

WORKING TIME AND GENDER INEQUALITIES IN ITALY | YEARS 2003-2023

More paid work for women

The gender gap in unpaid domestic and care work remains wide

In 2023, the time women spend on unpaid domestic and care work has fallen compared with twenty years earlier (-37 minutes per day, -12.4% compared with 2003).

Among employed women, the time spent on paid work increased by 1 hour 33 minutes per week compared with 2003.

In the European comparison, Italy records the widest gender gap both in unpaid domestic and care work and in paid work.

The rebalancing of unpaid domestic and care workloads between women and men is proceeding very slowly: the gender gap in time devoted to domestic and care work narrowed from 3 hours 22 minutes per day in 2003 to 2 hours 27 minutes in 2023.

Among employed people aged 25-64 living as a couple, women spend 2 hours and 22 minutes more per day than men on housework and care. The gap is particularly large in the presence of children and in Southern Italy.

68,9%

Share of domestic and care work done by women in dual-earner couples aged 25-64

-6.5 percentage points compared with 2003

4h10'

Average daily time spent on domestic and care work by employed women aged 25-64 living as a couple

-43 minutes compared with 2003

38'

Less daily free time for employed women living in a couple compared with men

The gap is 25 minutes smaller than in 2003

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About two and a half hours' difference between women and men in unpaid domestic and care work

Across the population aged 15 years and over, the gender gap in daily unpaid domestic and care work narrowed by around 55 minutes over the twenty years, from 3 hours 22 minutes in 2003 to 2 hours 27 minutes in 2023. This represents significant progress (-27.2% in twenty years), which nevertheless leaves women with a workload that is still well over double that of men (4 hours 21 minutes against 1 hour 54 minutes). The narrowing of the gender gap came mainly from the reduction in the time women spend on domestic and care work, associated with women's greater participation in paid work and helped by the spread of technology and household appliances (Istat, 2026). However, differences in participation in paid work do not on their own explain the gender gap: even in couples where both partners are employed, women still perform 68.9% of the total domestic and care work.

Unpaid domestic and care work shows a similar age profile for men and women, but with very different intensity: the time devoted to it increases from childhood¹ to adulthood and decreases in the older age groups. Gender differences, already visible among children and teenagers (10 minutes in 2023), widen progressively with age and reach their highest values in the midlife, when childcare, housekeeping and participation in the labour market are concentrated together. In 2023, in the 45-64 age group, women spend almost 3 hours more than men on domestic and care work (2 hours 55 minutes). In the 25-44 age group the gap is slightly smaller (2 hours 49 minutes). At this stage of life, the time women devote to domestic and care work exceeds 4 hours a day, while that of men is around an hour and a half.

Over twenty years the gap has narrowed in all age groups. In adulthood this reduction came mainly from the contraction of women's time: women aged 25-44 spend about 50 minutes less on domestic and care work than in 2003, those aged 45-64 about 70 minutes less. The time men in the same age groups devote to domestic and care work has instead remained substantially stable, with a slight increase between 2003 and 2013 and substantial stabilisation in the following decade. This pattern is partly attributable to the employment crisis of 2008-2014, which temporarily reduced men's paid working time, increasing the time available to them for domestic work.

In the older age groups the mechanism behind the narrowing of the gap is partly different. Among those aged 65-74, the time women devote to domestic and care work remains almost unchanged over the years (from 5 hours 51 minutes to 5 hours 40 minutes), while that of men increases significantly (from 2 hours 45 minutes to 3 hours 8 minutes): it is therefore the increase in men's contribution, favoured by their exit from the labour market, that brings the two closer. Among those aged 75 and over, on the other hand, women's times increase (from 3 hours 51 minutes to 4 hours 11 minutes), as do men's (from 2 hours 6 minutes to 2 hours 36 minutes), so that the gender gap remains substantially stable. The growing domestic and care workload at this stage of life also reflects the intensification of mutual care between elderly partners, in a population that is ageing and living longer, but in a context in which health conditions are gradually improving, making older people more self-sufficient.

AVERAGE TIME SPENT ON UNPAID DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK IN AN AVERAGE DAY OF THE WEEK BY SEX AND AGE GROUP (a) (b). Years 2003, 2013, 2023, in hour and minutes

AGE GROUP	Males			Females			Gender gap (F-M)		
	2003	2013	2023	2003	2013	2023	2003	2013	2023
3-14	0:15	0:18	0:15	0:25	0:23	0:25	0:10	0:05	0:10
15-24	0:29	0:33	0:28	1:44	1:32	1:06	1:15	0:59	0:38
25-44	1:15	1:34	1:30	5:09	4:49	4:19	3:54	3:15	2:49
45-64	1:59	2:05	2:00	6:05	5:31	4:55	4:06	3:26	2:55
65-74	2:45	3:10	3:08	5:51	5:49	5:40	3:06	2:39	2:32
75 and over	2:06	2:25	2:36	3:51	3:59	4:11	1:45	1:34	1:35
Total aged 15 and over	1:36	1:54	1:54	4:58	4:42	4:21	3:22	2:48	2:27
TOTAL AGED 3 AND OVER	1:26	1:42	1:43	4:27	4:13	3:57	3:01	2:31	2:14

Source: Istat, Time Use Survey; the data refer to the population aged 3 and over.

(a) Average time, i.e. the average daily time referred to the whole reference population (see Glossary).

(b) The average day of the week is a theoretical day calculated on an annual basis as a weighted average of the different days of the week (weekdays, Saturday and Sunday).

Female employment and unpaid work: Italy lags the Nordic countries

Among the 12 European countries that have conducted the Time Use Survey in recent yearsⁱⁱ, Italy stands out for a double gender asymmetry that has no equal.

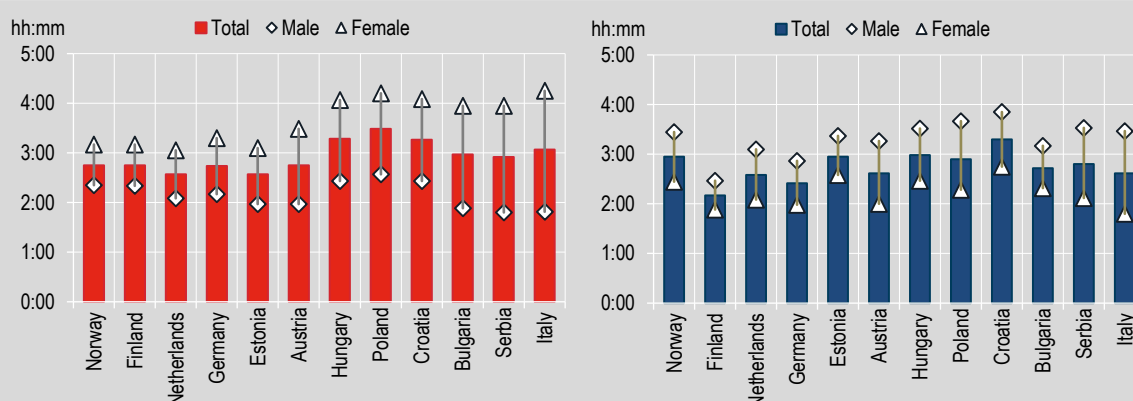
The first concerns paid work: with a female employment rate among those aged 15-64 of 52.5%, in 2023 Italy ranks last among European Union countries, more than 13 percentage points below the average (65.7%), with one of the widest gender gaps (-17.9 percentage points compared with men). Despite the progress made in recent years (+6.3 percentage points compared with 2013), which is nonetheless smaller than in most other countries, women's employment levels remain significantly lower than men's (Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey). Consistent with low female employment rates, women aged 15 and over spend 1 hour 48 minutes on paid work in an average weekly dayⁱⁱⁱ, the lowest value among the countries observed; Italy also shows the widest gender gap in paid work: men spend 1 hour 40 minutes more on it than women, ahead of Serbia (1 hour 25 minutes; Figure 1).

The second asymmetry concerns women's unpaid domestic and care work (women aged 15 and over, excluding help to non-cohabiting relatives), with the highest value among the countries observed: 4 hours 15 minutes per day. The result is a gender gap in domestic and care work of 2 hours 26 minutes, almost three times that recorded in the Nordic countries: in Norway and Finland the difference between men and women is only 49 and 50 minutes respectively.

Among the countries with the narrowest gender gaps in domestic and care work, besides the already mentioned Norway and Finland, are the Netherlands (58 minutes) and Germany and Estonia (1 hour 8 minutes). In these countries the smaller asymmetry in domestic and care work is generally accompanied by a greater female presence in paid work: women work more hours outside the home and fewer at home. The rebalancing of family workloads, however, does not necessarily depend on greater female commitment to paid work: in Germany, for example, women spend on average 1 hour 59 minutes a day on paid work, not much more than Italian women (1 hour 48 minutes), while men spend 2 hours 10 minutes on domestic and care work, against 1 hour 49 minutes for Italian men: the smaller gap is therefore explained above all by men's greater contribution, not by a substantial increase in women's hours of paid work.

Looking at total work (paid and unpaid), the widest gap is found in Bulgaria, where women work a total of 1 hour 13 minutes more than men, compared with 46 minutes in Italy. In Italy, by contrast, the two asymmetries add up and reinforce each other, appearing together at their highest levels: women do far more domestic and care work than men and far less paid work, and are thus penalised at the same time in terms of economic autonomy and the sharing of domestic workloads.

FIGURE 1. TIME SPENT ON UNPAID DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK (LEFT) AND ON PAID WORK (RIGHT) IN AN AVERAGE DAY OF THE WEEK BY THE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER IN SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, BY SEX. 2020 edition, in hours and minutes (a) (b)



Source: Eurostat Database, Time Use Survey – 2020 edition (in progress); Istat, Time Use survey 2023

(a) The survey is voluntary and does not cover all EU countries; the Italian 2023 data have not yet been released in the Eurostat database. Reference years: Estonia 2019-2021; Finland 2020-2021; Austria, Serbia 2021-2022; Netherlands 2021-2023; Germany 2022; Bulgaria, Croatia, Norway 2022-2023; Poland, Italy 2023; Hungary 2024-2025.

(b) Differences from national estimates are mainly due to the absence, in the estimates published by Eurostat, of help to non-cohabiting relatives.

Less housework, more paid work: the workload of employed women is changing

While the international comparison, albeit limited to a few countries, shows Italy as an extreme case in gender gaps in daily domestic and care work, the data on total weekly work give a more nuanced picture, in which employment status becomes the key variable for understanding how workloads are distributed and how they have changed over the last twenty years.

Among employed men, the contraction in working time clearly shows the impact of the economic crisis: between 2003 and 2013 the time spent on paid work fell by about an hour and a half per week (from 43 hours 15 minutes to 41 hours 41 minutes), while the time spent on unpaid domestic and care work rose by almost 2 hours (from 8 hours 27 minutes to 10 hours 24 minutes), in a partial substitution effect between the two spheres (Figure 2, right). With the employment recovery of the following decade, the time spent on paid work returned to pre-crisis levels (43 hours 5 minutes in 2023), but the time spent on domestic and care work did not fully revert: it stands at 10 hours 33 minutes per week, about 2 hours above 2003. This is a modest but indicative sign of a transformation in male behaviour.

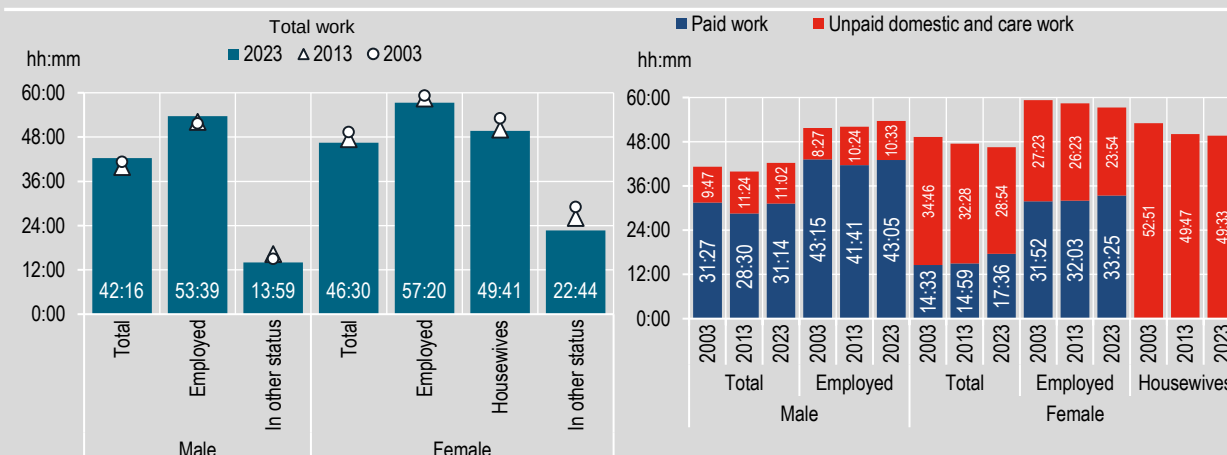
For employed women the change is sharper and points in a clear direction: over twenty years the time spent on paid work has grown by about an hour and a half (from 31 hours 52 minutes to 33 hours 25 minutes per week), while the time spent on domestic and care work has fallen by more than 3 hours per week (from 27 hours 23 minutes to 23 hours 54 minutes). As a result, the total work time (domestic/care and paid) of employed women has fallen by almost 2 hours per week, from 59 hours 14 minutes to 57 hours 19 minutes (Figure 2, left).

The improvement for employed women is real, but must be put in perspective: with almost 13 hours per week more of domestic and care work than employed men, the female overload remains a structural feature.

Housewives show a different profile: domestic and care work falls (from 52 hours 51 minutes in 2003 to 49 hours 33 minutes in 2023; -6.2% over twenty years), thanks also to improvements in household appliance ownership and changes in consumption habits (for example the spread of ready meals and online shopping), which have helped reduce the time needed for household activities (Istat, 2026). However, levels remain very high, almost 50 hours per week in 2023, confirming that exclusion from the labour market often translates into an almost full-time commitment to domestic and care work.

Looking at the population as a whole, and not only at those who work, the rebalancing between men and women in total weekly work is under way, but slowly: among men, total work time has risen to 42 hours 16 minutes in 2023 (from 41 hours 14 minutes in 2003), while among women it has fallen to 46 hours 30 minutes (from 49 hours 19 minutes), reducing the overall gap to just over 4 hours per week.

FIGURE 2. TOTAL WORK TIME (LEFT), PAID WORK AND UNPAID DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK (RIGHT) IN AN AVERAGE WEEK, POPULATION AGED 15-64, BY SEX AND STATUS. Years 2003, 2013, 2023, in hour and minutes (a)



Source: Istat, Time Use Survey.

(a) Comparisons of work time (total, paid and domestic/care) use the average week, calculated on an annual basis.

Parents under pressure: work never ends, but it is not the same for everyone

Among employed people, the composition of total work varies considerably with the role held in the family, but it is the gender difference that defines the most marked profile. Overall, employed women devote 41.7% of their total work time to domestic and care work, against 19.7% for men (Figure 3, left). The gap widens further among parents: domestic and care work absorbs 48.8% of mothers' work time and only 22.3% of fathers'. For employed mothers, almost one hour of work in two is unpaid domestic and care work: a distribution that reflects a strongly asymmetric division of roles, regardless of participation in the labour market.

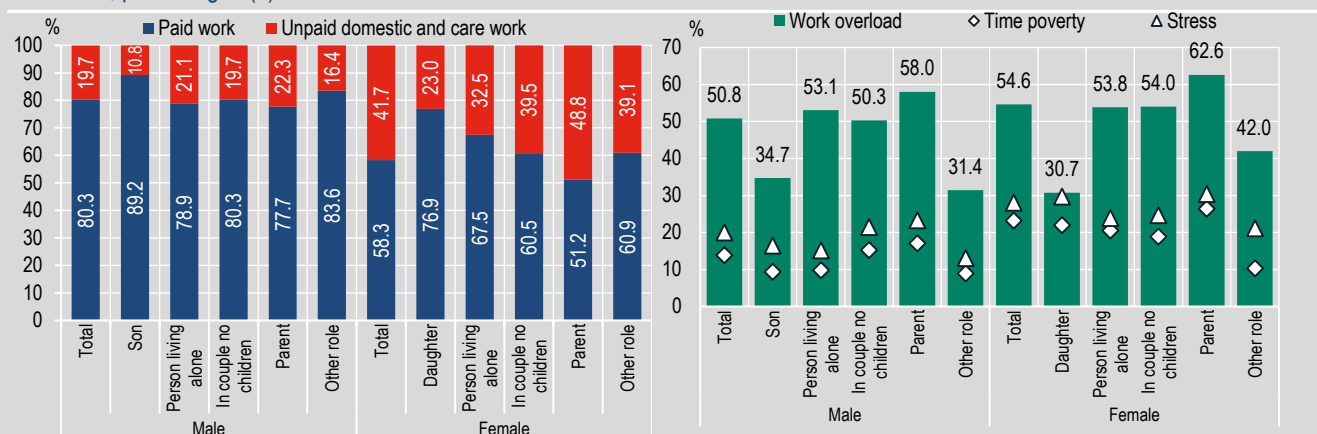
The gender asymmetry in the distribution of work does not, however, depend exclusively on family structure. Even among people living alone, women devote 32.5% of their total work to domestic and care work against 21.1% for men. The asymmetry therefore reflects different models of domestic care between the sexes irrespective of the formation of a family, and is thus not reducible to the division of roles within the couple alone.

The quality-of-life indicators give a more nuanced picture (Figure 3, right). Work overload, defined as performing more than 60 hours of total work per week, affects high shares of employed people of both sexes (50.8% of men and 54.6% of women). Gender differences emerge more strongly in the indicators of time poverty (13.9% of men, 23.2% of women) and stress (20.0 against 28.1%), indicators that do not measure the hours actually worked, but the subjective perception of the availability of time and of the difficulty of reconciling the different spheres of life.

Despite similar levels of overload, women more often report perceived stress and insufficient time. In this context, the intertwining of multiple responsibilities among employed women plausibly fosters a perception of greater pressure. Employed men, in fact, concentrate over 80% of their work time in paid activities, so that at the end of the working day the boundary between commitments and free time is sharper. For employed women, by contrast, the end of paid work more often coincides with the start of domestic and care work, with no break and with greater overlap between roles, a condition identified by the international terms role spillover or work-family conflict.

The greatest difficulties are found among employed parents. Mothers reach 62.6% overload, 26.4% time poverty and 30.4% stress; fathers, albeit with lower values, also show the highest peaks among male roles (58.0%, 17.1%, 23.3%). The presence of children is therefore a source of pressure for both sexes, but with significantly different intensity: for mothers, the accumulation of paid and domestic and care work translates into a worse perception of time and well-being.

FIGURE 3. COMPOSITION OF TOTAL WORK BETWEEN PAID AND UNPAID DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK (LEFT), QUALITY-OF-LIFE INDICATORS (RIGHT) OF EMPLOYED PEOPLE AGED 15-64, BY SEX AND FAMILY ROLE
Year 2023, percentages (a)



Source: Istat, Time Use Survey.

(a) The work overload indicator is the share of the population performing more than 60 hours per week of total work (paid or domestic/care); the time poverty indicator is the share of people who always feel rushed for lack of time; the stress indicator is the share of people who always or often feel "stressed".

The rebalancing of unpaid domestic and care work has come to a halt

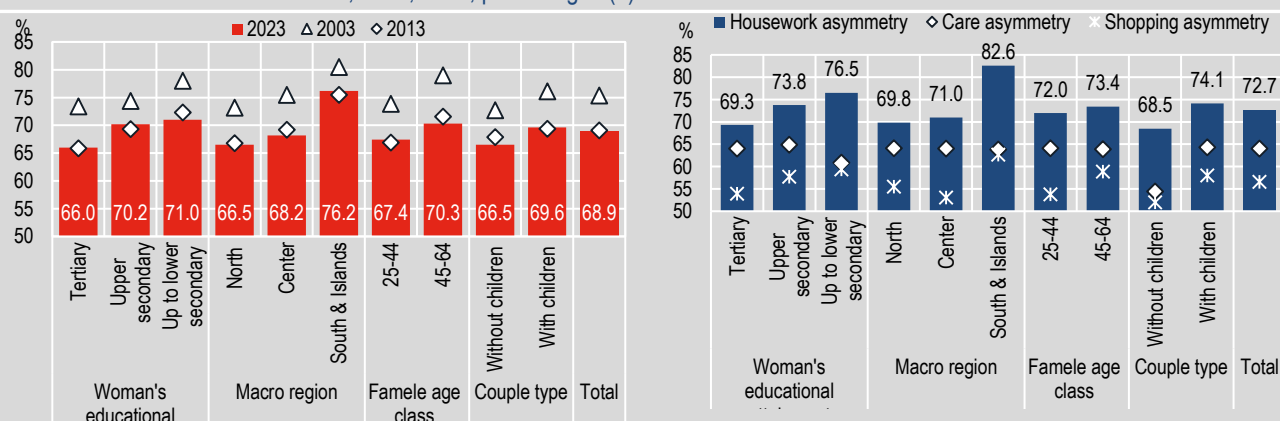
In couples where both partners are employed, aged 25-64, the division of unpaid domestic and care work is strongly asymmetric. In 2023 women perform on average 68.9% of the total domestic and care work done by the couple, while men account for the remaining 31.1% (Figure 4, left). The asymmetry index, which measures precisely the share of domestic and care work performed by women out of the couple's total (50 indicates a perfectly equal division), confirms this imbalance. Although between 2003 and 2013 the index fell significantly, from 75.4 to 69.1, in the following decade the rebalancing process has practically come to a halt.

A high level of education, while attenuating the overall asymmetry, which falls to 66.0% in couples in which the woman has tertiary education, compared with 70.2% among those where the woman has upper secondary education and 71.0% among those where she has at most lower secondary education. Is not enough to overcome gender imbalances: even when the woman has a degree, her domestic and care workload remains equal to two thirds of the couple's total work, substantially unchanged since 2013 (65.9%). The presence of children is associated with even higher levels of asymmetry: in couples with children the overall asymmetry index is 69.6% against 66.5% in couples without children. The gap is particularly large in care activities, where the index rises to 64.3% in couples with children, almost 10 points more than in those without (54.4%). This difference should, however, also be read in light of the different nature of the activities considered. In couples without children, care mainly concerns assistance to cohabiting adults, a type of activity that is generally more egalitarian. The presence of children, by contrast, has a very clear impact on the female workload: it not only increases the volume of care but changes its nature, introducing daily and continuous responsibilities that fall disproportionately on women even in dual earner couples.

The breakdown of domestic and care work by component, moreover, reveals different dynamics and different levels of asymmetry depending on the activities considered (Figure 4, right). Housework is the most asymmetric component (72.7%) and also the one most sensitive to the woman's level of education: the index falls to 69.3% in couples where the woman has a degree, while in couples where she has at most lower secondary education it rises to 76.5%. Direct care of other family members (children and adults), with an asymmetry index of 64.0%, is on average more shared than housework and shows no significant differences by the woman's educational attainment (64.0% among women with tertiary education and 60.9% among women with at most lower secondary education). Unlike housework, therefore, greater male involvement in direct care does not appear to be linked to the woman's level of education. Finally, purchasing goods and services for the for the home and family (shopping) is the most egalitarian component, with an asymmetry index of 56.6%.

At territorial level there is marked polarisation: in the South & Islands the overall asymmetry index reaches 76.2%, almost 10 points above the North (66.5%), while that for housework rises to 82.6%, against a share of only 69.8% in the North. Housework in the South & Islands is also the only component that between 2013 and 2023 not only shows no improvement but even shows a slight worsening compared with the previous decade.

FIGURE 4. ASYMMETRY INDEX OF DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK BY YEAR (LEFT) AND ASYMMETRY INDEX OF HOUSEWORK, CARE AND SHOPPING IN 2023 (RIGHT) IN DUAL EARNER COUPLES, AGED 25-64, BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS. Years 2003, 2013, 2023, percentages (a)



Source: Istat, Time Use Survey.

(a) The asymmetry index measures the share of domestic and care work (housework, care and shopping for goods and services) performed by women out of the couple's total; it ranges from 0 (entirely on the man) to 100.0 (entirely on the woman); 50.0 indicates full parity (see Glossary).

Less free time for employed women in couples

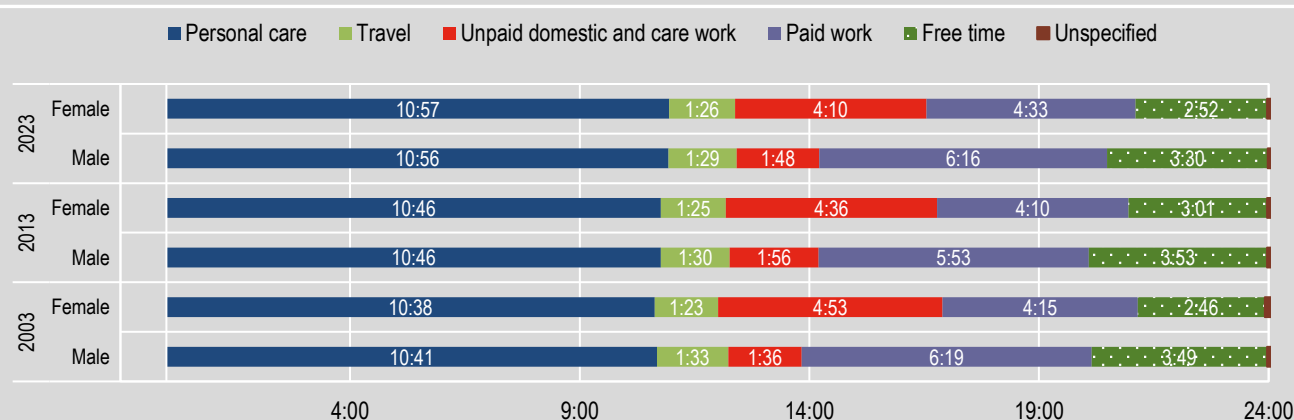
In a 24-hour day, the time devoted to the various daily activities is not distributed equally between men and women. Among employed people in couples aged 25-64, the difference in domestic and care work (2 hours 22 minutes per day in 2023: 4 hours 10 minutes for women, 1 hour 48 minutes for men) translates directly into a gap in free time: women have 38 minutes a day less than men (2 hours 52 minutes against 3 hours 30 minutes; Figure 5), which on a weekly basis amounts to about 4 and a half hours. Over a year, employed women in couples lose 231 hours of time for themselves compared with their partners, equivalent to almost 10 whole days.

Over the twenty years considered, the use of time has changed, but equilibrium has not been reached. Employed women in couples have reduced the time spent on domestic and care work by 43 minutes (from 4 hours 53 minutes to 4 hours 10 minutes) and increased the time spent on paid work by 18 minutes (from 4 hours 15 minutes to 4 hours 33 minutes). Women's free time has remained substantially stable, with an increase of only 6 minutes in twenty years (from 2 hours 46 minutes to 2 hours 52 minutes): the gain obtained by reducing domestic and care work has been almost entirely absorbed by the increase in paid work. For men the dynamic goes in the opposite direction: free time has fallen by 19 minutes (from 3 hours 49 minutes to 3 hours 30 minutes), partly because of the increase in men's domestic and care work (+12 minutes), and partly because of the contraction and subsequent recovery of paid work linked to the 2008-14 crisis.

The comparison with the intermediate 2013 data shows that the path has not been linear. In the first decade, between 2003 and 2013, the reduction in women's domestic and care work (-17 minutes) translated almost entirely into more free time (+15 minutes), because paid work remained substantially stable. In the following decade the situation changes: a sharper reduction in domestic and care work (-26 minutes) is associated with an increase in paid work (+23 minutes) that absorbs the gain, bringing women's free time even below the 2013 level (from 3 hours 1 minute to 2 hours 52 minutes). The margin of time for oneself won in the first decade has thus already been eroded in the second. Personal care times (sleep, meals, hygiene) grow slightly over the twenty years with no significant differences between men and women (from about 10 hours 40 minutes to about 10 hours 57 minutes in 2023): a confirmation that it is free time, not physiological needs, that comes under pressure from differentiated workloads.

The overall picture is that of a structurally heavier female day, in which the progressive rise in labour market participation has not freed up time for rest and personal time, but has simply replaced hours of domestic and care work with hours of paid work. A real but still incomplete transition, held back by cultural models that continue to see women as the main figure responsible for caring for the family.

FIGURE 5. AVERAGE TIME SPENT ON DAILY ACTIVITIES BY EMPLOYED PEOPLE IN COUPLES AGED 25-64 IN AN AVERAGE DAY OF THE WEEK, BY SEX. Years 2003, 2013, 2023, in hour and minutes



Source: Istat, Time Use Survey

Between tradition and equality: how the population sees gender roles

Men's and women's opinions on gender roles in 2023 give a heterogeneous picture, in which traditional models and egalitarian orientations coexist with varying intensity.

36.1% of the population aged 15 and over strongly or somewhat agree with the idea that it is above all the man who should provide economically for the family (male breadwinner model^{iv}) and 19.4% believe that, when jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to men. Egalitarian statements, however, attract much broader consensus: almost 90% believe that housework should be shared between partners who both work full time, over 87% support greater paternal involvement in childcare, 80.1% believe that a working mother can maintain a good relationship with her children, while the share of those who recognise fathers as just as capable as mothers of looking after small children stops at 73%. On all statements women are systematically more egalitarian than men, with the widest gap on the traditional views, in particular on the male breadwinner model (41.1% among men, 31.4% among women), and narrower on the fathers' caring role.

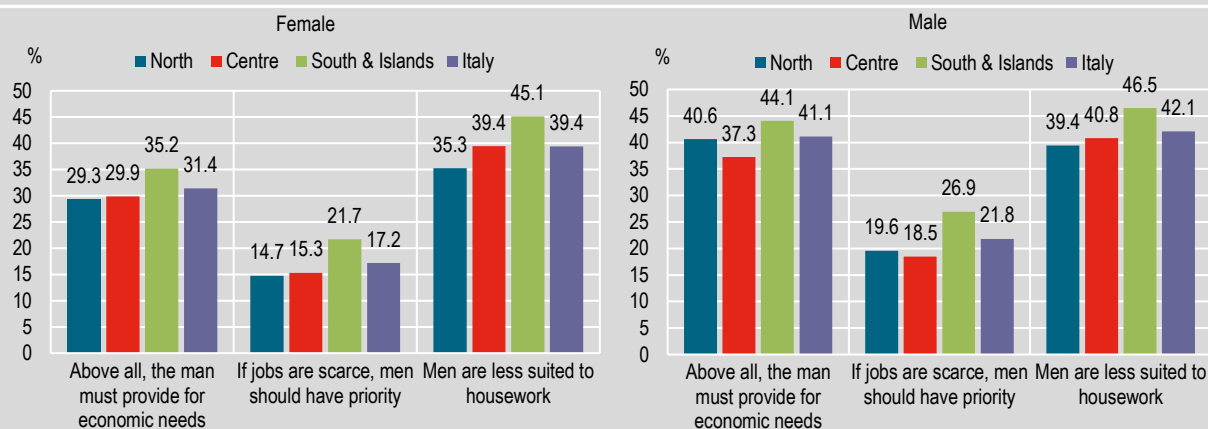
Compared with 2013 the change is clear and more marked among women: the male breadwinner model loses 14.1 percentage points and the idea of men's lesser aptitude for housework loses 15.7 points, while the sharing of family responsibilities (+17.4 points) and the paternal role in childcare (+16.8 points) grow.

Differences remain between population groups. Adherence to traditional models grows with age, but it is among young people that the gender gap is widest (13 points in the 15-24 age group on the male breadwinner model), a sign that girls anticipate the evolution towards egalitarian models more than their male peers.

Territorially, the South shows greater adherence to traditional models (46.5% against 37.3% in the North on men's aptitude for housework; 24.2% against 17.1% on priority for men in employment; 39.5% against 34.8% on the male breadwinner model), but gender gaps do not follow the same geography: they are wider in the North on domestic aptitude and the male breadwinner model, and wider in the South on priority in employment. On the paternal role the picture is more nuanced, with a significant territorial gap only on the care capacity attributed to fathers (76.1% in the North against 69.5% in the South).

Education and employment status act in the same direction: consensus with the male breadwinner model falls from 46.5% among those with lower secondary education to 20.9% among graduates, and is lower among the employed (31-39%) than among housewives and the non-employed (43-47%). In both cases men remain more traditionalist than women, with a gender gap that stays substantially stable across education levels (9-11 points on the male breadwinner model).

FIGURE 6. PEOPLE AGED 15 AND OVER WHO STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT AGREE WITH SELECTED GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPES, BY SEX AND REGION. Year 2023, percentages



Source: Istat, Time Use Survey.

Glossary

Generic average time (of performing certain activities): indicator measuring the average time spent performing given activities by the whole study population, considering both the persons who carried out the activity and those who did not. The sum of the generic average durations for all activities carried out in the day equals 24 hours. The indicator therefore makes it possible to add together the times devoted to different activities by the reference population considered. At international level this indicator is recommended for comparisons over time and across space.

Average day of the week: theoretical day calculated on an annual basis, obtained as a weighted average of the different days of the week (weekdays, Saturday and Sunday). In time use surveys it makes it possible to observe behaviours and to represent, in summary form, the average daily distribution of the population's activities, weighted by their frequency over the course of the year.

Asymmetry index of workloads in the couple: the amount of work (paid, domestic and care, housework, care) performed by women out of the total performed by both partners. The index takes values between 0 and 100; the value 50 corresponds to a perfectly equal sharing of workloads; values between 0 and 49 and between 51 and 99 indicate a progressively more unbalanced workload, falling respectively on the man or on the woman.

Unpaid domestic and care work: the set of unpaid activities carried out for the physical, emotional and logistical well-being of one's family members, whether cohabiting or not (e.g. elderly parents, grandchildren or other non-cohabiting relatives). According to ILO standards (2013, 19th ICLS), it is classified as "own-use provision of services" and is divided into **direct care work** (care of children, older persons and persons with disabilities) and indirect care work, which includes **housework** (cleaning the home, meal management, care of textiles, plants and animals and other household management) and the time devoted to **shopping for goods and services** for the home and family. It meets the third-person criterion (activities that can be delegated to paid external providers), but is not included in the calculation of GDP and does not define "employed" status in official labour market statistics.

Methodological note

Objectives of the survey and regulatory framework

The Multipurpose Survey "Time Use", conducted between January 2023 and December 2023 on an effective sample of about 15,000 households, is an important tool for observing how people organise their day and the relationships between the daily times of the various members of the household. The main distinctive feature of the survey is that, through the completion of a diary, it is possible to learn how each respondent allocates the 24 hours (divided into 144 ten-minute intervals) among the various daily activities, specifying for each interval the use of the Internet, smartphone, PC or other electronic devices for carrying out the activities described, the means of transport used and the places visited, the people with whom the time was spent and the level of enjoyment of the time spent. This is, that is, information with an extremely high level of detail, not comparable with that obtainable from traditional fixed-question questionnaires.

The Time Use Survey can thus contribute to a deeper understanding of a multiplicity of aspects of daily life, including: the division of labour between men and women (including unpaid work); the activities and needs of particular social categories (older people and children); the relationship between work, study, leisure and family care times; the times of use of services and spaces; the ways in which free time is spent; the use of mass media. The survey therefore provides an articulated information framework useful for formulating: family policies more attentive to the need to combine work activities and family commitments; a labour policy more aware of the characteristics and new forms of work; social policies aimed at meeting the needs of older people and minors.

The Time Use Survey is therefore a strategic tool for understanding the daily organisation of people's lives, with particular attention to gender differences. At national level, it is governed by Law 53 of 2000, art. 16, which establishes the obligation to carry it out every five years. At European level, Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council recognises its relevance within the common framework for statistics on persons and households, qualifying it as a voluntary survey and referring to Eurostat guidelines for methodological aspects. Finally, it is among the statistical surveys of public interest included in the National Statistical Programme.

Frequency and period of data collection

The survey, a sample survey, is conducted every five years over an entire calendar year.

Reference population

The population of interest consists of households resident in Italy and the individuals who compose them (persons living in institutional households are excluded). The household is understood as a de facto household, i.e. a set of cohabiting persons linked by marriage, kinship, affinity, adoption, guardianship or affective ties.

The survey is conducted on a theoretical sample of about 27,000 households.

Data collection strategies and instruments

The survey uses two collection models. The first is the basic questionnaire, by direct interview, consisting of: a "General Form", which collects kinship relations and other socio-demographic and socio-economic information on household members; "Individual Forms", one for each household member, which collect individual characteristics most closely related to lifetimes; and a "Household Questionnaire" containing household questions answered by a single adult member. The other is the daily time use diary for self-completion. The diary is handed out by the interviewer to each household member and contains questions that can easily be completed autonomously by the respondent even without the direct intervention of the interviewer.

The survey was conducted entirely with the PAPI (Paper And Pencil Interview) technique: the questionnaire, comprising the General Form, the Individual Forms and the Household Questionnaire, is administered through direct interview on paper, while the daily diary and the questions on the back of the diary are completed autonomously by the respondent.

Information is provided directly by all individuals aged 15 and over, while for children and teenagers under 15, who are not subject to the obligation to respond, information is provided by proxy by a parent or another adult member of the household; to ensure greater information quality, however, children aged 11 to 14 are recommended to complete the daily diary themselves. The self-completion questionnaire contains some questions of a sensitive nature, marked with the letter "S", for which respondents have the option not to answer; these questions are recalled in the information notice on the back of the forms.

Further information on the Time Use survey and the questionnaires used for data collection are available at the following link (in Italian): <https://www.istat.it/informazioni-sulla-rilevazione/multiscopo-sulle-famiglie-uso-del-tempo-4/>

The sampling strategy and the level of precision of the estimates

Sampling design

The study domains, i.e. the areas to which the population parameters to be estimated refer, are of two different types: territorial domains and temporal domains.

The territorial domains are as follows:

- the whole national territory;
- the five geographical divisions (North-West, North-East, Centre, South and Islands);
- the geographical regions (with the exception of Trentino-Alto Adige, whose estimates are produced separately for the provinces of Bolzano/Bozen and Trento);
- the municipality type obtained by dividing Italian municipalities into six classes based on socio-economic and demographic characteristics:

A) municipalities belonging to the metropolitan area, divided into:

A1, central municipalities of the metropolitan area: Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Bari, Palermo, Catania, Cagliari;

A2, municipalities gravitating around the central municipalities of the metropolitan area;

B) municipalities not belonging to the metropolitan area, divided into:

B1 municipalities with up to 2,000 inhabitants;

B2 municipalities with 2,001-10,000 inhabitants;

B3 municipalities with 10,001-50,000 inhabitants;

B4 municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants.

As for the temporal domains, the estimates produced by the survey are published with reference to four types of day: weekday, pre-holiday day (Saturday), holiday (Sunday) and average weekly day.

The sampling design has a general structure that follows that of most household survey sampling schemes, i.e. a multi-stage municipalities-households design, with stratification of municipalities.

Within each area obtained by crossing the regions with the six municipality types described above, the universe municipalities were divided into two subsets: the municipalities of larger demographic size form a stratum of their own and are defined as Self-Representing (AR); the remaining municipalities are defined as Non-Self-Representing (NAR) and are divided, on the basis of demographic size, into strata of equal size; from these strata the sample municipalities (three for each stratum) were selected with probability proportional to their size.

For each of the municipalities involved in the survey (AR and NAR), cluster sampling is carried out: the clusters – the households – are selected at random from the Municipal Population Register (LAC) and all the members

belonging to the de facto household are surveyed; for each household included in the sample, the characteristics under investigation are collected for all the de facto members of that household.

The temporal stratification of the sample provides that AR municipalities carry out data collection in all 12 months of the survey, while NAR municipalities carry out data collection once every quarter and therefore four times a year, three months apart. Each of the three sample municipalities of each NAR stratum was randomly assigned to one of the three months of the quarter. For example, a municipality that carried out data collection in January in the first quarter will carry out data collection in April, July and October in the following quarters.

Estimation procedure

The estimates produced by the survey are of two types: absolute or relative frequencies of persons who have a certain characteristic or take part in a certain activity, and average time devoted to a certain activity. The estimates are obtained using a constrained weighting (calibration) estimator, which is the estimation method adopted for most Istat surveys on businesses and households. The principle on which every sample estimation method is based is that the units belonging to the sample also represent the population units that are not included in the sample. This principle is implemented by assigning each sample unit a weight indicating the number of population units represented by that unit. If, for example, a sample unit is assigned a weight of 30, then this unit represents itself and 29 other population units that were not included in the sample.

The Time Use Survey produces different types of estimates:

- estimates referring to households and individuals;
- estimates referring to one of the three types of day (weekday, Saturday and Sunday) and to the average weekly day.

Consequently, each individual in the sample has been assigned two different weights:

- a household weight, equal for all members of each household;
- an individual weight relating to the specific type of day (weekday, Saturday and Sunday) on which the household completed the daily diary.

In what follows, reference will be made to the duration estimates obtained with the weight relating to the type of day, in particular to the estimates referring to the average weekly day, because these are the ones used in this statistics report.

The procedure for constructing the final weights to be assigned to responding sample units is articulated in the following phases:

- 1) direct weights are calculated as the reciprocal of the units' inclusion probability;
- 2) correction factors for total non-response are calculated, as the inverse of the response rate of the municipality to which each unit belongs;
- 3) base weights, or weights corrected for total non-response, are obtained by multiplying the direct weights by the corresponding correction factors for total non-response;
- 4) correction factors are constructed that make it possible to satisfy, at regional level, the equality condition between the known totals of the auxiliary variables and the corresponding sample estimates;
- 5) finally, the final weights are calculated as the product of the base weights and the correction factors obtained in step 4.

The correction factors of step 4 are obtained by solving a constrained minimum problem, in which the function to be minimised is a distance function (suitably pre-selected) between the base weights and the final weights, and the constraints are defined by the equality condition between the sample estimates of known population totals and the known values of those totals. The distance function selected is the truncated logarithmic function; adopting this function guarantees that the final weights are positive and contained within a predetermined range of possible values, thereby eliminating extreme positive weights (too large or too small).

Assessing the level of precision of the estimates

In order to assess the accuracy of the estimates produced by a sample survey, it is necessary to take into account the sampling error that derives from having observed the variable of interest only on a part (sample) of the population. This error can be expressed in terms of absolute error (standard error) or relative error (i.e. the absolute error divided by the estimate, which is called the coefficient of variation, CV).

Table B shows the relative errors associated with certain levels of point estimates of durations for the various study domains. Table C gives the sample sizes for the main characteristics surveyed.

From the relative sampling errors it is possible to construct the confidence interval which, with a pre-set confidence level, contains the true but unknown value of the parameter to be estimated. The confidence interval is calculated by adding to and subtracting from the point estimate its absolute sampling error, multiplied by a coefficient that depends on the confidence level; considering the traditional confidence level of 95%, the corresponding coefficient is 1.96.

In practice, for point estimates of durations, one must first look in Table C (sample sizes) for the number of persons that generated that duration; then, in Table B (durations in the average weekly day), look for the estimated duration (columns) and the sample size (rows) closest to those under consideration, in order to identify the associated percentage relative error.

As an illustration of the procedures, Table A shows how duration estimates are calculated. From this statistics report it appears that, in the average day of the week, for males aged 25-44 the estimate of the generic average duration of time devoted to domestic and care work is 1h30' (Table 1), which expressed in decimal values is 1.5 hours; moreover, Table C shows that the sample size for individuals in that age group is 1,379 + 1,722 = 3,101 units. In the first column of Table B the row corresponding to the total of 2,500 is selected, which is closest to 3,101. In the third column of the same table the average duration of 2.0 hours, closest to 1.5 hours, is also identified. The percentage relative error we are looking for is shown at the intersection of the row and column identified above and is equal to 3.6%.

TABLE A. WORKED EXAMPLE OF THE CALCULATION OF THE 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL FOR DURATION ESTIMATES

	Time spent on unpaid domestic and care work by males aged 25–44 on an average day	Time spent on unpaid household work by females aged 25–44 on the average day
Point estimate:	1.5 (1h30')	4.3 (4h19')
Relative error (CV)	3.6/100=0.036	2.5/100=0.025
Interval estimate		
Half-width of the interval:	$(1.5 * 0.036) * 1.96 = 0.1$ (7')	$(4.3 * 0.025) * 1.96 = 0.2$ (12')
Lower limit of the confidence interval:	1.5 - 0.1 = 1.4 (1h23')	4.3 - 0.2 = 4.1 (4h06')
Upper limit of the confidence interval:	1.5 + 0.1 = 1.6 (1h37')	4.3 + 0.2 = 4.5 (4h30')

TABLE B. INTERPOLATED VALUES OF THE PERCENTAGE RELATIVE SAMPLING ERRORS OF ESTIMATES OF AVERAGE TIME FOR ITALY AS A WHOLE, GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION AND TYPE OF MUNICIPALITY, FOR THE AVERAGE WEEKLY DAY. Year 2023

SAMPLE SIZE	AVERAGE TIME IN HOURS					
	0.5	1.0	2.0	3.0	5.0	10.0
ITALY						
20	38.6	29.5	22.6	19.3	15.8	12.1
30	33.1	25.3	19.3	16.5	13.6	10.4
50	27.3	20.8	15.9	13.6	11.2	8.5
100	20.9	16.0	12.2	10.5	8.6	6.6
250	14.8	11.3	8.6	7.4	6.1	4.6
500	11.3	8.7	6.6	5.7	4.7	3.6
1000	8.7	6.7	5.1	4.4	3.6	2.7
2500	6.2	4.7	3.6	3.1	2.5	1.9
NORTH-WEST						
20	35.0	27.3	21.3	18.5	15.4	12.0
30	30.7	24.0	18.7	16.2	13.5	10.5
50	26.1	20.3	15.9	13.7	11.4	8.9
100	20.8	16.3	12.7	11.0	9.1	7.1
250	15.5	12.1	9.4	8.2	6.8	5.3
500	12.4	9.7	7.5	6.5	5.4	4.2
1000	9.9	7.7	6.0	5.2	4.3	3.4
2500	7.4	5.7	4.5	3.9	3.2	2.5
NORTH-EAST						
20	35.2	27.3	21.2	18.3	15.2	11.8
30	30.7	23.8	18.5	16.0	13.2	10.3
50	25.9	20.1	15.6	13.5	11.2	8.7
100	20.5	16.0	12.4	10.7	8.9	6.9
250	15.1	11.7	9.1	7.9	6.5	5.1
500	12.0	9.3	7.2	6.2	5.2	4.0
1000	9.5	7.4	5.7	5.0	4.1	3.2
2500	7.0	5.4	4.2	3.6	3.0	2.3

TABLE B. INTERPOLATED VALUES OF THE PERCENTAGE RELATIVE SAMPLING ERRORS OF ESTIMATES OF AVERAGE TIME FOR ITALY AS A WHOLE, GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION AND TYPE OF MUNICIPALITY, FOR THE AVERAGE WEEKLY DAY. Year 2023

SAMPLE SIZE	AVERAGE TIME IN HOURS					
	0.5	1.0	2.0	3.0	5.0	10.0
CENTRE						
20	37.0	28.3	21.6	18.4	15.1	11.6
30	32.1	24.5	18.7	16.0	13.1	10.0
50	26.7	20.4	15.6	13.3	10.9	8.3
100	20.9	16.0	12.2	10.4	8.5	6.5
250	15.1	11.5	8.8	7.5	6.2	4.7
500	11.8	9.0	6.9	5.9	4.8	3.7
1000	9.2	7.1	5.4	4.6	3.8	2.9
2500	6.7	5.1	3.9	3.3	2.7	2.1
SOUTH						
20	39.2	30.6	23.9	20.7	17.3	13.5
30	34.0	26.6	20.8	18.0	15.0	11.7
50	28.5	22.2	17.4	15.0	12.5	9.8
100	22.3	17.4	13.6	11.8	9.8	7.7
250	16.2	12.6	9.9	8.6	7.1	5.6
500	12.7	9.9	7.7	6.7	5.6	4.4
1000	10.0	7.8	6.1	5.3	4.4	3.4
2500	7.2	5.6	4.4	3.8	3.2	2.5
ISLANDS						
20	37.3	28.6	22.0	18.8	15.5	11.9
30	32.0	24.6	18.9	16.1	13.3	10.2
50	26.4	20.3	15.5	13.3	10.9	8.4
100	20.3	15.6	12.0	10.2	8.4	6.5
250	14.4	11.0	8.5	7.2	6.0	4.6
500	11.1	8.5	6.5	5.6	4.6	3.5
1000	8.5	6.5	5.0	4.3	3.5	2.7
2500	6.0	4.6	3.5	3.0	2.5	1.9

TABLE C. SAMPLE SIZES BY SEX, AGE GROUP AND SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE AVERAGE DAY OF THE WEEK. Year 2023.

CHARACTERISTICS	MALES									FEMALES								
	3-10	11-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total	3-10	11-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
TOTAL	937	647	1,389	1,379	1,722	2,302	2,528	3,782	14,686	908	589	1,375	1,358	1,918	2,532	2,701	4,673	16,054
LEVEL OF EDUCATION																		
Degree	-	-	66	323	395	430	368	439	2,021	-	-	77	516	645	636	393	424	2,691
Upper secondary diploma	-	-	616	783	872	1,089	1,041	1,101	5,502	-	-	638	653	884	1,144	1,174	1,066	5,559
Lower secondary	-	108	687	241	405	708	980	1,127	4,256	-	106	644	169	337	671	960	1,176	4,063
Up to primary school	937	539	20	32	50	75	139	1,115	2,907	908	483	16	20	52	81	174	2,007	3,741
EMPLOYMENT STATUS																		
Employed	-	-	368	1,092	1,534	2,083	1,855	429	7,361	-	-	252	861	1,371	1,804	1,431	228	5,947
Seeking employment	-	-	131	148	109	95	87	11	581	-	-	99	190	162	164	89	4	708
Housewife	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	125	278	448	789	1,405	3,066
Student	-	-	836	72	5	1	-	-	915	-	-	939	96	7	5	2	5	1,054
Retired	-	-	-	-	2	9	351	3,188	3,550	-	-	-	-	1	9	267	2,796	3,073
Other status	937	647	54	67	72	114	235	153	2,279	908	589	64	86	99	102	123	235	2,206
HOUSEHOLD SIZE																		
1 member	-	-	18	215	323	428	457	762	2,203	-	-	9	121	190	306	525	1,757	2,908
2 members	47	37	93	238	302	369	706	2,157	3,949	43	35	92	295	336	544	988	2,131	4,464
3 members	190	158	378	423	446	565	667	568	3,395	200	131	395	408	509	684	696	503	3,526
4 members	477	308	613	366	468	723	534	203	3,692	439	288	597	405	633	778	374	172	3,686
5 or more members	223	144	287	137	183	217	164	92	1,447	226	135	282	129	250	220	118	110	1,470

TABLE C. SAMPLE SIZES BY SEX, AGE GROUP AND SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE AVERAGE DAY OF THE WEEK.
Year 2023.

CARATTERISTICHE	MALES									FEMALES								
	3-10	11-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total	3-10	11-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
TYPE OF FAMILY NUCLEUS																		
No nucleus	-	-	33	263	369	512	540	853	2,571	-	2	16	152	217	366	607	2,084	3,444
Couple with children	804	530	1,072	794	1,024	1,374	1,236	632	7,466	781	486	1,046	789	1,237	1,410	984	384	7,117
Couple without children	-	-	5	125	218	242	602	2,189	3,381	-	-	10	186	204	322	816	1,827	3,365
Single father	15	14	40	47	32	76	93	97	414	12	16	52	27	11	13	3	-	134
Single mother	117	103	239	150	79	98	57	11	854	115	85	251	204	249	421	291	378	1,994
GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS (NUTS 1)																		
North-West	210	146	342	324	369	557	594	881	3,423	211	130	344	315	434	602	635	1,110	3,781
North-East	213	148	278	287	377	531	538	767	3,139	198	141	280	258	425	537	598	948	3,385
Centre	185	130	262	242	335	435	479	767	2,835	181	116	254	250	388	507	499	997	3,192
South	236	157	376	379	443	576	657	972	3,796	218	138	367	374	479	627	664	1,130	3,997
Islands	93	66	131	147	198	203	260	395	1,493	100	64	130	161	192	259	305	488	1,699

Territorial detail

The statistics are available at national, geographical division (Nuts 1) and regional level (Nuts 2).

Dissemination

Time use statistics are disseminated in the IstatData data warehouse under the category Daily life and citizens' opinions:

https://esploradati.istat.it/databrowser/#/it/dw/categories/IT1,Z0850DAI,1.0/TIME_USE

The elementary data collected during the survey are made available to users who request them. In any case, the data are released in anonymous form.

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For technical and methodological clarifications

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Notes

ⁱ Children, too, perform small household tasks, such as tidying away their toys, setting the table, etc.

ⁱⁱ Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia and Hungary. For Italy, whose 2023 data have not yet been released by Eurostat, the estimates were calculated by Istat in line with Eurostat indicators and methodology.

ⁱⁱⁱ The figure refers to the average daily duration calculated over the entire female population aged 15 and over, including non-working days and non-employed women. The average thus calculated is therefore much lower than the actual hours of only those women who perform paid work. The same convention is adopted for all countries in the international comparison presented in Figure 1.

^{iv} A model of family organisation based on a traditional division of gender roles, in which the man is the sole or main earner of labour income, while the woman devotes herself mainly to the domestic and care activities of the family.