



Giovanna Altieri / Cristina Oteri / Francesca Sbordone

The Female Presence in the Labour Market

Instituto di Ricerche
Economiche e Sociali
Via S. Teresa 23
I - 00198 Roma

The Female Presence in the Labour Market

Giovanna Altieri, Cristina Oteri, Francesca Sbordone

General aspects

Since the 1980s, an increasing number of women of varying ages have started to look for a job, even though actual employment opportunities are scarce. In fact, data demonstrates how the presence of women has become “stabilised” in the labour market, with concentrations in certain sectors and levels. These tendencies are both the cause and effect of some structural changes that have happened in society at the demographic level, in the structure of the population, in the set up of lifestyles as well as changes within the economic production and employment system. It is possible to hypothesise that the new requirements of “flexibility” in hours and work has in some way favoured the entry of women into the labour market. Yet this situation has been accompanied by instability and marginality.

It should also be mentioned that the Italian labour market varies according to territorial (north/south) and sector variables. In 1996 women’s activity rate was 33.9%. In only 10 years, from 1980 to 1990, the activity rate of women between the ages of 30 and 49 increased from 45% to 60% in the centre-north and from 37% to 45% in the Mezzogiorno. This situation demonstrates the participation of women in work who are at a central stage in their life, at a time when there are the most family commitments. The activity rate of women in the south is only 27%, in the north, it is 38.5% (table 1).

Table 1: Total and youth activity rate by geographical area, January 1995/96

Geographical area	Activity rate ¹		Youth activity rate 15-24 years old	
	1995	1996	1995	1996
Male				
North	62,3	62,3	47,1	47,0
Centre	61,0	60,8	36,5	36,6
South	60,0	59,7	36,9	35,2
Italy	61,3	61,1	41,0	40,4
Female				
North	37,8	38,5	42,1	43,0
Centre	34,8	35,6	32,5	32,0
South	26,8	27,0	24,3	23,9
Italy	33,4	33,9	33,1	33,3
Male and female				
North	49,6	49,9	44,7	45,0
Centre	47,4	47,7	34,5	34,5

¹ This can be obtained by calculating the ratio between “those who work” and “the population above 15 years old”.

South	42,8	42,8	30,7	29,7
Italy	46,8	47,0	37,1	36,9

Source: ISTAT quarterly surveys on the labour force, January 1996

Increasing unemployment continues to affect women more than men. In fact, in 1996, the female unemployment rate was double that of men (16.8% compared to 9.4%). While for young, qualified and unqualified women in the south, unemployment rates have reached exclusion levels: the unemployment rate of young women in the south (15-24 years old) is 66%, in the north it is 21.4% (table 2).

Table 2: Total and youth unemployment rate by region, January 1995/96

Geographical area	Unemployment rate ²		Youth unemployment rate ³ 15-24 years	
	1995	1996	1995	1996
Male				
North	4,9	4,3	17,5	13,5
Centre	7,4	7,5	27,2	27,4
South	17,0	17,5	49,1	49,4
Italy	9,5	9,4	30,6	28,4
Female				
North	10,6	10,3	24,9	21,4
Centre	15,2	15,2	41,4	39,7
South	29,5	30,5	63,3	66,0
Italy	16,8	16,8	39,1	39,1
Male and female				
North	7,2	6,7	20,9	18,4
Centre	10,4	10,5	33,0	32,9
South	21,1	21,7	54,7	56,0
Italy	12,2	12,2	34,3	33,1

Source: ISTAT quarterly surveys on the labour force, January 1996

The position of women with respect to work is greatly influenced by their type of qualification. Women who have studied more, have higher activity rates, rarely give up work after having children and have a working behaviour that is more similar to that of men. However women with lower educational levels have lower activity rates, even though it is increasing. The higher the qualification, the greater the employment opportunities available for women. In fact 40% of working women have a degree or high school diploma, however such a percentage decreases to below 30% for those with a low education level.

The characteristics of female education (the quality of expectations and subjective investments) allow us to hypothesise that the increasing participation of young women in educational processes, doesn't only come down to the progressive re-balance of "presence", in other words a predictable recovery of the traditional disadvantage of the female component in

² This can be obtained by calculating the ratio between "people looking for a job" and the "labour force".

³ This can be obtained by calculating the ratio between "people between the ages of 15 and 24 years old who are looking for a job" and the "labour force in the same age range".

further education, but also to a specific kind of attitude/behaviour of young women towards training (Altieri, Farinelli, 1993).

In the last 20 years, female presence in scholastic and training institutes has increased, although there is still the problem of choice segregation, even if it has assumed different connotations than in the past. In any case, young women have a wider range of possibilities that are less defined than previous generations. Women's high level of education supports them in their desire to enter and remain in the labour market, in terms of reinforcing career expectations. This prevents them from assuming a negative attitude that could lead them to abandon the labour market, especially in the south.

Women who live in the south and have a job are on average more qualified than the men who live in the same area. They are even more qualified than those from the centre-north: less than 10% of the female labour force from this area have a degree, compared with 12% in the south. These phenomena are influenced by two convergent factors. Firstly, the women want to have a job because they have studied, they aren't satisfied with the role and sector imposed on them by the "traditional cultural model" and this, then, leads to an increase in women's job applications. Secondly, in recent years, with the downward trend in employment opportunities in the industrial and agricultural sectors, there has been an increase in jobs in the tertiary sector: private services and public administration and clerical work in production sectors. These are either traditionally female working areas or sectors that have become more open to female workers.

Data on the labour market demonstrates that total employment in all production sectors is decreasing, apart from in the tertiary sector (non commercial) and a limited increase in possibilities in self-employment. This is especially the case for men whose work opportunities increase in the self-employment sector, whereas there is an increase in work for women in both self-employment and employment. (table 3)

Table 3: Male and female employment, differences between the first quarter 1995 and 1996

Categories	male			female		
	1995	1996	Diff.	1995	1996	Diff
Workers	12.780	12.801	+21	6.918	7.032	+113
Self-employed	4.020	4.072	+52	1.625	1.644	+19
% of total	31,4	31,8		23,4	23,3	
Employed	8.760	8.729	-31	5.294	5388	+94
% of total	68,5	68,1		76,5	76,6	

Source: ISTAT

As far as the distribution in sectors is concerned, there are considerable variations in the average presence of women (35%) in the various sectors. In Industry, women are under-represented with respect to the average (less than 30%) whereas they are over-represented in the public tertiary sector (53%). There are also considerable differences within the various

industrial sectors. For example, in textile and leather industries women make up half of the labour force, whereas in other sectors there are very few. (table 4)

Table 4: Female employment share by sectors and groups

	Entre-preneur	assis-tant	director	line man-ager	white collar worker	inter-mediate	man. worker	appen-dice	auxi-liary	total
agriculture	10,3	42,4	3,4	5,4	31,0	16,5	16,4	12,7	24,0	17,4
mining	8,4	26,3	4,0	4,3	31,5	3,6	2,4	4,8	6,5	9,2
food	2,4	57,4	4,9	10,1	41,9	9,0	31,1	39,9	40,5	32,4
textiles, clothing	52,1	63,3	12,9	21,9	59,9	35,6	72,9	86,0	83,1	67,4
leather	31,9	60,7	11,7	20,9	58,8	17,2	52,9	61,2	78,5	50,4
wood	7,4	31,4	6,6	12,7	50,0	3,5	14,3	10,1	30,6	14,3
paper, printing	22,5	53,1	9,8	19,8	47,7	16,4	21,7	29,9	32,0	28,3
petrol	7,1	41,7	2,3	4,1	22,0	0,1	2,0	12,5	12,2	9,7
chemicals	17,7	46,9	5,5	14,4	38,2	8,9	18,5	37,8	18,0	24,5
rubber	25,1	52,1	5,8	9,5	47,6	5,4	25,5	37,0	51,7	28,8
non-metallic minerals	14,1	40,4	5,6	9,1	38,7	6,6	12,9	19,3	28,9	17,2
metallurgy	12,7	47,6	5,4	7,3	40,6	2,1	9,8	8,8	27,7	14,8
metal	12,5	49,7	3,3	6,4	33,4	1,7	9,1	7,9	21,7	15,3
electrical machines	14,9	50,2	4,0	7,3	32,3	8,7	33,3	4,0	53,2	29,4
means of transport	14,2	41,9	2,3	4,9	27,1	2,6	11,4	16,4	10,9	13,9
electricity, gas, water	7,9	37,1	2,8	6,3	21,5	14,6	1,9	13,1	7,7	11,1
construction	4,4	25,3	4,8	7,9	36,6	6,6	2,3	1,8	10,1	6,9
commerce	29,0	57,5	13,5	18,6	54,0	34,8	23,8	33,2	47,4	36,5
hotels, restaurants	36,9	58,4	21,0	20,2	46,2	34,8	43,5	40,7	50,2	43,7
transport	7,9	38,2	10,8	13,1	37,4	6,2	4,0	20,5	21,6	19,0
finance	18,5	50,9	5,7	13,0	39,5	20,0	28,1	72,9	26,1	31,2
private education	39,7	52,8	43,7	53,5	66,1	67,4	63,0	77,9	67,6	56,4
private health service	21,7	33,1	32,3	45,0	73,4	68,4	71,8	82,2	76,7	45,4
Industry	22,5	52,2	5,5	9,7	38,5	12,6	28,2	39,6	48,5	29,4
Public ad-ministration			24,5	55,1	62,1		46,8		50,0	53,0
private services	28,3	55,8	11,7	16,7	49,1	15,9	28,6	47,3	39,3	35,8
total private sector	24,6	53,4	9,3	13,4	45,3	14,7	24,9	36,9	40,2	30,7
total	24,6	53,4	15,6	46,4	49,4	14,7	28,1	36,9	47,0	34,9

Source: ISTAT: Census on industry and services, 1991

In some sectors, for example, the metal sector, the presence of women continues to be more widespread in the lower levels of the hierarchy, even if there is a slight increase in the presence of women in high white collar positions. According to Federmeccanica (metal sector employers' union) data, female presence is 17.7%; 53% are manual workers and 47% clerical workers. In spite of this data, there are less men present at the rank and file level compared with the clerical level, respectively 31.8% and 68.2%.

Moreover, within the metal sector, the phenomena of exclusion caused by enterprise re-organisation and the crisis in the traditional models of work relations have penalised female worker more than male workers. For example, short term contracts have been given more to women than to men and what's more they are less involved in training and professional qualification interventions.

According to ISTAT data (1996), mostly male workers take part in enterprise training interventions. The analysis of the distribution of training interventions, per sector, highlights that women's participation is higher than their male counterparts when there is a relatively low presence of women (mining industries, transport, construction) (table 5). The percentage of women participants matches that of the men in enterprises with 50-99 workers.

Table 5: Participants in training courses by sex and economic sector

Sector	percentage composition (total 100%)		% participants/employees		
	male	female	male	female	total
Mining industries	85,1	14,9	38,3	55,3	40,1
Manufacturing industries	83,0	17,0	31,3	22,0	29,2
food	79,6	20,4	20,9	14,5	19,1
textiles	55,5	44,5	10,8	7,0	8,7
paper and printing	77,1	22,9	19,7	19,5	19,6
chemicals/ pharmaceuticals	83,9	16,1	40,0	31,6	38,4
metal products	91,0	9,0	23,2	18,6	22,7
manufacturing of machines	79,2	20,8	36,9	32,0	35,8
manuf. means of transport	92,4	7,6	30,7	11,6	27,3
other manufacturing sectors	80,7	19,3	12,2	8,0	11,1
electricity, gas, water	90,5	9,5	34,7	29,8	34,2
construction	89,2	10,8	17,0	19,8	17,3
commerce	64,3	35,7	33,2	24,9	29,7
selling and repairing vehicles	87,1	12,9	31,7	19,4	29,3
wholesale commerce	72,3	27,7	38,3	27,6	34,6
small shopkeepers	53,7	46,3	30,2	24,5	27,3
hotels and public businesses	45,8	54,2	26,3	24,3	25,2
transport	83,8	16,2	30,3	40,1	31,5
post/ telecommunication	75,5	24,5	16,8	11,1	14,9
credit/ insurance	72,2	27,8	60,1	50,0	56,9
enterprise services	68,8	31,2	39,5	36,5	38,5
computer-related work	63,1	36,9	48,4	45,5	47,3

other enterprise services	72,0	28,0	36,2	31,9	34,9
Total	78,4	21,6	32,6	26,6	31,1

Source: The training of enterprise personnel, 1993

Table 5a: Participants in training courses by sex and enterprise category

Enterprise category	percentage composition (total 100%)		% participants/employees		
	male	female	male	female	total
10-19	78,2	21,8	33,8	25,6	31,6
20-49	73,5	26,5	25,9	24,4	25,5
50-99	72,2	27,8	22,1	22,7	22,3
100-249	75,8	24,2	27,2	22,4	25,9
250-499	75,5	24,5	28,1	22,4	27,3
500-999	77,2	22,8	32,2	27,1	30,9
1000 and over	79,9	20,1	35,2	28,0	33,5
Total	78,4	21,6	32,6	26,6	31,1

Source: The training of enterprise personnel, 1993

With respect to employment categories, it's possible to notice that there are very few women directors and white collars who work in industry compared with men.

Table 6: The distribution of employment categories by sector (figures are given in percentages), 1991

	women		men	
	industry	tertiary	industry	tertiary
directors	13,3	86,7	28,3	71,7
white collars	17,3	82,7	25,5	74,5
blue collars	44,3	53,7	60,0	40,0

Source: national census on the population, 1991

Some trends that are important for industry and the labour market emerge at the macro level:

- crisis in some sectors (mainly the automotive sector) because of technological and organisational re-structuring processes and the loss of market quotas following increasing international competitiveness and globalisation;
- difficulty in industrial sectors where there is a high level of innovation (machines, utensils, robots) because of lack of investments and adequate "softener" policies;
- difficulty of the private tertiary sector to take on new labour because of the frequent interventions to drastically reduce the personnel,
- reduction in the response time of the enterprises, thereby increasing the crisis situation in the enterprises and the market, leading to difficulties in activating interventions, even through the use of social softeners;
- crisis in SMEs caused by a series of concurrent factors (e.g. competition of low cost producers, scarce investments in R&D, etc.);

- introduction of new organisation models of work, founded on the expansion of the workers' skills and professionalism as well as their active involvement in controlling the process and product.

In such a context, management and organisational methods change and enterprise requirements, in terms of performance flexibility and professional quality, increase. From an organisational point of view, a scenario with different characteristics can be outlined: on the one hand, there are more flexible and innovative sectors that are more open to a different kind of female presence with respect to the traditional model. Such sectors offer opportunities for the female labour force, related to Italian women's higher level of education and their availability to undertake flexible forms of employment. However, they also bring risks in terms of the quality of women's presence in the working contexts. On the other hand, there are inflexible and less innovative sectors that re-propose out-dated models where discrimination policies are established by the enterprises.

Old and new forms of segregation

The new model of women's presence on the labour market still hasn't produced actual conditions of equality, even though there has been a breakaway from the rigid segregation of female employment. However, the analysis of data from the last census reveals there has been an increase in female presence in more qualified professions as well as a general quantitative increase. Yet women are still at a disadvantage due to various causes: they have less innovative and practical educational backgrounds (humanities, teacher training institutes, etc.) and there is also a kind of "lack of self-esteem" that leads them to apply for traditionally "accessible" jobs (usually less socially prestigious) where there are limited opportunities to obtain career advancements and raises in salary.

It is also possible to hypothesise that there is a relationship between the phenomenon of the growing flexibilisation of the labour market and the rise in female presence. In fact, especially in the '90s, there has been an increase in atypical forms of work that are different from the "standard" employment model and typical of industrial societies: full time, stable employment with contractual and regulative guarantees, multiple forms of employment including unprotected work on the black labour market, various forms of unstable work, part-time and short-term work, regulated and protected consultancy-type of work (full-time or not) that are far removed from the standard traditional model. In 1995, 40% of employed women found themselves in non standard positions, a 4% difference, compared with men.

Such a difference is affected by part-time work that is carried out by 12% of female employees and only 2.5% of male employees, as well as short term work concerning 9% of female employees and 6% of their male counterparts. The diversification between the two sexes also emerges from the analysis of working hours by taking less than a 25 hour working week as a measure for reduced hour employment, it can be seen that about 21% of female employees are in this condition, compared with 5% of male workers. For self-employed women, such a percentage is reduced to about 13%, out of a total 16%. The most striking differences between male and female working hours is apparent in the service sector where 25% of the female labour force work reduced hours compared with 7% of men.

In recent years, in Italy, there has been a growth in short term employment (from '93 to '95 it increased by 4.3% among dependent workers) and part time work (7.8% for women and 3.2% for men) but at the same time, stable employment was reduced (by 5.1%). The increase in

short term work has mainly involved the male labour force. However it should be mentioned that short term work concerns twice as many women as it does men (8% of women and only 4% of men). The growth in short term work has affected women more than men: about 12.4% of women have part time jobs, compared to 2.7% of men. It is possible to hypothesise that the rise in short term work for men is linked to the fact that when there is a lack of jobs, demand tends to privilege the male supply and so they are more competitive. The widespread diffusion of part time work among women can be explained by the fact that this type of working set up is more common in “typically female” jobs and also because the traditional cultural model portrays the man as being in full time employment. From this point of view, several macro tendencies should be highlighted as they are modifying the employment system:

- a widening and transferral of employment to sectors that traditionally manage the labour force in a “flexible” way (unstable-seasonal work in agriculture, tourism, activity carried out by the “poor tertiary sector”), as well as an extension of instability that covers the entire tertiary sector that is a typically female employment area;
- the recuperation of increasingly wider margins of flexibility for the industrial enterprise system. In this typically masculine area, flexibility has come about through the management of working hours, in other words, the length of use of the plants, the diffusion of shift work, (night and Sunday shifts), in a framework where there is an intensive use of the workers. Furthermore, the reduction in hiring and firing restraints has increased the margins of freedom of the enterprise system.

Moreover, it should also be mentioned that social softeners (CIG, Mobility and early retirement) have been used to manage excess personnel, therefore Italian enterprises have acquired a greater level of freedom compared to enterprises in other European countries (ISCO, '95). It should also be highlighted that a complex re-organisational process is underway where the enterprises create “islands” of flexibility by using the weakest components of the labour market (young people and low qualified women). However this is done without dismantling the internal markets of Tayloristic labour and involving the entire work force. For example, in the metal sector, there are more women doing shift work in the enterprises than men (42.2% compared with 34.8%), even though there are more men who do the night shift (10.4% compared with 4.1% of women)⁴.

Therefore in predominantly female employment areas, atypical and/or flexible types of work have assumed unstable and underemployment characteristics, whereas in male-dominated sectors, flexibility has been managed by using different instruments and mechanisms, taking on board the positive characteristics of compensation and negotiation.

In the flexibilisation process, it can be seen that the work demand has taken advantage of two key characteristics of the Italian traditional model of female and male work supply. In other words, women’s necessity to sell working hours in short and discontinuous portions and the men’s need to sell working hours in long and continuous portions.

By observing the tendencies underway in the labour market, two aspects can be highlighted. The first one is linked to the internal differentiation of the female labour market. Family ties have less of an effect on women’s participation in the labour market than in the past. In fact it

⁴ It should be mentioned that night shift for women is not allowed in some enterprises on the basis of national enterprise agreements.

is the balance that women manage to establish between life phases and family organisation (being married or not, number of children, help from relatives) and career paths, along with the different training and professional opportunities and the actual employment possibilities in the territory that decide the quality of the women's presence. The combination of all these factors is at the basis of the emergent stratification among women.

Therefore the possibility of female presence on the labour market is greater in areas where there are better cultural and material conditions. Women from the centre-north seem to have a greater chance, even more so if they are single, of finding stable and satisfying positions in the labour market. However this is not the case for women from the south where unemployment rates have reached exclusion levels.

Likewise a high percentage of women with low to medium levels of education are in a position of marginality as they have found employment in the de-qualified tertiary sector. In this area they can work a relatively reduced number of hours but it is often accompanied by a position of marginality in the labour market because of poor career development in terms of guarantees and protection. Therefore, women who are at a relative disadvantage, in terms of territorial conditions or subjective characteristics (e.g. low level of education) find themselves in a state of marginalisation (most women from the south) and instability (women with low levels of education).

However there is a tendency for men and women to be equal, in terms of competitiveness, at the access stage of work but only at the highest levels of the social and professional hierarchy. Yet, subsequently women are penalised in their career paths. If we take into consideration the various characteristics of the female labour force in terms of attitudes, opportunities, motivations, justifications and effects that it produces, it is possible to outline an Italian model that is divided into three different areas:

- competition
- marginality
- exclusion

The second aspect is the persistence of an employment system that creates segregation for women. As described previously, the methods used to manage flexibility leads to the segregation of the labour market, rather than to its instability. In fact employment arrangements are different if you are young, female, male or adult. Indeed middle aged adults continue to be the privileged subjects of typical employment. However atypical jobs are reserved for those who are entering the labour market, but as time goes on men, in the most developed areas of Italy, are inserted into stable employment whereas women remain segregated.

On the whole, the inequality between the sexes in the labour market is characterised by horizontal and vertical segregation, along with objective and subject conditions that make it increasingly difficult for women to be inserted into the labour market. Even though there has been a slight decrease in inequality between the sexes in terms of actual employment, there is a rise in differentiation between the same female segments. The paradox of the female condition in the labour market is focused on three aspects:

- competitiveness of the female supply, from a quantitative point of view with respect to men

- increase in female employment in unstable and atypical work
- differentiation and segmentation of markets and female professions.

Case studies

The analysis of professional and career paths according to a socio-psychological perspective highlights the problems of satisfying the needs and expectations encountered in people's relationship with organisations. The relationship between women and organisations has become an important topic of debate because women's presence in organisations has increased. In fact this is a complex and central phenomenon in the structuration of relations. Therefore, there emerges the necessity to explain the specific and different aspects, even those connected to gender that characterise the presence of individuals in organisations. The new model of female presence in the labour market is also influenced by:

- an increase in women's education level and work expectations;
- the change in economic conditions, family set up, etc.;
- the change in enterprise organisational models.

Some researches conducted by IRES on these themes have highlighted the specific nature of women's attitude towards work, participation and presence in working contexts.

The Terim case

The research, carried out at the Terim plant in Modena, intended to verify the realisation of equal opportunities between female and male production workers. Terim is a metal enterprise producing kitchens where there is a very traditional type of organisational model (assembly lines). Two interesting elements emerged from the research: the first one concerns women's difficulty in establishing a career, the second concerns the rigid division of tasks and the structure of working roles in production.

In this enterprise, career advancement isn't regulated by formal rules, in fact 5 out of 4 directors are men (table 7). This situation is indicative of a macro trend that can be seen by analysing female presence at the highest levels of organisational hierarchies. Less women than men manage to get to "top" positions. However there is a high concentration of women in the clerical sector that confirms the fact that women are mostly assigned to secretarial and clerical type of jobs. Whereas the employees in the technical and quality control offices are all men.

Table 7: Personnel and distribution according to job title and sex

Total personnel	men	women	total
Directors	4	1	5
Line managers	0	0	0
Clerical workers	9	17	26
Manual workers	116	54	170
Total	129	72	201

With respect to career paths, there is a certain inequality between men and women because women are promoted a lot slower than men. There is the greatest concentration of women in

the third and fourth levels. These are women who have been in the enterprise for a long time. Yet there are young male workers at the fourth and fifth levels, even though they haven't accumulated a significant length of service. Men, even those with less seniority than the women, are given jobs with greater responsibility (e.g. the testing phase of production) that allow them to pass onto the fourth or fifth professional levels a lot quicker.

In the past, the labour force in Terim was almost completely made up of women and only recently has the proportion of men and women been inverted. Previously, men found work in the countryside and automobile factories situated in the Modena area, and women were employed in factories producing electrical appliances, like Terim. However the crisis in the agriculture sector and the closure of many automobile enterprises has led men to look for jobs in *kitchen factories*.

What has just been outlined above justifies the high number of women with an average of 15 years of service, but this doesn't explain why these workers are stuck at the third or fourth level (61.2% of women compared with 38.7% of men). Men are given promotion for professional merit, as well as length of service but the rules are different for women. In fact, for women, promotion is a form of recognition of seniority and not for the professionalism acquired through their experience. This is because women aren't given the same opportunities for professional growth.

The disproportion is inverted if we look at the distribution of men and women at the fifth level. There are 28 men at this level compared with 2 women: it is a lot easier and quicker for men to be promoted from the fourth to the fifth level because men are given tasks with greater responsibility, even after a short period of service in Terim. The testers and heads of divisions are all men, some of them are even young with only several years of seniority in the enterprise.

Table 8: Distribution according to level and sex

level	men	women	total
first	0	0	0
second	10	3	13
third	60	33	93
fourth	19	30	49
fifth	28	2	30
upper fifth	6	2	8
sixth	0	0	0
seventh	1	2	3
Total	124	72	196

Another element of difference between female and male workers concerns the assignment of tasks, as this explains why women have difficulty in being promoted quickly compared to men. The women are given "traditionally female" tasks (cleaning the kitchens, work that requires precision and patience, etc.). On the other hand, men are given positions of responsibility like testing, electrical adjustments, etc.

This kind of work division assigns different roles to female and male workers and therefore there is a different kind of social and professional recognition within the enterprise. It is not by chance that all the women are able to do various aspects of the production cycle and so they can change places during their shift, substituting colleagues or resolving emergency situations in the production cycle. These professional figures should be given recognition within the organisation as new organisational models are founded on the workers' extension of skills and their capability to do many tasks.

It is possible to note that the female workers in this enterprise are limited by cultural factors and by the traditional organisational model. For example, there are scarce investments in technologies that could facilitate the women's possibility to do heavy work and there is also a large gap between men and women's roles and tasks; these elements do not allow the realisation of a cultural and organisational model that is capable of receiving and sustaining the female workers' expectations.

The FIAT case

The case of the automobile enterprise, FIAT of Melfi (in Basilicata, a region in the south of Italy), is emblematic of the different presence of women in the organisational structure. The research highlighted how the women are highly motivated in their work, this can come down to:

- the fact that they belong to a socio-economic context - south of Italy - characterised by a lack of working opportunities
- a high educational level
- the work force is very young; the average age being 26
- a traditional cultural model that sees women confined to caring roles;
- the factory's organisation model that allows greater recognition of professional roles.

The main aspect that emerged from the research is the different work expectations and motivations expressed by men and women. Women have greater expectations from their job than their male colleagues. Female workers feel that they have responsibilities, are satisfied and want to remain in the plant for a long time. Women who prove to be precise and careful are generally assigned "more responsible work stations" (e.g. end of line control, quality control, etc.).

Yet men's attitude is different: for all the male workers interviewed, independent of their skills profile and level of involvement, the factory is a transitory experience while they wait for a better job to come along. In fact more or less everyone has other work along side their job at the factory (in the countryside as agriculturists, self-employment or other kinds of work suited to their educational background).

For the women, the factory represents an alternative to not having a job and an opportunity to get away from the dominant model of domestic work. Therefore work becomes an experience of autonomy and emancipation that allows the women to claim a social role and to assume an "active" identity in a male-dominated social and working environment.

Along with the reasons outlined above, there is also the *lean* and *flat* organisation of the factory, even though there is a certain perplexity about its complete realisation of this organisational model. In fact, the research highlighted that there is still a hierarchical organisation of roles, a lack of autonomy in the work organisation and the leaders are too vigilant on the work carried out, etc. By the way it can be said that the organisational model recognises that women can have a different presence in the organisation of the factory by assigning them, on the basis of their capabilities and commitment, responsible positions.

Literature

Altieri G., Farinelli F.: La legge sulle pari opportunità: implicazioni connesse con il sistema formativo, *Iresmateriali* n.6, 1993.

Baglioni G./ Milani R.: La contrattazione collettiva nelle aziende industriali in Italia, Angeli, 1990

Bettio F./ Villa P.: Changing patterns of work and working time for men and women, Italy, UMIST Working Papers, 1995

Bianchi P.: Costruire il mercato, mimeo, 1995

Bianco M. L.: La Partecipazione delle donne al mercato del lavoro, in: *La Mobilità della Società Italiana*, Confindustria, SIPI, 1996

Camonica M.: La vita a turni, *Collana Ricerche* n.6, nov.'93, Fondazione Corazzin. Analisi

Cifos: La professionalità della donna nell'azienda, Roma, 1988

Ecap: Il lavoro delle donne in Emilia Romagna, Dicembre 1994

Fiom nazionale: Esplorare il lavoro, Bologna, 1997

Frascaroli C./ Garibaldi F./ Sbordone F.: The Fiat Plant in Melfi - A new organisational model?, under publication

Garibaldi F./ Bolognani M.: La società dell'informazione, Roma, Donzelli Editore, 1996

Horrel S./ Rubery J.: Genere e Tempi di lavoro: analisi delle politiche adottate dai datori di lavoro, Working paper, 1995

ISTAT: Rapporto Annuale - La situazione del Paese, Roma, 1995

ISTAT: Formazione del personale in impresa, 1996

Lipparini A.: Imprese, relazioni tra imprese e posizionamento competitivo, Etaslibri, 1985

Lundvall B.A./ Johnson B.: The learning economy, *Journal of Industry Studies*, 2, 1994

Paolucci G.: La femminilizzazione degli orari di lavoro atipici: una maggiore libertà per le donne?. Relazione al Convegno Riduzione del tempo vincolato e ambiguità del tempo libero; Roma, 24-25 febbraio 1995

Regini M./ Regalia I.: Italia anni 90: rinasce la concertazione, in: *Collana Discussioni* n.23, IRES lombardia, gennaio 1996

Reyneri E.: Il lavoro delle donne: un necessario trade off tra occupazione e segregazione?, relazione al Convegno AIS " Tempo vincolato e tempo liberato: la riduzione del tempo di lavoro e le ambiguità del tempo libero", Roma, 24-25 febbraio 1995.

Sbordone F.: Male and Female Perception and Expectation from the Fabbrica. Inquiry among the Workers of S. Nicola di Melfi, to be published in the *Journal of Anthropocentric Production System*

Scarnera A.: I nuovi occupati, in *Sociologia del Lavoro*, no.59-60, Angeli, 1995