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**GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION OF 2001
ITALIAN POPULATION CENSUS DATA**

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Introduction

1. The Italian Population Census is a complete enumeration of the population that takes place every 10 years (jointly with the Housing Census and, in 2001, with the Building Census). Census data are collected through the traditional questionnaire method, even though administrative sources (namely data from Municipalities Population Register) are used in order to monitor fieldwork. Questionnaires are delivered home and collected by enumerators (who have to give advice and answer questions, if required) but are self-filled in by the household or the person being enumerated. As very well known, census is a unique statistical source in that it allows to collect data at enumeration areas geographic level. Furthermore, in Italy it represents the only source of detailed information with regard to many subjects as, for example, the demographic, socio-economic and family characteristics of Italy's *population with migration background* or the educational and economic characteristics of usually resident population (e.g. census derived information on educational attainment is the only one available for what regards the stock of usually resident population).

2. Last Census was taken in October, 2001. The first set of final data, on the demographic characteristics of persons usually resident in private and institutional households and on households and families, was disseminated at the end of 2003. Data on foreigners usually resident in Italy were disseminated in the first half of 2004 while data on foreigners non-usually resident in Italy but temporary present at the time of census were disseminated a few months later at the same time of data on persons usually or temporary resident in institutional households. Finally,

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data on economic and educational characteristics of persons will be disseminated by the end of 2004.

3. All data have been collected and disseminated with a particular attention to the gender perspective. On one hand, the Census questionnaire has been designed in order to allow specific analysis on the issue of gender differences and inequalities. On the other hand, as to data already disseminated, the issue of gender differences has been approached through the press releases on usually resident foreigners, on the population of the thirteen biggest cities (over 250.000 inhabitants) and on persons living in institutional households. Further on, when data on education, activity status and employment will be available, it will be possible to study gender differences from the perspective of equality/inequality: analyzing gender differences in access to resources (such as education) and to high job positions/high status employments.

4. A brief description of 2001 Census product innovations which have enhanced gender usefulness of census data will be given in the second paragraph while some examples of gender related subjects to be examined through the use of census data will be provided in the last one.

Product innovations and gender perspective

5. The 2001 Italian Census has been characterised by several product and process innovations. As for the former, on the population side, many changes and modifications were made to the questionnaire in order to improve information quality (i.e. responding to socio-economic changes, meeting users' needs, complying with international recommendations, producing data comparable with data coming from other sources).

6. After testing innovations and modifications by means of a Questionnaire Pre-test and two Pilot Surveys, the results of which have been analysed by the "Population and Housing Census Study Commission", the introduction of the following main product innovations was decided:

- many questions were added (e.g. questions related to people's migratory background, a question on legal marital status before current marriage)
- a more detailed classification of the variable "relationship to reference person of private household" was adopted
- questionnaire section on economic status was completely redesigned according to the new definition of "employed person" implemented in Labour Forces Survey
- a new unit of enumeration (*person temporarily resident in the dwelling at the time of the census but usually resident elsewhere*), a new unit of analysis (temporarily resident person) and new questions were introduced in order to determine, besides the traditionally compiled *total usually resident population* and *total present at the time of the census population* counts, the *total population that stands on/uses the territory* (of a certain territorial division) one.

7. Even though Census is not a gender specific survey in that it has to provide statistical structural information on the population, labour force and housing situation, census data, if analysed in a gender perspective, can be very useful for assessing gender differences in living and working conditions. Census data have always provided basic information on gender issues and the above-mentioned changes and modifications have greatly improved possibilities offered by census as a statistical source for gender studies.

How can Census data be used for the study of gender issues?

Peculiarity of women international migration to Italy

8. Administrative information provided by municipalities population registers (on usually resident foreign population) and Ministry of National Affairs (foreign citizens residence permits) allow to monitor year by year changes in Italy's foreign population size. Yet, the population census is the sole available source for what regards qualitative information on Italy's *population with migration background* (foreign citizens, naturalized citizens and second generation immigrants), providing data that allow a deep knowledge of their demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

9. This makes it also a powerful source of gender statistical information since international immigration to Italy has long been characterised by a greater percentage of women on the total immigrant population than in traditional receiving countries. In fact, the increased need for house and care work (e.g. assistance to elderly people) which has followed the ever-growing presence of Italian women on the labour market has generated flows where women are the drawing element of migration processes, thus showing how adaptable are household and family structures of many countries of origin and highlighting a radical change of traditional gender relationships within the migration process.

10. By Census data a highly detailed picture of such processes can be drawn. For example, the use of data on demographic (sex, age, country of birth, country of citizenship) and household and family characteristics (type and size of family nucleus, type and size of private household) of foreigners living in Italy, on one side, and educational (educational attainment and field of study) and economic characteristics (activity status, occupation, industry and status in employment), on the other one, allows the study of differences in gender roles within households according to ethnic/cultural differences.

Changes in women's life: new household and family structures

11. Comparative analysis of data coming from the past two Censuses shows major changes in life styles of Italian population, such as increasing percentages of separated and divorced people, growing numbers of people living alone and couples without children, the decrease in household and family size, the increase of new types of family nuclei (consensual unions, lone parents). Census has always provided very detailed information on household and family structures but the 2001 more detailed classification of the variable "relationship to reference person of private household" and the new question on legal marital status before current marriage have enhanced the potential of census data as source for studying household structures and new forms of family nuclei (e.g. data on reconstituted families were not collected until last census). Here again Census data tell us a lot about women life since, for example, the growing number of people living alone or lone parents are mainly due, respectively, to elderly widowed women (women usually live longer than their male companions) and lone mothers. Moreover, women tend to become mothers later and have fewer children than before but live their parents' family earlier than their coetaneous.

12. All these gender differences can be explored through Census data and put in relationship with educational and economic characteristics. How do educational attainment or activity status influence women choices and attitudes towards family life? Do women still choose or have to choose different field of studies from men in order to cope with family duties? To which extent does marital or household status affect women participation to labour market?

Family commuters and the population that uses the territory

13. The determination of the *population that “uses” the territory* has been the object of a specific survey carried out within the 2001 census, “parallel” to the main one on the population usually resident. We could define this population as that of the “inhabitants” meant as the whole of those (resident and not resident) who *live* (work, study, ..., and at the same time use public transportation, consume, sleep) in a given municipality non-occasionally with regard to a given reference period. In fact, the city population is, to an ever increasing extent, a composite population which is not always well represented by the concept of usually resident population. From a mirror-like point of view, the progressive emergence of a new social phenomenon can easily be noticed, that of the so-called “family commuting”. According to data coming from Istat sample surveys (Census data on population that uses the territory will be disseminated at the beginning of 2005), this phenomenon concerns people of any age and of both sexes (although it seems to be more relevant among the young than among the elderly and among men than among women) who temporarily live in a dwelling which is not their usual residence, or who usually live in two (or more) dwellings, mostly because they work or study in a different place from the one where their families live.

14. Thank to this new information provided by 2001 Census, it will be possible to study gender differences in using the territory and gender adaptation strategies for reconciling work/study aspirations and family life.

Women participation to labour market

15. As already said, as soon as data on educational and economic characteristics will be available, it will be possible to study gender differences from the perspective of equality/inequality. Gender differences in access to higher levels of education and to high job positions/high status employments or in terms of correspondence between education and work will be highlighted while the new “employed” definition (“based on the one-hour criterion”) and all the new questions on job’s type and nature (whether part-time or full-time, whether temporary or permanent) will provide much more detailed information on women participation to labour market.

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