GENDER INEQUALITY IN ITALY: A TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS

Leonardo Salvatore Alaimo, Giulia Nanni

1. Introduction

The principle of equal rights between men and women appeared for the first time in the UN Charter in 1945. Nowadays even if this principle is internationally recognized, we are still far from its full achieving. Over the years, many instruments have been adopted at international level to clearly affirm equality between men and women and to try to limit gender inequality. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination against women as *any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field* (CEDAW, 1979:2). The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action considers *gender equality as a shared vision of social justice and human rights* (UN, 1995:4). The World Economic Forum (WEF) refers to gender equality as that *stage of human social development at which the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not be determined by the fact of being born male or female in other words, a stage when both men and women realize their full potential* (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, 2005:1). More recently, the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development includes the achievement of gender equality among its goals (UN, 2015).

Over the years, the need of overcoming gender inequality has been accompanied by the need to define tools to measure it. For this reason, several organisations have produced different indices to measure gender inequality across countries. The best-known is the WEF Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), which has been monitoring the state of gender equality since 2006. Of the 144 countries that the WEF included in the last report, no country has yet reached gender equality and Italy is the 82nd (WEF, 2017). Despite some positive news, gender inequality in Italy continues to be a persistent phenomenon (CEDAW 2017; ASVIS, 2017). At the same time, we know that Italy is not a homogeneous country and national data

cannot reflect regional differences. A deeper analysis of Italian data could show the heterogeneity inside the country, especially between Northern, Central and Southern Regions. Moreover, the Regions have the authority and the tools to define some policies and therefore need to know their strengths and weaknesses in order to take appropriate decisions. Knowing and considering the situation in terms of gender inequality is crucial for this objective. The aim of this article is to create a measure of gender inequality, allowing a comparative analysis of the Italian Regions.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework. Section 3 describes data and methods. Section 4 presents the empirical results, discussion and conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework

The world is deeply divided and organized by gender and its social organization limits the potential of women to contribute to their full ability. Even where women have significant rights, a long historical tradition prevents their concrete expression. These limits are the result of varied and intricately connected processes, historically and culturally specific (Berreman, 2001; Slade, 2008; Grown, 2008; Ridgeway, 2011). Gender status persists because it is supported in people's everyday experience by positional inequalities between women and men that provide the latter with more resources and power than women (Ridgeway, 2011). Of course, not all women live with the same degree of discrimination, but unfortunately, all of them experience the inequalities.

When we look at gender inequality and its measures, we often hear of *gender gap*. It refers to *systematic differences in the outcome of men and women on a variety of issues ranging from economic participation and opportunity, political empowerment, and educational attainment to health and well-being* (Richardt, 2008:277). This definition allows us to identify the classical domains of gender gap: *education*, *economy*, *politics* and *health.* The gender gap is, first, an *educational gap*, because inside the educational settings *there are cultural messages about appropriate gender behaviours and socialization practices that support them* (Best and Luvender, 2015:747). Thus, if in principle women should enjoy equal access to quality education (UN, 2015), in practice education has gender gap in a number of areas (Richardt, 2008; OCSE, 2015). *Economy is a major social arena in which decisions are made in society about the distribution of material resources and through which individuals gain access to positions of authority and power* (Ridgeway, 1992:ix). In particular, gender inequality focuses on *work*, in terms of access and quality. Even today, women meet discriminations in the access to workplace. Furthermore, when women access the labour market,

they are bound to clash with horizontal and vertical segregation[1]; labour flexibility[2]; use of part-time[3]; wage inequality[4]; harassment and mobbing (Richardt, 2008; Slade, 2008; Sartori, 2009; Ridgeway, 2011). *Politics* usually refers to political empowerment of women and *concerned with equitable representation of women in decision-making structures and their ability to influence the policy-making process* (Richardt, 2008:278). Women should enjoy equal access to political participation as well as equal opportunities with men for decision-making at all levels (UN, 2015). Even if above all of political systems have de jure equality, men continue to be dominant in key global decision-making positions (Richardt, 2008; Slade, 2008; Best and Luvender, 2015). In our analysis, we also took into account another manifestation of political empowerment of women, in addition to that one traditionally considered in literature: people who have performed a civic or political participation activity. Another domain of gender inequality is *health*, in particular *access to nutrition, health care, reproductive facilities, and overall security in terms of safety and integrity of a person* (Richardt, 2008:279). The women's health rights are another important aspect in order to ensure the full realization of the more general right to health. In our analysis, in addition to the usual state of health, we also considered indicators representing the health determinants (smoking, alcohol and drugs consumption, sedentariness and nutrition).

We want to identify a specific measure of gender gap in Italy, taking into account not only the national specificities, but also the regional ones. In fact, it is true that women are universally regarded as a disadvantaged group, but the reasons for such a situation – as well as for a way out – are not the same everywhere (Somjee, 1989; Grown, 2008). Studying gender inequality in a national and regional perspective requires a re-thinking of the domains and their indicators in a more specific perspective. In our analysis, we consider the four classical areas of gender gap identified in literature, adding another manifestation of historical unequal power relation between men and women: *violence against women* (Slade, 2008; COE, 2011). We believe it essential to consider the impact of this aspect in the women's lives. According to literature, gender violence is a structural, cultural

[1] Horizontal segregation determines the concentration of women in a few sectors or working areas that very often reproduce typically feminine roles and tasks. Vertical segregation or 'glass ceiling' considers those barriers that prevent women access to higher positions, concentrating them on the lower levels of hierarchical scales of power, responsibility and autonomy (Richardt, 2008; Slade, 2008; Sartori, 2009)

[2] The flexibility of labour sees female contracts shorter than the male and unstable occupations carried out more by women than by men (Slade, 2008; Sartori, 2009)

[3] The use of part-time is predominantly female. The greatest concentration of part-time workers is found in the phase of entry into employment, while for women lies more in the reproductive period and returning from maternity leave (Slade, 2008; Sartori, 2009)

[4] Women are not paid the same as men for the same work or work of equivalent value (Richardt, 2008; Slade, 2008; Sartori 2009)

and transversal phenomenon[5]. Furthermore, in Italy, the violence against women is wide: 6,788,000 women have suffered a form of physical or sexual violence during their lives (Istat, 2015).

3. Data and methods

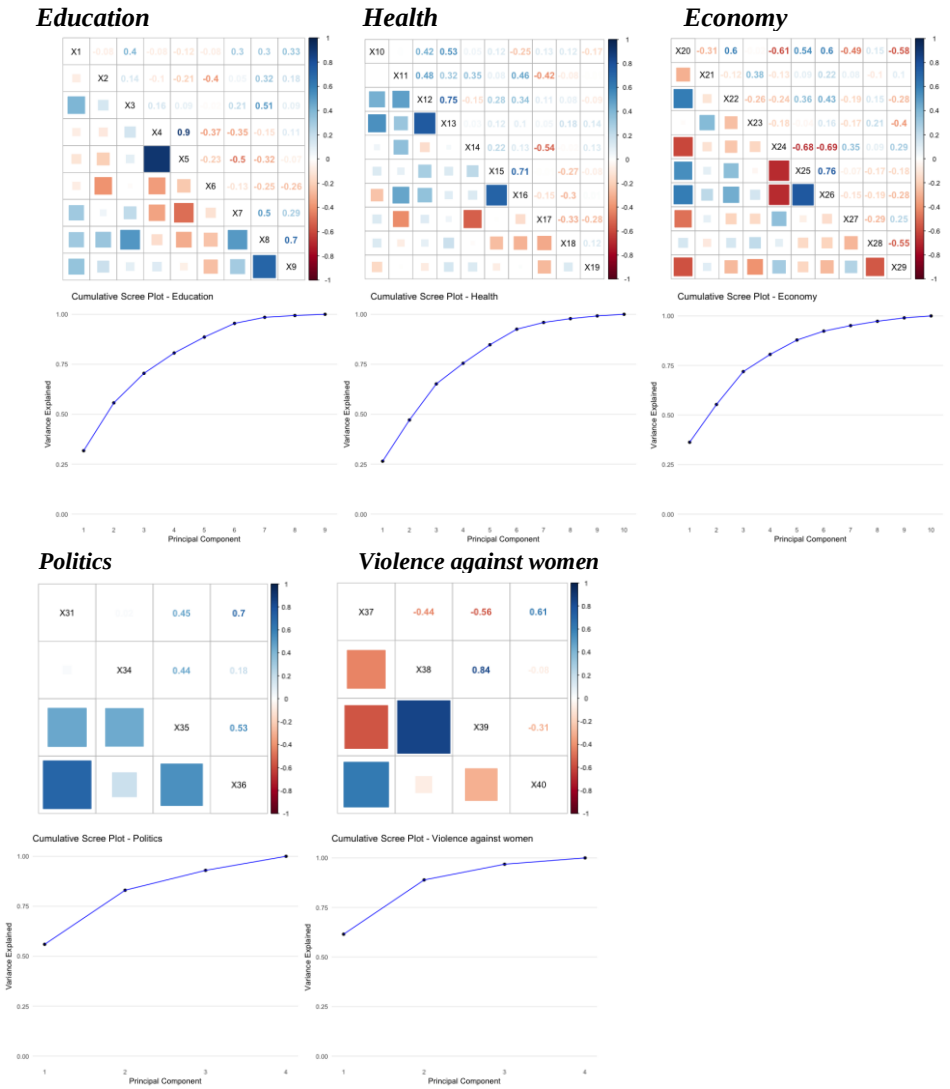
The aim of this article is to define a synthetic index, which allows us to compare different Regions regarding their level of gender gap. In doing this, we follow the hierarchical design, requiring the definition of different components (Maggino, 2017:90-91): the phenomenon, its domains and its general aspects; the latent variables, which represent each aspects, allowing the phenomenon to be specified; the basic indicators, representing what is actually measured in order to investigate each variable and its domains. By looking at the nature of the latent variable (gender gap) and its definition, we realized that our model of measurement (referring to the relationship between the latent variable measuring gender inequality - gender gap - and the basic indicators selected for each domain) is formative, since indicators are considered as causing the gender gap (rather than being caused by it, such as in the *reflective approach*). This means that changes in formative indicators determine changes in the value (and meaning) of the latent variable. According to this approach, indicators are not interchangeable (omitting an indicator is omitting part of the construct); the measurement model does not explain and is not influenced by the correlations between indicators; internal consistency is of minimal importance: two uncorrelated indicators can both serve as meaningful indicators of the same construct (Maggino, 2017). Furthermore, the main international synthetic measures of gender gap (for instance, the Global Gender Gap Index of WEF and the Gender Inequality Index of UNDP) are based on a formative model.

The data source is the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) data-warehouse and we consider the latest released. The choice of the Regions as unit of analysis was made to highlight potential territorial differences or historical, geographic and cultural traditions homogeneity. From the analysis of the theoretical framework, we know that gender inequality is a multidimensional concept and it is measured through gender gap. We added to the four domains traditionally identified in literature, a fifth one, violence against women. We selected a set of 37 basic indicators; some of these were already used in the measurement of gender gap; others were selected in order to take into account the specificities of the Italian situation. Almost all the basic indicators selected have

[5] Violence against women is structural because is based on gender; cultural because it reflects and reinforces the roles that society gives to man and woman according to their sex; transversal because it affects every country, race, age, religion.

been converted to female-to-male ratios (see table A1 for details). This is to ensure that the final synthetic index is capturing gaps between women and men's attainment levels, rather than the levels themselves.

Figure 1 – *Corrplots and scree plots of domains of gender gap: Education; Health; Economy; Politics; Violence against women*



The corrplots report the ID of the indicators: please see table A1 for their names and descriptions.

Table A1 shows the indicators used, their definition and the dimension to which they belong. Before constructing our composite index of gender gap, we performed an exploratory analysis of the basic indicators chosen for each domain. In Figure 1, we report the corrplots, representing correlations among the basic indicators, and the scree plots, obtaining performing a PCA for each domain. As said previously, we chose a formative model for the measurement of gender inequality; so, the correlations between basic indicators are not very relevant. Since the selection of indicators is based on a reasoned choice supported by literature, the PCA has only a descriptive purpose. The results obtained confirm our conceptual framework and the choices we made. The scree plots show that the first two principal components explain almost 50% of variance for all domains, except health (44%). This seems to indicate that in those domains in which we observe high variance explained by the first two components (>50%), we can consider that there is only one latent variable and, thus, we can construct only one composite index. In the case of health, the variance explained by the first two components is less than 50%; this seems to highlight the presence of more latent factors. Thus, we decided to divide this domain, and the basic indicators belonging to it, in two different ones. In the first one, called *health status*, we included all the indicators that point out the difference in well-being and health state between men and women[6]. The second one, called *health determinants*, considers the indicators expressing habits or lifestyles that could affect our health[7].

In order to construct our gender gap index, we follow the *composite indicators approach*. In detail, we, first, synthesized one composite index for each domain and, after, we obtained a synthetic measure. From the operational point of view, the construction of a composite index is a step-by-step process: after the definition of the phenomenon and the selection of basic indicators, the following phases are the normalization of the individual indicators and the aggregation of the normalized indicators[8]. We chose the Adjusted Mazziotta-Pareto Index (AMPI), which is a partially non-compensatory composite indicator based on a Min-Max standardization and a re-scaling of the basic indicators in a range (70; 130), according to two goalposts, representing a minimum and a maximum value of each variable for all units and time periods (Mazziotta, Pareto, 2016). Even if AMPI is the best solution for a *multi-years analysis* (Mazziotta, Pareto, 2017:178), we adopted this method in our single-year analysis because we wanted to analyse the

[6] The indicators are the same used by Istat in order to construct the synthetic index of health for BES project.
[7] We perform a PCA that for *health status* gives a variance explained by the first two principal components equal to 73% and for *health determinants* equal to 67%. We do not report the *scree plots*.
[8] For an exhaustive analysis of the different phases, please see: Mazziotta and Pareto, 2017.

situation of the Italian Regions by comparing it with the Italian one in the same year. Given the original matrix (1):

$$X = \{x_{ij}\} = \begin{pmatrix} x_{11} & \cdots & x_{1m} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ x_{n1} & \cdots & x_{nm} \end{pmatrix} \quad (1)$$

where *i=1,...,n* are the units of analysis and *j=1,..,m* are the basic indicators, we calculate the normalized matrix as follows:

$$r_{ij} = \frac{(x_{ij} - Min_{x_j})}{(Max_{x_j} - Min_{x_j})} * 60 + 70 \quad (2)$$

where x_{ij} is the value of the indicator *j* in the unit *i* and $Min_{x_j}$and Max_{x_j} are the *goalposts* for the indicator *j*. Let Inf_{x_j} and Sup_{x_j}be the minimum and the maximum of indicator *j* across all time periods considered, and Ref_{x_j} be the reference value for indicator *j*. Then the "goalposts" are defined as: $Ref_{x_j} \pm \Delta$, where $\Delta = \left(Sup_{x_j} - Inf_{x_j}\right)/2$ (Mazziotta and Pareto, 2017:178). As said, we chose the goalposts so that 100 represents the value of Italy. The adjusted MPI is given by:

$$AMPI^{\pm} = \mu_{r_i} \pm \sigma_{r_i} * cv_i \quad (3)$$

where μ_{r_i}, σ_{r_i} and $cv_i = \sigma_{r_i}/\mu_{r_i}$ are the mean, the standard deviation and the coefficient of variation of the unit *i* and the sign $\pm$ depends on the kind of phenomenon measured. In this work, all the composite indices are negative, i.e., increasing values of each index correspond to negative variations of the gender gap in a specific domain, then $AMPI^{+}$ is used (Mazziotta and Pareto, 2017). Table 1 shows the values of the composite indices of each domain and of the *Gender Gap Index* (GGI), constructed synthesizing the previous ones.

4. Results and conclusions

Analysis of basic indicators shows that the domain with the best performance in Italy is education; women have better values than men in several indicators. Even if women have much higher levels of tertiary educational attainment in the scientific field than men, they are still under-represented in scientific fields of higher education. Considering health status, women have a higher life expectancy than men, but are less healthy. However, health determinants show that women are less inclined to risk behaviours. We can explain this paradox considering the high association between health limitation and socioeconomic determinants (Eurostat,

2010). Women work less than men and having children worsens the gap. In addition, when they work, their conditions are worse than those of men. Moreover, women still maintain most of their domestic responsibilities, doubling their workload. In politics, the gap is higher. Women are very under-represented in key positions (parliament, regional councils, CDAs) and also have less participation in civic or political activities than men. Confirming its transversal nature, violence against women is a widespread phenomenon throughout Italy. The highest levels of violence are found in Campania, Liguria and Lazio; the lowest – although still significant – is in Valle D'Aosta.

Table 1 – *Composite indices for domains of gender gap.*

Regions	Education	Health status	Health determinants	Economy	Politics	Violence	GGI
Piemonte	97.2	93.2	100.2	89.9	96.9	93.7	95.3
Valle d'Aosta	81.7	79.5	117.2	82.0	108.4	87.1	95.4
Liguria	111.2	96.0	106.1	98.3	100.2	115.7	105.1
Lombardia	104.5	97.4	102.4	101.1	97.3	94.3	99.6
P. A. Bolzano	97.1	80.8	108.3	106.0	103.1	95.9	99.5
P. A. Trento	102.7	91.1	100.3	84.8	106.8	96.2	97.7
Veneto	107.7	100.1	102.7	108.3	93.2	91.7	101.1
Friuli V. G.	103.9	88.4	119.1	96.7	95.9	92.4	100.6
Emilia R.	101.7	104.4	115.5	95.7	82.7	101.2	101.4
Toscana	97.8	102.9	110.7	100.4	90.5	101.1	101.0
Umbria	100.5	100.9	107.0	97.4	94.8	103.4	100.8
Marche	99.9	96.8	107.3	101.4	94.2	102.9	100.6
Lazio	103.8	104.3	108.8	95.6	88.5	115.6	103.7
Abruzzo	90.8	88.7	96.4	116.8	107.4	113.0	103.6
Molise	102.1	92.9	103.9	103.7	103.1	103.0	101.6
Campania	102.1	95.3	94.0	119.1	118.4	116.2	108.8
Puglia	100.7	103.8	99.7	115.8	116.4	97.9	106.4
Basilicata	96.3	115.9	104.0	113.4	125.0	102.7	110.5
Calabria	96.2	90.0	93.4	114.0	116.9	95.4	102.3
Sicilia	94.7	112.1	89.3	111.7	115.0	111.8	106.9
Sardegna	89.0	118.3	106.3	101.4	109.5	95.7	104.4

As previously written, the value 100 of the composites represents that of Italy. We have to keep in mind that it is already not a good value; no Italian Region has achieved gender equality in any domain. Regions with values in the synthetic indicator lower than 100 have a better performance than Italy in that specific domain; while those with values higher than 100 have worse values than the Italian ones. The values of the GGI, reported in Table 1, highlight the territorial differences that characterize the country, with generally better values for the

Northern Regions (except Liguria) than Central and Southern Regions. Piemonte has the best value of GGI (95.3), due to better performances than the Italian ones in all domains. Basilicata presents the worst GGI value (110.5) due to particularly marked gaps in politics (125, the worst value of all the Italian regions), health status (115.9) and economy (113.4). Looking at the different domains, a certain variability can be observed in the values assumed by the various Regions. For example, if we compare Veneto with Italy, we can observe that it has values in line with the national ones for the GGI (101.1), but badly performs in economy (108.3) and education (107.7). Sicily is among the Regions with the highest gender gap in health status (112.1), while it has the best value in health determinants (89.3). This confirms that the GGI is only a synthesis and that its correct understanding requires analysis of the synthetic indicators obtained for the individual domains and of the elementary indicators.

It is clear that gender equality is still a long way off. While GGI could be an important first step in comparing and monitoring the gender gap in a territorial perspective, the complexity of the situation shows how further investigation is still necessary. Of course, it would be important to identify strategies to promote gender equality; the whole community has a responsibility to build schemes that can either encourage or counteract a social model based on respect for men and women. A country that aspires to real social, political and economic growth cannot ignore gender equality.

Appendix

Table A1 – *Basic Indicators: ID; description; source.*

ID	Basic Indicator	Description	Source
Domain: Education			
X1	Secondary educational attainment	Percentage of population with secondary level of education	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X2	Tertiary educational attainment	Percentage of population with tertiary level of education	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X3	Tertiary educational attainment in scientific field	Percentage of population with tertiary level of education in scientific field	Istat: Data from National Student Registry 2012
X4	Literacy level	Scores obtained in the tests of functional literacy skills of students in the II classes of upper secondary education	Invalsi - 2016
X5	Numeracy level	Scores obtained in the tests of numeracy skills of students in the II classes of upper secondary education	Invalsi - 2016
X6	Early school leavers	Percentage of people aged 18-24 years who have achieved only lower secondary (ISCED 2) and are not included in a training program on total people aged 18-24 years	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X7	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training	Participation rate of youth and adults (25-64) in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 4 weeks	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X8	Tertiary education students	Percentage of students in tertiary education	Istat: Data from National Student Registry (ANS) – 2012
X9	Tertiary education students in	Percentage of students in tertiary education -scientific	Istat: Data from National

	scientific field	field	Student Registry (ANS) - 2012
Domain: Health - Sub-Domain: Health status			
X10	Life Expectancy at birth	Average number of years that a child born in a certain calendar year can expect to live	Istat: Life tables of Italian pop. - 2016
X11	Healthy Life Expectancy at birth	Average number of years that a child born in a given calendar year can expect to live in good health	Istat: Life tables of Italian pop. and Survey on Aspects of daily life - 2016
X12	Life expectancy without activity limitations at 65 years of age	Average number of years that a person aged 65 can expect to live without suffering limitations in activities due to health problems	Istat: Life tables of Italian pop. and Survey on Aspects of daily life - 2016
X13	Physical Component Summary (Pcs)	Summary of the scores of each individual answering the 12 questions on the Short Form Health Survey SF12 questionnaire on physical state (Physical Component Summary)	Istat: Survey on health conditions and use of health services - 2013
X14	Mental Component Summary (Mcs)	Summary of the scores of each individual answering the 12 questions on the questionnaire SF12 on psychological state (Mental Component Summary).	Istat: Survey on health conditions and use of health services - 2013
Domain: Health - Sub-Domain: Health determinants			
X15	Smoking	Proportion of people aged 14 and over who report current smoking.	Istat: Survey on Aspects of daily life - 2016
X16	Alcohol consumption	Proportion of people aged 14 and over who have at least one behavior at risk in the consumption of alcohol	Istat: Survey on Aspects of daily life - 2016
X17	Drugs consumption	Percentage of people who have consumed drugs in the last two days for chronic diseases	Istat: Database Health for all - 2016
X18	Sedentariness	Proportion of people aged 14 and over referring not to perform any physical activity	Istat: Survey on Aspects of daily life - 2016
X19	Nutrition	Percentage of people aged 3 years and over who say they take every day at least 4 portions of fruit and vegetables	Istat: Survey on Aspects of daily life - 2016
Domain: Economy			
X20	Employment rate (20-64 years old)	Percentage of employed people aged 20-64 on total people aged 20-64	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X21	Non-participation rate	Percentage of unemployed people aged 15-74 plus part of the potential labour force aged 15-74 who are inactive not having looked for a job in the past 4 weeks but willing to work, on the total labour force aged 15-74 plus part of the potential labour force aged 15-74 who are inactive not having looked for a job in the past 4 weeks but willing to work.	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X22	Ratio of employment rate for women 25-49 years with children under compulsory school age to the employment rate of women 25-49 years without children*	Employment rate of women aged 25-49 with at least one children under compulsory school age / Employment rate of women aged 25-49 without children	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X23	Share of employed persons who feel their work unsecure	Percentage of employed persons who, in the following 6 months, consider it is likely they lose their job and it is not at all or a little likely that they find another similar job	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X24	Gender Pay Gap	Ratio between female hourly wages and male hourly wages.	Istat: Wage differentials in the private sector - 2014
X25	Low wage	Percentage of employees with an hourly wage of less than 2/3 of the median on total number of employees	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X26	Involuntary part time	People employed in a part time job because they did not find a full time job on total employed people	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X27	Transition employment rate	Transition rate (12 months time-distance) from non-standard to standard employment	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X28	Share of over-qualified employed persons	Percentage of people employed with a qualification higher than the qualification held by the majority of people who exercise the same profession on total employed people	Istat: Labour Force Survey - 2016
X29	Share of population aged 15-64 years that work over 60 hours per week	Pertentage of population aged 15-64 years that work over 60 hours per week of paid work and household work	Istat: Time Use Survey - 2016
Domain: Politics			
X30	Civic and political participation	Percentage of people aged 14 and over that have performed at least one civic or political participation activity in the last 12 months	Istat: Survey on Aspects of daily life - 2016
X31	Political representation in Parliament	Percentage of women elected in Parliament on percentage of men	Istat: Processing of data from Parliament - 2016
X32	Political representation in regional	Percentage of women elected in regional councils on	Individual regional

	councils	percentage of men	councils - 2016
X33	Representation in the CDAs of public controlled companies	Percentage of women in the CDAs of public controlled companies on percentage of men	CERVED - 2017
Domain: Violence against women			
X34	Stalking*	Women who have been stalked for 100,000 women	Istat: Processing on data on crimes reported to Police Forces (Ministry of Interiors) and data on Citizens' Safety Survey - 2016
X35	Physical violence rate*	Percentage of women aged 16-70 victim of physical violence in the last 5 years before the interview	Istat: Women Safety Survey - 2014
X36	Sexual violence rate*	Percentage of women aged 16-70 victim of sexual violence in the last 5 years before the interview	Istat: Women Safety Survey - 2014
X37	Psicological violenc rate*	Percentage of women aged 16-70 victim of psicological violence in the last 5 years before the interview	Istat: Women Safety Survey - 2014

All indicators are expressed as ratio between female/male percentage, except *

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SUMMARY

Gender inequality in Italy: a territorial analysis

Despite the principle of gender equality is by now recognized, also in Italy we are still far from its full achieving. There are several international indices to measure gender inequality at national level, but they cannot represent Italian heterogeneity. Thus, we have created a measure of gender gap, which allow a comparative analysis of the Italian Regions.

Leonardo S. ALAIMO, Sapienza University, leonardo.alaimo@uniroma1.it
Giulia NANNI, Sapienza University, giulia.nanni@uniroma1.it