

## Highlights Italy

### Babies and Bosses – Policies towards reconciling work and family life

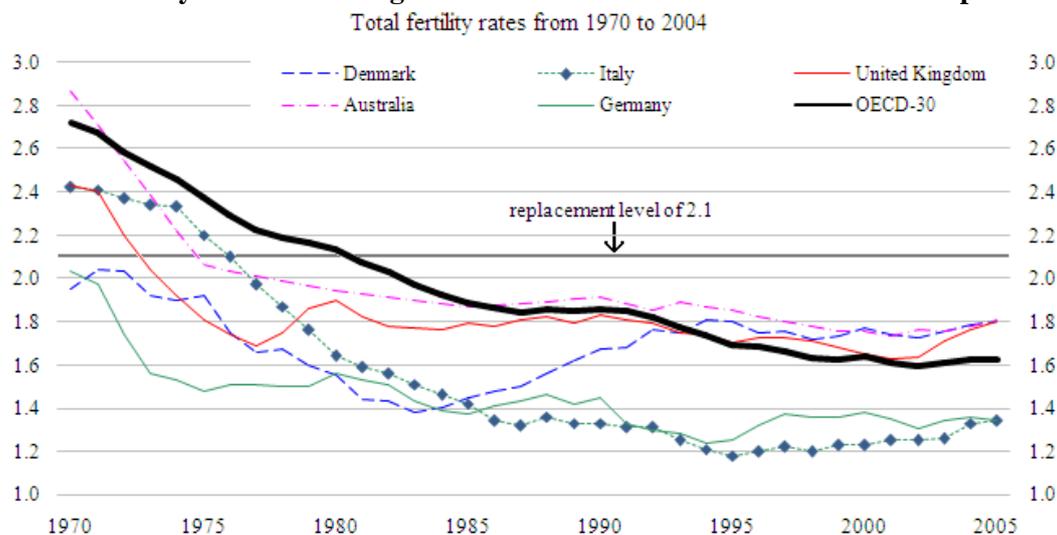
[www.oecd.org/els/social/family](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family)

- *The Italian fertility rate is one of the lowest in the world.*
- *Few women work compared to the rest of the OECD.*
- *Italian women have to choose between paid work and caring for children. There is insufficient help for many women to be able to combine the two.*
- *Italian children are amongst the least likely in the OECD to attend formal childcare institutions between the ages of 0 and 2. Increasing accessibility to childcare both in terms of affordability and regional availability will help for mothers to enter the workforce earlier.*

#### *Fertility Rates and women's paid work*

In the first part of the 1970's Italian fertility rates were relatively high. The decline since then has been very rapid indeed, and although recently birth rates in Italy have risen fractionally, rates remain very low. It is hard for young people to have children. Getting established in the labour market is difficult and Italians remain living with their parents for a long time.

**Figure 1: Total fertility rates are amongst the lowest in the OECD and well-below replacement levels**

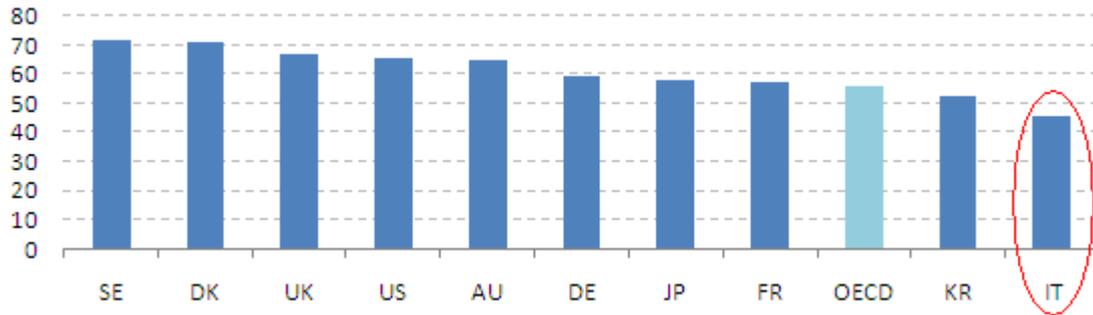


#### *Women in the workforce and the double burden*

The Italian female employment rate is 45%, amongst the lowest in the OECD (see figure 2). Italian women who work often find that they have taken on the double burdens of housewife/mother and earner.

The labour market participation of Italian women is slowly increasing and one reason for this is the increase in women's educational attainment. Higher qualifications provide people with the opportunity to access more interesting and well-paid forms of work. Almost 70% of Italian women aged 25-34 had an upper secondary education in 2004 compared to only 60% of males.

**Figure 2: Italian women are amongst the least likely in the OECD to be in paid employment**  
*Employment/population ratio by group, 2003-2005: Women, all*

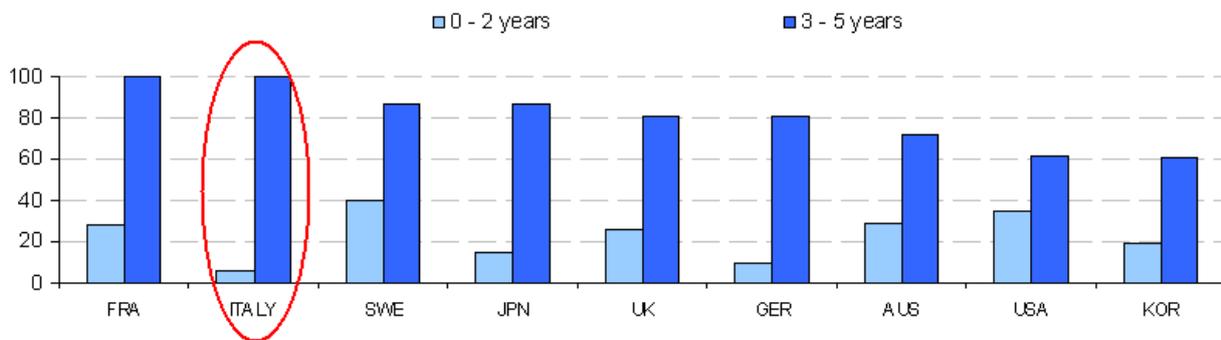


*Enrolment in childcare and preschool education*

Childcare for preschool children is expensive in Italy unless parents are in receipt of means-tested benefits. Moreover access to childcare in Italy varies a lot across regions. Figure 3 shows that Italian children are much more likely to be cared for by their parents, relatives or friends between the ages of 0-2 years than children in the majority of other OECD countries. On the other hand pre-school ‘*Scuola dell’infanzia*’ is well-used, reflecting both the fact that it is publicly funded (at three times the rate of formal childcare), universally available and of high quality, the child to staff ratios in kindergarten is amongst the lowest in the OECD.

**Figure 3: Italian Pre-schooling rates for 3 to 5 year olds are high but prior to this age the vast majority of childcare arrangements are informal**

*Average enrolment rate of children in formal childcare and pre-school educational programmes by age (2004)*



Data for Germany are for 2001; data for France reflects 2002 and data for Australia, Korea and the United States concerns 2005.  
 Source: OECD Family database and OECD Education database.