

## PRESS NOTE

# WELL-BEING AND INEQUALITIES IN ITALY

## MAIN RESULTS

The seventh edition of the **Forum on Well-being**, organised by the **OECD** in Rome in collaboration with **ISTAT** and **MEF**, is the occasion for the publication of a web-publishing product that, based on the **equitable and sustainable well-being (Bes) project**, provides an insight into inequalities between men and women, between generations, between territories and between population groups with different levels of education, using an approach that also takes into account the combination of several characteristics in order to identify the groups that are most disadvantaged in terms of well-being in the different life spheres.

The analysis of the Bes indicators in Italy reveals a complex and articulated picture of inequalities, with significant differences among regions, between men and women, and between population groups with different levels of education and different age groups.

Northern regions tend to have better well-being indicators than the national average, while the South still shows marked disadvantages, particularly in the areas of work and social relations.

In terms of gender inequality, considerable progress has been made in the educational and cultural spheres for women: one in three young women aged 25-34 has a university degree, compared with one in four men, and women's educational careers are characterised by better results, fewer early school leavers and higher qualifications. Nevertheless, women continue to be penalised in the labour market, with a persistent gap in employment rates (56.5 per cent compared to 76 per cent for men), in political representation at the top of institutions and in economic conditions. However, the increased investment in women's education is a factor that may reduce this gap in the future, especially if it is accompanied by a parallel expansion of opportunities and tools to support work-life balance.

Educational attainment is confirmed as a crucial determinant of well-being, with most indicators showing a strong gradient by level of education, underlining the increasing positive association with measures of well-being as educational attainment increases. Differences are particularly marked for cultural participation (64.6% for those aged 25 and over with tertiary education compared to 12.5% for those with only lower secondary education) and lifelong learning (25.2% for those aged 25 and over with high educational attainment compared to 3.2% for those with low educational attainment), with a strong impact of educational attainment also on economic conditions and employment opportunities. Therefore, education policies aimed at improving access to higher and tertiary education, especially in disadvantaged areas and for the most vulnerable groups, can be a factor in increasing well-being equity.

Well-being indicators show a strong gradient by age, in some cases in favour of the youngest, e.g. 93.9% of 25-34 year olds use the internet regularly, compared to 57% of the over-55s. In terms of lifestyle, the young are less sedentary than the over-55s (26.8% vs. 45.8%), but smoking is more widespread (26.9% vs. 14.4% for the over-55s). Finally, intergenerational inequalities place young adults in a position of economic vulnerability, which could have long-term consequences, not only at the individual level, but also for the social cohesion and development of the country. Strategies aimed at reducing barriers to employment, ensuring job continuity and progression, and improving opportunities for the younger generation would help addressing these critical issues.

However, in order to highlight the most critical population groups, the analysis focuses on the intersection of several factors, shedding light on the inequalities that affect specific subgroups of the population and have a profound impact on their quality of life. For example, it is shown that cultural participation outside the home is more than eight times higher among women with tertiary education living in the North than among women with at most lower secondary education living in the South and Islands. Another example of the multidimensionality of inequality factors is the risk of poverty, which is 25 times higher among 25-34 year olds living in the South and Islands with a low level of education than among those living in the North with a high level of education (56.7% against 2.2%).

Web-publishing is available on the website and easily navigable. In addition to the analyses, statistical tables, interactive graphs and links to the Istat data warehouses with updated BES indicators are available.