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THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

Graduate Studies

The Rise of Irregular Domestic Work Amongst Female Migrants in Italy

A Thesis Submitted by

Elena Romeo

to the

Political Science Department School of Humanities and Social
Sciences

16/11/2022

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Political Science



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List of Abbreviations

ARCI: Associazione Culturale e Ricreativa Italiana

CENSIS: Research Centre for Social Investment

EU: European Union

ILO: International Labour Organization

INPS: Italian National Institute of Social Security

ISTAT: Italian National Institute of Statistics

IBF: Institute for Banking and Finance

IOM: International Organization for Migration

IREF: Istituto di Ricerche Educative e Formative

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

M5S: Five Stars Movement

UN: United Nations

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In today's globalized world, hardship and geopolitical and economic crises have led to the lack of decent work, and this resulted in new, migratory movements. Women have joined these migration flows in a growing number, and this is having important consequences for gender equality in both countries of origin and destination (ILO,2015). Hence, migration has a new character, and it includes many women who emigrate from their country because of a lack of access and choices to jobs, exploitation, and lower wages compared to men in Europe. In this context, one can affirm that today irregular migration is on the rise, especially in the South of Europe, not only because of the strategic geographical position of these countries, easy to reach by the sea, but also because of a change in the demand of the labour market, where cheap female domestic work is rapidly spreading.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to fill the gap in the literature and explain the persistence of irregular domestic work through a gendered lens. I will draw on interview data with domestic migrant workers and examine the results to discuss my findings.

1.1 Context of the Problem

As mentioned above, irregular migration is on the rise, and it includes the migration of female domestic workers, who easily enter the country and work irregularly for several years. This phenomenon cannot be explained only through a weak regulatory framework, but an 'intersectional' approach should be adopted, where gender, social class, and migrancy are to be taken into consideration to tackle the problem.

Hence, the research question is:

Why is irregular domestic work amongst female migrants still persistent, despite attempts at regularization?

This thesis affirms that irregular female migrant domestic work is still widespread not only because immigration laws are weak, but because it is part of a well-rooted informal labour market, where foreign workers supply the cheap workforce necessary to provide care to families. In this framework, one could say that there is a clear relationship between the implicit bargain amongst middle-class households and a welfare state in crisis, which favours and sustains the increasing number of irregular female domestic workers.

As described by Siegmann and Stoilova (2021), a middle-class group can be defined as ‘the status in a social hierarchy, the employment position, or a position in the income distribution’ they add that ‘the income approach defines a household as a middle class when its income is within a range of the median income’.

Kenton (2022) defines a welfare state as ‘a type of governing in which the national government plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of its citizens’.

To analyse the relationship between the two variables, it is important to describe the empirical context around the problem of irregular migration.

Hence, I argue that the implicit bargain is between a welfare state in crisis and middle-class electors on immigration and labour issues, where successive governments have tacitly allowed female domestic workers to enter Italy and sustained irregular migration for their benefit, and the one of middle-class families. While the state has been unable/ unwilling to provide financial help to families through care and social services, families have also supported these governments with votes in order not to lose their ‘cheap’ domestic workers. The gender implications in this relationship are notable: irregular migrants are helping Italian women to balance their roles in the house (Triandafyllidou, 2016) while, at the same time, they are ‘empowering’ themselves in the country where they are already formal citizens, as they become the main breadwinner of the family (Kristensenwin 2016, 23). The commodification of this

highly feminized labour market seems to achieve the desired gender equality in the host country, nevertheless, by replacing one woman with another it reproduces, instead of challenging, gender stereotypes related to this work (Kristensenwin, 2016, 6). While the Italian family might believe that they are helping unemployed female migrants to earn money, they are, instead, committing a crime (Rodríguez, 2016, 2).

1.2 The structure of the research

The thesis is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework. Before the framework, some key concepts will be defined, such as what is irregular migration and what is the role of a domestic worker. After that, the relationship between the rise of irregular migration and the tacit accord between an Italian welfare state in crisis and middle-class groups will be described. In the framework, I conceptualize and justify the main argument of the thesis. Chapter 3 then introduces the literature review. It will use multiple sources and delve into the literature on irregular migration and borders control, formal and informal intermediate actors, and finally the informal local market in relationship with foreign domestic work. First, an overview of migration in Italy, border controls and migration networks will be given. Second, the characteristics of foreign domestic work and the informal domestic labour market will be described. Here, the gendered and exploitative nature of domestic work will be analysed, with possible pathways to regularization. Lastly, the research gaps that were identified are addressed. Chapter 4 is the empirical context, providing information on migration routes, borders control, migration laws, the Italian welfare state and irregular foreign domestic work in Italy. Chapter 5 constitutes the interview chapter and its results, with its discussion in chapter 6. Finally, chapter 7 draws general conclusions from the main theory.

1.3 Defining Parameters and Theoretical Framework

To understand why irregular migration of female domestic workers is on the rise today in Italy, it is important to define what is irregular migration. Irregular migration can be seen as

the movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit, and receiving countries. There is no clear or universally accepted definition of irregular migration. From the perspective of destination countries, it is an entry, stay or work in a country without the necessary authorization or documents required under immigration regulations (IOM, 2011). As it has been explained before, the focus of this study is restricted to the irregular migration of foreign domestic workers. A domestic worker is a person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship, as a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker (ILO Convention, 2011). The literature refers to female migrants' irregular work as 'dirty' (Anderson, 2000), 'invisible' (Ambrosini 2012, 2016, 2018, Fellini and Fullin, 2018, Lyons 2003, Samers 2003,), 'home-made' (IREF, 2007), 'hidden' (Gori, 2002), 'underground' (Ranci, 2002). Broadly speaking, one can say that Italian middle-class families are the ones who normally hire foreign female domestic workers.

In this research, the definition of a middle-class social group will be based on Weber's view on social stratification. He divides society according to three factors, mainly power, class, and status. These three terms are the three components of stratification in which people who belong to the same class share the same lifestyle and are provided with the same amount of opportunities to grow. Weber supported Marx's theory on social class, but he added that men in our society thrive for power and this is the reason for social stratification. Opposite to Marx's capitalist view of society, Weber categorizes society in four ways: the propertied upper class, the white-collar workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and the manual working class (webena, 2020).

According to Larsen (2021), '...class is a person's economic position, based on birth and individual achievement, while status refers to a person's prestige, social honour, or popularity in society...Weber noted that political power was not rooted solely in capital value, but also in one's individual status. ...it refers to a person's ability to get their way despite the

resistance of others. For example, individuals in state jobs may hold little property or status, but they still hold immense power...’ If we apply this stratification to Italian society, we may notice that the Italian middle-class today is fragmented and highly dependent on pensions.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

As it has been explained before, irregular female migration to Italy and other countries in the South of Europe is on the rise because of several reasons. In other words, most female migrants emigrate to Western countries as they escape the context of social inequalities, dictatorships, unemployment, and economic and political crises.

Most of the literature (Ruhs and Anderson, (2007), Ambrosini, (2011,2013, 2019), Bonizzoni, (2017), Triandafyllidou, (2017, 193), and Sigona (2012) attribute the rise of irregular migration to a weak immigration regulatory framework and a developed network of intermediaries between the sending and the receiving country. While this is partially true, the real hidden reason is connected to the local informal market and the absence of social services and support to working women, the large Italian informal economy. Moreover, as mentioned before, the labour market is shaped according to a patriarchal logic of division of sexes in the public and private space, and where domestic work is a job mainly attributed to women.

Gasparri, (2021, 189) explains that ‘... Domestic service – as well as other specialized jobs like cooking, laundry-making, and childcare, are generally considered a ‘suitable’ occupation for women because of its symbolic links with conservative family values...’ (Sciortino, 2003). However, from the mid-1970s, the demand for domestic labour was strengthened by a growing number of middle-class women entering the labour market, and ‘...As the welfare state did not absorb the productivity differentials, the setting was characterized by both a sharp increase in the demand for personal services and a sharp decrease in their supply...The result was a powerful pull factor for the recruitment of foreign domestic workers...’ (Sciortino, 2003).

In other words, migration laws are highly gendered and designed to implicitly allow high flows of female migrants who are needed inside Italian households to provide social support to elderly members of the family. As many families see women as ‘the pillar’ of the household, they prefer to hire a foreign woman, rather than men, to perform domestic work for a cheap price, thus indirectly feeding the informal labour market of irregular migrants.

In this context irregular female domestic migrants coming mainly from non-EU East European countries and South America enter the country and work for families to substitute Italian women in the household, who are struggling to join the labour market. In this way, the state can both maintain control over society and promote a highly patriarchal model of a family, where women are responsible for the house and men are the breadwinners.

Based on this assumption, this study states that the rise of irregular work is the result of this tacit pact between a welfare state in crisis that wants to save money and Italian middle-class families, struggling to meet their needs and looking for external support at an affordable price (irregular female domestic migrants).

Therefore, a weak immigration regulatory framework in Italy can be seen as the ‘pass-part out for the state to provide cheap labour to Italian families, while pretending that ‘illegal migration’ is under control.

With these essential parameters defined, we can move on further to the methodology of the research.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This research is a qualitative study, based on my previous ethnographic study and the present study with foreign domestic workers. This thesis is based on different qualitative methodologies, mainly ethnography, interviewing, and process tracing. The reason why I have chosen a qualitative method is that it allowed me to test my hypothesis and understand the relationship between the different variables through the information collected during the interviews.

Lisa Wedeen (2010, p.257) states that ethnography has many advantages, and it has a double nature: the researcher is not only a spectator but also an actor involved in the life of the observed community. Hence, it provides a broader insight into the social group the researcher is trying to study to add new results while picturing people's lives for what they are. Therefore, the present study is based on a qualitative method which includes the previous knowledge I gained as an immigration consultant in Italy and the present online interviews with foreign migrants.

2.2 Data analysis

As mentioned above, this research is based on the process tracing method. Process tracing is defined by Vagnoni (2011) as '...the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator...'. Moreover, process tracing can make '...decisive contributions to identify the new hypothesis and political theories...', which, in this research, proved to be useful to build new hypotheses on the reasons behind the spread of irregular domestic work among female migrants. Punton and Katharina Welle (2015, 2) explain that there are different types of process tracing. In this thesis, I will use what is called 'theory building' (TB) process tracing, in which '... we know what both A and B are (for example, we know that we ran an intervention, A, and we know

that outcome B has occurred), and we think there is a causal link between A and B...’

In TB process tracing, the first step involves collecting evidence to infer a causal mechanism that will explain facts (Punton and Katharina Welle, 2015).

Hence, in this study, the characteristics of the informal local labour market have been traced through the analysis of different types of documents and the research of real evidence provided by qualitative studies. Although labour informality characterizes a biggest share of the Italian labour market, this study will focus mainly on one aspect of it, mainly the irregularity of the foreign migrants labour market.

First, I focused on the literature on irregular migration to the South of Europe and Italy in particular. In this stage, I have consulted Italian and foreign online newspapers, magazines, and journals. A lot of material has been also retrieved from official governmental websites, such as the National Institute of Statistics, the International Labour Organization, and the International Organization for Migration.

Second, I performed online interviews for around 6 months during summer 2022 and based my job on my knowledge of qualitative research and ethnographic methods.

After the interviews were completed, I transcribed all the conversations and codified them. To do that, I reported it into a table divided into groups of topics. The main topics were the first experience in Italy, the time as an irregular domestic worker with an Italian family, the actual job, and possible pathways to regularization. As last, I compared the information retrieved from the interviews and elaborated it, while considering the archival data in official documents and statistics by the Italian government and the EU, as well as Italian and foreign newspapers. This comparison helped demonstrate that both the state and Italian middle-class families play a crucial role in the spread of irregular domestic work between foreign migrants.

2.3 Previous Ethnographic Research

The fieldwork has been conducted in June 2022, and the research is also based on previous ethnographic work at ARCI NGO. Although my volunteer experience as an immigration consultant in Italy was more than years ago, it is still relevant to this fieldwork with foreign migrants because I have worked in close contact with migrants for over a year, and I learned of the difficulties they face when emigrating from their own country.

ARCI for Migrants (Desk for the renewal of residence documents) is a front desk for immigration that support migrants with issues regarding the renewal of the residence permit, the issuance of for Family Reunification Visa, and the procedure to obtain a residence permit (Massa and Cecchini, 2007). At the Migrant Desk, it is possible to meet people with different backgrounds, and the age range is from 29 to 45. When I worked there, Ecuadorians were the most prevalent nationality, followed by Moroccans, Bengali, Senegalese, Albanian, and a few other minorities. The main support I offered to these people was consultancy over migration documents and social and work guidance.

During my volunteering experience with migrants, I realized how the language barrier and the lack of support in understanding a migration application were big obstacles to building a new life and integrating into the local community. As I was volunteering one afternoon per week, I used to deal with a media of 60 people per day. It is exactly what I have learned there that shaped my interest in migration and gender inequality and pushed me to write this research.

2.4 Fieldwork with Foreign Migrant Domestic Workers

This research is a qualitative study based on ethnographic research. It can be defined as a single case study, and it is based on semi-structured interviews conducted online.

During my interviews, I shared with participants my experience as a female migrant myself to gain their trust and to also avoid a situation of the power imbalance between me as

an Italian researcher and them as foreign domestic workers.

The material consists of interviews with 6 foreign female migrants who have moved abroad to support their families while their country was collapsing under economic and political pressure. The age range is from 40 to 70. The interviewees live in different Italian cities and are coming from Romania, Moldova, Poland, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Hence, they all are part of this migration flow coming from East Europe or South America that reached the country to work as domestic helpers. Overall, they all have worked irregularly from a minimum of one year to a maximum of 6 years, after which they found a stable jobs as a live-in domestic worker or nurse. Here, it is important to mention that Romania and Poland have joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 respectively, therefore, it might be interesting to note that one participant reached Italy as regular migrants and as irregular, however, both started working on informal basis. The interviewee from Poland had to retire due to health issues. All the participants agreed to disclose their real names (names and personal information of participants available in Appendix (1) at the end of the dissertation).

2.5 Data Collection Method

In this research, I have found my participants through an online voluntary organization for domestic workers run by an Italian lawyer and two foreign domestic workers. The data has been collected through the snowballing technique.

Dudovskiy (n. d) defines this technique as ‘...a non-probability (non-random) sampling method used when characteristics to be possessed by samples are rare and difficult to find ...This sampling method involves primary data sources nominating another potential primary data source to be used in the research. In other words, the snowball sampling method is based on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects...’

The snowball technique allowed me to gain the trust of participants, however, the main limitation was that six individuals is a small sample, therefore, I had to spend over an hour and

half with each of them to obtain the needed information.

Patton (1987, 108) says that ‘...depth interviewing involves asking open-ended questions, listening and recording the answers, and then following up with additional questions...’ This technique requires ‘...sensitivity, concentration, interpersonal understanding, insight, mental acuity, and discipline...’ As Patton (1987) shows, depth interviews are not simple ‘question and answer’ research, but it requires a good number of skills, being sensitivity one of the most important skills when formulating the questions to make.

In this thesis, the interviews have been conducted in Italian: I have spoken with the participants online on a video call and followed up with them with additional written questions. My knowledge of Spanish helped a lot when I interviewed participants from South- America, however, the transcription job proved hard, as some of them could not speak a clear Italian.

The focus of the questions has been the role of the state and Italian middle-class families in the irregular domestic labour market. Interviewees were asked about their backgrounds, their reasons for migrating, their experience when they arrived in Italy, and to what extent the state and their employer supported them to enter the country, settle, learn the language, or apply for a visa. Moreover, specific questions on the characteristic of the domestic work performed in the host family have been gathered to understand their condition of living, the type of work they were performing, and their remuneration.

What is important to notice is that, despite a set of questions having been prepared, the interviews were flexible, and the respondents' answers triggered other questions which were not planned (see the questions in the Appendix).

In the end, this work has been challenging as it was time consuming, it required a lot of concentration to codify the message that the participants wanted to communicate, and lot of empathy was needed when I had to listen to these dramatic stories of abuses perpetrated by

Italian families and human traffickers.

Next chapter will introduce the literature review on irregular migration to Italy and borders control, migration networks, and irregular female migrants' domestic work.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Nowadays, the problem of irregular migration is widespread in Southern Europe, and most people believe that stricter immigration law is the solution to curb the flow of irregular migrants. Nevertheless, as will be explained later, a well-defined migration framework is not the real solution to the problem, as there are other factors underlying the problem mainly related to the informal local labour market. In other words, most migrants come to Italy regularly with a tourist visa and become irregular after a few months because of the local, contradicting migration law. As they are not entitled to have a regular job, to survive, they join the informal labour market.

Numerous studies (Ruhs and Anderson, (2007), Ambrosini, (2011,2013, 2019), Bonizzoni, (2017), Triandafyllidou, (2017, 193), and Sigona (2012), confirm that irregular migration can be related mainly to the inconsistencies and contrasting elements in the Italian immigration policies. This thesis, instead, wants to show that irregular female migrants manage to easily reside, find a job and integrate into various aspects of life in Italy not only because of weak control at the borders and a thick network of intermediaries but also because of the wide availability of irregular '*in nero*' domestic work, in a country where informal work is highly spread amongst the Italian society (23.7%, according to the World Economics, 2021).

To focus on the spread of irregular domestic work amongst female migrants, it is necessary to review the literature on irregular migration, migration networks and borders control. After that, the literature on domestic work and its gendered nature will be reviewed.

3.2 Borders Control and Intermediate Actors

As explained above, even though much of the literature attributes the rising of irregular work to a weak migration regulatory framework and control at the border, this study claims that irregular migration and informal work go hands in hands, where the local market regulates the flow of irregular domestic workers. Therefore, one could say that irregular domestic work is highly feminized, and so are migration regulations and networks that connect the home country and the host country.

According to Caponio (2008), today irregular migration has changed, and it involves female domestic migrants, mainly coming from East- Europe, who have fled to richer European ones because of macro push factors such as social and economic inequalities, unemployment, dictatorship, or political turmoil (Caponio, 2008, 8).

As mentioned before, most of the literature (Ruhs and Anderson, (2007), Ambrosini, (2011,2013, 2019), Bonizzoni, (2017), Triandafyllidou, (2017, 193), and Sigona (2012), shows that a weak regulatory framework allows irregular migrants to reach Italy through different networks of intermediaries. They use several intentional and voluntary tactics to elude any control at the border and simulate compliance with the system rules, such as false documents or corruption of civil actors (Kosic and Triandafyllidou, 2004, 25).

Migration networks are made up of informal and formal intermediaries with different doubtful trajectories of social mobility, with individuals with various degrees of self-interest. Gemi and Triandafyllidou (2013, 31) state that irregular migrants' informal networks can function as transnational social networks, which are part of a wider migration system linking the migrant's country of origin to the country of destination. The idea that migrants use transnational migration networks shows that the political-legal regulations are deeply embedded in broader socio-economic and political relations that need to be explored from a gender perspective. In this context, Gemi and Triandafyllidou (2013) argue that migration

networks and control at the borders are made up of three different elements: political-legal regulations (visa and passports), technical means, such as transport connections, and other various resources (such as information and money to obtain transportation). Barron et al. (as cited in Bonizzoni, 2016, 4) highlight how migrants' networks are made up of different kinds of subjects who take part in the legalization process, following logics of profit, solidarity, civil disobedience, and protest. These networks can provide useful contacts to find accommodation and work (Campani and Lapov, (2015), Bashi (2007, 3), such as fellow nationals or host country NGOs such as ARCI Migranti NGO.

Nevertheless, this system of formal and informal intermediaries many times includes also intermediaries actors, who 'help' migrants to cross the border, but put them under enormous risks and danger, such as being smuggled, trafficked, or exploited, as they have to pay a large amount of money.

As the interviews will show, when female migrants move to Italy, they do not find a good job, but they are being exploited and trafficked by different Italian and foreign organizations from the moment they cross the border of their own country. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, weak migration policies and extended networks of intermediaries cannot stand alone to explain why irregular domestic work is still widespread amongst female migrants, as the lack of support from the national welfare system highly influences the market forces and society, still rooted in a patriarchal vision of family and life.

3.3 Foreign Domestic Work

To understand why the state is lax and allows the spread of irregular domestic work, it is important to discuss foreign domestic work and its exploitative and gendered nature.

Irregular female domestic work is by nature gendered. Female migrants migrate for several reasons, and they follow the needs of the market and/or society, as they '...are recruited... for "trivial and dirty work" in the submerged and precarious sector of care,

domestic, and sex work...' (Rodríguez, 2007, 6).

Domestic work in Italy is seen as a woman's responsibility, and it is usually underestimated, unpaid when performed by the family, and seen as inferior when performed by foreign domestic migrants.

Rodríguez (2007) explains that '...the family displays here the general societal attitude toward care work as inferior and unrecognized. The reproductive value of care work as a contributor to the upbringing and emotional growth of a human being is not perceived...'. In the authors' view, '...care work needs to be considered on a biopolitical level, as a socially significant moment in the reproduction of life, which is made invisible when we negate the affective bonds of care and domestic work...' (Rodríguez, 2007, 12).

Bonizzoni (2017,7) also agrees that foreign domestic work is underestimated, highly feminized and exploitative. She describes the Italian family's gendered views on domestic work and problematizes matters further when she describes their relationship with female domestic migrants. She explains that the family supports female migrants to obtain the residence permit, so they are key actors in the regularization process, but they do it at a cost. On one hand, they accept female immigrants into their home, help them learn the language, and eventually support them to regularize. On the other hand, they make them 'earn' their regularization document, and the residence permit becomes an 'act of gratefulness', originating from a '...long-lasting, stable, loyal and satisfactory service...' (Bonizzoni (2017, 7).

Although Bonizzoni's point is very interesting, she doesn't expand on the fact that the state is behind it, that the state has intentionally weakened its control on the border to allow female domestic migrants to enter the territory and work irregularly. Therefore, the responsibility does not fall entirely on the family, but rather on the state too. Hence, the question here is why is the family hiring a female migrant irregularly? As mentioned before, for the family is convenient to hire an irregular female migrant to maintain a balance in the family, so

all the members of the family can work equally and have somebody who takes care of the house.

3.4 Weak Labour Protection

Regularization is an important aspect of domestic work, which determine the conditions in which foreign migrants have to live.

As Kraler (2018) discusses, ‘...Regularization—the award of a legal status to irregular immigrants—is significant in that it provides an avenue to legal inclusion and membership (Block, 2015) and to economic (Riaño, 2011) and social citizenship (Marshall, 1965, see also Goldring & Landolt, 2015), including access to social welfare rights associated with a legal status.... (2018, 1).

Despite domestic work is being regulated by the national collective labour agreement on domestic work (Domina, 2018), domestic work, in fact, is not protected, and it is one of the many sectors of the local informal labour market. The exploitative nature of irregular domestic work is an important aspect to tackle when studying irregular female migrant domestic work.

As Rodríguez (2007,14) remembers, despite the general societal attitude towards domestic and care work as ‘unskilled’, ‘inferior, and unrecognized’, it is fundamental to recognize that domestic and care work is, in fact, a skilled job. In particular, care work, whether it is performed by a man or a woman, entails several skills, and it needs to be considered as ‘...a socially significant moment in the reproduction of life...’

If domestic and care work is performed by female migrants, the situation worsens even more, as employers believe that they have absolute control over their employees, and ‘...disrespectful treatment, the exceeding of personal limits...’ and other unpleasant situations become common scenarios (Rodríguez, 2007).

Female migrants perform an ‘unskilled’ job when they join the domestic labour market. They migrate to improve their life (Anderson,2000, 29), with the perspective to earn money for

their family left in the origin country. However, their expectations are not usually met: '... There is a lot of disinformation. Many people say that you go to Spain, you earn a thousand dollars, you pay back your debt in one year...and finally, you get there, and it's not like that. It takes you six months to find work, your debt is increasing because of interest. You don't earn a thousand dollars... and you spend rent, food and all this and your stay, which was going to be one year, becomes two, three, and you are still there...'. (Anderson, 2000, 29).

As this interview point out, irregular female migrants are already disadvantaged when they come to the host country, and, since they start to work as domestic workers, not only do they experience a strong deskilling, but they are also imposed unfavourable, exploitative, living conditions. They do not have the choice to reject this job and '...be released from the dynamics of dependency and isolation that characterize the regime of co-residency...' (ILO, 2019, 3). Therefore, the nature of irregular female domestic work is exploitative and not empowering as it might seem at the façade. Similarly, Ambrosini (2013, 77) deeply investigates irregular female migrants' working conditions: women are in a weaker position in this labour market, as they lack the knowledge and skills to seek other job opportunities, so it is highly unlikely that they can move out of the family. They do not know the language; therefore, they have few acquaintances. As they are afraid of losing their job, they become 'insensitive' to their family problems, although helping other family members and improving their social and economic status was the main reason for leaving their country.

As it will be discussed below, this gendered vision of the family permeates the Italian society and the state and that this equilibrium is 'maintained' by irregular female migrants. To put it succinctly, these women are 'enslaved' and exploited to allow local families to sustain a new patriarchal model of family, where Italian women work, but 'low-skilled' migrant women perform the required care and domestic work in the house.

3.4.1 The Gendered Nature of Domestic Work

Domestic work, as explained before, is gendered, other than exploitative. Kristensenwin (2020) claims that, families hire female domestic workers to buy themselves the chance to ‘... to live up to the dual-earner dual-career model of gender equality...’ they also want to accommodate the family needs (23). However, in doing so, they also reproduce gender stereotypes that a woman, and not a man, is needed to fulfill the family’s needs.

Since a stronger migration framework is not sufficient to reduce irregular domestic work, one could say that, if Italian families do not stop to ‘commit a crime’ by hiring irregular female migrants to help in the house, irregular migration will not decrease. For example, Norway is a very famous pioneer nation in gender equality, and women empowerment is at the core of the nation’s identity (Kristensenwin, 2020,3).

Kristensenwin (2020) states that Norway is distinguished in Europe because the country was able to increase women's participation in the labour market and encourage men to participate in domestic and care work. Thanks to this great achievement, the country has a balanced control on immigration entries, a comprehensive welfare model, and, consequently, irregular migration in the country are better controlled. On the contrary, in Italy, weak, gendered migration policies and a biased perception that domestic work is low-skilled and has to be performed by women contribute to feeding the irregular domestic labour market.

Rodriguez (2007) argues that the ‘... hegemonic view reaffirming the existing organization and division of work along the lines of "race," ethnicity, sexuality, class, and gender. This systematic devaluation of the professional and educational backgrounds [of female migrants] represents itself a process of social inequality [between racial groups]...’ (Rodríguez, 2007,16). As this author shows, domestic and care work must be appreciated and seen by society as skilled work if we want to contribute to gender equality and the improvement of foreign migrants’ working conditions. Nevertheless, the demand for foreign female domestic

work is still very high, and, if we attempt to study why Italian families hire 'cheap' domestic workers, the answer lies down in the structure of the Italian welfare system.

3.4.1 The Italian welfare system

Gøsta Esping-Andersen (2019) affirms that the literature on the welfare state is scarce, and that an appropriate definition of what a welfare state has not been provided. According to the author, the definition of welfare state ‘involves state responsibility for securing some basic modicum of welfare for its citizens. Such a definition skirts the issue of whether social policies are emancipatory or not; whether they help system legitimation or not; whether they contradict or aid the market process; and what, indeed, is meant by 'basic'?' Would it not be more appropriate to require of a welfare state that it satisfies more than our basic or minimal welfare needs?’ Interestingly, Andersen (2019) refers to the welfare state as a ‘system of stratification’, which ‘actively and directly orders social relations’ between classes. If we start from this definition, foreign migrants can be seen as one group or social class in the Italian welfare system.

As discussed before, migrant workers are an integral part of the underground economy in Italy. Despite this phenomenon is often perceived as ‘an indicator of an oversupply of migrants’ (Reyneri, 1998), the reality is that the underground economy is deeply rooted in the Italian economy. In the South of Europe, many people are working in occupations where administrative and legal rules are easily ignored: agriculture, small firms in manufacturing and services, building and self-employment.

Along a similar path, Reyneri (1998) explains that informal work can be perceived as part of a particular ‘welfare culture’ spread in Southern Europe. In addition, he argues that, despite public regulations of many economic activities appear traditionally strict, in reality,

they are scarcely effective and ‘free rider behavior prevails within the common welfare culture.’

Similarly, Livi Bacci (1991) compares the South European welfare system with the American one, and explains that their differences are due to the structure of the welfare state. On one hand, the USA offers few or no guarantees to needy people, and it is relatively open the frontiers. On the other hand, in European countries, the state offers a minimum welfare provision, and care, to be taken, requires admitting as many people as necessary to contribute to the state budget.

To address the ‘issue’ of irregular work in Italy, Gøsta Esping-Andersen (2002) suggests that some welfare states in Europe need to adjust and set the goal of a major social inclusion and justice. He pinpoints four principal ‘social-policy’ domains, mainly ‘ the age and transition to retirement; the welfare issues related to profound changes in working life; the new risks and needs that arise in households and, especially, in families with children; and the challenges of creating gender equality’. In this context, it is clear how a major modification of the welfare system is necessary to improve the condition of female migrants.

Ruhs and Anderson (2006) and Triandafyllidou et al. (2012) describe the nature of the national welfare system, where the provision of care services to the members in need of support is central to the family (the woman in specific), rather than the state (ILO,2013, 11). In Italy, successive governments aimed at weakening their migration policies to save large amounts of money (Coniglio and Serlenga, 2010, 3), and allow irregular female domestic migrants to join the labour market. As life expectancy rises and fertility declines, the aging population is putting pressure on the European welfare states, and a constant flow of immigrants reduces the pressure on the state and improves financing (Berger et al, 2016).

Foreign migrants can provide a complex range of services, such as personal care, health care, emotional support, replacement of absent family members, and constant availability in case of emergency.

Miyazak (2019) asserts that domestic work is gendered, as it is the Italian welfare state. and this typical patriarchal welfare model is sustained by care for family members provided exclusively by women, and today is fulfilled by migrant women. He calls this phenomenon the "migrant-in-the-family model" or "migrant-based care model" (Miyazak, 2019). Furthermore, the author compares Italy with Japan and admits that, while Japan is based on an 'explicit' nationalized formal care model, Italy corresponds to an 'implicit-supported' familistic model built on '...the combination of unbounded cash-for-care benefits and unregulated marketization [of migrant workers] ...' Once again, the contradictions of the Italian welfare system are evident, the system is in crisis, and the only available social support for families can be found in female migrants working in the 'informal' market, rather than the state (ILO, 2013, 2011, Ruth and Anderson, 2006).

In this work, I argue that this implicit pact between the state and Italian families is exactly what maintains an equilibrium in society, that would be broken without the presence of irregular female migrants. While the state wants to maintain control over society and support a patriarchal model of family, women are relegated to the private sphere and men dominate the public space. In this framework, the state facilitates the integration of foreign female domestic workers, who become part of the local informal labour market. Hence, the answer lies down in the role of the underground economy and the pull effect it has on migrants.

Reyneri (1998) explains that many migrants travel to Italy to undertake 'unregistered' jobs in street-selling, agriculture, housekeeping, urban services, and manufacturing. Moreover, he notes that the underground economy in Italy has profound roots, where migrants contribute to maintain it. Interestingly, he highlights a couple of pull factors that leads migrant workers to reach Italy: first, is 'the image of Italy being a country where staying and earning is easy, even without a stay permit'. Second, he states that migrants 'emigrate to improve their circumstances through work and are aware of the difficulties and the opportunities they will find. It is well

known that migratory chains transmit information underestimating difficulties and overestimating opportunities, because migrants must justify their choices in relation to those who stayed home. What ultimately matters is the image that is transmitted by migratory chains of Italy being a country where living and earning is easy' (Reyneri, 1998, 17).

3.6 Pathways to regularization

Kosic and Triandafyllidou (2004, 25) note that emerging from this exploitative situation remains a complicated task for female immigrants because of the large informal sector that has existed already in Italy for a long time and the lack of predictability and complexity of the Italian migration regulation practices.

Despite their exploitative condition, irregular female migrants make use of several resources and practices to obtain a regularized status (Bashi, 2007, 3). As mentioned above, they can count on solidarity institutions, such as Caritas or Arci, which support them with documentation, learning the language, and having a shelter. Other than that, female migrants and domestic workers can resort to technology to endure the difficulties of their life and work. That is to say, the enhancement and expansion of technologies of communications, such as different social networks, smartphones, and the Internet, have changed the characteristics and dynamics of migration and made it possible for the migrant to keep the family united.

As separation from their families becomes a major issue for irregular female workers for they leave parents and children behind, these women become key actors in the formation of long-distance emotional ties and transnational families (Banfi and Boccagni, 2018, 287; Ambrosini 2013). In this way, the whole migrating experience becomes much easier and less of a psychological burden, as physical proximity is not required anymore to be connected with your native family and friends (Baldassar, Nedelcu, Merla, Wilding, 2016, 2).

When female migrants finally become 'regular', however, they might experience a worsening employment condition, with lower wages and taxes to pay. Therefore, when they are given the residence permit, they might try to escape because their live-in work is too difficult to tolerate for a long period (Triandafyllidou, 2013, 2), and reunification with their own family becomes an option, made through the employment of all kinds of formal or informal means (Bonizzoni, 2017, 3).

3.7 Research Gaps Addressed in the Present Study

In conclusion, most scholars see the roots of irregular work amongst female migrants in the lack of strict regulations and control on the borders, together with the presence of an extended migration network of intermediaries between the country of origin to the country of destination. In other words, in Italy, compared to other western countries, the state regulatory capacity remains weak, (Ambrosini 2011, 2013, Triandafyllidou, (2011, 2017), Vickstrom (2019) and this allows migrants to enter the territory and easily integrate into the society through different kinds of intermediaries such as NGOs, religious organizations, fellow nationals, but also smugglers and human traffickers.

In addition, the literature also highlights how the high presence of female migrants in the informal market is regulated by the demand of the market, or better by the needs of Italian families, who are buying themselves the chance to ‘... to live up to the dual-earner dual-career model of gender equality...’ (Kristensenwin, 2020) .

This orientation lies in a cultural background, where ‘...the pervasiveness of the male breadwinner model oriented the definition of fiscal and family policies, and indirectly remarked the dependency of the members on the ‘head of the family, hindering the participation of women in the labour market for a long time...’ (Mazzola, 2015, 5). The author also adds that this trend has been maintained by the Catholic Church, which has always strongly supported the traditional model of the Italian family and its application in politics and society.

Yamamoto (2007, 105, cited by Ambrosini, 2018) clearly explains this contradictory behavior from the state. As he puts it ‘...in immigration policies, the government frequently juggles contradictory demands: anti-immigration sentiments and employers’ demands for low-wage foreign labour. One strategy the government takes in this context is to please the former with tough-looking immigration policies while satisfying the latter with ineffective law

enforcement...' As Yamamoto (2007) shows, while the state is unwilling-unable to support families, the need for care and social work has increased, therefore, it has been 'necessary' to weaken its immigration control to allow female migrants to join the domestic labour market and to fulfil the family's needs.

Therefore, this work aims at tackling the problem from a gendered perspective to show that irregular domestic work is still widespread not only because of a weak regulatory framework but also because of an implicit, silent pact that benefit both parts, middle-class families and the Italian state.

The following chapter presents the empirical analysis of the irregular migratory context in Italy, and how it is regulated by the law. After that, the irregular domestic labour market will also be described, with a focus on foreign female migrants.

Chapter 4: Empirical Context: Migration to Italy and Foreign Domestic Workers

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned before, this chapter will introduce the empirical context of the case study, which is borders control and intermediate actors, the migration regulatory framework, the Italian welfare system and the domestic informal market.

According to Luigi and Frisone (2021), when Italy turned into an immigration country, the state was quite 'unprepared' to integrate migrants, and the poor legislative migration framework was '...characterized by a fragmentary and incomplete nature...'. They explain that Italy was characterized by a lack of understanding of the 'irreversible changes' happening not only in the country but also in Europe, and the growth of trans-European infrastructure networks facilitated the entry of foreign migrants into the Italian market. As we shall see below, these changes in the migration framework followed the need of the market, and determined specific migration routes and different scenarios in Italy and other countries in the South of Europe.

4.2 The Italian Immigration Regulatory Framework

If we try to briefly trace back the first immigration laws in Italy, (see table 4.1 below) we can notice an evolution of populist ideas in different governments over the years (Pianta, 2020).

Table 4.1: Migration policies in Italy from 1998 to 2012.

1980	<i>Foschi</i> Law (n. 943)
1990	<i>Martelli</i> Law
1998	<i>Turco Napolitano</i> Law (Law 40/1998)
2002	<i>Bossi-Fini</i> Law (Law 189/2002)
2009	Security Act 94/2009
2012	Legislative Flow Decree 108/2012 (<i>Flow Decree</i>)

Pianta (2020) clearly describes, in the last decades, Italy has been characterized by political instability in electoral behavior. In other words, if we look at immigration laws issued by different governments in the last decades, we can confirm a general attitude towards nationalism and anti-immigrant policies, and the idea of detention centers as a tool to stop irregular migration was slowly setting in (Becucci, 2020).

The country's migration first regulations were called '*circulars*', and they had been issued in the 1980s by the Ministry of Labour in an attempt of regularizing irregular positions through the opening of several amnesties.

In the second half of the 1980s, the '*Foschi*' Law introduced the family reunion, which enables family members to reunify with another member who left their country of origin. Besides, it guaranteed the regularization of 120,000 illegal migrants (Mancinitti and Paparusso, 2018).

Afterwards, at the beginning of the 1990s, a new law has been issued, the *Martelli* Law. Rusconi (2020) affirms that this law regulated the migration flows through a pre-set number of accesses (a quota) linked to the job market. A two years visa is permitted, which

can be obtained for study, work, medical reasons, or family reunification. However, migrants with regular documents that stay after the expiration of the permit, are considered “illegal immigrants” and can be expelled.

Since the *Martelli* Law, as different scholars admit, the trend started to change, and populist movements in the Northern regions gathered more support, based on a strong 'ethno-nationalist' propaganda to protect 'internal security and stop immigration'¹.

In 1998, the so-called *Turco-Napolitano* law has been approved by the new-elected center-left government to regulate irregular migration through the emission of a permanent residence permit and the creation of temporary detention centers (CPT) in Italy. This law and several other laws have been launched afterward, with the priority of building '...a strong international reputation ...' and '...a credible migration policy, geared towards greater strictness in controlling external borders» and «able to meet the Schengen requirements...'. Although the Italian state attempted to control migration to the country, it didn't produce appreciable results, and this has further cracked the relationship with European partners, leaving the Mediterranean Sea area as a «strongly governmentalized space...' and as '...an area of overlap and intersection of competences and jurisdictions in the field of interception and rescue of boats...' (Luigi and Frisone, 2021, 36).

Turco-Napolitano was the most liberal law. Bossi-Fini reversed it in nationalist ethnic turn. In other words, in 2002, the *Bossi-Fini* Law tightened furthermore the norms against migration: ‘...Immigrants found in international waters, formerly outside of the patrolling

¹ Populist movements originated in the Northern regions of Italy in the 1990s and gathered more support in the South of Italy later on. *Lega Nord* (Northern League) is an ultraright populist party which has been founded in 1991 by Umberto Bossi. The party launched a march on Twitter called *Stop Invasione* (Stop Invasion) against ‘the enemies of all Italians’: irregular migrants, the European Union, and the economic crisis. As Padovani (2018, 2) explains, Salvini, one of the leaders of the party, used the connection between migration and unemployment to gain more votes: ‘...immigration, according to Salvini, was the first and common enemy to fight...’ ‘... His plans eventually proved successful: Indeed, only four years later, *Lega Nord* had become a major force and it had achieved unprecedented success, going from 8% of the national vote in the 2013 political elections to 18% in the 2018 elections...’

power of Italy, can be sent back to their country or neighboring countries. No boat carrying people without visas can dock on Italian coasts...Forced detention – and no longer the intimation of detention – becomes ordinary rule...’ (Gattinara, 2016).

Becucci (2020) explains that, from 2008 to 2019, there has been great variability in the number of migrant arrivals by sea. He argues that this can be related to the attempts to block departures from Libya itself, which have been successful for a few years. In 2008, a cooperation agreement was signed between Italy and Gaddafi, the former head of Libya at that time. Under this agreement, Italy would provide economic aid to Libya in exchange for the blocking of migrants' departure to Italy, and, as result, there has been a consistent reduction in the number of arrivals to Italy by the sea in 2009 and 2010.

In 2009, the law became stricter, and the 'crime for illegal migration' has been introduced with the Security Law during the third Berlusconi government, which tripled the time of detention for irregular migrants and criminalize whoever helps irregular migrants come to Italy (Paparella,2002).

In 2012, the government establishes a yearly quota for seasonal, non-seasonal, and other types of workers (such as domestic workers) to regulate the flow of migrants (Flow decree), nevertheless, only migrants with a proven job offer can apply. In this regard, Salis (2012) explains that the general rule is the one of nominal hiring from abroad, where extra-EU workers can only enter and work in Italy under a specific request advanced by a regular resident employer.

In 2018, the local government issued a new measure called the ‘Security Decree’, which, once again, focused on the 'fight against illegal immigration, and allowed the implementation of expulsion measures. It was only recently that the state took a favorable position toward the immigration of female domestic workers about the most recent demographic trend, which confirms a slow, but progressive aging of the Italian population,

and a growing number of populations leaving the country (Luigi and Frisone, 2021, 36). As the growth rates appear negative, immigration seemed to be a necessity for the government to compensate for the need for labour, especially in the care labour market and the low fertility rates. In this context, the migration law took a new turn to accommodate the needs of Italian families for care and support. Iosub (2021) explains that the Italian family has the possibility of hiring a person already present on the Italian territory with a regular residence permit or making a nominative request at the time of the issue of the 'Flow Decree' (Iosub, 2021).

The 'Flow Decree' has been enacted on 12 October 2020 and it sets the quota for the number of foreign citizens (non-EU citizens) that can be admitted to Italy for work purposes, and it changes every year to establish the quota for autonomous and subordinated work. In theory, domestic workers should be hired by the employer according to the law in order not to incur heavy penalties. That is to say, the request must be accepted by '*Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione*' (immigration desk), where the work permit will be issued. After the establishment of the contract, the employer must notify the National Institute of Statistics (INPS), which will open a series of insurance and pension benefits. As it will be shown in the interviews, the 'Flow Decree' is not effective and it only generates more irregular work, as many migrants who have entered Italy through a tourist visa, once the document is expired, stay and work in the country irregularly to wait and apply for the flow decree.

In case the non-EU citizen is still abroad, Ajelli (2021) explains that '*Nulla Osta*' is the document that has been issued by Italian immigration authorities to authorize a non-EU national to apply for a work visa in the Italian embassy or consulate in the country of residence.

As explained before, migration laws are contradictory, and, although they seem to 'regulate' migration flows, they are feeding more irregular migration because migrants still enter Italy through legitimate channels and stay in the country even when their tourist visa is

expired. Hence, to understand this phenomenon, it is crucial to describe what is borders controls

4.3 Migration to Italy and Borders Control

Migration to Italy began over forty years ago. Italy has been for a long time a country of emigration, rather than immigration (Lindström, 2013, Parati, 2005, Ambrosini 2001). The turning point was only around the 80s' when an increasing number of foreign immigrants started to move to Italy and other countries in the Global North from different peripheries within the European Union, such as Romania and Bulgaria, or around the EU (Ukraine or Moldova). Demographic pressure due to higher population growth rates in the periphery, continuous economic and political instability, widespread conflicts, and high levels of inequality have all pushed many people to leave their countries, also through 'irregular' means.

Caponio (2010) points out four different migration routes that developed throughout 1980. The first one linked Sicily and Tunisia, and it developed during the mid-1960s where Italian entrepreneurs to the island because of Tunisian nationalization policies. They filled gaps in the agricultural and fishing sectors. The second developed between Friuli Venezia Giulia and the Balkan area, to provide the necessary labour force to reconstruct cities after the 1976 earthquake in Friuli. The third migratory system was the one linking cities such as Rome and Milan with the ex-colonies in Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia after the return home of Italian colonial officials and their families after World War II. Last, the fourth network included the relationships between developing countries and religious organizations.

Migration to Italy, today has changed, and it is, many times, accompanied by the word 'irregular'. Irregular migration in Italy, as it is easily inferred, does not involve only this country, but it is an international phenomenon that regards almost all EU members and includes irregular migration from non-EU East European countries and South America.

Karandaeva (2011) notes that Italy can be a destination country, but also a transit country for irregular migrants who try to reach other EU countries. She adds that active immigration to Italy has been stimulated by stronger immigration rules in other European countries, which pushed more migrants to enter the Italian territory easily. Similarly, Vagnoni (2017) affirms that a lot of pressure has been placed upon Italy by EU partners, as they have refused to relocate the increasing number of irregular migrants, and, in addition, some have closed their southern borders to prevent migrants reach their own countries. As he puts it, ‘...Countries reaffirm the sovereign rights of states to control their borders and set clear limits on net migration levels...’ Along the same path, Ialongo (2018) states that an ‘...inefficient reception system in Italy that was easily overwhelmed by the inflow of people, and the unwillingness of other E.U. member states to share the costs of receiving the migrants during the crisis year of 2015...’ resulted in ‘... the locking down of borders in Europe, and an emphasis on border security at the periphery...’ in Europe.

Broadly speaking, an important matter related to irregular migration is geography. Despite the majority of domestic workers come from East Europe and South America, Italy is also the closest country in Europe to Africa and hence, together with Spain and Greece, it is the first territory where other migrants land by the sea. In other words, it represents one of the main fault lines between the global North and the global South in a way that compares with the US-Mexico borders.

Geography also refers to the territory and its borders. Fauser (2018) claims that borders with their crossings in Europe are the result of the formation of nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition, she states that ‘... the emergence of the nation-state was associated with control over the mobility of people through the invention of new instruments of control, such as the passport (Torpey 2000). In this process, borders came to denote a clear-

cut physical boundary around a territory inhabited by an equally clearly defined community of citizens.

Borders are not just physical territorial separations, but rather '...the product of power relations and their contestations...' that should be considered as '...politically, culturally, and socially constructed both through the international order of states and complex domestic processes, formed by state authorities...and non-state actors.

If borders are just physical separation, irregular migration is as well a concept based on political interests from states to criminalize migrants and keep them weak to satisfy the interests of the labour market. Nevertheless, irregular migration is not only about unauthorized crossing of borders. It is also about overstay and, importantly, informal employment.

Monzini (2006) explains that the Italian border can be irregularly crossed by two types of migratory flows: the first kind is made up of flows that originated in South-eastern Europe, and which travel overland to Italy and other countries in Western Europe as a final destination. The second kind is represented by intercontinental flows which often see an initial collecting point in Turkey or North-eastern Europe, and that cross Italy or Austria – to reach other countries in Western Europe.

Broadly speaking, as most of the media depict, it seems that irregular migration is mainly the result of weak migration control at the border; however, as it has been explained before, that is not the case because migration and the underground economy are strictly related one another, and they are the result of contradictory policies, where the importance of borders control is emphasized over other important factors which are the real pull trigger of irregular work.

Triandafyllidou (2011) analyzes the Italian policies on border control, and she argues that Italy implements internal and external control policies, but she also affirms that these two sets of policies have not been properly coordinated and are often contradictory. Furthermore,

she adds that external immigration refers to those policies directed at 'potential immigrants outside the regulating state and at the border', while internal immigration policies regard 'immigrants who are already inside the nation's borders. She classifies irregular migration control policies according to a 'fencing' or a 'gate-keeping' strategy: gate-keeping strategies are aimed at restricting access to practical legal access to a nation and its institutions, while fencing measures 'target illegal migrants to arrest and then expel them (see Table 4.1 below, Triandafyllidou (2011).

Table 4.2 Dimensions of Migration control regimes. Reproduced from Triandafyllidou (2011).

	Gate-keeping	Fencing
External control policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -visa procedures -carrier sanctions -papers control at ports of entry (land border, sea border, or airports) -procedures to deal with asylum at the border -cooperation with countries of origin and transit to prevent irregular migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -border controls outside ports of entry, at land or sea -cooperation with transit or origin countries for expulsion and readmission procedures
Internal control policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -regularization of illegal status -asylum procedures within the country's territory -labour market checks and controls of access to welfare and other services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -internal controls in public places -detention, expulsion, removal, and other procedures to enforce return

Triandafyllidou (2011) highlights that migration through 'unlawful' border crossing is what has the highest media visibility, and consequently, leads to the conclusion that more effective border control and/or external and internal fencing strategies are necessary to decrease irregular migration flows. Nevertheless, a more careful examination shows that

irregular migration is driven by the informal market forces, rather than border control, therefore, this indicates that migration policies in Italy are contradictory. This is because the state propaganda to secure borders against 'illegal migrants' goes against the spread of irregular work, which is sustained today by an increasing number of foreign migrants reaching Italy through legal channels such as tourist visa, family reunification and so on (Ambrosini, 2011).

Similar situations can also be found in other Western countries, such as Spain, Austria, the United Kingdom (Rodríguez, 2007), and the U.S.A, where, despite big investments in border controls and large-scale deportations, over 11 million irregular migrants are settled in the country (Ambrosini, 2016).

4.4 Foreign Domestic Work

Nowadays, the irregular domestic labour market is one of the sectors which employs a wide number of foreign workers.

In 1979, the Research Centre for Social Investment (CENSIS) provided a general picture of the foreign population residing in Italy and the structural changes in local labour markets. What they found out was that foreign migration answered to a constant demand for low-skilled workers in sectors that were unattractive for national workers, such as agriculture, fishing, and other heavy jobs in small and medium-sized firms in the North of Italy. Thus, in the 1980s most of the emerging literature was based on this general assumption that Italy was a 'case apart' because, compared to 'old' European immigration countries, where immigration flows were joining a positive, expanding labour market, in Italy, migration was favored mainly by a need of low skilled labour and a lack of regulations and restrictions to regulate immigration (Caponio, 2008, Parati, 2005, Reyneri, 2010).

Irregular migration, as mentioned before, responds to the need of the local labour market, where informal work is widely spread, and foreign domestic is part of it. The Italian labour market is regulated by the Italian welfare state, which promotes, as explained earlier, a

model of society where domestic work is usually performed by women of the family (Țoc and Guțu, 2021).

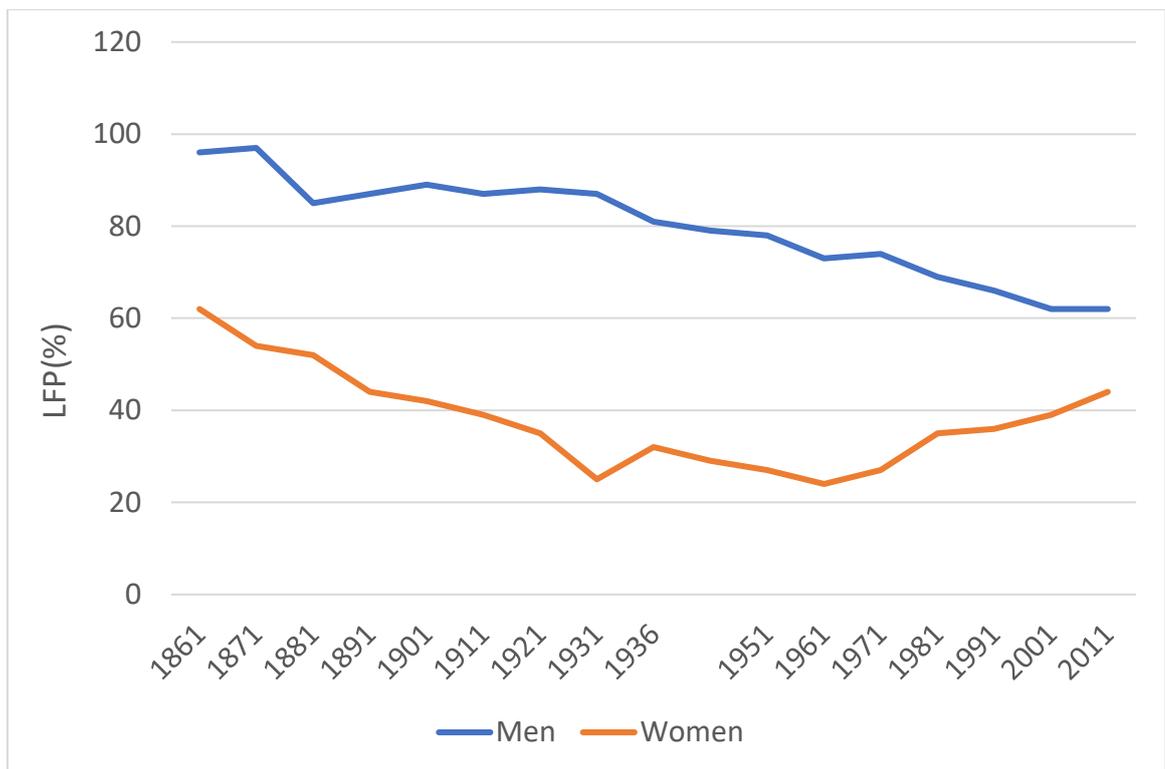
Domestic service – as well as other specialized jobs like cooking, laundry-making, and childcare, are generally considered a 'suitable' occupation for women because of their symbolic links with conservative family values. According to ILO (2021), domestic work includes tasks such as '...cleaning the house, cooking, washing and ironing clothes, taking care of children, or elderly or sick members of a family, gardening, guarding the house, driving for the family, and even taking care of household pets. A domestic worker may work on a full-time or part-time basis; may be employed by a single household or through or by a service provider; may be residing in the household of the employer (live-in worker) or may be living in his or her residence (live-out). A domestic worker may be working in a country of which she/he is not a national, thus referred to as a migrant domestic worker...'

Vergari (2020) explains that foreign domestic work has witnessed an increase in demand which corresponded, as explained before, to the growing participation of women in the labour market and a decreasing involvement in housework.

Sciortino (2013) argues that '...if servants had been traditionally a key element of middle-class status, their presence was now also functional to allow middle-class labour market participation without challenging the traditional division of labour within the household. At the same time, the pool of domestic workers shrank as women had new opportunities for unskilled work opening in manufacturing and public services... As the welfare state did not absorb the productivity differentials, the setting was characterized by both a sharp increase in the demand for personal services and a sharp decrease in their supply... The result was a powerful pull factor for the recruitment of foreign domestic workers...' As the author shows, the relation between irregular migration and the state is very clear, as irregular migration becomes a tool to satisfy the demand for personal house services and balance work

and life of the family. Nevertheless, despite women started to increasingly join the labour market, the patriarchal division of roles in the house has remained still unchallenged, as a woman, rather than a man, is still responsible for domestic work in the house.

Figure 4.1 Labour force participation rate (LFPR) in Italy. Reproduced from Mancini, 2017.

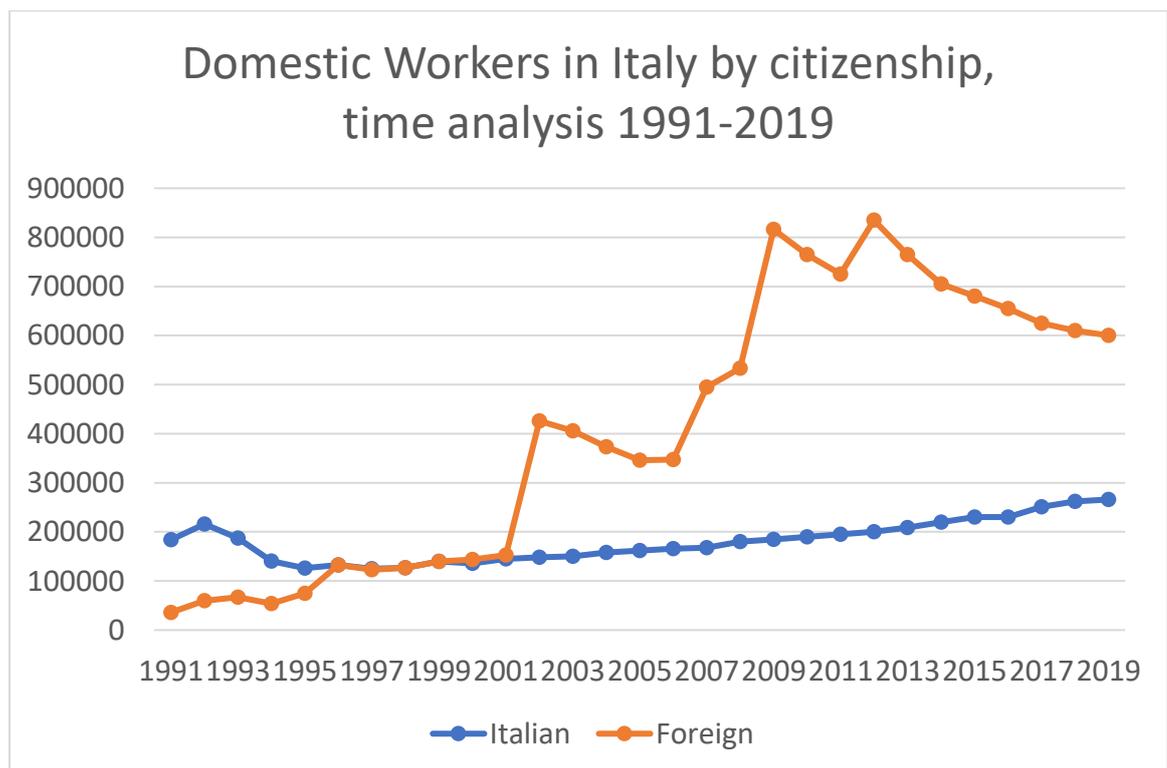


If we look at figure 4.1, we can see the percentage of Italian female labour participation (LFP) from 1861 to 2011 (Mancini 2017). On one hand, men's participation exhibits a slow decline attributed by the author to increased school enrolment, and earlier retirement age. On the other hand, the LFP displays a U pattern shape, with a clear increase after WWII. Mancini (2017) explains that this pattern is consistent with the social and structural transformation in the Italian economy and the reallocation of production among the three major sectors of industry, agriculture, and services. In other words, there has been a boom in the service sector

after the Second World War, while the share of agriculture sped up its 'secular decline' (Mancini, 2017).

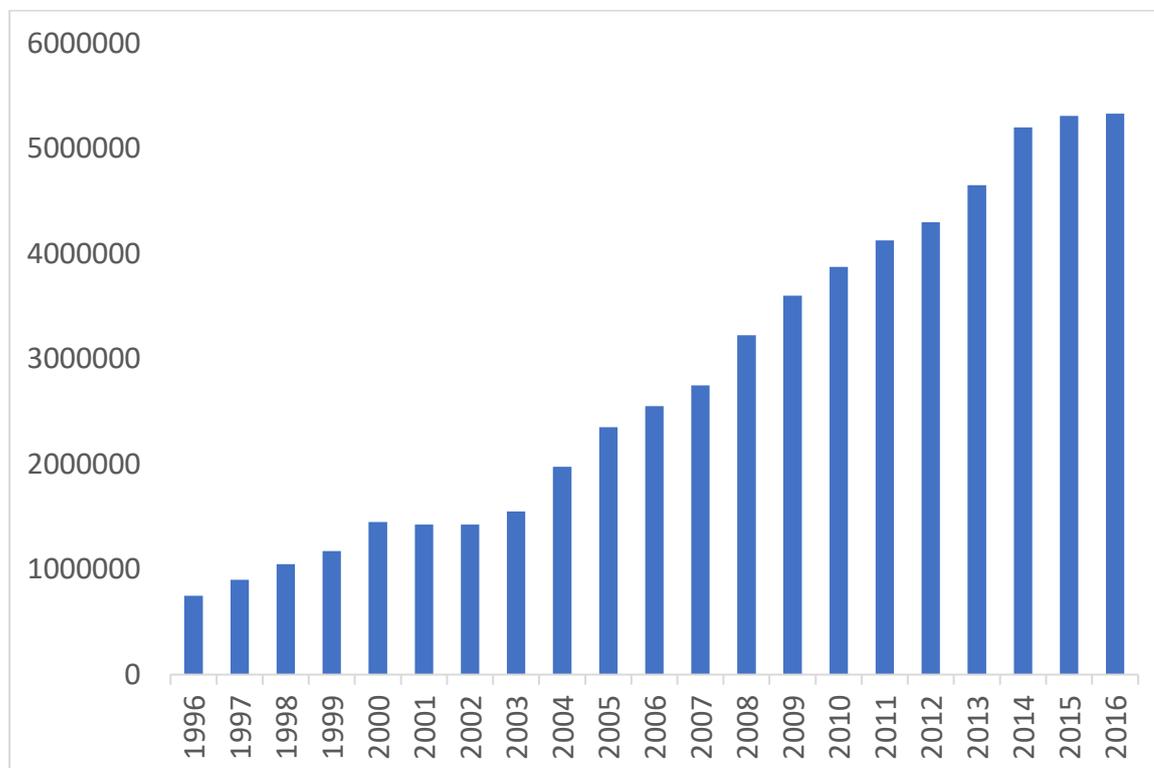
While the number of Italian women joining the labour market was increasing, as Figure 4.1 below shows, between 1991 and 2019 there has been also a parallel remarkable increase in the number of foreign domestic workers (Vergari, 2020, 129). Interestingly, Italian domestic workers are represented by the red curve, which shows a slow, but constant increase in the timeline period of the graph, due most probably to the economic crisis of the labour market in Italy.

Figure 4.2 Reproduced from *Domina* agency on domestic work, based on ISTAT and INPS data (2020).



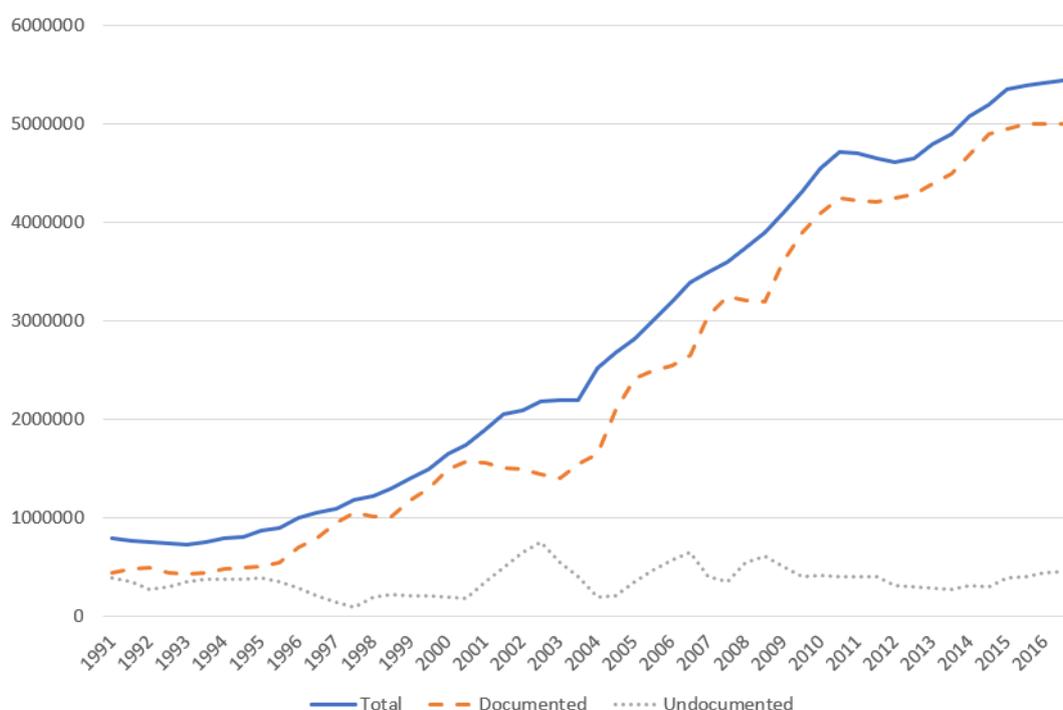
If we look into numbers, according to Ambrosetti and Papparuso (2018), the foreign resident population increased and passed from 737,793 in 1996 to 2,419,483 in 2006 and 5,026,153 in 2016, representing around 8.3% of the total population (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. Evolution of the Foreign Resident Population in Italy (1996-2016).
Reproduced from Ambrosetti and Paparusso, using ISTAT data 2017.



Irregular migrants also form a significant part of the immigrant population. Figure 4.4 below shows the unstable trend of irregular migration over the years, which corresponds to the adoption of different periodical amnesties and other migration laws described earlier in the chapter. Despite the graphs shows that the number of documented migrants is higher than the number of the undocumented ones, the real number of irregular migrants might be higher, as many of them usually reach Italy regularly, but stay in the country even after their document has expired (Reyneri 1998, Sciortino 2004).

Figure 4.4 Estimates of the Irregular Foreign Population Residing in Italy by Status (1991-2016). Reproduced from Ambrosetti and Papanusso, using ISMU data.



Regarding the type of employment, the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2020, 35) states that immigrants are employed in different sectors, with 18% of foreigners working in agriculture, 17.7 % in hotels and restaurants, 17.6 % in construction, and 36 % in collective and personal services, with includes the caregiving and housekeeping services. In these sectors, there is a higher prevalence of females (84%), with domestic caregivers coming from Ukraine (21.5 %), the Philippines (16.5%), Moldova (9.9%), Perú (7.1%), and Sri Lanka (6.9%).

As other authors, Țoc and Guțu (2021) confirm that Italy is the main destination country for Romanian domestic workers. Migration from Eastern Europe, from Romania in particular, has been facilitated by many factors. One factor has been the rising levels of unemployment and low-paid job opportunities in the migrants' countries of origin, characterized by the

deindustrialization of the state industry. In Romania, for example, after 40 years of a communist regime, the country transitioned to a capitalist model, and this change left many people out of work, creating new hotbeds of poverty, a widespread informal market, and dozens of abandoned buildings (Internazionale, 2015). Another similar example is the country of Moldova where, after 1991, an economic collapse in the region led to the loss of many jobs in agriculture and industry, wages were insufficient, and people were suffering many other social problems (Drbohlav & co., 2017).

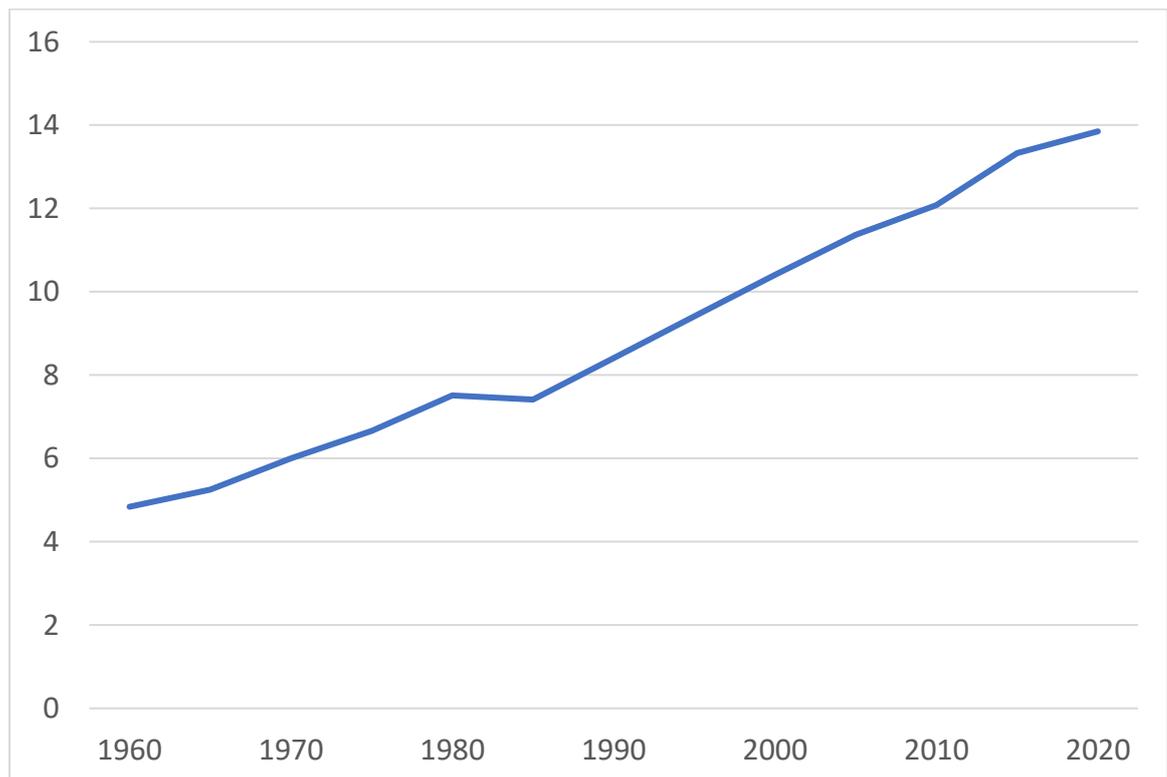
For the territorial distribution of domestic workers, the major concentration of domestic and care workers is recorded in the Northern regions. In particular, the North-East has a high density of domestic workforce, with around 255 thousand care and domestic workers, which is around 29.7% of the total national domestic workforce (Table 4.1, DOMINA report on domestic work, 2019, 50). De Luca (2019) explains that, if we combine the care and domestic workers in the North with the 172 thousand units in the Northeast, the result represents around half of the whole national domestic workforce. In Central regions, instead, there are 244 thousand care and domestic workers (28.4% of the total), while the domestic workforce in South Italy and the Islands accounts for 188 thousand units (around one-fifth of the total).

Table 4.3: Territorial distribution of domestic workforce in 2018. Reproduced from DOMINA report on domestic work, 2019.

Area	Domestic workers	Distribution	Care and domestic workers per 1,000 inhabitants
North West	255,282	29,7%	15,9
North East	171,644	20,0 %	14,7
Centre	244,220	28,4%	20,3
South and Islands	188,087	21,9%	9,1

As discussed above, this steady growth of foreign domestic workers follows the needs of the market, where domestic work is much needed to care for an aging population, which is rapidly increasing in Italy (see Figure 4.5 below).

Figure 4.5: ‘Population ages 65 and above, total – Italy’. Reproduced from World Bank, 2019 Revision.



The increase of foreign domestic work is not solely a responsibility of the state. Mazzola (2015) explains that in Italy, the family plays a crucial role in assisting vulnerable family members. As the assistance provided to families in terms of budget and responsibilities has proved to be scarce and specific policies are still lacking, foreign domestic work has become a must for many families.

4.5 Weak Labour Protection

As the interviews will confirm, Italian families hire female domestic workers irregularly, which mean without a contract, and this condition does not provide enough protection at work.

Many domestic workers, once they arrive in Italy, do not know the language, but they are educated. They have tertiary education, and some are high skilled workers. When they join the domestic labour market, they go through a process of 'deskilling, in which they '... occupy jobs not commensurate with their qualifications and experience...' and this '...usually occurs (although it is not the only factor) due to the nonrecognition of [their] professional qualifications...' (IOM 2013,14).

Castagnone (2013, 18) claims that when migrant domestic workers leave their country, their social resources are weak, mainly related to the few relatives and acquaintances, and this is due to their condition of isolation at work in the household. Nevertheless, over time they develop new relations with Italian persons (such as former employers, trainers of courses) or third-sector organizations, trade unions, and social networks.

Marchetti (2012, p.16) points out that the main problem for migrants is the lack of assistance when they first arrive, and "trust" in the good faith of labour organizations. Usually third-sector organizations provide legal assistance (such as procedures to obtain residence permits) and another kind of supporting integration services in Italy. As for trade unions, migrant domestic workers generally join it only when they obtain a regular status, and this may be due to a lack of knowledge of the union's internal procedures.

Female migrants do not trust trade unions, which are perceived as taking the side of Italian families rather than foreign workers: '...Italian labour organizations are seen as unable to fully protect workers' rights, especially in the case of migrants. They are said to not care about defending migrant domestic workers and to be, ultimately, always on the side of Italian

employers, asking domestic workers to accept very disadvantageous compromises. Various images which relate to this belief reinforce the idea that Italians are always ready to form alliances among themselves, not caring about the rights of foreigners...'

Castagnone (2013) adds that this is also the case with many cooperatives, associations, and agencies close to the Catholic church, which, although they somehow support foreign women, they defend 'an attitude of deference and submission of the family assistant' and do not promote an equal working relationship between the employer and the domestic worker.

As highlighted above, irregular female migrants are weak because they work without a contract. Their work is relegated to the household of the employer, so they work behind the walls. Nobody can see them, and their word is against the family' word.

Living-in includes a bigger number of working hours compared to live-out. Although the report states that a live-in worker performs her duty for an average of 38 hours, as the interviews will show, that is not always the case, as most women are exploited and work all day long, without any holiday or day off. For the family is a win-to-win arrangement, where they can have domestic helpers for an affordable price and the state saves money while pretending to secure and save the country from 'illegal' migrants. In this situation, female migrants are the ones who pay the price, as they are forced to work under terrible circumstances to support their children and relatives left behind in their own country.

According to Sciortino (2013, 15), the lack of a contract also makes them vulnerable because they have no access to long-term health services. As he puts it, '...there is evidence that the overall structure of such a migratory regime keeps migrants as long as possible in the categories where fewer rights are enshrined and where the protection of such rights is less stable... they are entitled only to emergency medical care and to a limited degree of education for their children... As a matter of fact, social assistance for the group is basically left to

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and a handful of local authorities... (Sciortino, 2013, 15).

The duration of the work relationship is also important. Vergari (2020) states that families rely a lot on the assistance and support of domestic workers, who become to them part of their family. While this might be partially true, it is important to remember that most irregular domestic workers work for many years for the same family mainly to be regularized and obtain later the permit of residence. This situation becomes very challenging, as foreign domestic workers cannot leave the family before accumulating several years of work. In this situation, they do not have the power to say no to extra work, exploitation, and abuse as the family can deny them a contract of regular work.

Female migrants also are weak as the Italian law allows a domestic worker to apply for the residence permit only if they have a long-term contract. The duration of the residence permit cannot exceed two years, and to apply for it, the employer has to pay around 300 euros. (Di Masi, 2018).

This situation highlights another vulnerability from the side of the employer (the host family), which usually do not have enough economic resources and many times prefers not to regularize female migrants to avoid extra expenses. As they might lack resources or do not want to use it, many families reduce the workers' salary and use this money to pay taxes related to the contract. Hence, both female migrants and families are vulnerable, where the first are completely dependent on their employer and lack any legal protection.

To sum up, being a regular worker with a contract is of the utmost importance for a foreign female migrant, as she will be protected by the law and she will not be exploited by the family with long working hours, low wages, psychological and sometimes even physical abuses. Once again, this paper states that irregular work will continue if immigration laws and the law regulating domestic work remain weak, a situation that is convenient for both the state

and the family. As stated earlier, there was a 2013-16 collective labour agreement for domestic workers, but it is not clear whether there is a current one or whether the labour law applies to domestic workers. In other words, as it is easily inferable, the law protecting domestic workers is applied but not respected by many employers who don't want/cannot afford to pay all the taxes that are part of a regular domestic work contract. Therefore, it is crucial that the state supports female migrants to set up, learn the language and eventually become regular and obtain the residence permit.

In the following chapter, I will test the validity of the mentioned hypothesis by analyzing the influence of the welfare state on the increasing number of irregular female migrants.

Chapter 5: The Rise of Irregular Domestic Work Amongst Female Migrants

5.1 Introduction

As stated earlier, the research question of this dissertation is why irregular female migrant domestic work in Italy is still persistent, despite the state's attempts at regularization. This chapter will discuss in detail the previous hypothesis and states that irregular work in Italy is on the rise mainly because it responds to the need of the labour market, lacking cheap domestic labour force.

In this chapter, first, the Italian welfare system will be described, second, a definition of Italian middle/class groups will be provided. Last, the process underneath the bargain between the two groups will be conceptualized.

5.2 The Italian Welfare System

The Italian welfare system today is in crisis. Social welfare rights in Europe usually include financial or other aid provided by the state to citizens in need in the form of unemployment benefits, invalidity, pension, support to families with children and elderly people; nurseries for babies, etc (Cesie, 2021). However, in the late 1900s, Italy has been represented by several authors as the 'sick man of Europe' because of its contradictory system, characterized by extremely costly pensions but weak family policies which provide very scarce support to childcare and elderly facilities (Ferrera, 2013).

Ferrera (2013) states that this 'vicious' circle of heavy social spending on pensions for a growing share of the population can be connected to fast aging, an early retirement age weak, low economic growth and fertility rate. Put under a tremendous fiscal strain, the Italian state cut out other necessary social spending for other social services such as childcare, social support for the elderly or job training, and human capital formation (Lynch, 2014, 6). Consequently, families have to directly hire irregular domestic workers, and state services are

being substituted by the informal work of foreign domestic migrants working in the household as housekeepers, babysitters, caregivers, babysitters, and so on (Gabrielli, 2021, 189).

As indicated in Table 5.1 below, irregular domestic work allows the state to save a large amount of money. Thanks to families' contributions, the State saves around 1.1% on the GDP, which equals to 16.6 billion. This saving refers to both the documented and undocumented domestic work. In a possible scenario without family expenditures, the state expenses might have increased of 53%, and pass from 23.3 billion to 34.9 billion, with the state saving dropping down to 0.7%. Therefore, Table 4.1 shows that is convenient for the state to cut public expenses on family support to save money; if families wouldn't contribute to cover these expenses, the state would have to manage an expenditure of 11.6 billion higher than the current one. However, the Table also shows that, in Italy, public expenditure for pensions are very high (16.3% of the GDP) compared to the EU average, while for families, the public expenditure is low (2.7% of the GDP) compared to the EU average (4.2% of the GDP).

Table 5.1: The contribution of Domestic work to Italian GDP. Reproduced from De Luca, 2021. Osservatorio Nazionale Domina sul Lavoro Domestico.



In this context, one could say that the deficit in the “welfarism” of the “welfare state” could be at the origin of informality and irregular migration.

Reyneri (1998) illustrates that irregularity in the domestic work is the results of several factors: on the demand side, the high costs of social contributions push many households not to register female migrants, and on the supply side, housekeeping is the only available option for migrants who lack a permit of stay after their tourist visa expires. The big involvement of migrants workers in the informal economy is often regarded as an indicator of an exceeding

number of migrants, however, he states that ‘the underground economy has long been well rooted in Italy as well as in all South European countries...In Southern Europe more people are working in occupations where it is easier to ignore administrative and legal rules: agriculture, building, small firms in manufacturing and services, self-employment. Furthermore, the public regulation of economic activities is traditionally strict, but scarcely effective and ‘free rider’ behavior prevails within the common welfare culture... While migrants cannot be said to have brought about the submerged economy, which in Italy is a domestic phenomenon, with roots going back a long way, migrants’ propensity to accept not registered jobs did contribute towards its continuation’.

Miyazak (2019) compares the Italian welfare system with the Japanese one, and highlights a few important differences between the two systems, such as the different enforcement of the immigration law.

While Japan has adopted a restricted migration control system which allows very few migrant care workers enter in the country, Italy is organized according to ‘...the interrelation among the repeatedly conducted regularization programs, the increase in unauthorized migrants, the hyper-aging population, the welfare familism and the domestic work sector...’ (Miyazak, 2019). In addition, he notes that the Italian state do not invest in migrants training and integration in the local society.

According to Miyazak (2019), in Italy, care and migrant policies scarcely concern the training, regulation, and evaluation of migrants' care work conditions and professional skills. On the contrary, Japan is a more formal and regulated economy, where care work candidates are supposed to graduate from the faculty of nursing and attend other training and language courses. While the author makes an interesting comparison between the Japanese and the Italian welfare systems, he does not investigate the reasons why the state control on irregular

work is weak and what are the Italian families' responsibilities in the growing of the informal market, where female migrant domestic workers have very small protection and are exploited.

In this context, it can be stated that the rise of irregular work is the result of this tacit pact between the government that wants to save money and Italian middle-class families, struggling to meet their needs and looking for external support at an affordable price. The state doesn't support families and public social structures for the elderly are completely absent. The mechanism is clear: a conservative state, based on the male-breadwinner family model started falling off under the pressure of middle-class women joining the labour market, therefore, overlooking irregular migration and work was necessary not to crack down under the pressure of Italian families in need of social support.

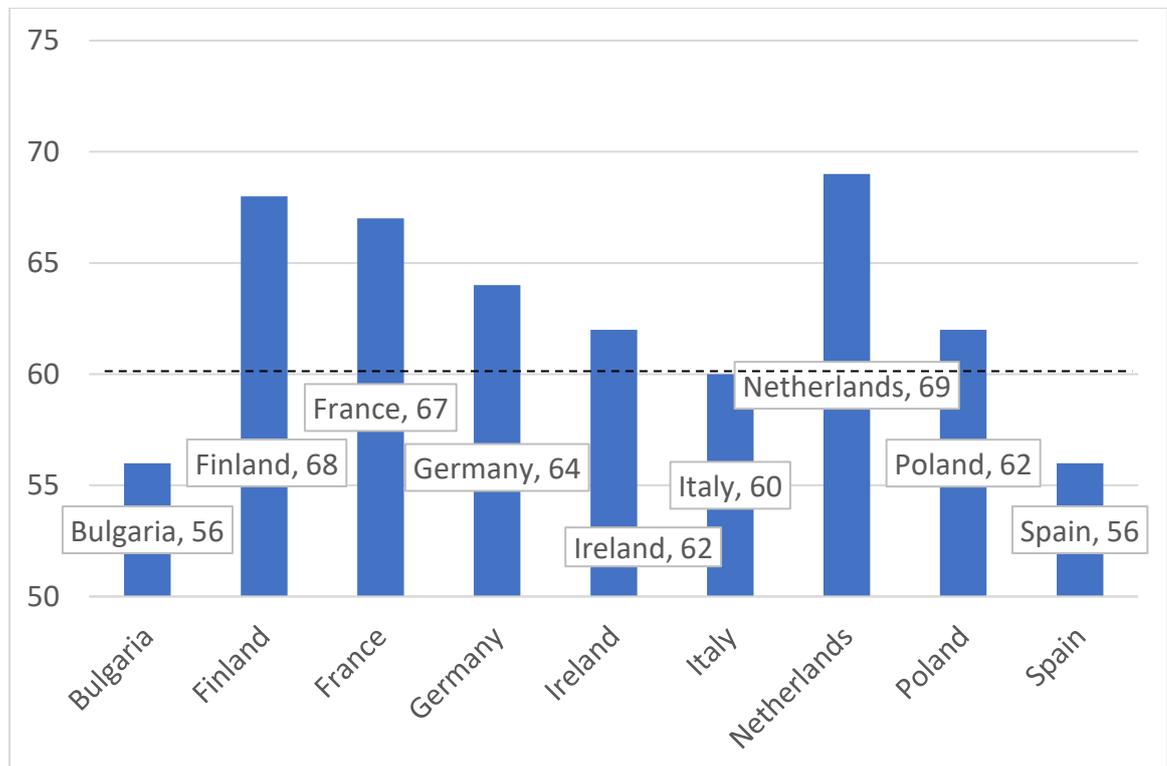
In the last decades, as the welfare system has not improved, a big financial burden has been placed on middle-class families who had to cope with all the effects of the lockdown, such as job loss, distance learning, remote job, and lack of financial and social resources (De Luca et al, 2021, 188). Insufficient social services and an inadequate school system are major points that need to be addressed, especially concerning the progressive aging of the Italian population and the need to have support for the household. As explained before, a weak welfare system, combined with the need of Italian middle/class groups has determined, in the long term, the rise of irregular domestic work. Therefore, it is important to describe what a middle-class group is.

5.3 Italian Middle-Class Families

Although the middle- class group in Italy is shrinking, it still constitutes a big share of society. To define this social group, it is useful to consider several dimensions, such as income, profession, education, and so on. According to Xuequan (2017), Italian society is segmented into nine different social groups. The two largest groups are represented by white-collar families, and they are households of office workers and wealthy pensioners. In this thesis,

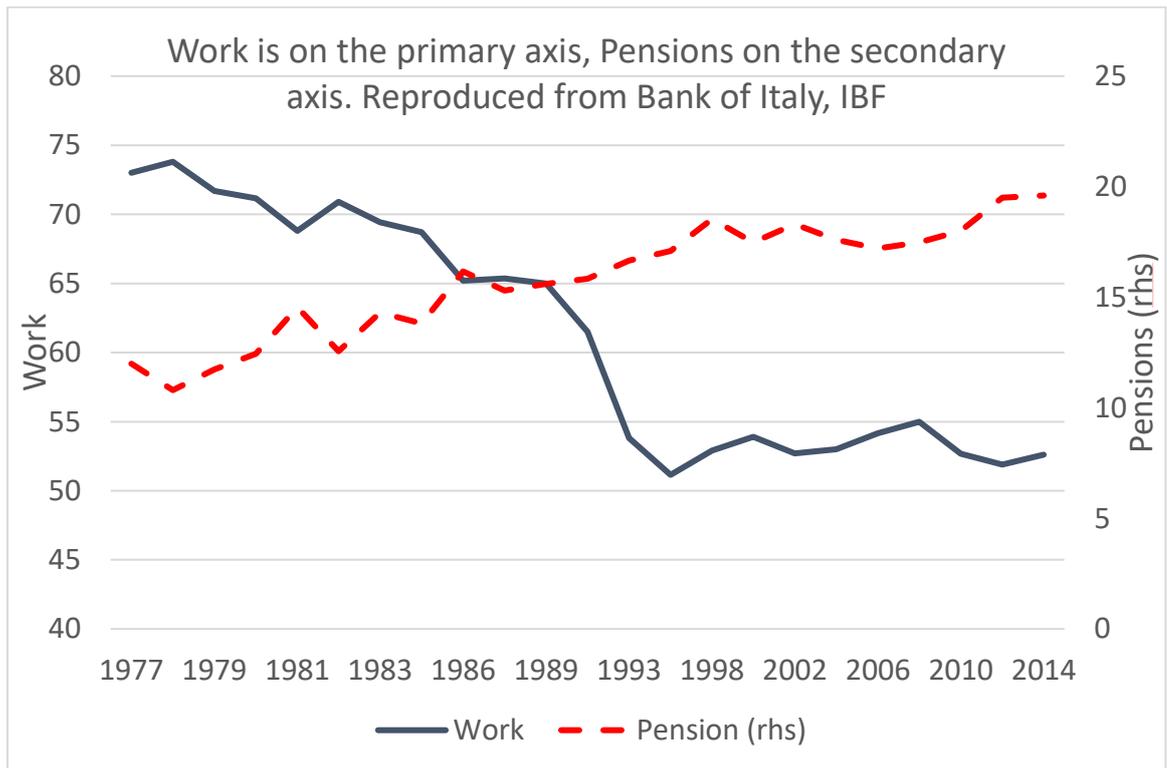
middle-class groups are defined according to their status in a social hierarchy, income distribution, and employment position (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1, The size of the Italian middle-class in 2013. Reproduced from *The Position of Middle-Class Households in nine European countries* of Siegmann and Staneva,.



Bitetti and Morganti (2021) argue that the Italian middle-class is divided into sub-groups, and the difference mostly relates to the strong intergenerational income imbalance, where an older-generation middle class is still receiving generous pensions from public welfare (see Figure 5.2 below), and the new generation depends on short-term jobs, as mentioned before.

Figure 5.2: Share of household by the source of income (Reproduced from IBF, Bitetti and Morganti, 2021).



The authors also add that these new classifications for the middle-class are based on income, working status, and age. They find that in these two groups- middle- and upper middle class- the main demographic feature is old age and income, related, as explained before, to the generous pension system.

Despite the economic crisis making it more complicated, especially for lower-income groups, to afford domestic help, this study argues that many middle-class families had to hire a domestic worker to balance work and care for the elderly members of the family.

After describing the characteristics of the Italian middle-class groups and the welfare state, the thesis will attempt to address the connection between the rise of irregular migration and the tacit pact between the two groups. To answer the research question, it is then important to explain how the state can influence middleclass groups through political propaganda, mass media e other means.

5.4 Italian Middle-Class Families

As the literature shows, in the last few decades in Italy, the issue of irregular migration has been used as a political tool during elections in a similar way by different governments to gain more consensus among the public (Caneva (2014).

Terlizzi (2019, 26) affirms that, since the 1900s, '... the securitarian-humanitarian mix has characterized the discourse over the need to establish cooperation with – and provide assistance to sending countries... Decision-makers – from both the center-left and the center-right – have always considered the externalization of border management and migration control as the winning strategy to curb migratory flows...' Interestingly, the idea of irregular migration spread by the media and political parties draw the attention on migrants coming to Italy by boats, and on the importance of preventing them to reach the country to protect society from 'smugglers, drug traffickers, thieves and terrorists'. Nevertheless, this political propaganda does not include foreign domestic workers, or the fact that they are irregular and exploited by Italian families. On the contrary, they affirm that '*badanti*' (domestic workers) are necessary figures in our society that need to be 'protected'.

Similarly, Gattinara (2016) claims that political actors separate different aspects of the immigration issue and turned it to their advantage to gain electoral support, instead of fully disregarding or endorsing it. In this way, the picture of a party anti- or pro-immigration is, therefore, simplified. He affirms that '... how the immigration issue is debated at the local level varies substantially depending on a locality's characteristics. That is, local conditions and opportunities shape how migration is perceived and experienced, and thus how electoral actors represent it...' He believes that migration has different dimensions, the cultural and religious dimension, the law and the order dimension, and finally the socio-economic dimension.

If we look into the profile of the electorate, we can see that it is dominated by middle-class voters. Bitetti and Morganti (2017) state that '... immigration is an issue deeply felt by

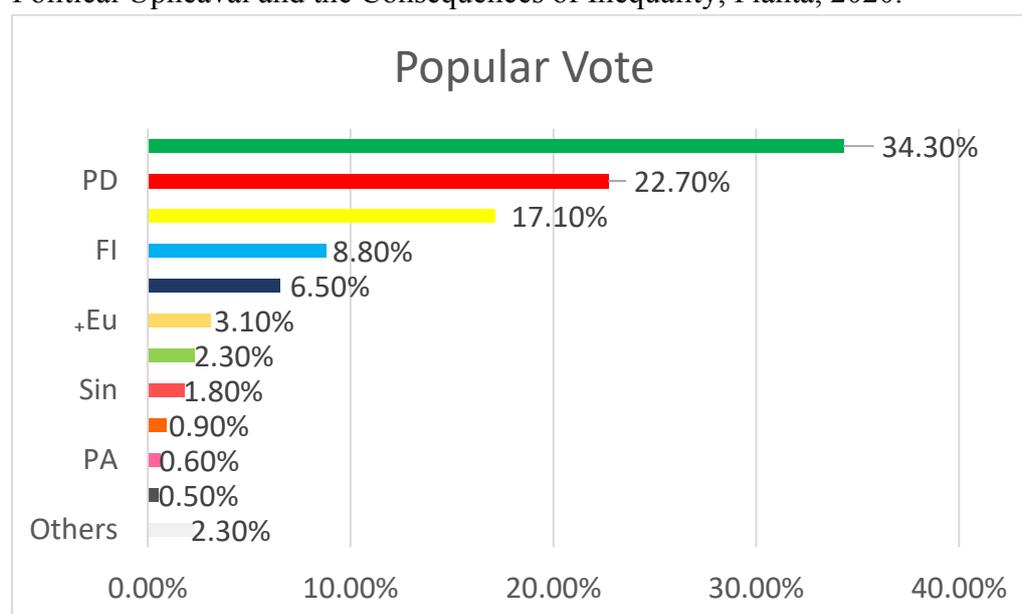
the Italian low-income class, and by that portion of the middle class which perceives themselves as lower class. Based on a yearly observatory, "Gli Italiani e lo Stato", from 2015 to 2016 the number of citizens answering "I believe that immigrants are a danger to public order and people's safety" rose from 28% to 40%. Moreover, '...Public expenditures on migrants are routinely debated as a major component of public spending: an issue framed, often violently, as "stealing" from Italian citizens and stripping them of their right to welfare..' They add that usually, the average middle-class Italian voter is the "responsible father of the family" and their electoral choices could be placed in the "median" area of a spatial model throughout all the transformations of the Italian political system.

Interestingly, Maraffi (2020) describes the evolution of the Italian electorate in different areas of the country, and he says that the vote follows ideological and cultural divides and social inequality in wealth and income in different parts of Italy. These general political tendencies on migration and irregular labour can be taken as expressions of the middle-class stance and interest that supports the status-quo of irregular female domestic labour. Here, it is important to highlight how middle-class Italians generally have a dual opinion on migrants: while their view on immigration is based on their fears for the security of their community and the defense of their cultural identity and heritage, they don't see foreign domestic workers the same way as the other migrants, coming, for example, from Africa.

Pianta (2020) groups Italian regions into three areas: Metropolitan regions' (the regions of Turin, Genoa, Milan, and Rome), 'Third Italy' (the North-East and Central regions), and the South. He adds that Metropolitan regions have the country's highest income levels, but also high levels of inequalities. 'Third Italy' regions have intermediate income levels and the lowest inequalities. Southern regions have the lowest income levels and the highest inequality. In addition, he argues that many votes gained by right-wing parties are driven by the level of income and inequality. As he puts it, '... The Lega [right-wing populist political party) has

greater consensus in those regions where the incomes of the middle class are pushed down and get closer to those of the poor, and where the distance between the middle class and the richest employees is lower...Voting for the M5S [a populist, anti-immigration party] is strongly associated with income poverty and casualization, reaching very high values in Southern regions, where both variables are particularly high...' (see Figure 5.3 below, votes shares in 2019 in Italy). In this way, one can say that anti-immigration sentiments result from a constructed discourse that hides the true causes of inequality: the neoliberal policies advocated by the parties to which the votes go. This attitude showed by political parties can be said to be a manifestation of a 'sick' state, trapped in a vicious circle of 'welfare and fiscal crisis – a growth of irregular jobs – migrants entering the submerged economy – further growth of irregular labour – worsening of welfare and fiscal crisis – growing attitude of rejection towards immigrants and strict migration policy – illegal immigration – immigrants forced to enter the submerged economy – and so on. The vicious circle is clear in a country such as Italy, where the values of universalistic welfare state did not have the time to take root, and where community and family bonds are traditionally very strong'. (Reyneri, 1998).

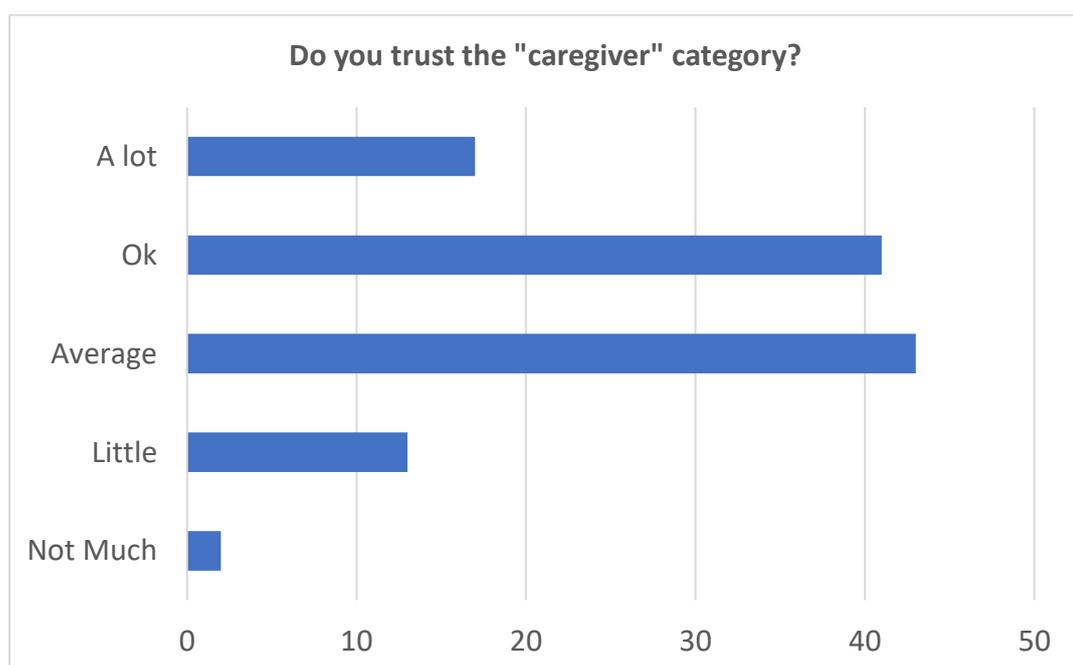
Figure 5.3: Vote shares in the 2019 European Elections in Italy. Reproduced from Italy's Political Upheaval and the Consequences of Inequality, Pianta, 2020.



Although those official figures show a tendency toward anti-immigration parties, as explained before, they do not include foreign domestic workers as ‘dangerous’ migrants. Many official surveys, in fact, show that foreign female domestic workers are generally trusted, more than men. Once again, it is important to shed light on the gendered nature of irregular domestic labour, where females generally are held as less of a threat than males because they are perceived as less violent and more docile.

Pepe (2021) asserts that the majority of Italians trust ‘*badanti*’ (see Figure 5.4 below). The term refers to foreign, and sometimes Italian, female domestic workers employed on a long-term basis in an Italian household. If we take a look at Figure 5.4, the data collected in this poll shows that around 49% of respondents have generally enough or a lot of confidence in the role of the caregiver, while only 15% say they have little confidence in this figure. In other words, most respondents consider caregivers as a fundamental and essential element in society to support fragile people.

Figure 5.4: Public survey on domestic work. Reproduced from ‘*Badacare*’ domestic work agency (2021)



As it can be easily inferred by looking at Figure 5.3 and 5.4, it is clear how middle-class voters' behaviour on the issue of migration is contradictory, and hence it can explain the pact with the state according to which different governments promise to keep its citizens safe and protected against irregular migrants who 'threaten' society, but it favours the presence of '*badanti*', who are necessary to maintain stability inside the Italian family.

To further explain my argument, next chapter will report the interviews that have been conducted in May 2022. Some participants of this research come from peripheral countries within the EU (Poland, Romania), while others come from outside of it like Moldova. Two women, instead, come from South America. As it will be showed, most participants entered easily in Italy, worked irregularly for many years, and received little or any protection from the state, trade unions and NGOs. As discussed before, NGOs and the church can support female migrants, however, it is never enough to guarantee female migrants labour and social protection from the time they enter the country and after that.

Chapter 6: Results

6.1 Introduction

One research question is investigated in the present study. It attempts to identify the reasons why irregular domestic work is on the rise among female migrants in Italy. The study included seven questions, and it was conducted entirely online, through calls and written messages. In this chapter, the results of the interviews with irregular female migrant domestic workers are reported. Results of the interviews that irregular migration is not simply the result of weak immigration laws but is a manifestation of the needs of the informal market. As Reyneri (1998) puts it, ‘While migrants cannot be said to have brought about the submerged economy, which in Italy is a domestic phenomenon, with roots going back a long way, migrants’ propensity to accept not registered jobs did contribute towards its continuation’. In other words, in a welfare state in crisis, foreign domestic workers are necessary to provide care to families.

6.2 Interviews Results

The interviews that I have conducted have been determinant to confirm my theories. All participants’ answers were in line with the theory that the state is absent, and it is intentionally allowing female domestic migrants to easily reach Italy and work in Italian households to avoid spending more resources for families. In other words, the results of these interviews showed that migration laws and control at the borders are weak, and this allows smugglers and other types of intermediaries’ actors to traffic migrants and earn money on it. The interviews’ names and personal information are available in Appendix 1, while questions are reported in Appendix 2.

6.2.1 Borders control and Intermediate Actors

The first question that I asked participants was:

What was your first experience when you arrived in Italy?

Table 6.1 What was your first experience when you arrived in Italy?

Ioana (Romania)	I left my country in 2002 and entered Italy with a tourist visa. I came by car and a friend of mine helped me find a job. At that time, I found an illegal agency, which asked me for 350 euros to reach Italy. However, I decided not to pay as it was too expensive for me. At the border, nobody asked me where I was going because the truth is that everybody knew it...'
Claudia (Romania)	I left Romania in 2007. My friend in Romania said that I could have found a job in Italy like her brother, without knowing the language. She said that he was not paid, but that I would have earned 35 euros per day. Therefore, I paid 120 euros for the bus ticket to Vittoria. When I arrived in Italy, they came to pick us up and brought us to the countryside near the city of Ragusa. There, we were forced to work in the tomato fields all day, and we could leave the house as there were cameras literally in every corner of the house...there was also a Romanian lady who was reporting everything to the 'master'... I was panicking... I did not know anybody, I didn't know the language, what could I do? Where could I go? One day they also brought some pit-bull in the garden, and they left them starving so that nobody would leave the house at the night with the fear to be eaten...'
Elisaveta (Moldova)	I arrived in Italy through an agency, to which I paid a huge amount of money that I cannot tell you now. I couldn't come by plane because of the control at the borders, where you must show that there is an employer ready to hire you and offer accommodation for a few weeks...as you arrive as a tourist you cannot have a regular contract, and that is the reason why most of the migrants work irregularly (in nero) ... I have paid 2.500 euros to the agency. The agency organized everything...we were a group of 8 people and each of us paid the same amount to leave Moldova and reach Italy. Traveling by train was the only option because there is no control at the border: we were not asked for any documents, nothing...they only told us not to speak so that the police wouldn't recognize that we were from Moldova.
Anna (Poland)	I suffered a lot with my first job. I went to Naples because a friend of mine said I could have found a job easily without speaking the language. I came by bus. At the Italian border, nobody checked my passport. I was checked by the police only in Czechoslovakia and Austria.

Lara (Venezuela)	I traveled by plane to Italy to meet with the family, and I entered with a family reunification visa.
Mildred (Ecuador)	I left Ecuador because the state was bankrupt. The country was falling apart. When I was in Ecuador, the family prepared the document for me, and when I arrived, I simply went to the Consulate with the 'Nulla Osta' and they issued a work permit for me. With the work permit, I was given a residence permit with a validity of 2 years.

6.2.2 Italian Middle-class families and Weak Labour Protection

Another important aspect that came out in the participant's answers has been the lack of information and social protection at the workplace and in life of foreign domestic workers.

The question that I asked to female migrants was:

What kind of support have you received from the state and other informal organizations when you entered Italy? (e.g., access to health services, access to educational services, etc...)

6.2. What kind of support have you received from the state and other informal organizations when you entered Italy? (e.g. access to health services, access to educational services, etc...)

Ioana (Romania)	There is 'omertà' in Italy between the state and the law...everyone knows everything, but they don't do anything to change the situation. There is huge exploitation of foreign female migrants who come to the country to work and sustain their families in their own country. I know many women from Moldova and Georgia who are suffering in this situation...
Claudia (Romania)	The police, the state, and nobody helped us. We didn't speak the language, what could we do? Our word against the family's word...In Lentini (Sicily) they are used to irregular work, they will never make a contract...I was working day and night, without any holiday or day off. My salary was 500 euros per month, exactly 2.50 euros per hour. She [the employer] was saying that if I wanted a contract, she would have deducted taxes and contributions from my salary as taxes were too high... When I finally found a stable job in Catania, I reported these families and I brought them to Court. The trial lasted 4 years and after that, I was given 2000 for the time, I have worked irregularly I could have filed a report earlier, but I was afraid to lose the case in court...'

Elisaveta (Moldova)	I worked 'in nero' (irregularly) for two years. It was hell. I was abused, but I couldn't say anything because there was nobody to testify to it. I was afraid that if I reported to the family, they would not help me regularize my position. I didn't have any rights, no pension, no holiday, nothing. The state, NGOs, the church, nobody helped me.
Anna (Poland)	Nobody, nobody helped me. When I worked for this family I didn't have food and I had to sleep in the same room as this old man...one time I was so hungry that I took a piece of bread and they started a war against me, they wanted to kill me...they were eating a different meal than mine, which was, most of the time, a can of tuna with a hand of pasta...the job was so hard as this man was ill and couldn't walk. He was waking me up many times during the night. When Poland became a member of the EU, things were easier for me. I moved to Tuscany, and I found a family that made a regular work contract and paid taxes...'
Lara (Venezuela)	I arrived in Italy with a tourist visa only and I was waiting for my permit to stay...I didn't have my room, I worked day and night, and this old man was calling me every two hours...the man was ill with Alzheimer's. As I didn't have a residence permit, I didn't even have free health care. When I obtained the permit to stay with the family reunion visa, the employer finally regularized me...'
Mildred (Ecuador)	When I moved to Italy after 15 days, I was already working. I found a family, they regularized me, and paid a flight ticket to travel to Ecuador and apply for a 'Nulla Osta...' In addition, I could attend a free language course provided for free by the church.

The three following questions on the relationship with the family have been asked:

- 3. a Do you think that the family had an interest to regularize you?
- 3. b Has the family not regularized you from the beginning because there is no law to protect domestic workers?
- 1. -3. c Why do you think Italian families prefer to hire a woman rather than a man for domestic housework?

6.3 Do you think that the family had the interest to regularize you?

Has the family not regularized you from the beginning because there is no law to protect domestic workers?

Ioana (Romania)	-Families prefer not to regularize you. I worked for a VIP family and, despite they were very rich, they left me with a tourist visa to avoid paying taxes related to the work contract. I was earning 800 euros per month to work day and night, without any day off...Only after many years, I refused to work irregularly and I finally find a stable job. -Despite there being a law, nobody makes sure that is being respected.
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Claudia (Romania)	-In Lentini, nobody makes a contract. They are used to it. They want to exploit people. -The law to protect us is very weak.
Elisaveta (Moldova)	Many families hire you irregularly because the law is not enforced and they have to wait for the ' <i>Flow Decree</i> ' to regularize you.
Anna (Poland)	No, they don't. They don't want to pay taxes and contributions. The state? Nobody checks on us. They are not interested if you work 34 a week with a sick person.
Lara (Venezuela)	No, they didn't. They don't want to pay taxes. To be hired regularly, you also need to wait for the ' <i>Flow Decree</i> '.
Mildred (Ecuador)	The family usually hires irregularly because they want to save money. To have a regular contract, you must apply for the ' <i>Flow Decree</i> '.

6.4 Why do you think Italian families prefer to hire a woman rather than a man for domestic housework?

Ioana (Romania)	A few men are doing this job, maybe because a woman is the one that has the role of housewife: she washes the dishes, cooks, and cleans, especially here in the South of Italy.
Claudia (Romania)	Because women are better to do house chores. Today, 80% of domestic workers are women, although men can help with cooking and heavy house chores such as gardening or assisting sick, overweight elderly men.
Elisaveta (Moldova)	If a man has studied, he will not work as a domestic worker, he will choose to work in the hospital as a Certified Nurse, but for us is different. Most Italian families prefer to have a woman, and our education will not count much because a woman can do everything in the house, she can cook, clean, iron...what does a man can do?...
Anna (Poland)	Women are more fragile. Italian men don't do housework, you know? If a man doesn't like a job, he will just leave. A woman is weak and will accept anything...
Lara (Venezuela)	It depends on the family, however, people prefer to hire a female, rather than a male, as a domestic worker.
Mildred (Ecuador)	Generally, families prefer women, however, when there is heavy work or a sick old, heavy man, they prefer to hire a man. They need someone strong when the assisted is disabled and needs somebody to wake up and move. However, most of the time women are the ones who are chosen.

A question on the role of the state was:

Do you think the Italian state is corrupted and has an interest to keep foreign female

workers irregular?

6.5 Do you think the Italian state is corrupted and has an interest to keep foreign female workers irregular?

Ioana (Romania)	A big yes! All that I can say is that everything is because of corruption. They don't regularize us because they are corrupted.
Claudia (Romania)	We are not protected, we have nothing. When I went to Court, it took me 2 years to have a trial and file a case against the family. The Italian state and the Romanian state abandoned us. I was left in the hand of the Romanian mafia.
Elisaveta (Moldova)	I think so. Why there is a law to hire construction workers every year, but we have to wait two years to be hired regularly [<i>Flow Decree</i>]? When a family finds a domestic worker, they cannot regularize her. They must wait for the law.
Anna (Poland)	I don't know, but what I know is that in Germany all domestic workers are regularized, but in Italy, unfortunately, we are not.
Lara (Venezuela)	The state prefers to regularize us so they can take taxes. It is the family the one that wants to hire us irregularly to avoid paying contributions, holidays, and so on. When I left the family, I asked for a recommendation letter, they said it was not possible because I was hired without a contract. Maybe they were scared I could file a report against them.
Mildred (Ecuador)	No, because they need to regularize us and get our taxes, because nobody will reach the pension, thus the state can earn a lot of money from our taxes. The ' <i>Flow Decree</i> ' is only a tool to control the labour market: there are too many migrants, and there is not enough work for everybody.

6.2.3 Pathways to regularization

The last important topic that has been discussed during the interviews was what could be done to improve foreign migrants' conditions.

Hence, the following question was:

What do you suggest it can be done to improve the condition of irregular female domestic workers?

6.6. What do you suggest it can be done to improve the condition of irregular female domestic workers?

Ioana (Romania)	It is all the state's responsibility. There is bad propaganda against migrants in Italy...Moreover, we have only duties towards the family, but we should also have rights. Our job should be protected...the state doesn't enforce any law...the family's mentality can only change if the state takes an action...
Claudia (Romania)	'...I only ask for protection; we are completely abandoned by the state...'
Elisaveta (Moldova)	'...Many families do not respect the contract terms, and many times we work for extra hours, and we are paid less...This is not fair...'
Anna (Poland)	If you ask me what could be done to improve our situation, I have a list ready...first, we have to be paid contributions...no one cares about us...our job should be appreciated, as nobody does it... the state also is not interested in our job...when we go to the office to fill a document, nobody explains to us what it is written, and we don't understand it...In addition, as Italian citizens, we have the right to receive a pension, I am a European citizen... '
Lara (Venezuela)	I think that the work contract has to be changed: a woman cannot work without any holiday, locked in the house, and with only half an afternoon per week to leave the workplace.
Mildred (Ecuador)	Information about every law should be available for foreign migrants. We have the right to know about all different types of contracts for domestic work, salaries obligations, and so on.

6.3 Interpretation of findings

The purpose of the present study was to find out why irregular domestic work is on the rise amongst foreign female migrants. The results of the interviews highlight that irregular work is still widespread not only because of weak migration laws but also because of the increasing demand for cheap domestic work in the labour market.

As the interviews confirmed, reinforcing border control (the external and internal fencing) cannot significantly reduce irregular domestic work, as migrants can adopt different strategies to reach Italy: tourist visa (Mildred, and Ioana), family reunification (Lara), or through intermediaries' networks (Claudia, Elizaveta, Anna). Both Claudia and Elizaveta reached Italy through the 'help' of fellow nationals, who offered them a job and fake

documents. Mildred's experience, compared to the other interviewees, was different as, although she entered the country with a tourist visa, she found an honest employer who helped her apply for a '*Nulla Osta*' work permit (see '*Nulla Osta*' in chapter 4, section 4.2), in addition, she had a relative already living there, so she could request a family reunion permission too. Migration laws also don't help migrants to regularize their status. In this context, Elisaveta and Lara explained that, once domestic workers are in Italy, they cannot be regularized because they have to wait around two years the '*Flow Decree*', which establishes the quota of foreign workers admitted to Italy.

Another important point to discuss is the migrants' nationality. The nationality of irregular migrants counts, as it determines the different migration trajectories and experiences. For instance, Claudia and Ioana are both from Romania, however, since Romania joined the EU in 2007 they had different experiences. Ioana needed a visa to enter Italy, as she travelled back in 2002, while Claudia easily reached Italy in 2007 with her ID.

As it has been described previously, irregular migration is also fed by intermediaries. For example, Claudia reached Italy with word of mouth. She was promised a good job, that didn't require knowledge of the language. Nevertheless, when she got off her bus, she has been kidnapped by fellow nationals and sent to a house in the countryside.

The interviews with these women helped understand the importance of being supported by institutions and society from the beginning. When asked about what could be done to help female migrants obtain a regular job, all participants agree that the main problem is the lack of information when they enter Italy, the language barrier and the loneliness they experience when they move to a new country. Irregular work makes foreign migrants weak: they cannot complain, live in constant fear, and experience loneliness. Irregular work makes foreign migrants weak: they cannot complain, live in constant fear, and they are alone. The language barrier, prevent them to change jobs or apply for a visa. Elisaveta and Anna, for example,

revealed that they worked irregularly for many years because they couldn't understand or speak Italian and did not have many acquaintances. The language barrier and lack of support meant for most of them irregular work without a contract.

A contract of work is the starting point. Almost all participants, except Lara, had to work irregularly for several years before obtaining a regular job. Claudia worked without a contract for 6 years, Ioana and Anna for 4 years. Conversely, Mildred could find honest employer from the beginning, but she agreed, as Lara, that a transparent and clear contract is very important to build a stable career and avoid exploitation. The duration of irregular work is also strictly dependent upon the honesty and financial condition of the employer, who usually prefer to keep their employee irregular to save money. The interviewees confirmed that they worked irregularly for many years, and this situation was convenient for the family. For example, Ioana told that she worked for a VIP family and, despite they had enough money, they preferred to keep her '*in nero*' (irregular) to avoid paying taxes.

The lack of a regular contract in most cases translates into exploitation and no access to long-term health or judicial services. Claudia, for example, who had to work irregularly for 6 years, couldn't report the family, and she was denied access to judicial services, long-term public health services, and other types of social assistance to which Italians are entitled to. Similarly, Anna shared that she had to quit her job due to all the abuses she had suffered, and she still cannot access to long-term health assistance and does not have a pension, which could help her sustain the costs of her medical treatments.

Lastly, most interviews with foreign migrants are also in line with the idea that Italian society is highly gendered, and women and men have different roles inside the household. That is to say, irregular migration follows the social division in our society, where men are the breadwinners and women are the main caregivers, relegated to the private sphere. For example, both Ioana and Elisaveta argued that women are the ones responsible for the house, however,

Claudia added that also men can ‘help’ with gardening and heavy chores, but she admitted that 80 % of domestic workers are still women.

Hence, here comes the implicit bargain between the state and Italian families: both the state and Italian middle-class families have an interest to keep foreign domestic workers irregular, as they both can save money and contribute to maintaining an equilibrium in the demand and supply system of domestic work in Italy.

6.4 Conclusion

To sum up, the results of the interviews showed that irregular domestic work is widespread amongst female migrants because it responds to the need of the market, where the demand for cheap, female domestic work is very high, and it is regulated by the needs of middle-class Italian families and the state. Most participants’ answers can be related this hypothesis, especially when they affirmed that Italian families prefer not to pay taxes, or when they explained that migrations laws are weak, as labour protection is. This issue will be further investigated in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The present study aimed to demonstrate that female migrant domestic work is still widespread not only because immigration laws are weak, but because it is part of a well-rooted informal labor market, where foreign workers supply the cheap workforce necessary to provide care to families. In this framework, one could say that there is a clear relationship between the implicit bargain amongst middle-class households and a welfare state in crisis, which favors and sustains the increasing number of irregular female domestic workers. While the state has cut social expenditure, it has also allowed foreign migrants to enter Italy and join the large Italian informal economy to avoid the fall of the welfare system.

Six research questions have been presented in this study. The first question attempted to investigate if irregular migration is on the rise because of weak control at the border, the other questions, instead, looked into the state and family positions in this matter to demonstrate that irregular domestic work mainly responds to the need of the labour market and the rule of a welfare state in crisis. In this chapter, the findings of the study will be presented and then analyzed by other research studies on the rise of irregular domestic work amongst foreign migrants in Italy. This chapter will also introduce the implications and limitations of this study.

7.2 Discussion of Results

7.2.1 Border Control and Intermediate Actors

While the majority of the literature attributes irregular migration and work mainly to the ineffectiveness of border control, internal enforcement measures, and deportation (Massey, Durand and Pren 2015; Papademetriou, 2005, Ambrosini, 2016), this study affirms that ineffective border is just one side of the coin. As the interviews demonstrate, migrants easily

reach Italy, mainly through a tourist visa, their passports if they come from an EU country such as Romania, or through the help of intermediate actors.

Irregular domestic work follows the market needs, and it is the result of a thick system of control and management of female domestic migrants, who are trafficked and abused by smugglers and other intermediaries' actors who benefit from this situation. Hence, the results of this study partly correspond with the results of the studies mentioned above, because strengthening migration control at the border also means to stop intermediate actors who benefit from the traffic of irregular migrants.

Therefore, this research and the interviews are in line with those studies that assert that irregular migration and work are fed and maintained by an extended network of intermediaries which connect the sending and the receiving country and that are useful to a welfare system in crisis (Ruhs and Anderson, (2007), Ambrosini, (2011,2013, 2019), Bonizzoni, (2017), Triandafyllidou, (2017, 193), Sigona (2012).

6.2.2 Italian Middle-Class Families and Weak Labour Protection

The items in the interview questions also intended to demonstrate that, despite the state is trying to show, even during elections, that security against 'illegal' migrants and smugglers' is their top priority, it sustains irregular migration of female domestic workers to support families and vulnerable members who need continuous assistance. Ioana confirmed that the negative propaganda against migrants has a strong influence on Italians, who remain diffident and take advantage of the migrants' weak position as irregular workers. These results are in line with the findings of Ambrosini (2018), Luigi and Frisone (2021), and Padovani (2018). For example, Ambrosini (2018), states that the state '...frequently juggles contradictory demands: anti-immigration sentiments and employers' demands for low-wage foreign labour. One strategy the government takes in this context is to please the former with tough-looking

immigration policies while satisfying the latter with ineffective law enforcement...’ This statement confirms the double position of the state towards irregular foreign labour, a necessary tool to satisfy the demand for cheap labour while pretending to provide citizens with the needed security against the ‘threat of migrants’, who, many times, are accused to steal the job from Italians.

As discussed in the previous Chapters, the Italian middle-class family is one of the major actors involved in the rise of irregular domestic work amongst foreign migrants. Ioana and Anna, for example, argued that the family is responsible for their condition of irregularity: they don’t want to/cannot pay taxes and contributions, therefore, they do not offer a regular contract. This hypothesis has been confirmed by Gasparrini (2021) and Lynch (2014), who add that the Italian state do not pay social contributions to families because it is put under a tremendous financial strain due to the heavy spending on pensions. De Luca (2021) also agrees with this argument and proves that the state saves around 7.2 billion euros on domestic work with the traffic of irregular domestic workers.

Bonizzoni (2016) proposes a gendered approach and state that domestic work is externalization of a complicated system, ruled by a globalized, gendered division of roles, where migration routes, laws, and even rules inside the household respond to this view. Kristensenwin (2016) and Triandafyllidou (2016) analyze the gender implication behind the relationship between domestic workers and the family, showing that foreign migrants are the ones who pay the price: they are not empowered, but exploited, underpaid, and sometimes abused. Claudia and Annas’ interviews are a proof of that , as they have been trafficked, abused, and forced to work irregularly for many years, even though their employers believe that they were helping them escape from their misery and poverty.

7.2.3 Pathways to regularization

Castagnone (2013) argues that domestic work usually corresponds to live-in care work, where the carer has to cohabit 24 hours a day with the assisted old person. This person, in most cases, presents a mental or physical disability and is not self-sufficient, therefore, the care assistant works long hours, overtime, and during the night too. Although live-in work presents some advantages (such as saving money, free accommodation, and extra time to wait for *Flow Decree*), it makes domestic workers vulnerable.

As the interviews showed, to curb irregular domestic work, it is crucial to strengthen labour protection by regularizing their work contract and by promoting social integration and awareness for both the family and domestic workers. For instance, Salis (2013) proposes tutoring and information services for households that want to hire a domestic worker, and, on the workers' side, she suggests '...processes for the self-organization ...that allow them to raise awareness and enhance knowledge of labour and social rights...'

Hence, as explained before, better access to information would allow foreign workers to reject exploitative working conditions, and choose, instead a regular job. In addition to that, as some participants showed, the language barrier represents a huge impediment to regular work and possible different occupations. In the interviews, Mildred said that the church offers language course for migrants, nevertheless, it appeared that not all foreign migrants could access to it. Hence, this thesis believe that the state should support migrants' integration in society through campaign on social media in different languages that can, therefore, be understood by several people and avoid social isolation of migrants.

7.3 Implications of Findings and Concluding Remarks

To sum up, the implications of the findings of the present study indicate that is it very difficult to contain irregular domestic work until the big, informal labor market in Italy is so

deeply rooted. Moreover, it might be necessary not only to review migration controls at borders, but also to change the structure and dynamics of the Italian society.

An important point highlighted by the participants of this research and other previous researches (Castagnone, 2013) is the need for advocacy for families, domestic work agencies and associations, and foreign workers. For instance, one employee from an intercultural association for domestic work in Castagnone's study said that '... For the families, when they arrive, we explain the rights, we try to raise awareness among them about the people who they hire because however the effect is always on the elderly ... and in the end, if I'm treated badly by a person then I do not even really want to take care of her or him and if I do so I do it in the wrong way ...'

As the family has responsibilities, so does the state. Hence, as mentioned above, an 'implicit-supported' familistic model (Miyazak, 2019) should be abandoned and substituted with a modern welfare system that invests in its local and foreign citizens with training and social and health assistance to an increasingly aging population.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to push public institutions back into a fair provision and management of long-term care services and design social policies that can help Italian households satisfy their care needs. Besides, gender equality should be promoted as a core value of our society, where women and men share the same position and responsibilities both in the private and public spheres.

7.3.1 Implications for Policies

As Castagnone (2013) states, an integrated approach that aims at harmonizing care, migration policies and employment could provide a solution to the rise of domestic work. In particular, she suggests a reduction of social contributions that employers of domestic workers have to pay, as well as domestic workers.

Hence, professionalization of domestic workers and family assistants, tutoring for families and increased protection of labour could contribute to curb irregular work. Last, a re-thinking of the role of women and domestic work needs to be done, so that families can learn how to balance work and house responsibilities in a shared effort between females and males.

6.5 Delimitations of the Study

This study had the aim to identify the causes of the persistence of irregular domestic work among female migrants. It delved into the literature on the intersection of gender, migration, domestic work and the welfare state in Europe. The results have been compared to understand the gendered and social dynamics behind the irregular employment of female migrant domestic workers. Nevertheless, there were some limitations in the current study that have probably influenced its results. First, the number of participants was only 6, and a such small sample can make it difficult to generalize the findings of the present study to the target the population of irregular female domestic migrants. Although most respondents agreed that irregular work follows the needs and decisions of Italian families and the state, it would have been beneficial to interview more foreign migrants from different countries. Second, it would have been useful to also interview families to understand to what extent their economic condition affects their choices of hiring a domestic worker irregularly. Last, this study has been based on interviews conducted online, therefore, the researcher could not properly know participants, gain their trust, and possibly obtain new other information.

7.5 Appendix 1: Names and personal information of participants to the interview:

	Claudia	Elisaveta	Ioana	Anna	Mildred	Lara
Age	52	62	53	68	60	43
Place of Birth	Stănița Romania	Orhei, Moldavia	Bogdanesti Romania	Gryfino Poland	San Vicente, Ecuador	Edo Falcón, Venezuela
City of Residence	Catania, Italy	Parma, Italy	Lecce, Italy	Carasco Italy	Genova, Italy	Pavullo nel Frignano Italy
Time spent as irregular domestic workers	6 years	3 years	4 years	4 years	3 years	1,5 years
Time spent as regular domestic workers	6 years	From 2007- present	10 years	18 years	15 years	6 years
Actual job	Live-in Domestic Worker	Live-in Domestic Worker	Live-in Domestic Worker	Retired	Live-in Domestic Worker	Full-time Registered Nurse (RN)

Appendix 2

Interview questions asked to migrant domestic workers:

1. What was your first experience when you arrived in Italy?
2. What kind of support have you received from the state and other informal organizations when you entered Italy?
3. Do you think that the family had the interest to regularize you?
4. Has the family not regularized you from the beginning because there is no law to protect domestic workers?
5. Why do you think Italian families prefer to hire a woman rather than a man for domestic housework?
6. Do you think the Italian state is corrupted and it has the interest to keep foreign female workers irregular?
7. What do you suggest it can be done to improve the condition of irregular female domestic workers?

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