

ITALIANS IN LONDON

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Abstract:

The present research on migration to London is part of a larger project involving other similar investigations dealing with the Americas (specifically Canada and Argentina). The purpose of the overall project is the systematic study of some socio-demographic variables and the most significant factors that have helped shape the evolution of international migration in a settlement today. It also illuminates, in a diachronic development, a possible link between the determinants of European and transoceanic migrations and suggests the likely differences. The results that will be presented in this paper are those of the study of a sample obtained by a non-probability snowball sampling through interviews with 221 Italian immigrants in London. The data retrieval is achieved by administering a pre-structured questionnaire. The survey method was based on the traditional and effective optical gender related to different demographic, social and economic factors in order to find different aspects of Italian regional migration to London. We have seen that gender difference has increasingly become more helpful in modifying the traditional migration profiles of Italian regions.

Key Words: Plato, Gender, London, Migrancy

Introduction

Migratory movements, as old as human history itself, involve all countries of the world³⁴⁴ and represent a true vocation of mankind which has its roots in the most diverse motivations.

The migratory process is such a broad concept as to draw together a whole series of factors which influence the future behaviour of the populations involved. The process triggers a complex mechanism which must take account of the interaction between micro-structure (social origin of the migrants, the various social networks) and macro-structures determined by the historical, political and cultural relationships of the countries affected by the migratory phenomenon. Any approach that is of value in dealing with migrations is unable to encompass all aspects of the question, owing to the lack of a single pillar around which all explicative and interpretative questions of human mobility rotate.

These difficulties remain also for quantitative measurement, with the result that migratory statistics are often incomplete. On an international level, the difficulties are also due to complications in collecting the data and by their quality, given that they are often published by countries that do not use uniform criteria. In addition, account should be taken of the illegal character of much migration.

The purpose here is to outline briefly some of the questions regarding migrations, essentially as an introduction to the present research into emigration to London.³⁴⁵ The particular character of the investigation is in exploring, through a twofold analyses of gender category and region of origin, some socio-demographic dynamics of Italian migrations to London, providing, through empirical elements, a further contribution to the many interpretations which already exist within the

³⁴⁴ IOM Data: International Organization for Migration

³⁴⁵ The study is part of a wider project involving similar investigations dealing with the Americas (specifically Canada and Argentina). The overall objective of the project is the scientific observation, in a systematic way and for comparative ends, of the principle socio-demographic variables and most significant motives that have contributed to the historical evolution of the figure of the migrant in an international settlement.

classification model of migrations. In this context the term gender emphasizes the aspect of social construction, arising above all from female emancipation in our times, in contrast with the simple biological difference.

It is therefore of some interest to make an analysis from the point of view of gender that interprets well the changes which time also brings to migrations.

London was chosen for the study because apart from being a great cosmopolitan metropolis, which sees both the transit and settlement of immigrants from the most varied ethnic backgrounds, it has also become more and more the preferred goal of temporary migrants including students, professional people and highly qualified workers who cyclically undertake the adventure of migration for reasons of study, because of necessity or for pleasure. These are the aspects that suggest an interpretation of contemporary migrations as “circular” processes which are at the centre of the transformations which characterize societies in the modern globalized world.

Thanks to the development of communications and transport, the simplicity of travel today has modified the “geography” of migrations, shrinking “the confines of the world” and causing a growing mobility which has understandably become a defining element of the contemporary world.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the Italian presence in London

Little is known about Italian emigration to Great Britain because it has never been a mass phenomenon comparable to that towards other European countries or to the Americas; nevertheless it is a phenomenon with deep roots.

From the end of the 1970s many young people went to Great Britain in order to study the English language or because they were attracted by a way of life which was felt to be more free and rewarding, as well as being facilitated by the guarantee of being able to find work quickly. The subsequent intensification of economic and commercial relations between the two countries encouraged many business people, managers, technicians and staff in various Italian companies and institutions to settle in Great Britain. Today, approximately half the entire Italian community in Britain resides in London, the city which, in the course of time, became the centre of international finance and trade.

The results presented here come from a study of a sample of 221 Italian emigrants³⁴⁶ in London. The data was gathered through the administration of a pre-structured questionnaire in three different ways:

- The questionnaire was sent by post to persons already known and resident in London who, in turn, forwarded it to their friends and acquaintances;
- Direct interviews by questionnaire³⁴⁷;
- The questionnaire was sent online to various associations³⁴⁸.

Bearing in mind that migrations are diversified by the structural characteristics (age and sex) of the population concerned³⁴⁹, it was decided to emphasize a gender analysis, in relation to age, in order point out the modern homogeneity of the lifestyles of the two sexes, the effects of which have brought a change also in the classical migratory profiles of the Italian regions. The entire structure of the processes of mobility has always been closely linked to the economic and social conditions of the populations involved, so much so that the concept of migrant was assimilated with young male of working age.

³⁴⁶ The sample of 221 Italian emigrants, was obtained with by non-probability snowball sampling. Applying the Bayesian theory of probabilities, the retrospective precision of the confidence interval, for a probabilistic significance $\alpha=0.05$, is around 7%.

³⁴⁷ The interviews were carried out in August 2010 by Dr. P. Ferrara.

³⁴⁸ Italians in London, Italians United, Italian Nights, Patronato A.C.L.I., Patronato INAS-CISL, Patronato INCA-CGIL, Patronato ITAL-UIL (UIM).

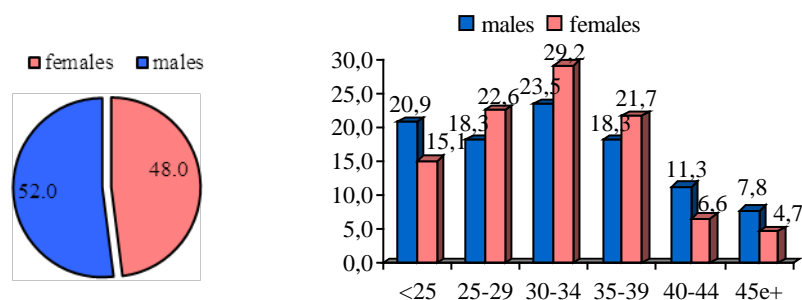
³⁴⁹ Cf. Bonaguidi (1985).

Female emigration has always been secondary to the mobility of men. Women were traditionally characterized by their bond with their homeland, their home, and their family³⁵⁰, and through marriage they acquired a new social status which allowed them the only “migration” possible, that of moving from their parents home their marital home.

Setting aside an examination of the experience of female mobility over the centuries, we focus our attention on the coming to awareness of women as workers which represented a true “milestone” in the emancipation of women, such as to result in the two sexes having very similar lifestyles. Moreover, in advanced industrial societies the greater participation of women in the labour market, understood as a career to be pursued for status and income capacity, the increased number of divorces (with the result that female work is often the primary source of income), the decline of the birth rate and the greater availability of education have created motivations so strong as to attract women to move elsewhere. Consequently, there has been a decisive influence on all social phenomena; and in the particular case of emigration, interesting aspects emerged in this study.

The sample analysed was formed by 115 males (52%) and 106 females (48%) with an average age of 31 and 32 respectively (cfr. Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of respondents by age and sex

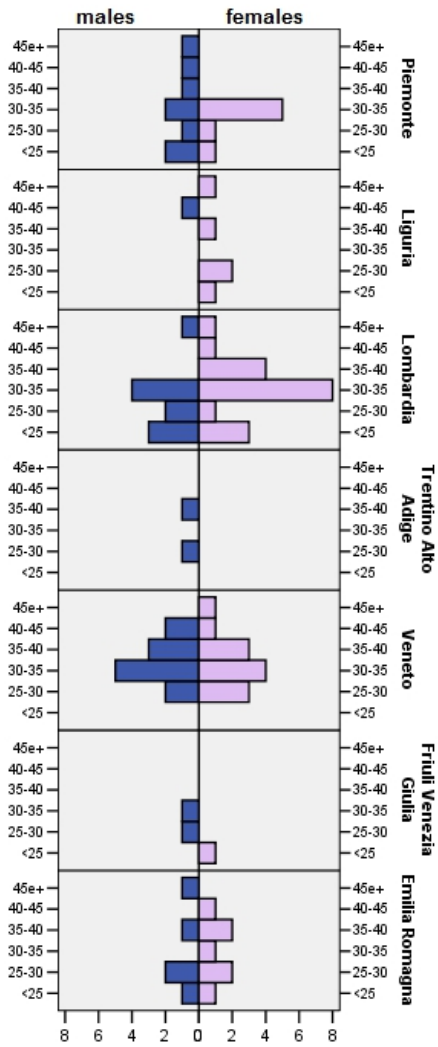


The age pyramids of the individual regions (Fig. 2) demonstrate how the migratory phenomenon significantly affects both sexes between the ages of 25 and 35. It is also noted that a significant number of men also emigrate before the age of 25. Of particular interest is the first result obtained, which in some regions shows a greater propensity among women to move regardless of the great geographical areas. A possible interpretation of this is that territorial asymmetries seem to depend on present day trends dictated by ever more homogeneous models of life between men and women, rather than on historical sedimentation linked to the cultural traditions of the northern and southern regions of the whole country.

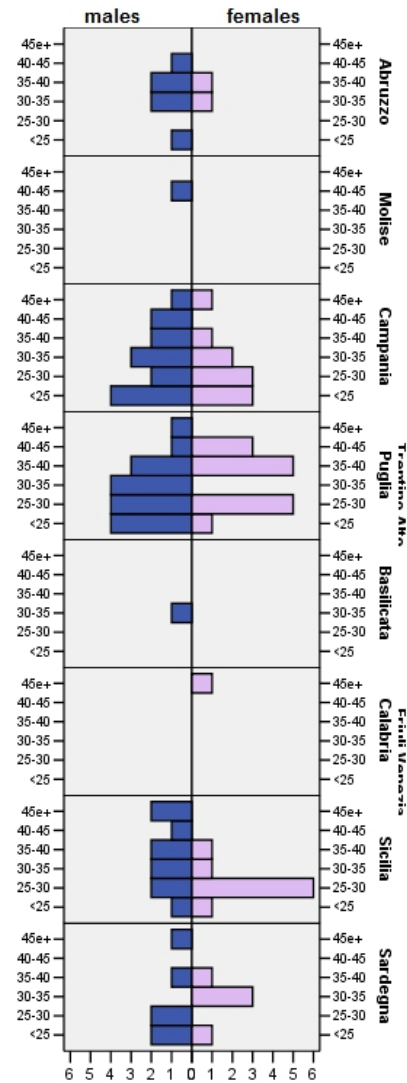
³⁵⁰ History is full of examples: one that serves for all is the classical myth of Penelope who incarnates the model of family loyalty.

Figure 2. Age pyramids of the ages of the migrants interviewed according to geographical area/region

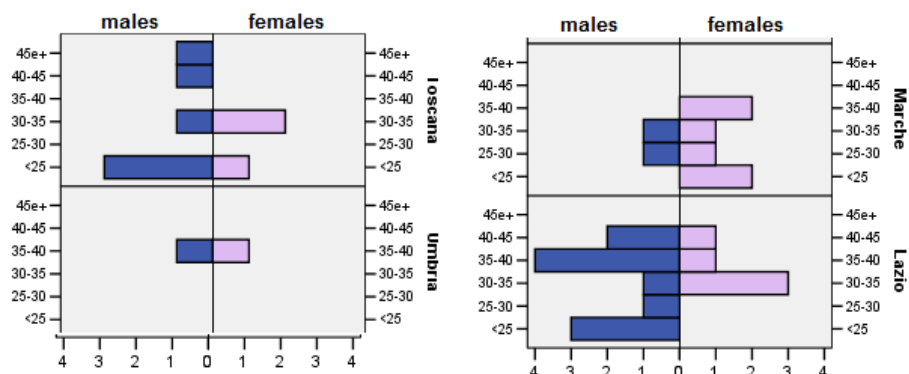
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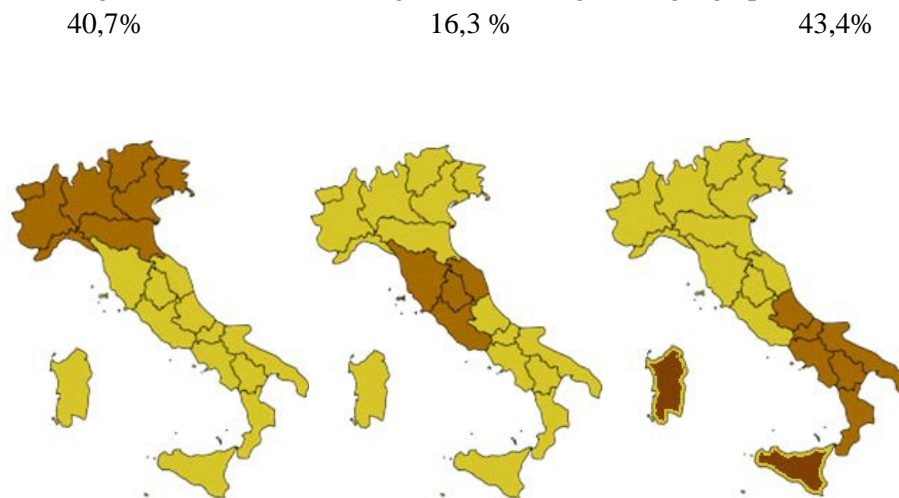
The analysis of the migratory profile according to sex in the corresponding regional behaviour (cfr. Tab. 1) underlines the result, which we have already noted, that the propensity to leave one's homeland is no longer a particular characteristic of men. Indeed, in some regions more women move than men. In the case of Lombardy, in particular, it is curious to note that the number of women who emigrate, in percentage terms, is exactly double that of men. The greatest number of migrants interviewed come from Puglia (14%) followed both by industrialized regions (Lombardy, Piedmont) and by traditionally less developed central and southern regions. Without entering into a complex analysis, the level of emigration does not appear to be determined only by the different role that the regions have in the economic and social life of the country, but reflects a range of situations that are so diversified as to equate regions that are otherwise different from each other.

Table 1. Percentage distribution based on place of origin and sex

Place of origin	Males	Females	Total
Puglia	14,8	13,2	14,0
Lombardy	8,7	17,0	12,7
Campania	12,2	9,4	10,9
Veneto	10,4	11,3	10,9
Sicily	8,7	8,5	8,6
Lazio	9,6	4,7	7,2
Piedmont	7,0	6,6	6,8
Emilia Romagna	4,3	6,6	5,4
Sardinia	5,2	4,7	5,0
Tuscany	5,2	2,8	4,1
Marche	1,7	5,8	3,5
Abruzzo	5,2	1,9	3,5
Liguria	0,9	4,8	2,7
Friuli Venezia Giulia	1,7	0,9	1,4
Umbria	0,9	0,9	0,9
Trentino Alto Adige	1,7	-	0,9
Molise	0,9	-	0,5
Basilicata	0,9	-	0,5
Calabria	-	0,9	0,5
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

However, the so-called “culture of migrations” is not to be underestimated (Fawcett, 1989), because the more the incidence of emigration grows in a specific collective group, the more cultural evaluations and perceptions are modified and stimulate an increased probability of emigration. This might provide a useful contribution to the interpretation of data about the individual regions, in that the limited mobility found in traditionally little developed regions (Basilicata and Calabria) and in regions characterized by development and productivity (Liguria, Trentino-AltoAdige) could also be read in terms of conservative trends, that is as strong social and family roots which tend to increase the opportunity cost of migration. There remains, in any case, a marked disparity between the great geographical areas. (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of the emigrants according to the geographical macroarea of origin



The observation of the variables shown in Tab.2 reveals that most of the interviewees are unmarried and have a high educational level; in particular the figure for tertiary education of single women graduates (72.9%) confirms the trend of an overall increase of female education with significant increases in the number who have university degrees (Pisati 2000, Blossfeld 1993, ISTAT 2010).

Trough the data available, when the analysis is conducted according to sex, age and academic qualification by geographical macro-area of origin³⁵¹, it emerges for the whole country that there is, in percentage terms, a majority of graduates, above all in the age ranges 25-29 and 30-34.

More specifically, the regional difference is seen in the examination of the age range 30-34 since for both sexes the percentage values are higher in central and southern Italy. In addition, significant percentages were obtained for diploma holders in the < 25 range. These values are probably determined by those who declared themselves to be students.

³⁵¹ As already explained in the introduction, I wanted to highlight an investigation which stressed territorial differences.

Table 2. Distribution of the interviewees according to academic qualifications, sex and marital status. Absolute and percentage values according to academic qualifications.

Academic qualification	Sex	Marital status							Total
		married	unmarried	Widower/ widow	separated	divorced	cohabiting		
Degree	M	A.v.	15	39	-	-	-	-	54
		%	27,8	72,2	-	-	-	-	100,0
	F	A.v.	14	51	1	-	3	1	70
		%	20,0	72,9	1,4	-	4,3	1,4	100,0
	Total	A.v.	29	90	1	-	3	1	124
		%	23,4	72,6	0,8	-	2,4	0,8	100,0
High School Diploma	M	A.v.	8	35	-	-	2	-	45
		%	17,8	77,8	-	-	4,4	-	100,0
	F	A.v.	8	21	-	-	1	1	31
		%	25,8	67,8	-	-	3,2	3,2	100,0
	Total	A.v.	16	56	-	-	3	1	76
		%	21,1	73,7	-	-	3,9	1,3	100,0
Middle School Diploma	M	A.v.	3	10	-	-	1	-	14
		%	21,4	71,5	-	-	7,1	-	100,0
	F	A.v.	1	2	-	1	-	-	4
		%	25,0	50,0	-	25,0	-	-	100,0
	Total	A.v.	4	12	-	1	1	-	18
		%	22,1	66,7	-	5,6	5,6	-	100,0
Elementary School Certificate	M	A.v.	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
		%	100,0	-	-	-	-	-	100,0
	F	A.v.	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
		%	100,0	-	-	-	-	-	100,0
	Total	A.v.	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
		%	100,0	-	-	-	-	-	100,0

%	100,0	-	-	-	-	-	100,0
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The data represented in graphic form in Fig. 4 show that a distinctive characteristic of the migrant population interviewed is that the greatest proportion with a high academic qualification (university degree) are the women of the South. In effect, as a result of non-traditional educational experience, fewer and fewer women suffer from gender stereotypes today.

In order to verify whether there is a link between academic qualification and gender, Cramer's V index was applied³⁵². Its application did show that a link exists, though it is not an excessively marked one (the value of the index is, in fact, V=0.21). There is, therefore, a positive correlation between gender and academic qualification among the migrants interviewed.

It is argued in a number of studies that for women education represents "a valid mode of social mobility" (Schizzerotto 2002), confirming the desire for personal affirmation. Male educational models which wanted women to be "well mannered but not educated" for a role in the family that was subordinate to the man in all intellectual activities³⁵³ are now long forgotten, proof of the how the migratory model changes in time. In reality, the perspective of analysis adopted suggests that more and more the life choices of both men and women are interconnected and interdependent, and involve the desire not to renounce a life that is as rewarding as possible from every point of view both in the private and public spheres.

Key academic D.: Degree qualification:

H.S.D.: High School Diploma

M.S.D.: Middle School Diploma

E.S.C.: Elementary School Certificate

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of interviewees according to academic qualification and sex, by geographical origins

9 Pearson's χ^2 index measures the association of characters in a politomic $m \times p$ (m line by p column)

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^m \sum_{j=1}^p \frac{(n_{ij} - n_{ij}^*)^2}{n_{ij}^*},$$
 where the ratio $n_{ij}^* = \frac{n_i n_j}{n}$ represents the expected frequency in the cell of line i and column j in the hypothesis of independence.

It will be $0 \leq \chi^2 \leq \chi^2_{max}$, where $\chi^2_{max} = n[\min(m,p) - 1]$.

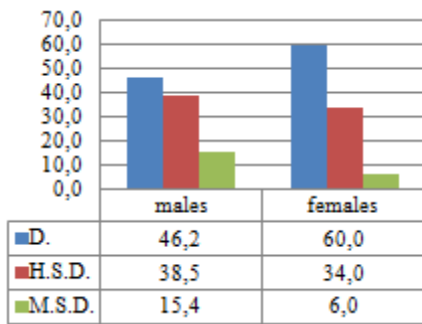
As can be seen from the formula, the maximum value of the index χ^2 depends on the number/ in the sample. To obtain a standardized index (reduced to the interval [0,1]) Cramer's index can be used.:

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{\chi^2_{max}}}, \quad 0 \leq V \leq 1;$$

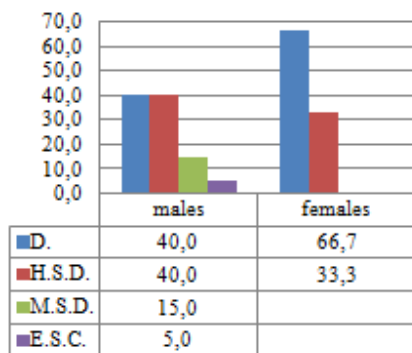
V=0 when there is no association and V=1 in the case of maximum association.

10 The words written by Plato thousands of years ago seem more relevant than ever: «... there is no special faculty of administration in a state which a woman has because she is a woman, or which a man has by virtue of his sex, but the gifts of nature are alike diffused in both; all the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also» (Plato, The Republic).

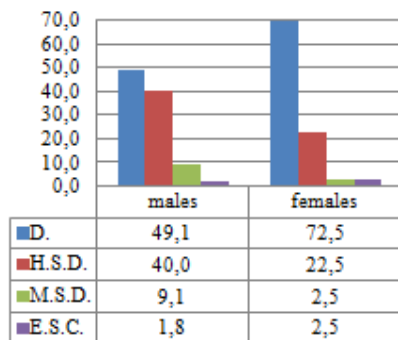
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Length of stay and reasons for emigrating to London

Length of stay is an illuminating point of observation that confirms the importance of the women's academic qualifications. In fact, a greater number of unmarried women who have resided in London for only a few years. Cramer's V Index also suggests a slight but interesting link between length of stay and marital status ($V=0.268$). In effect, most of the married and divorced have resided in London for more than 6 years, while the majority of unmarried males and females have resided there for less than 3 years. The picture outlined above may be further explained by observing the interviewees' lengths of stay in London in relation to their academic qualifications and geographical origins. The graphical representation of the data in Figs. 5 and 6 clearly reveals a greater percentage of women graduates who have only been in London for a few years and who come from all the large geographical areas, above all southern and central Italy.

Another observation deserving of mention concerns the reasons that drove the interviewees to emigrate to London. The questions linked to the opportunity of finding work registered the highest values, with considerably higher numbers among those from the south of Italy.

But everything seems to be defined by the general context in which each person finds himself or herself. It is not by chance that in the North of Italy where there are greater opportunities of work, the interviewees gave less importance to economic dissatisfaction and opportunities of work and favoured the “desire for change” in terms, very probably, of quality of life. The opposite is the case for the South where there is a predominance of motivations related to the opportunities of work. In effect, a little over half of them already had a job before leaving compared to Central and Northern Italy where only a quarter did not have work.

There is no doubt that in today’s world mobility “is becoming more and more an element of real democracy” (Golini, 2000) by means of which all can be given the opportunity to exploit their own potentialities. In practical terms this may mean performing humble work which is simply a means to attain one’s goals. Certainly, the interviewees declared that they never lose sight of their future plans for a more satisfying job suitable for the academic qualifications they possess. Undoubtedly, the motivations which drive them to seek work abroad may be determined by the internal conditions in their country of origin, not only the shortage of jobs, but also the lack of rewarding prospects in terms of both economic and social status. While the incentive to “escape” from the place where one was born or resides may also be to travel for pleasure, the results obtained here indicate that it is usually determined by necessity based on economic calculations.

Figure 5. Percentage distribution of interviewees according to length of stay, sex and academic qualification.

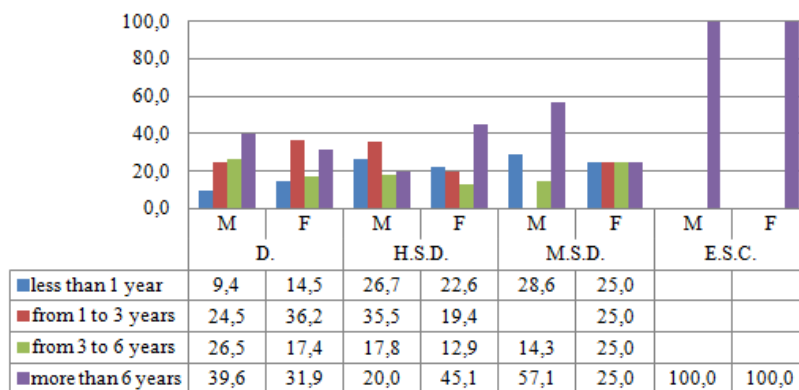
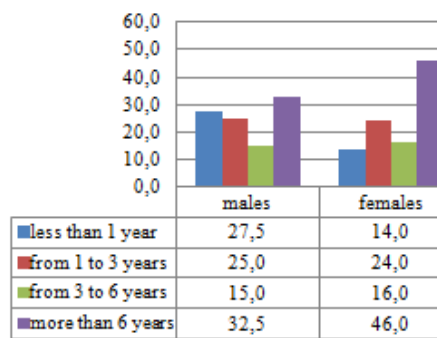
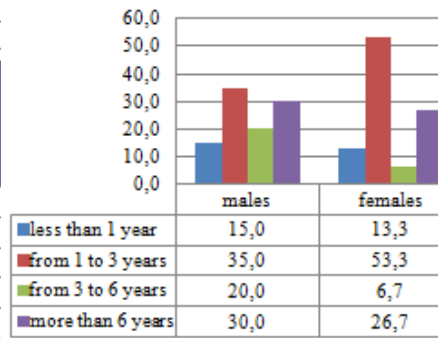


Figure 6. Percentage distribution of interviewees according to length of stay, sex and geographical origin.

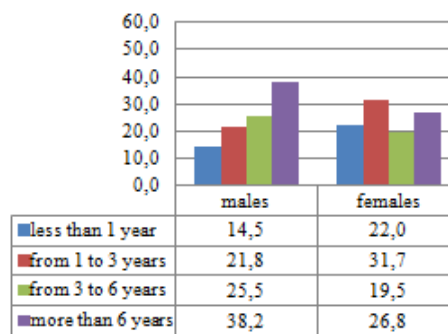
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This is confirmed by an examination of the data concerning the reasons for choosing London: for the answers immediate availability of work and necessity or desire to learn English (possibly for opportunities linked to work) there were marked variations between geographical areas with significantly higher numbers in central and southern Italy.

One expected result was the high percentages for the necessity or desire to learn the language, above all among the women. This occurs because of an inadequate knowledge of English which makes the academic qualifications obtained not immediately spendable on the labour market.

In the final analysis, it seemed opportune to investigate the most significant motivations driving the interviewees to return to Italy. The results obtained were surprising because regardless of both sex and geographical area, there did not seem to be great interest in an eventual return to Italy even with work prospects.

Yet again, however, it is gender difference which determines the rules and makes the consequent findings so curious. Specifically: in the end the links with the family of origin persuade the women more than the men to return. In addition, the territorial differences are highlighted by the possibility of immediate work which creates a strong incentive to return.

Conclusions

The empirical findings presented here have highlighted interesting aspects that emerged from the particular approach adopted by the study. Certainly the observation of the migratory process in a study of gender widens the horizons of these initial indications also making it possible to emphasise the concept of the similarity of lifestyles between the two sexes which has overturned some aspects that were formerly considered essential parts of any migratory model.

As a whole, the results suggest that the migrants interviewed are educated people with an average age of a little over 30 who, regardless of their sex and geographical origin, seek to invest in their future by taking the various opportunities available to them. Perhaps we should use the term cosmopolitan rather than emigrant, a term which is more and more remote in our vocabulary, as the figure of the migrant of the past no longer finds a place even in our imagination.

The interviewees revealed a socio-cultural background that enabled them to pursue their dreams and aspirations. Obviously, the general context in which individuals find themselves in the country of origin does not play a role of secondary importance: the decision to emigrate is frequently due to the inevitably wide differentials between the tenor of life in the country of origin and in the destination countries. This would explain the choice of London, a city which, according to the interviewees, offers a higher quality of life based, above all, on an undeniably meritocratic society.

Side by side with an analysis of a demographic nature, it was stimulating to consider some variables of a social character, and others will be examined in further studies, showing the absence today of the “traditional” Italian emigrant who was obliged to emigrate above all because of considerable poverty, often determined by the strong demographic pressure experienced by Italy in the 19th and 20th centuries. In effect, the interweaving of changes in demographic dynamics and the modifications of working life reflects those developments of recent decades which have contributed to the transformation of the population from the quantitative as well as relational point of view.

The fact is that modern day emigration is no longer a question simply of manpower, but also of “brainpower”. The brain and skill drain is to be considered a further cause within the cumulative social process of migrations. In fact, this element could be added to the structural failings of the entire socio-economic system that frequently leads the migrant to pass from what is initially a temporary emigration, through various stages to one which becomes definitive. The latter will come to include the formation of a community and valid social networks with the country of origin (ethnic enclaves) which will in turn be the subject of further studies. (Goldring 1990).

In conclusion, intense and widespread mobility has become a characteristic element of the contemporary world, with specific features such as to make it more a transnational form of mobility than a true migratory phenomenon comparable to those of the past. This is despite it frequently having the same common denominator in being generated by strong motivations of an economic character.

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