

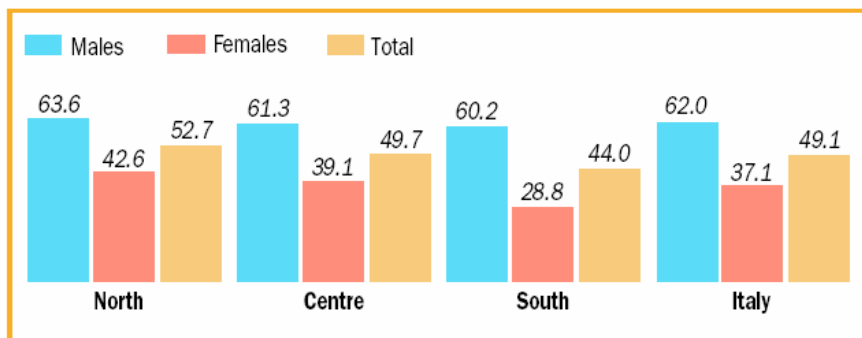
# Women and entrepreneurship in Italy

According to the analysis of ISTAT, the national institute for statistics, the cultural and educational level of women in Italy has been growing in recent years.

Also the number of women employed in the new technology fields is rising. Although the gap between men and women in the labour market is being reduced there are still some criticisms about the condition of women in the workplace. For example, they receive a lower salary compared to men and it is more difficult for women to find highly qualified jobs.

## ACTIVITY RATES BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA AND SEX

%, 2003



## LABOUR FORCE INDICATORS BY AGE AND SEX

%, 2003

|                     | Activity rate | Employment rate | Unemployment rate |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>TOTAL</b>        |               |                 |                   |
| Males               | 62.0          | 57.8            | 6.8               |
| Females             | 37.1          | 32.8            | 11.6              |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>49.1</b>   | <b>44.8</b>     | <b>8.7</b>        |
| <b>AGED (15-24)</b> |               |                 |                   |
| Males               | 38.4          | 29.1            | 24.2              |
| Females             | 29.9          | 20.6            | 30.9              |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>34.2</b>   | <b>24.9</b>     | <b>27.1</b>       |

One of the reasons why some Italian women are encouraged to set up their own business is to overcome these problems.

The majority of women decide to build up a company as they want to be independent and autonomous, and they need to establish their own identity and use their own resources to obtain the results they want.

According to the recent data from the Ministry of Equal Opportunities, every 3 out of 10 entrepreneurs are women and 35% of new companies are driven by women. 69% of the companies driven by women are in the tertiary sector. However this is mainly confined to small companies, due to the continuing problems of time management, work flexibility and finding initial funds to establish one's own company ([www.pariopportunita.gov.it](http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it))

According to ISTAT, in 2003 22,4% of working females were self employed.  
31,5% of the total self employed labour force in Italy was female.

In 1993 out of the total of 100 entrepreneurs 15 were female, today that figure stands at 22.

Is it clear that there is a growing number of women who are deciding to build up a company but the number is nowhere near to the male total. (<http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it>)

In the last few years the number of female entrepreneurs has risen from 50 000 to 140 000.

The sectors in which women use to start up a company in Italy are connected to communications and services.

The Italian law 215 'Positive action for female entrepreneurs', which was passed in 1992, gives a real help to women wanting to start up an entrepreneurial activity or to those who have already founded their own company and intend to develop innovative projects and plan to acquire resources in order to improve their products, insert new technology and research new markets.

Its main aim is to:

- Promote entrepreneurship and vocational training of female entrepreneurs.
- Support the creation and development of female entrepreneurship
- Promote the presence of female-run companies in diverse sectors of activity.
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The Valle d'Aosta region, followed by Emilia Romagna, has the highest women employment rate. Emilia Romagna, however, is first one in terms of numbers.

In Emilia, as a matter of fact, 40.61% of the work force is women with a national average of 35.16%.

And thanks to the new opportunities created by the law No. 215 on women entrepreneurship, new business could be established in some areas, such as in Rimini and Piacenza. ([http://www.italiannetwork.it/pdonna/pdonna38/pdonna\\_e.htm#A39](http://www.italiannetwork.it/pdonna/pdonna38/pdonna_e.htm#A39))

As far as the education level is concerned, the number of women aged between 25 and 34 enrolled in a University degree or PhD is higher (14,5 %) than the number of men of the same age (11%). This is the period of ones life in which women are more likely to set up their own organisation (ISTAT, 2003).

As illustrated above we can say that even if the number of female entrepreneurs is growing it is still difficult for women to start up a business.