



Istituto per la Ricerca Valutativa sulle Politiche Pubbliche

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# **An analysis of the implementation of the programme “Buoni di Servizio” in the Trento Province**

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## **Abstract**

This report presents a follow-up study of the implementation of the programme “Buoni di Servizio” that aims at complementing an extending the work carried out by IRVAPP in September 2009. The “Buoni di Servizio” is a new policy of the Autonomous Province of Trento which sets up a ‘service voucher’ scheme to help women reconcile paid work and family responsibilities. This report seeks to provide evidence on the impact that the changes in the implementation of the programme once it was already in place, and distributed the first wave of vouchers, may have produced in the working out of this policy, especially with regard to its potential beneficiaries and the goals of work-life balance reconciliation that it addresses. The analysis also identifies several interesting results for the management of the programme itself. To carry out this new study, the report uses administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento that covers the period right before the changes in the implementation rules (February to December 2008) with more recent ones after the changes were in place (March 2009 to March 2010).

**Keywords:** follow-up, work-life balance policies, service vouchers, women, children

**JEL codes:** D1, I3, J7

## 1. Introduction

This report is a follow-up examination of the implementation of the Programme “Buoni di Servizio” based on the analysis of administrative data on recipients of the vouchers provided by the Autonomous Province of Trento. The two cross-sections of data analyzed correspond to a period right before and after the implementation of important changes that affect who is recognized as entitled claimant of the service vouchers. Concretely, while at the beginning only active women in the labour market with dependent children, independently of their marital status, were entitled to request the vouchers, later on also working men with little children were allowed to do so. In this latter case, the partner of the claimant (either the mother or the father) should also be actively involved in the labour market. Thus, the first cross-section of data, covering from February to December of 2008, refers only to service vouchers requested and assigned to working mothers, while the second one from March 2009 to March 2010 refers both to working mothers and fathers with dependent children.

As background information the “Buoni di Servizio” is a new programme of the Autonomous Province of Trento which sets up a ‘service voucher’ scheme (co-funded by the European Social Fund) to help women reconcile paid work and family responsibilities. The cost of child care has been recognised as one of the largest regular expenditures within the household. Therefore, the voucher programme has been introduced to help ease the financial burden and allow mothers to participate in the labour market. More specifically, financial aid is offered in the form of a cash coupon, the amount of which varies between €900 and €1500 depending on household income, and is valid for twelve months. The vouchers are subject to a 10% copayment by the recipients. Despite these stated goals, in reality the eligibility rules of the programme were modified to allow also working fathers to become claimants and recipients of the vouchers. This, we shall argue, may well be hindering its scope and the potential positive effects in terms of work and family-life reconciliation. Indeed, the original design of the policy targeted mothers who were either 1) employed 2) about to start a job 3) about to return to work after a leave, the duration of which is at least 3 months (e.g. maternity leave, sick leave), or 4) dismissed attending training/requalification courses aimed at promoting active job searches, it has turned out that all the actual recipients of the programme, mothers and fathers, as well as their spouses – in the case of married individuals –, are actively involved in the labour market. This makes it not possible to isolate the likely effects of the programme in activating the labour market careers of, for instance, those unemployed women who want to return to the labour market after childbirth or measure whether the vouchers help reducing the length of the maternity leave.

The goal of this report is to provide evidence that may allow re-evaluating both the design and the implementation streams of the programme in order to better accomplish its stated goals of work-life balance for women. To do this, in the next section we shall review previous research on the role of social policy in the sphere of work and family reconciliation. Section three presents the results of the analysis using administrative data from recipients of the vouchers, before and after the implementation rules were changed. Section four concludes with the policy recommendations that seek to improve both the quality and scope of the programme “Buoni di Servizio”.



## **2. The new role of women: the importance of work-life balance policies**

The new role of women stands as the most relevant transformation of our societies over the past decades. There is increasing public debate and scholarly attention around the driving forces behind this ongoing process as well as about its likely outcomes in the future. Most of the relevant scholars working in the field of social stratification and inequalities who have paid attention to its gender dimension highlight that it is in the combined effect of women's will for greater independence, manifested in their educational attainment, and the role of social policies designed to help them coping with the new societal demands associated with their dual role as workers and caregivers of the family that we can explain the progress made in favour of a more gender equal society. Indeed, women's will for greater autonomy is, first and foremost, better represented in the overrepresentation of women in higher education, at least, since the beginning of the nineties (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). The explicative factors remain largely unknown even though recent research suggest that together with differences in resources related to family background and academic performance, women's higher incentives to attain higher education largely explain the growing female advantage in college completion (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006). All in all, the observed outcome is that the gender gap in higher education has not only completely vanished but inverted in favour of women.

Together with the shift in the educational sphere, we have witnessed a parallel change in the labour market behaviour of women. More as a result of a free choice now than it was in the past, women's involvement in the labour market and in pursuing rewarding professional careers has become clear for all social observers. The increasing labour market participation of women and, to some extent, the closing down of the gender gaps associated with the labour market trajectories of them (for instance, the pay and status gaps) (Blau *et al.*, 2006) clearly represent the achievements of women in recent decades in the sphere of paid labour.

Both the changes in the educational attainment and the labour market careers of women are endogenous in the sense that they reflect their new values and preferences for more independent lives. As Hakim has accurately argued, nowadays women's preferences are more heterogeneous than they used to be some time ago. In the past it was their role as home producers and care providers, better represented in the male breadwinner model, which was the dominant societal equilibrium. This model is now in crisis because the new values of women have given rise to new types of life courses. Nowadays, the majority of women seek to make compatible motherhood and careers. In addition, there is a small minority who prefer to pursue a professional career over motherhood (Hakim, 2000). However, those studies showing the decline in the fertility rate across countries and the consistent gap between the desired and realized fertility (McDonald, 2001) suggest that the rapid societal changes we have witnessed in the last decades have created second order effects which need to be tackled carefully in order to correct them. In this vein, Esping-Andersen has characterized this new society as an unstable equilibrium in which women's quest for greater autonomy cannot be fully accomplished (Esping-Andersen, 2009). In demographic terms such unstable equilibrium, besides of its effects on the fertility behaviour of women, has provoked dramatic changes in the life course of the families given rise to the so-called second demographic transition (Lesthaeghe, 1983). This label denotes that families are not any more the stable

institutions of the post-war period in which all its members had very clear and defined roles. Instead, they are now more unstable. On one hand, more open to innovations, as manifested by the myriad of new family arrangements. On the other hand, less secure settings to provide welfare to its members and isolate them from the societal risks.

The conditions in which women have to pursue their aspirations are more complex and uncertain than those men enjoyed decades ago. Therefore, it is not enough with the endogenous shift of their preferences for better education and satisfying labour market careers. Under these conditions, and especially for that vast majority of women who wish to make compatible a professional career with motherhood, public policy becomes the key issue. Without the role of specific public policies designed to tackle women's needs further progression towards greater gender equality will be much more difficult to accomplish. Nowadays women face trade-offs that are specifically "their trade-offs", trade-offs that men have not suffered and will not suffer but of which they are also partially responsible. The fact is that despite the progress made, the increasing labour market incorporation of women still lacks behind that of men. This is because their labour market decisions remain largely dependant on their role within the family. Indeed, there is recent evidence showing that family and labour market decisions of women are clearly endogenous and that what they do at home, in terms of unpaid labour, has a direct impact both on their wages and in their labour market involvement (Bryan & Sevilla Sanz, 2008). It is worth remembering that despite the fact that women seek to participate actively in the labour market, they still remain in charge of the bulk of the domestic activities. We may conclude that their gains in the labour market have not come yet with a parallel change in their roles at home. Women, as a leading scholar has argued, face a process of lagged adaptation between the home and work spheres (Gershuny, 2000, Gershuny *et al.*, 2005).

Work-life balance policies designed to help women reconcile work and family responsibilities are the required exogenous drivers they need not only in order to alleviate the burden of their dual role but to guarantee a better incorporation in the labour market that may reduce the extent of gender inequalities observed in paid labour. Academic research concerned with the promotion of gender equality distinguishes two different scenarios: one that seeks to harmonize motherhood and careers by helping women to resolve the trade-offs inherent in the interplay of the two spheres. The other, instead, aims to make gender absolutely neutral in the allocation of women's opportunities. Although more ambitious, the latter is a much less precise objective, and therefore more difficult to accomplish. The first one is more specific and feasible. Work-life balance policies belong to this objective. They are the tool through which to favour the harmonization of work and family duties (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 69-70)

Consensus around what constitutes a basic work-life balance package includes generous maternity and paternity leave arrangements, affordable childcare facilities, and, significantly, the availability of flexible working arrangements. The importance given to each of these key elements varies across the European welfare states but altogether they are considered to facilitate reconciliation (Moss & Korintus, 2008, Cousins & Tang, 2004). Since the seminal work of Esping-Andersen (Esping-Andersen, 1990 & 1999) the institutional framework is recognized to play a significant role in the design and implementation of work and family public policies (OECD, 2005; Aybars, 2007). The design of the service vouchers programme of the Autonomous Province of Trento seeks to channel

the public support directly through the families in order to help them pay for the childcare facilities and the education-related expenses of children in the school ages. Unfortunately, it does not sufficiently recognize that women are the ones within the family with more need to reconcile the family and work duties. In addition, previous research on cash transfer policies to the family has shown that when women are the recipients of the income, the outcome, in terms of intra-family household allocation, is more efficient than when it is the husband the beneficiary of that transfer (Vogler *et al.*, 2006).

The lack of recognition that work and family reconciliation is predominately a women's issue is especially relevant for the case of single mothers, as we will show in the analysis below. Among the new family arrangements that have become more common in our societies is the spread of single parenthood either as a result of reconstructed family forms after a divorce, widowhood, or because of the free choice of the parents. However, it is clear that more than single parenthood it seems more appropriate to refer to single motherhood. Given that for single mothers the pressures to reconcile family and work duties are more compelling, the design of work-life balance policies should accordingly consider the especial needs of single mothers. Previous research has shown that all around Europe single mother households are over-represented among poor households (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Sorensen 1994). Besides, they are also at higher risk of experiencing recurrent episodes of poverty which hinders the life chances of both the mothers and their children (Jenkins *et al.*, 1990).

It is worth mentioning that work-life balance policies are not only important for their positive impact on the individual lives of all family members, especially mothers and children, but they are also likely to have a positive spillover effect at the societal level. In a context of welfare state retrenchment in which debates about how to reform our public pension systems (Pierson, 2001, Arza & Kholi, 2008), a public policy designed to increase the labour market participation may also guarantee the sustainability of the system of welfare provision for the elderly.



### 3. Analysis of the implementation of the Programme “Buoni di Servizio”

In this section we present the results of the analysis of the programme “Buoni di Servizio” implemented by the Autonomous Province of Trento. We shall analyse the findings in line with our previous discussion about the relevance of these policies for helping women to reconcile work and family responsibilities. In doing so, this work seeks to identify those factors that may hinder the achievement of its goal of work-life balance reconciliation. For the analysis we shall make use of the administrative data provided by the Province of Trento which corresponds to successful claimants of the vouchers who made the request between February and December 2008 (before the changes in the eligibility rules of the programme) and March 2009 to March 2010 (after the changes enter in place).

To begin with Table 1 presents the monthly distribution of the “Buoni di Servizio” received by the claimants in the two cross-sections of data analyzed. Interestingly, in both periods of time May appears to be the month in which the highest number of vouchers is received. In the overall distribution, they represent 37 percent in 2008 and 2009-2010. Another remarkable issue refers to the larger amount of vouchers given in 2009-2010 respect to 2008. Although this could be simply due to the fact that for 2009-2010 we have 13 months of data, while for 2008 only 11 months are available, a careful examination comparing the same months for the two periods shows that there has been, indeed, an increase in the number of vouchers received, most likely due to an increase in the demand. Such increase may stem from two different phenomena: the increasing awareness of this policy among potential claimants that may have fostered the number of request. It may stem also from the fact that in the second period also fathers were allowed to claim the vouchers. A possible combination of these two processes may, of course, well explain the increasing demand of the programme.

The total amount spent by the PAT in the Programme “Buoni di Servizio” in the year 2008 equals 1,269,999 euros. This gives an average of 514.80 euros per buono even though as we will see below there is considerable variation in this amount by type of voucher. In 2009-10 the total budget allocated by the PAT was 2,229,367 € This corresponds to an average of 734 € per voucher. Both in terms of the total budget of the programme and the average amount given by voucher there has been a considerable increase in the resources that the PAT has allocated to the “Buoni di Servizio” between the two years analyzed.

**Table 1. Number of *Buoni di Servizio* and amount spent by the Autonomous Province of Trento (monthly frequencies and percentages 2008 and 2009-2010).\***

	Frequencies	Percentages	Amount spent
<b>2008 (moms alone)</b>			
February	115	5	49,650
March	355	14	194,614
April	542	22	293,469
<b>May</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>485,383</b>
June	237	10	124,614
July	89	4	37,278
August	37	1	14,827
September	61	2	27,043
October	50	2	19,730
November	30	1	8,898

December	45	2	14,493
N/Total €	<b>2,467</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,269,999</b>
<b>2009-2010 (moms &amp; dads)</b>			
March	298	10	271,776
April	575	19	388,480
<b>May</b>	<b>1,133</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>568,032</b>
June	274	9	144,360
July	94	3	66,221
August	57	2	83,066
September	100	3	121,705
October	83	3	94,133
November	39	1	64,515
December	43	1	47,917
<i>January 2010</i>	52	2	115,823
February	69	2	76,405
March	219	7	186,928
N	<b>3,036</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,229,367</b>

\*In bold mode and total number of service vouchers for 2008 and 2009-2010.

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 (February-December) and 2009-2010 (March-March).

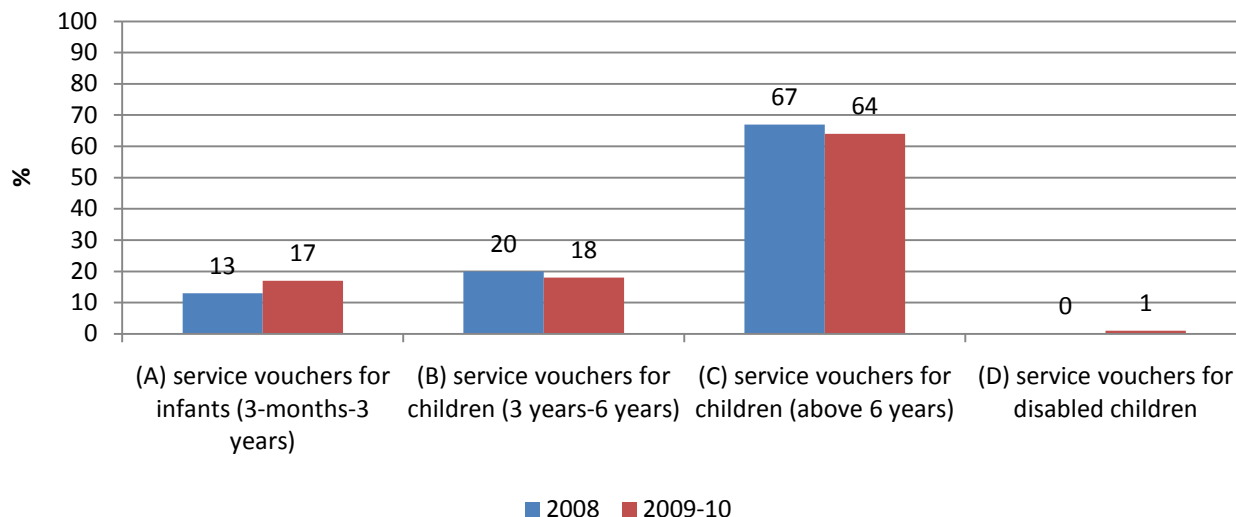
A feature of the “Buoni di Servizio” programme is that it distinguishes type of vouchers the claimants can request according to the age of the child as well as whether she has any certified disability. Thus, there are four types of vouchers available as shown in Figure 1 below. This information provides insights into the kind of the demand the Autonomous Province of Trento needs to respond to. As one of the key goals of the programme is to facilitate the return to work of mothers after childbirth we should expect a higher demand of vouchers from parents with infant children below 3 years old. However, this is far from being the case. In the years under study the highest demand of vouchers correspond to children above 6 years old (67 percent in 2008 and 64 percent in 2009-10). This is particularly noticeable since in 2008, as we have said before, only mothers were entitled to make the request for the vouchers. For this year this variable was not available in the administrative data provided by the PAT and it had to be reconstructed using the date of birth of the child. For this reason, there is no information on the number of vouchers given to children with certified disabilities.

Regarding the total budget allocated by the PAT according to the type of voucher, we find considerable variation. Thus, in 2008 the largest total amount was to help mothers to purchase service for children above 6 years old (873,961 €), secondly for children between 3 and 6 years old (262,626 €), and finally for dependent children below 3 years old (131,881 €). However, if we look at the average amount per type of voucher the differences are not so striking. Concretely, it was of 403 € per voucher for children below 3 years old, 528 per voucher for children between 3 and 6 years old, and 533 per voucher for children above 6 years old.

The corresponding numbers for the year 2009-10 were 922,104 € spent in vouchers for dependent children below 3 years old (average per voucher: 1801 €), 326,729 € spent in vouchers for children between 3 and 6 years old (average per voucher: 597 €), 933,525 € spent in vouchers for children above 6 years old (average amount: 481 €), and, finally, 47,009 € for children with disabilities (average amount: 1270 €). Interestingly, if we compared the allocation of resources between the two cross-section analyzed it appears that in the year 2009-2010 it seems to fit better with the stated goals of the programme as the amount spent by the PAT in dependent children below 3 years old

and that of children with disabilities is clearly larger than for the other age groups, a pattern that is not observed for the year 2008.

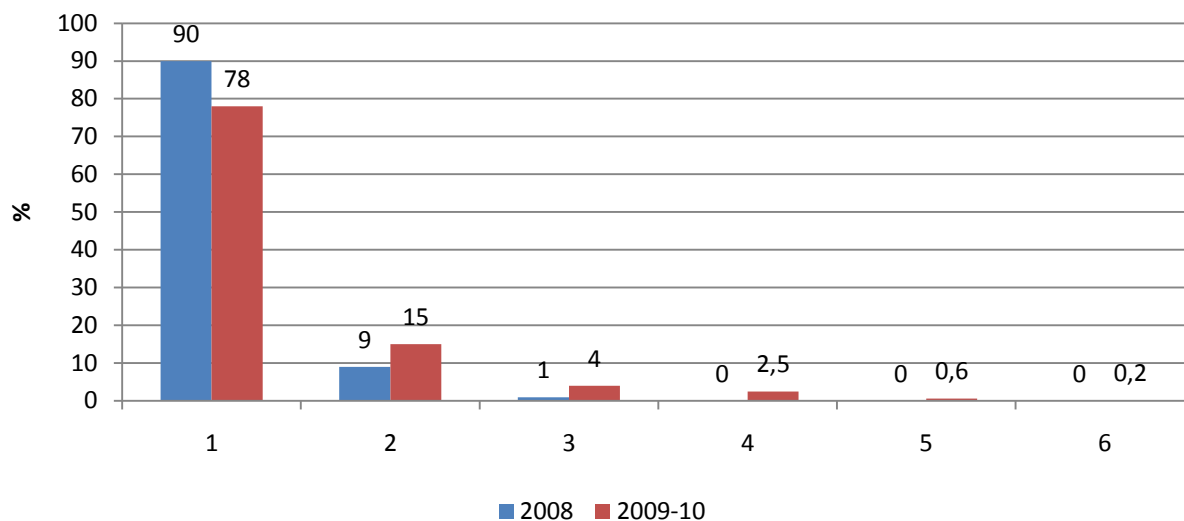
**Figure 1. Buoni di Servizio by type given by the Autonomous Province of Trento (percentages 2008 and 2009-2010).**



Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 (February-December) and 2009-2010 (March-March).

Figure 2 presents the results of a secondary analysis we have done using the original administrative data. With the information available we have been able to isolate the number of vouchers requested by the parents for their children. Remarkably, although the largest proportions for the two years correspond to cases of a single request (90 percent in 2008 and 78 percent in 2009-10), there is a significant number of claimants who received more than one vouchers. In addition, there seem to be a positive effect of time: there is an increase in the cases of repeated vouchers from 2008 to 2009-10. Concretely, while in 2008 the maximum number of repeated vouchers by claimants was 3 in 2009-10 this number amounted to 6.

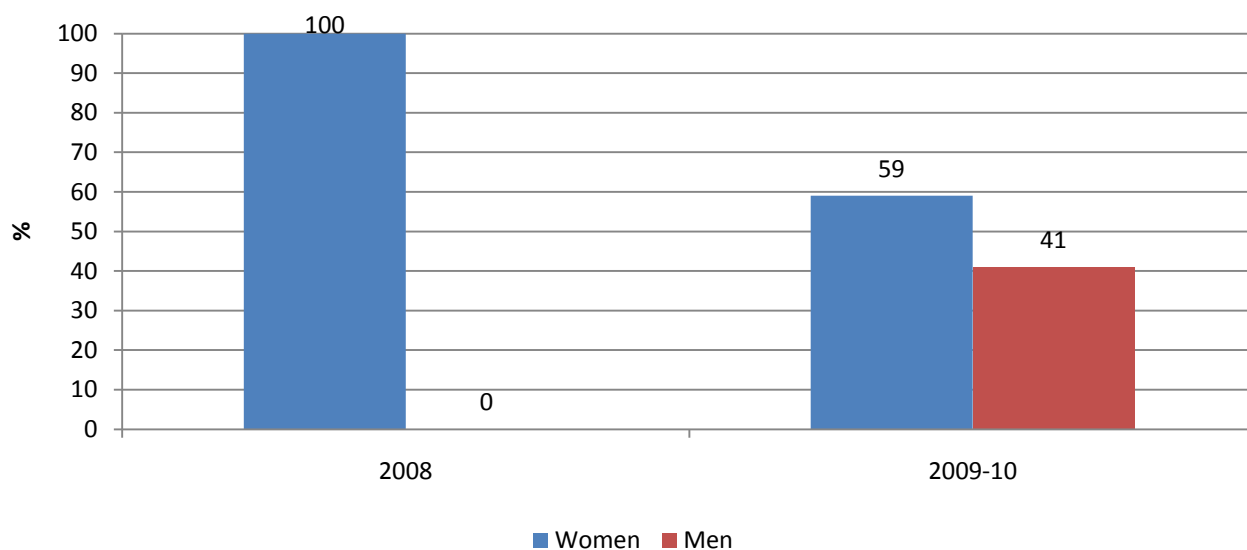
**Figure 2. Number of *Buoni di Servizio* received by claimants from the Autonomous Province of Trento (percentages 2008 and 2009-2010).**



Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 (February-December) and 2009-2010 (March-March).

As we have already discussed one of the main aims of this follow-up report was to provide evidence of one of the key findings the first IRVAPP report on the programme *Buoni di Servizio* finished in September 2009 unravelled: the existence of fathers receiving the service vouchers on behalf of their children, a deviance from the original drafting of the policy and contrary to the eligibility rules of similar policies aimed at lifting the costs of work-life family reconciliation for women across the European Union. Figure 3 below plots the sex composition of the parents recipients of the “*Buoni di Servizio*” in 2008 and 2009-2010. Interestingly, while in 2008, in accordance with the initial eligibility rules of the programme, all the recipients were mothers, this changed substantially in 2009-2010. In this latter case, although the majority are still mothers (59 percent), there is also a significant proportion of fathers among the recipients (49 percent).

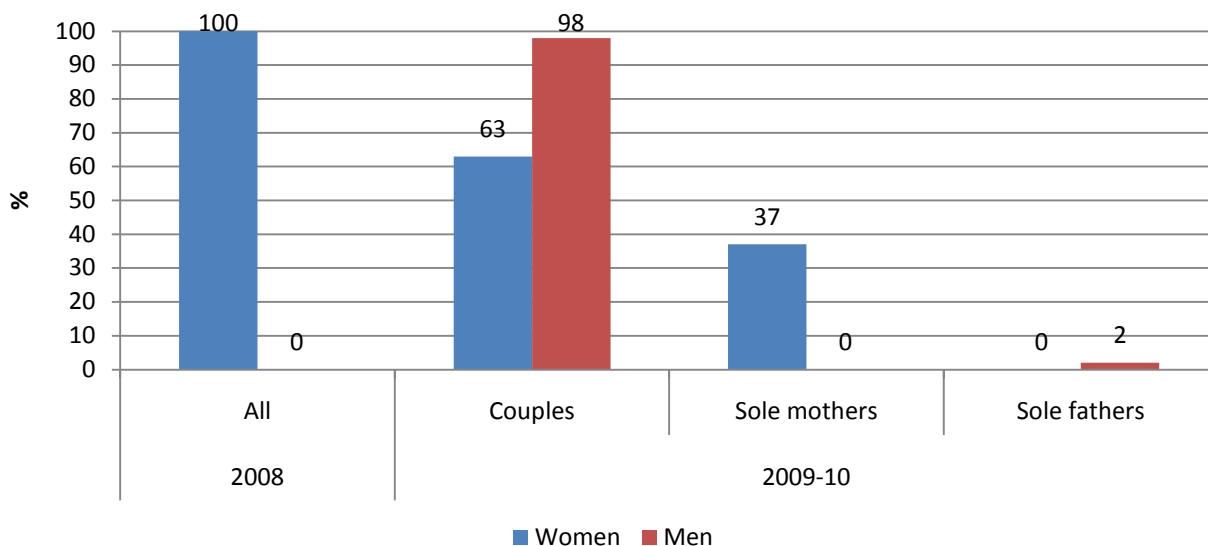
**Figure 3. Sex composition of the recipients of the programme *Buoni di Servizio* (percentages 2008 and 2009-2010).**



Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 (February-December) and 2009-2010 (March-March).

With the administrative information available only in 2009-10 we were able to reconstruct the type of family of the recipients of the “Buoni di Servizio” only for the last cross-section of data analyzed, 2009-10, were information on the claimant and the two parents was provided. On 2008, to repeat again, we can only know that they were all mothers but nothing about their marital or couple status. Interestingly, the majority of recipients of the vouchers (either mothers or fathers) were in stable unions (98 percent of fathers and 63 percent of mothers) although a closer look to the data highlights important gender differences since lone parenthood is a much more common phenomenon for mothers than for fathers (37 percent of sole mothers against 2 percent of sole fathers). Again, this finding confirms that women are the ones facing real trade-offs when having to reconcile family and work responsibilities. As we have argued in the first report, this issue should be acknowledged through the eligibility rules of the programme.

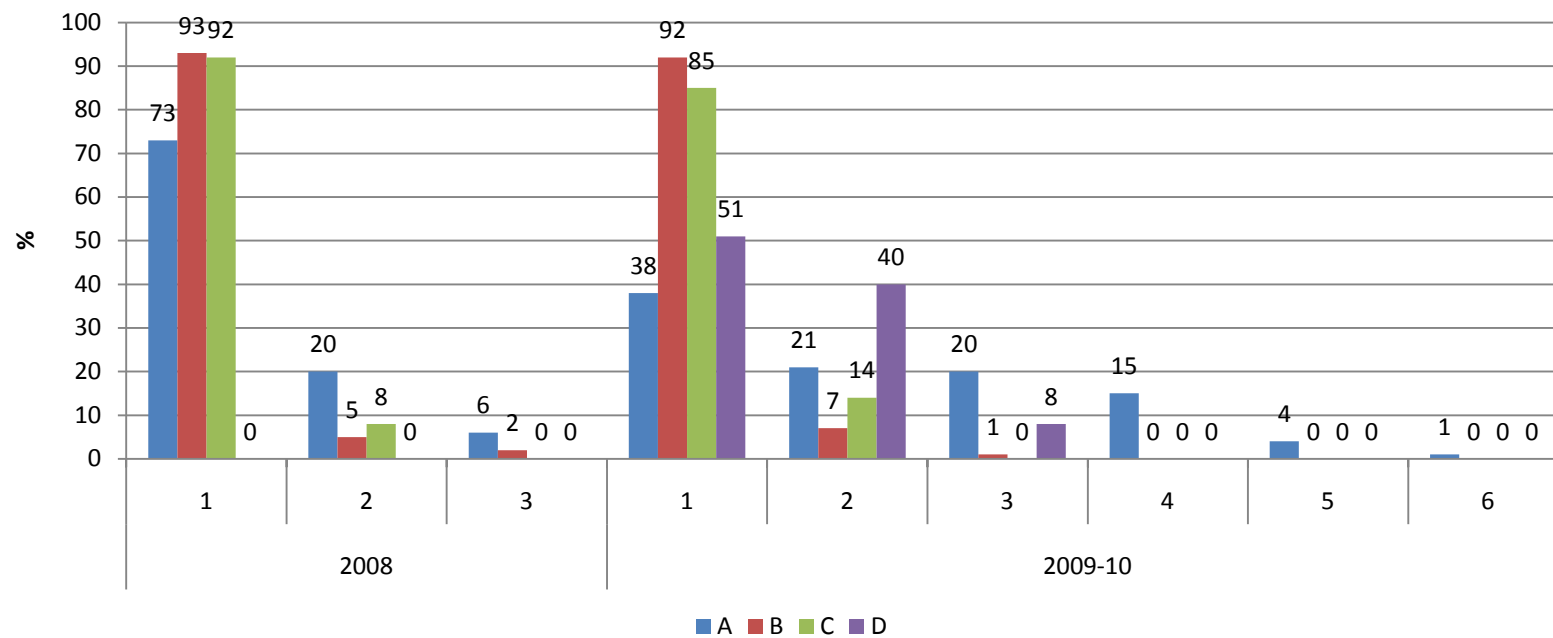
**Figure 4. Family type by sex of the recipients of the programme *Buoni di Servizio* (percentages 2008 and 2009-2010).**



Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 (February-December) and 2009-2010 (March-March).

With the variable created to group the cases of recipients of repeated vouchers and the type of vouchers Figure 5 below presents the distribution of the type of “Buoni di Servizio” by the number of recipients. The graph highlights important differences between 2008 and 2009-2010. While in the first year of data the type of vouchers seems not to be related with the number of request made (for all types the modal value is single recipients), in 2009-2010, the vouchers for infants between 3 months and 3 years old (vouchers type A) are over-represented among those of repeated recipients. Interestingly, we showed in Figure 1 that this is not the modal voucher requested but it seems that those who claimed this vouchers are facing important constraints to reconcile family and work and so they have an extensive use of the programme requesting the vouchers several times.

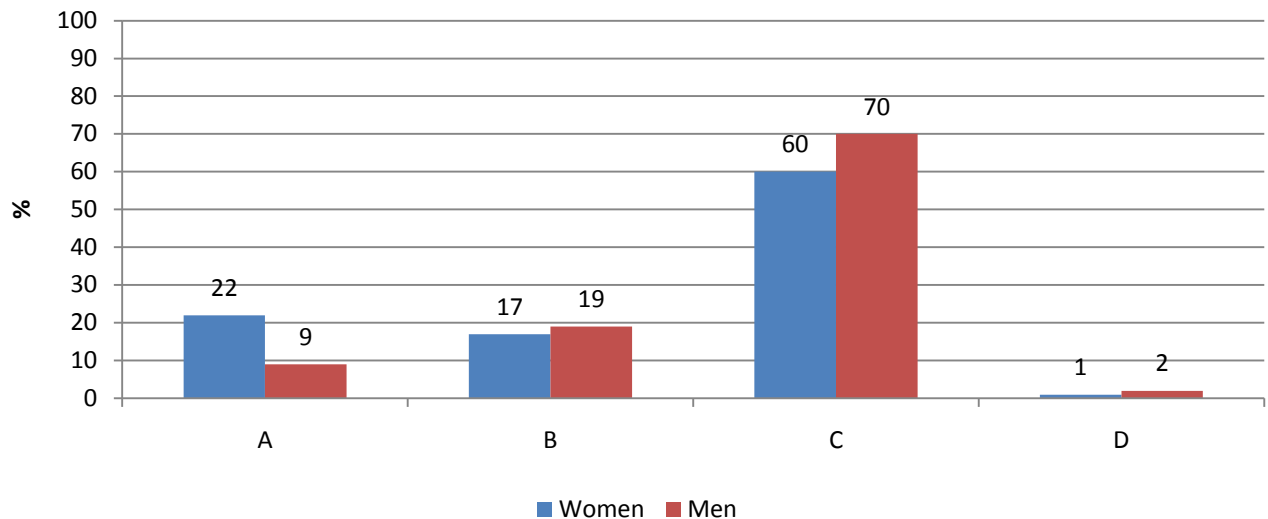
**Figure 5. Distribution of the type of *Buoni di Servizio* by the number of times they have been received by the claimants (percentages 2008 and 2009-2010)**



Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 (February-December) and 2009-2010 (March-March).

Again only in 2009-10 we were able to distinguish the type of vouchers received by the sex of the claimant in order to identify whether significant gender differences exist. Figure 6 shows that there are indeed important differences. Although both women and men request more vouchers for children above 6 years old (60 percent of women and 70 percent of men), there is a gender gap of 13 percent points more of vouchers for infants (type A) (22 percent of women against only 9 percent of men). Thus, this suggest that mothers are the ones assuming childcare, especially when children are little.

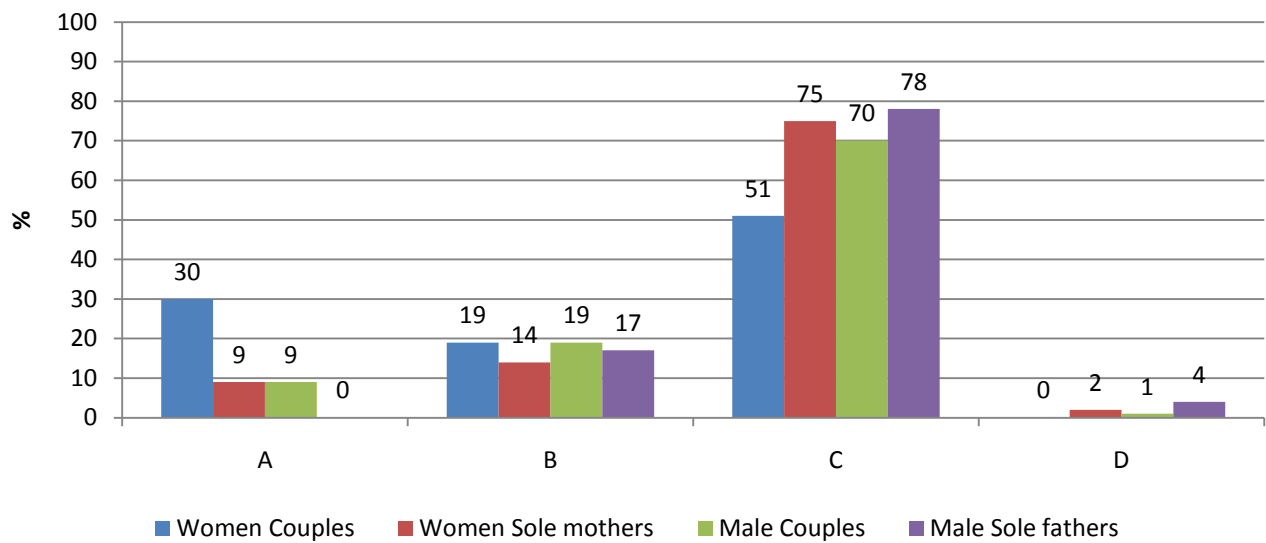
**Figure 6. Type of *Buoni di Servizio* by sex of the recipients (percentages; only 2009-2010 data)**



Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2009-2010 (March-March).

Figure 7 is a further analytical exercise of the above graphic. Here the graph breaks down the information considering also the type of family of the recipient of the vouchers. Thus, for type A vouchers mothers in couples make up the majority, while single mothers and fathers are over-represented among those receiving vouchers for children above 6 years old. Clearly, the family circumstances of the recipients are key issue behind the demand of the vouchers as it is also sex in the gender bias of the type of vouchers requested.

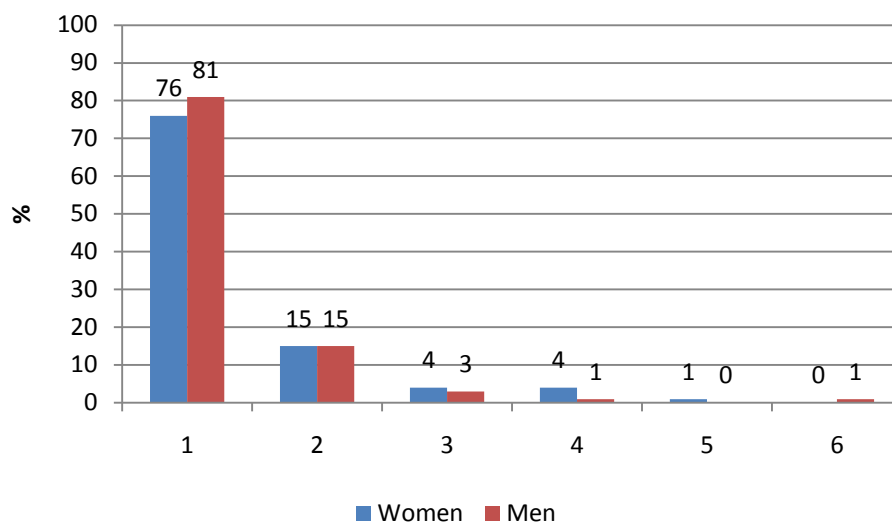
**Figure 7. Type of *Buoni di Servizio* by sex and type of family of the recipients ( percentages; only 2009-2010 data)**



Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2009-2010 (March-March).

Figure 8 also shows that there seems to be a slight gender differences in the number of vouchers received in 2009-10. Although the overall gap in the number of repeated vouchers requested by women and men is only of 5 percent points, women appear to claim more vouchers for their children than men do. Again, this finding goes in line with the existing literature in as much work and family reconciliation remains as a women issue despite the higher involvement of men in recent years in the rearing of their children.

**Figure 8. Number of *Buoni di Servizio* by sex of the recipients (percentages; only 2009-2010 data)**

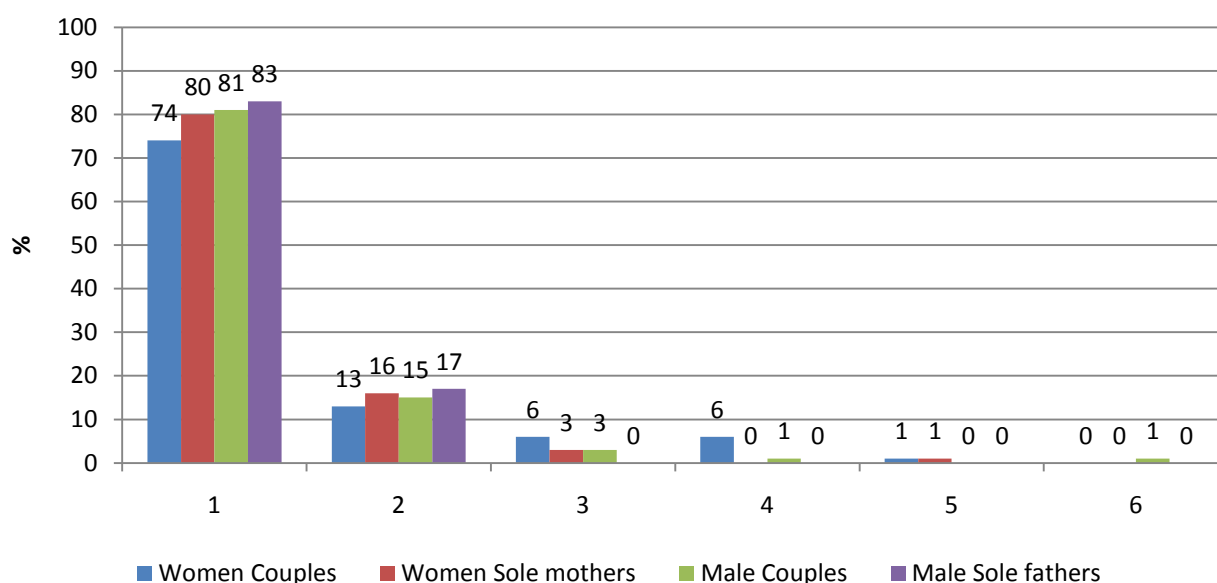


Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2009-2010 (March-March).

Finally, Figure 9 breaks down the previous one also by the type of family of the recipients. In this case not significant gender differences are identified. It seems to be the sex of the claimant more than her particular family arrangements which is related with the number of times the vouchers are claimed.



**Figure 9. Number of *Buoni di Servizio* by sex and type of family of the recipients ( percentages; only 2009-2010 data)**



Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2009-2010 (March-March).

So far, one issue remains unanswered regarding the cases of repeated vouchers by recipients. This has to do with whether the repeated vouchers go to the same child within the family or to more than one child. Table 2 below presents the result of our careful examination to the data. In 2008 110 claimants requested 2 vouchers and 9 requested 3 vouchers. All these cases of repeated vouchers were, nevertheless, for a single child in the family which means that they solely benefit from the support of the programme. The picture in 2009-10 changes considerable. Firstly, as we have said before, there are more cases of repeated vouchers: 224 received two vouchers, 38 3 vouchers, 19 4 vouchers and 1 6 vouchers. Secondly, although the large majority of these repeated vouchers go to a single child, there is a significant proportion of family that request more than one voucher for 2 or even 3 different children in the family. This seems to suggest that parents have become more familiar with the programme with time and with the benefits they can profit from.

**Table 2. Number of children recipients of the repeated *Buoni di Servizio* by claimants.**

Number of vouchers	2008					2009-10				
	Obs	Claimants	Children %			Obs	Claimants	Children %		
			1	2	3			1	2	3
2	220	110	100	0	0	448	224	88	12	0
3	27	9	100	0	0	114	38	76	21	3
4						76	19	95	5	0
5						20	4	75	25	0
6						6	1	100	0	0

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 and 2009-2010 (March-March).

As a descriptive exercise of the main personal and family characteristics of the recipients of these repeated vouchers Table 3 below shows these dimensions for the case of the claimant who received 6 vouchers over the year 2009-2010. Thus, the type of vouchers is A (infants between 3 months and 3 years old). The recipient is a father who lives in a couple, 36-37 years old. He is an employed

with a permanent contract who works full-time in a private enterprise. Over the year the request of the vouchers were made every two or three months, the average ICEF index of his application was 0.16. This person has got a considerable total amount for all the vouchers. At the end of the year analyzed he appears to have received more than 12,000 Euros, that is, an average of more than 2000 Euros in every request. However, this amount is not evenly splitted, the largest amount corresponds to the last request an is almost of 6,000 Euros. Finally, all these vouchers went to a single child in the family.

**Table 3. Personal, family and employment characteristics of the recipient of a *Buono di Servizio* six times over a year.**

Type buono	Sex claimant	Type of family	Age claimant	Type of contract	Type of firm	Hours of work	Date of request	ICEF	Amount buono (€)	Number of children
Service voucher for infants (3 months- 3 years)	Men	Couple	36	Permanent/ Employed	Private	Full-time	March 09	0.08	1,496	1
			36				June	0.08	1,496	
			36				August	0.21	1,174.25	
			36				October	0.21	1,174.25	
			36				December	0.21	1,174.25	
37	March 10	0.21	5,871,25							
								<b>0.16</b>	<b>12,386</b>	

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2009-2010 (March-March).

A key dimension to decide the amount of money given to the recipients are their financial resources. As in other social policies of the Province of Trento they are measured through the ICEF individual declaration to the PAT. Table 4 shows the mean differences in the ICEF index by sex and by sex and type of family of the recipients for the year 2009-2010. For the year 2008 where only women were entitled to make the request the corresponding average was 0.20. Using the equivalent scale to estimate the ICEF this average index corresponds to an equivalent average income of 10.000 € As the range of the ICEF index of the recipients mothers in 2008 goes from 0 to 0.35 the estimated equivalent income ranges from 0 € to 17.500 € For the year 2008 it is not possible to calculate more detailed equivalent incomes of the recipients of the Programme as the family composition is unknown.

According to the information in the table women have a considerable lower ICEF index than men, that is, they are in a worse economic position when making the request of the vouchers. When considering the type of family they form, it appears that there are no significant differences by women and men in couples but that both single mothers and single fathers face considerable financial constraints (single mothers even slightly more troublesome than single fathers). Overall, these results indicate that a programme like the “Buoni di Servizio” might clearly have a positive impact would its eligibility rules recognize with a sort of top-up measures the especial needs of single mothers and fathers.

**Table 4. Mean differences in the ICEF index by sex and type of family of the recipients of the *Buoni di Servizio* (2009-10).**

Women		Men		Difference	
0.18 (1783)		0.21 (1253)		-0.03***	
Couples	Single mothers	Couples	Single fathers	Women	Men
0.22 (1120)	0.13 (663)	0.22 (1230)	0.16 (23)	0.09***	0.06***

Sample size between parentheses.

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2009-2010 (March-March).

Table 4.1 presents the reconstruction of the ICEF equalized income for the recipients of the “*Buoni di Servizio*” in the period 2009/2010. From the original ICEF index (mean, minimum and maximum) obtained from the family type of the claimant, I have estimated the equalized ICEF income for different family sizes. The family sizes chosen stem from the minimum and maximum number of different children by claimant as shown in Table 2. Concretely, the above table shows that the number of different children by claimant in the year 2009-2010 ranges from 1 up to 3. Hence, the family composition of a coupled claimant may vary from 3 to 5 members whereas for single parents claimants the family size goes from two to 4 members.

Thus the equalized ICEF income shown in Table 4.1 is obtained from the following formula:

Equalized ICEF Income= (ICEF Index\*50,000)\* Equalized scale.

Such equivalized scale is a weighted number that varies according to the family size.

The results obtained show that there is considerable variation in the material resources of the claimants. Interestingly, such heterogeneity does not seem to stem from the family type of the recipients of the voucher as, for instance, the maximum ICEF income of single mothers and fathers in couples are alike. Also, as it stands, the programme “*Buoni di Servizio*” appears to be quite comprehensive since it grants the vouchers to claimants whose wealth situation varies considerably, from no ICEF income to a maximum (in the reconstruction carried out) of nearly 50,000 €

The key issue lies not so much in how open the programme is but in taking into account the special care needs and trade-offs between homemaking and paid labour activities that single parents (mothers and fathers) face. To do so, a weighted coefficient in the formula applied to calculate the final amount of the voucher given that allows single parents to receive larger amount vouchers as compared to coupled claimants could be used.

**Table 4.1. Equivalized ICEF income by sex and type of family of the recipients of the *Buoni di Servizio* (2009-10).**

		Family members	ICEF Income (€)		
			Mean	Min	Max
Women	Couples	3	22,440	0	35,700
		4	27,060	0	43,050
		5	31,350	0	49,875
	Single mothers	2	10,205	0	35,700
		3	13,260	0	43,050
		4	15,990	0	49,875
Fathers	Couples	3	22,440	0	35,700
		4	27,060	0	43,050
		5	31,350	0	49,875
	Single fathers	2	12,560	3,925	23,550
		3	16,320	5,100	30,600
		4	19,680	6,150	36,900

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2009-2010 (March-March).

Table 5.1. reports the mean differences in the amount of the vouchers by sex and type of family for 2009-10. It appears clearly that women, either in couples or singles, receive larger amount vouchers than their male counterparts (most likely due to their lower economic resources) which suggest that in this regard the programme seems to be working well even though the situation of single fathers (a small number of the recipients but still important) remains worrisome.

**Table 5.1. Mean differences in the amount of the *Buoni di Servizio* by sex and type of family (2009-10).**

Women		Men		Difference	
801 (1783)		639 (1253)		162***	
Couples	Single mothers	Couples	Single fathers	Women	Men
893 (1120)	646 (663)	640 (1230)	601 (23)	247***	39

Sample size between parentheses.

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2009-2010 (March-March).

Table 5.2. presents the results of the average difference in the amount of the vouchers by their type for 2008 and 2009-10. For the two years the comparison is made with type A vouchers. Interestingly, there seems to have operated a significant change between 2008 and 2009-10 with respect to the amount of money received by the type of voucher. Specifically, while in 2008 the vouchers for children above 6 years old were on average the ones receiving more money, in 2009-10 this has changed and now (more in line with what we should expect) the largest amount vouchers are for infant children and for those with officially recognized disabilities.

**Table 5.2. Mean differences in the amount of the *Buoni di Servizio* by type of voucher (2008 and 2009-10).**

Type	Mean amount	Difference with type A
<b>2008</b>		
A. Service vouchers for infants (3 months- 3 years)	403 (327)	
B. Service vouchers for children (3 years-6 years)	528 (497)	125***
C. Service for children (above 6 years)	533 (1640)	129***
<b>2009-10</b>		
A. Service vouchers for infants (3 months- 3 years)	1,801 (512)	
B. Service vouchers for children (3 years-6 years)	597 (547)	-1204***
C. Service for children (above 6 years)	481 (1940)	-1320***
D. Service vouchers for disabled children	1270 (37)	-530***

Sample size between parentheses.

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 and 2009-2010 (March-March).

A parallel change of the same sort seems to have occurred also with respect to the average amount received by the number of vouchers received. Indeed, Table 5.3 shows that while in 2008 the claimants receiving more than one voucher were awarded with, on average, lower amounts in each one, in 2009-10 the more vouchers received the larger was also the amount of transfers.

**Table 5.3. Mean differences in the amount of the *Buoni di Servizio* by number of vouchers (2008 and 2009-10).**

Type	Mean amount	Difference with single recipients
<b>2008</b>		
1	530 (2220)	
2	395 (220)	-135***
3	211 (123)	-319***
<b>2009-10</b>		
1	667 (2372)	

2	852 (448)	-185***
3	1,172 (114)	506***
4	1,244 (76)	577***
5	1,264 (20)	597***
6	2064 (6)	1,397***

Sample size between parentheses.

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 and 2009-2010 (March-March).

Finally, Table 6 reports the main labour market characteristics of the recipients of the vouchers in the two years. They highlight significant gender differences in line with the existing research on gender inequalities in the labour market. Thus, there are more self-employed men than women, more men with a permanent contract (at least for 2009-10 where the gender comparison is possible), more women civil servants than men (the gap is of 10 percent points) which highlights an issue of self-selection of women and men into different labour market trajectories. Finally, there are more women among partimers than men. All these gender differences confirm that women are the ones facing real trade-offs between family and work responsibilities.

**Table 6. Main labour market characteristics by sex of the recipients of the *Buoni di Servizio* (%).**

	2008	2009-10	
	All women	Women	Men
<b>Type of worker</b>			
Employed	99.9 (2464)	89 (1581)	79 (992)
Self-employed	0.1 (3)	11 (193)	21 (258)
<b>Type of contract</b>	<b>All women</b>		
Permanent contract	81 (1995)	72 (1278)	77 (951)
Fixed-term contract	19 (472)	28 (486)	23 (277)
<b>Type of firm</b>			
Private	N.A.	70 (1222)	80 (990)
Public	N.A.	30 (536)	20 (254)
<b>Hours of work</b>			
Full-time	43 (1059)	62 (1107)	99 (1228)
Part-time	57 (1408)	38 (665)	1 (17)

Sample size between parentheses.

Source: Administrative data from the Autonomous Province of Trento 2008 and 2009-2010 (March-March).

#### **4. Conclusions and policy recommendations.**

This follow-up report of the programme “Buoni di Servizio” has provided consistent evidence of the impact that the changes in the implementation of the policy between 2008 and 2009 has had for the stated goal of the policy. In this regard, we believe, that there are grounds to support the policy recommendations made in our initial report of September 2009. These were:

##### *The beneficiaries of the policy*

As we have previously discussed work-life balance policies are tools especially designed to tackle women’s needs associated with their dual role as homemakers and caregivers and as workers. It is for this reason that we recommend the design of the policy to establish mechanisms to consider women with dependant children as the main subjects of this public intervention. The fact that so many fathers claim the service limits the leverage of a policy design to facilitate work and family reconciliation. The double burden phenomenon is definitively a women’s issue since childcare activities are mostly assumed by mothers who also seek to pursue a professional career. In addition, as we stated above, women’s worse involvement in the labour market is a second order effect that stems from their childcare role. Hence, we believe, the policy should better consider the overall difficulties to reconcile work and family responsibilities that women face. For instance, considering, together with the time spent in the labour market, the amount of time spent doing housework and providing care to family members.

In addition, the re-formulation of the programme “Buoni di Servizio” should consider establishing some sort of affirmative action in favour of single mothers, but also those single fathers that request the vouchers. Single parenthood, either in women or in men headed families, should be especially targeted by the programme “Buoni di Servizio” guaranteeing that when their income is clearly below the average of the partnered claimants, they get larger amount vouchers. Single fatherhood, we believe, is the only case in which men should be allowed to make the request of the voucher. As we have discussed in section two of the report single parents are the ones who could really benefit from this type of policy. Interestingly, for the case of single mothers, we have shown in the analyses presented in section three that the fact that they are in the worst economic position of all the recipients of the vouchers, the final amount they are allocated is below that of the other groups analysed.

##### *The rules of eligibility*

The current implementation of the policy has substantially deviated from its original design. If in the design of the policy there are clearly four groups identified as potential claimants of the vouchers, in reality the programme has targeted only those with an active involvement in the labour market and, for the case of coupled claimants, whose partners are also employed. This implementation decision has left aside those who are either temporally or permanently out of the labour market for different circumstances. Thus, the programme originally states that those individuals with dependant children who are below a certain family income and in the following labour market situations could claim the vouchers: 1) employed 2) about to start a job 3) about to



return to work after a leave, the duration of which is at least 3 months (e.g. maternity leave, sick leave), or 4) dismissed workers attending training/requalification courses aimed at promoting active job searches. However, a careful examination to the administrative data provided by the Autonomous Province of Trento clearly shows that all the claimants report being active in the labour market. This selection issue is further reinforced given that for coupled claimants their partners have to be also working even though the extent of their involvement cannot be ascertain with the data available. This is a key issue which hinders the scope of the programme since for many women with dependant children their labour market decisions are clearly dependant on their family situation. That is, many women who may potentially claim the service do not actually do so just because they are inactive in the labour market given their care responsibilities in the family.

Besides of having direct negative consequences for many women and their families, this implementation of the policy, limits the potential benefits of this programme. It is a well-known fact that work-life balance policies of this type can have positive spillover effects in activating the labour market careers of mothers who are out of the labour market during the early years of their children.

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