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The Complex Relationship among Life Satisfaction, Risk Perception, and Confidence: the Italian Case

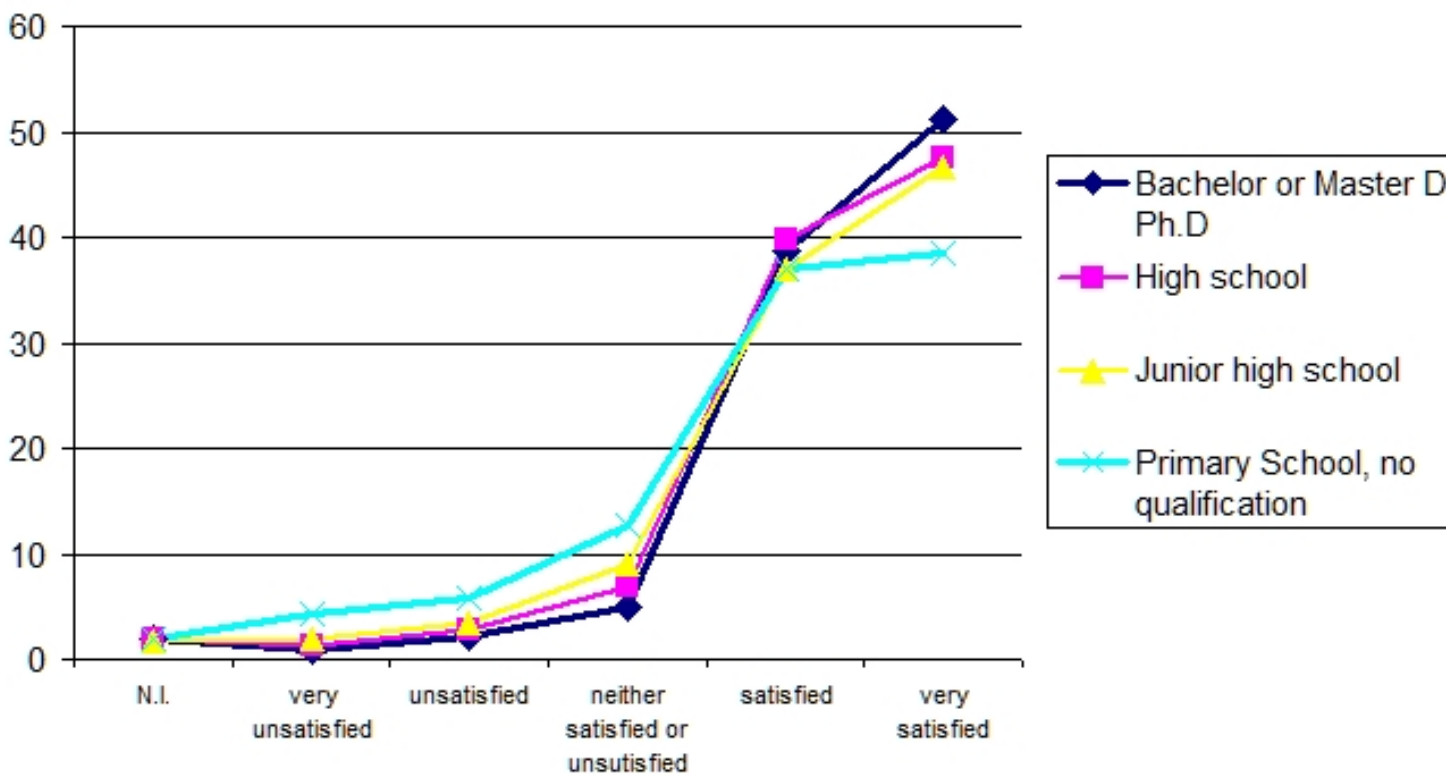
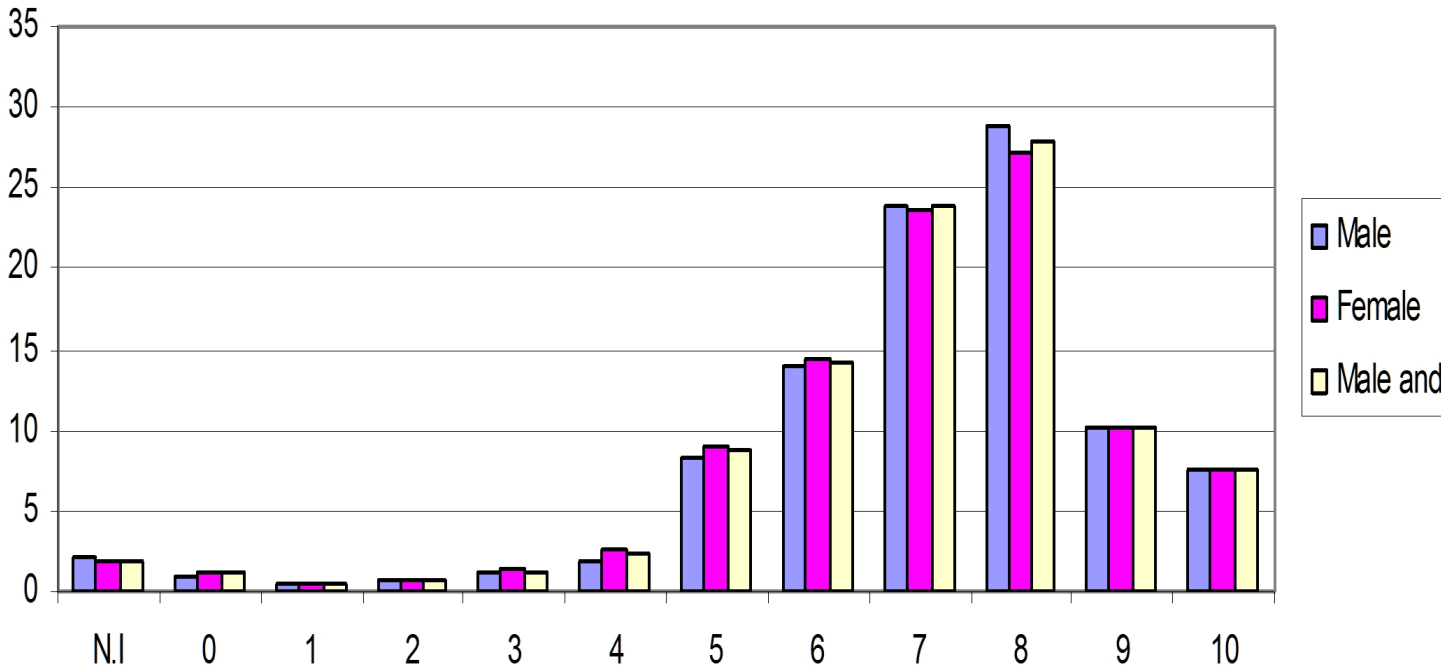
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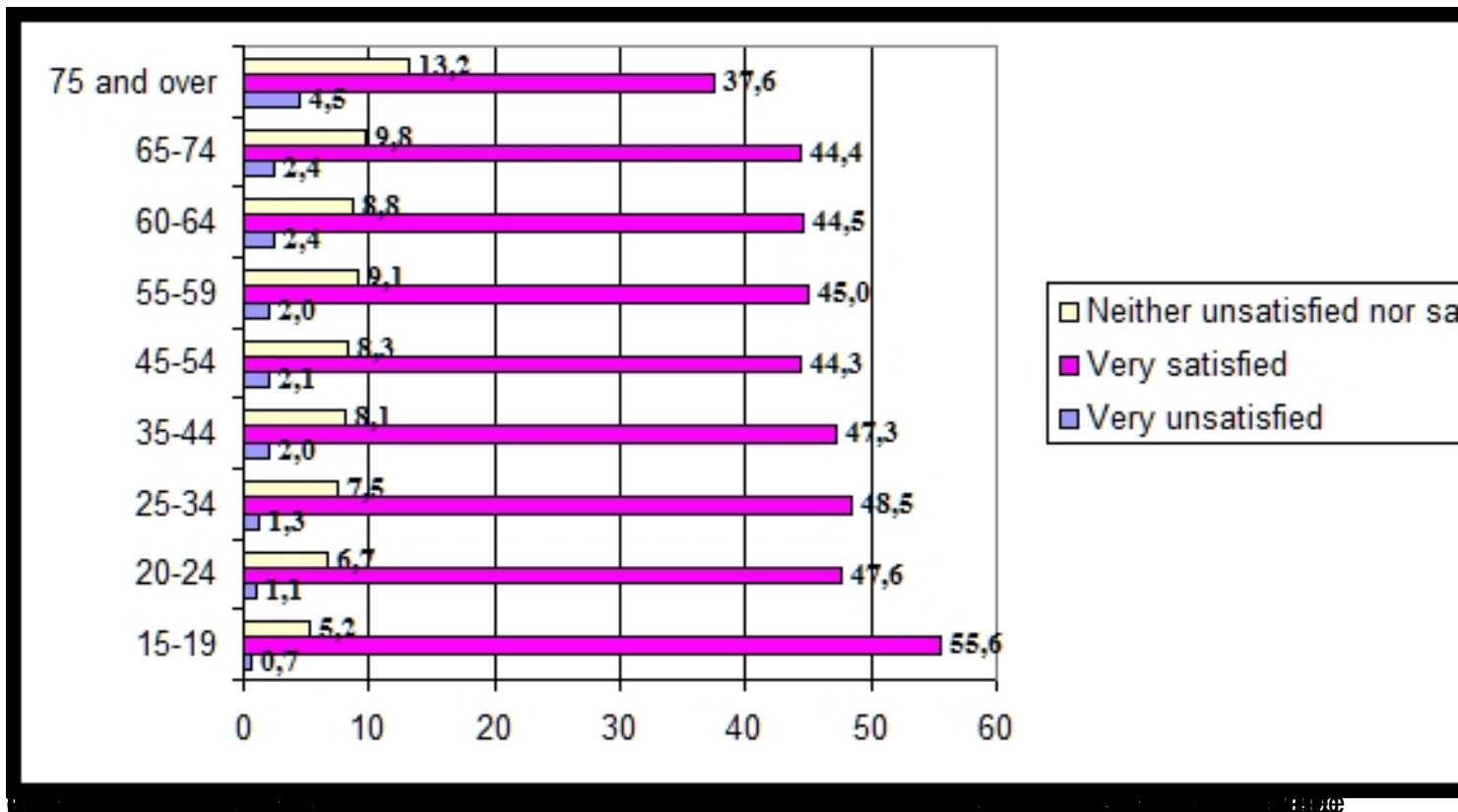
Abstract The work analyses the impact of risk perception (in terms of safety) and confidence (in other people, in institutions, etc.) on Italian citizens' life satisfaction. Considering the impact of human relationships on everyone's life, the dimension of life satisfaction has to be conceived as strictly related to social capital. So, the analysis will explore the complex relationship between life satisfaction, lifestyle, and social capital, under a territorial, gender, and age cohort outlook. The attitudes about risk perception and confidence will be related to the identified levels of life satisfaction. The analysis is based on data from the Istat Survey on Aspects of Everyday Life 2011 and also on data from the 2008-09 wave of the Istat Citizens' Safety survey.

1 □ □ □ □ □ The puzzling Italian people's life satisfaction

In 2011, the Istat [\[2\]](#) Survey on Aspects of Everyday Life asked to a sample of approximately 50,000 individuals (about 25,000 households) to express their score (min 0, max 10) on their satisfaction with life. According to the data, Italian people seem to be generally satisfied about their own lives (Fig 1): 28.0% of them scored "8". Thinking about the long-standing economic global crisis, and the impact of it on Italian society as a whole (Istat, 2011), the Italians' perceived satisfaction may seem a sort of "sociological puzzle". This could be an interesting starting point for a reflection about some aspects of the Italian social context.

How Italian people score their own life: a generalized good level of satisfaction





Confidence In others and in institutions: a focus on confidence as threatened by risk perception and how it relates to life satisfaction

Based on ISTAT Multipurpose Survey on Everyday Life, some living dimensions affecting the confidence (in others, in institutions, etc.) has been summarised by multiway techniques as correspondence analysis (Greenacre 1984).

As regards confidence, the survey has asked for the first time specific questions about confidence in the other people:

‘Do you think it is possible to be confident in most of people, or not?’, and another about having loose one’s pocket: ‘what is the likelihood that it would be given back to you with all your money in, by one of your neighbour, a policeman, a total stranger?’

Many indicators can affect the confidence in the others: the social and cultural activities of people, related to their attendance of friends, among the others, how often people go to

cinemas, theatres, museums, concerts and so on. Furthermore satisfaction in some important life dimensions, as friendships and leisure time, family life, ones own health, job and economic situation, environment, can also be considered as positively affecting the confidence in the others and at a lesser extent in institutions..

As regards confidence in institutions, information about the social and political participation can be considered a proxy of a positive inclination towards institutions.

To be member of some political or union associations can be viewed as a positive attitude towards institutions. Participating to other associative groups as ecological or volunteering groups is considered here as a soft indication of less confidence in institutions: volunteering is needed where services are not enough to assure benefits and rights for every people. Also how people take information about politic is included in the analysis, considering media or union associations, or electoral meeting as a soft indicator of confidence in institutions, while preferring relatives or friends as a soft indicator of less confidence in institutions.

Other important indicators affecting confidence in institutions are related to the family availability and accessibility of the main public services as health services, municipal offices, police, educational services as schools.

The analysis of the living area in terms of traffic and parking problems, air and noise pollution, traffic transport, but also in term of criminality and social decay perception (risk perception), is still an important topic to be considered when approaching confidence in institutions. People living in problematic areas, with street and/or criminality problems can show more disaffection versus institutions perceived as lacking. Such problems can also affect confidence in the others, exacerbating feelings related to survival in difficult situations, when the others can be felt as competitors.

The above dimensions has been summarised by various multiple correspondence analysis providing the following synthetic indicators:

No Satisfaction: positive values catches no satisfied people, negative values satisfied ones. This indicator is different from the score one discussed in the previous paragraph, as it is obtained summarising opinions in various life dimensions, while the above one is an overall

score given to the whole life individual satisfaction;

Political participations and social-cultural activities: positive values for active people;

Public services: no difficulties in accessing public services with negative values;

Area where living: traffic, pollution problems with positive values

Safety: street and criminality problems with positive values

2.1 A dependence analysis

A dependence analysis (logistic regression, Agresti 2002) has been performed considering the four variables of confidence (if people are trustworthy and the three 'who' that gives back the pocket with money still in) as dependent variables and the dimensions affecting confidence, according to the above hypothesis, as independent ones. In the model the main demographic variables are included to be controlled for.

In all the following analysis the two dimensions related to the area of living (safety and area of living) are not related with the confidence variables. That could be due to the fact that the two dimensions are asked to the reference interviewed person, not to all the member of the family, while the variable of confidence are asked individually to each member of the family.

The first analysis considering if people are trustworthy (table 1), shows that people living in three regions in the south of Italy, Basilicata, Puglia and Sicily, are less confident than the others, while in the north there are more confident people in Valle d'aosta, Trentino Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Liguria.

Table 1: Odds Ratio Estimates for people are trustworthy (only significant values reported)

Effect

Point Estimate

95% Wald

Confidence Limits

No satisfaction

0.539

0.512

0.568

political participation

1.119

1.055

1.186

socio-cultural life activities

1.408

1.343

1.476

AGE 14-18 vs 35-44

1.199

1.051

1.368

AGE 19-24 vs 35-44

0.840

0.746

0.947

AGE 25-34 vs 35-44

0.788

0.717

0.866

AGE 45-54 vs 35-44

1.250

1.153

1.356

AGE 55-59 vs 35-44

1.377

1.241

1.528

AGE 60-64 vs 35-44

1.282

1.151

1.427

AGE 65 e piu' vs 35-44

1.218

1.109

1.339

GENDER Females vs Males

0.893

0.850

0.939

REG Basilicata vs Piedmont

0.697

0.581

0.835

REG Friuli-Venezia Giulia vs Piedmont

1.475

1.268

1.715

REG Liguria vs Piedmont

1.398

1.208

1.618

REG Puglia vs Piedmont

0.826

0.715

0.954

REG Sardinia vs Piedmont

1.385

1.200

1.598

REG Sicily vs Piedmont

0.803

0.698

0.925

REG Trentino-Alto Adige vs Piedmont

1.904

1.671

2.169

REG Valle d'Aosta vs Piedmont

1.866

1.570

2.217

MUNICIP 10.001-50.000 vs \geq 50.001 inhabitants

1.092

1.012

1.179

MUNICIP 2.001-10.000 vs \geq 50.001 inhabitants

1.121

1.038

1.210

EDUC Secondary vs Secondary school I grade

1.317

1.235

1.404

EDUC Degree vs Secondary school I grade

1.811

1.662

1.974

EDUC Primary vs Secondary school I grade

0.909

0.836

0.988

Also in Sardinia people are more confident in the other than the rest of Italy. People living in small municipalities (2000-50000 inhabitants) are more confident than the others. Considering socio-demographic variables, females are less confident than males, and younger people aged between 19teen and 34 are less confident than the others. People with increasing educational level, increase their confidence in the others.

The variable about public services is not significant in the analysis, so as marital status. Focusing on the studied dimensions people more satisfied with their life, realizing social-cultural interests and participating in political life are more confident in people

The analysis of the second measure of confidence in the other (Table 2), that is the likelihood that a neighbourhood would return your lost pocket with all the money still in, shows a similar scenario.

Table 2: Odds Ratio Estimates neighbourhood returns lost pocket with money still in(only significant values reported)

Effect

Point Estimate

95% Wald

Confidence Limits

No Satisfaction

0.602

0.578

0.626

political participation

1.314

1.250

1.382

public services1

0.908

0.877

0.940

socio-cultural life activities

1.372

1.305

1.443

AGE 19-24 vs 55-59

0.761

0.667

0.868

AGE 25-34 vs 55-59

0.800

0.717

0.894

AGE 65 e piu' vs 55-59

1.149

1.040

1.270

GENDER Females vs Males

1.161

1.108

1.216

REG Campania vs Umbria

0.813

0.700

0.944

REG Friuli-Venezia Giulia vs Umbria

1.585

1.317

1.906

REG Molise vs Umbria

0.804

0.675

0.957

REG Piedmont vs Umbria

1.509

1.288

1.767

REG Puglia vs Umbria

0.668

0.574

0.778

REG Sardinia vs Umbria

1.375

1.159

1.631

REG Sicily vs Umbria

0.726

0.625

0.844

REG Tuscany vs Umbria

1.552

1.320

1.826

REG Trentino-Alto Adige vs Umbria

1.863

1.565

2.219

REG Valle d'Aosta vs Umbria

1.945

1.551

2.441

MUNICIP Metropolitan Centre vs 10.001-50.000 inhabitants

0.840

0.771

0.914

MUNICIP 2.001-10.000 vs 10.001-50.000 inhabitants

1.321

1.242

1.406

MUNICIP <2.000 vs 10.001-50.000 inhabitants

1.358

1.235

1.492

MARIT Married vs Single

1.081

1.010

1.158

MARIT Divorced vs Single

0.810

0.689

0.953

MARIT Separated vs Single

0.848

0.755

0.952

MARIT Widow vs Single

1.146

1.031

1.274

EDUC Secondary vs Secondary school I grade

1.209

1.139

1.284

EDUC Degree vs Secondary school I grade

1.442

1.314

1.582

EDUC Primary vs Secondary school I grade

0.911

0.849

0.978

Puglia, Sicily, Campania and Molise are less confident in neighbourhood, while people living in Trentino Alto Adige or Valle d'Aosta or Friuli Venezia Giulia, Tuscany, Piedmont or Sardinia are more confident. In little municipalities (2000-50000 inhabitants) more people are confident in neighbourhood, while in metropolitan areas centres they are less.

Older people are more confident in the neighbourhood than younger. This could be a feature of the liquid society theorized by Z .Bauman (Bauman 2000).

Females are more confident than males in term of neighbourhood, differently from the previous analysis regarding confidence in the other people as a whole. Married people are more confident, while divorced or separated less, maybe due to their personal experience in relationships, or maybe to a changed in the habitation due to the separation. Also in this analysis education help in increasing confidence.

The analysis of the dimensions considered as affecting confidence in the others and in the institutions, shows that satisfied people, active in socio-cultural and political terms, are more

confident in their neighbourhood, while people experiencing difficulties in enjoying public services are less confident.

The analysis of the indicator of confidence in policemen (Table 3) shows that Abruzzo, Campania, Puglia and Umbria are less confident in the police.

Table 3: Odds Ratio Estimates of confidence in policemen

Effect

Point Estimate

95% Wald

Confidence Limits

No satisfaction

0.590

0.564

0.618

political participation

1.198

1.128

1.272

public services1

0.935

0.897

0.974

AGE 19-24 vs 35-44

0.751

0.663

0.852

AGE 25-34 vs 35-44

0.795

0.720

0.878

AGE 45-54 vs 35-44

1.131

1.030

1.241

AGE 60-64 vs 35-44

1.219

1.075

1.382

AGE 65 e piu' vs 35-44

1.403

1.261

1.560

GENDER Females vs Males

1.280

1.210

1.353

REG Abruzzo vs Calabria

0.762

0.644

0.902

REG Campania vs Calabria

0.818

0.707

0.946

REG Emilia-Romagna vs Calabria

1.317

1.106

1.567

REG Liguria vs Calabria

1.902

1.545

2.341

REG Piedmont vs Calabria

1.415

1.203

1.664

REG Puglia vs Calabria

0.837

0.719

0.975

REG Sardinia vs Calabria

1.341

1.119

1.606

REG Tuscany vs Calabria

1.528

1.283

1.820

REG Trentino-Alto Adige vs Calabria

1.826

1.505

2.216

REG Umbria vs Calabria

0.805

0.667

0.972

REG Valle d'Aosta vs Calabria

1.667

1.288

2.157

MUNICIPALITY Metropolitan areas Centre vs 10.001-50.000 inhabitants

0.832

0.752

0.920

MUNICIPALITY Metropolitan areas Periphery vs 10.001-50.000 inhabitants

0.743

0.673

0.821

EDUC Primary vs Secondary school

0.867

0.785

0.957

The same regions underlined above in the north (Piedmont, Valle d'Aosta, Trentino Alto Adige, Liguria) and in the centre (Tuscany, Emilia Romagna) and Sardinia are more confident than the mean of the Italian citizens. People living in metropolitan areas are less confident.

The socio-cultural activities variable is not significant in the actual analysis.

It is interesting to note that people aged 35-44 years old express the level of confidence in the police of the Italians, younger people are less confident, older people are more confident in the police. Females are more confident than males; marital status does not affect the confidence in the police; only people with a low educational level (at most primary school) are less confident.

The multivariate dimensions affecting confidence in the other and in the institutions, shows that satisfied people participating in the political life are more confident in the police, while people experiencing difficulties in benefitting public services are less confident. The two results are important as they show clearly an association with confidence in the institution: police is considered an expression of the institutions, the political participation and the availability of public services has been conceptualised in the present work as a proxy of confidence in the institutions, and the three variables show congruent association.

The last analysis about confidence in a stranger is critical for describing confidence in the other

people (stranger giving back the pocket with all the money still in). Results of the analysis are in the table 4.

Table 4: Odds Ratio Estimates Confidence in a stranger

Effect

Point Estimate

95% Wald

Confidence Limits

No Satisfaction

0.775

0.726

0.826

socio-cultural life activities

1.307

1.229

1.389

AGE 19-24 vs 60-64

0.666

0.548

0.809

AGE 25-34 vs 60-64

0.702

0.597

0.824

REG Basilicata vs Sardinia

0.718

0.557

0.926

REG Calabria vs Sardinia

0.643

0.511

0.808

REG Friuli-Venezia Giulia vs Sardinia

1.626

1.321

2.002

REG Lazio vs Sardinia

0.674

0.541

0.841

REG Liguria vs Sardinia

1.330

1.077

1.644

REG Molise vs Sardinia

0.560

0.428

0.733

REG Puglia vs Sardinia

0.533

0.424

0.671

REG Sicily vs Sardinia

0.641

0.517

0.794

REG Trentino-Alto Adige vs Sardinia

1.811

1.501

2.184

REG Valle d'Aosta vs Sardinia

1.492

1.176

1.893

EDUC Secondary vs Secondary school I grade

1.198

1.101

1.302

EDUC Degree vs Secondary school I grade

1.470

1.315

1.644

Friuli, Liguria, Trentino Alto Adige and Valle d'Aosta are more confident in the other people, also in strangers, while Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily, Puglia, Lazio and Molise are less confident.

No differences by municipalities dimension, nor by marital status or gender.

Also in this analysis younger people are less confident.

Regarding this type of confidence only satisfaction in the considered life dimensions and the individual dynamics in terms of social and cultural activities are important, affecting positively confidence in the other, also if strangers.

A further analysis will explore the relation between the score satisfaction variable described in the first paragraph, as dependent variable, and confidence as independent one, controlling for risk perception.

3 Concluding remarks

At the beginning of this work the Italian people's satisfaction in life was defined as a sociological puzzle. The data analysis carried out here didn't pretend to solve an enigma; not all the enigma, at least. However, the data have stressed the importance of a reliable social network for personal well-being, as well as the need to cultivate interests, and to participate to social life.

These dimensions help social capital and personal well-being, reducing the risk perception at the same time. Policies have the mission of helping the well-being of the population; maybe the data analysis carried out here can help focusing social areas on which to concentrate the efforts.

It may seem interesting to conclude this work with a geographic note: can we talk about "an Italian geography of life satisfaction"? Looking at Figure 4 it may seem so.



Level of dissatisfaction	
Very high level of dissatisfaction	(2)
High level of dissatisfaction	(5)
Average level of dissatisfaction	(8)
Low level of dissatisfaction	(5)

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