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Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of worry about the future economic situation of the family by analysing data collected in 2009, 2010 and 2011 from samples of individuals resident in Italy by the Osservatorio sulle Strategie di Consumo delle Famiglie (Observatory on Family Consumption Strategies). After providing a theoretical overview of the object of study, I will attempt to establish whether the number of subjects who are worried about their family's future economic situation increased between 2009 and 2011.

After observing this rise, I will explore whether it has had more impact on those who have fewer available resources. The data analysis highlights that the increase in the sense of worry about future economic wellbeing is now actually more uniform with regard to the attributive qualities of individuals, tending to become a constant feature of their behavioural tendencies.

Keywords: family, economic crisis, worry about future economic wellbeing.

1. Introduction¹

At a time of deep-set structural economic and financial crisis such as the present one, it is of particular interest to assess the level of worry that individuals perceive with regard to their family's economic condition.

As Vella recently underlined (2011), the financial crisis that exploded in 2008 is providing the societies subjected to it with a valuable demonstration of the need to evaluate risk effectively. After all, a greater ability to read the risks related to one's own behaviour can reduce the danger of falling into a state of profound financial crisis, economic recession and social disintegration.

Through surveys conducted in 2009, 2010 and 2011, the Observatory on Family Consumption Strategies (hereinafter OFCS) attempted to investigate the level of worry about the future economic situation of the family and assess the possible determinants.

In this paper, whose aims are exploratory in nature, I intend to account for the data collected regarding this variable in an attempt to identify the trend for the three years in question and identify the socio-demographic variables that can explain the variability.

To achieve these aims, I will start by presenting a theoretical overview of the object of study (§ 2). I will then describe the research strategy adopted (§ 3) before presenting (§ 4) and discussing (§5) the results obtained through analysis of the data collected in the surveys conducted by the OFCS.

¹ Thanks to the anonymous referees from the Italian Sociological Review for their reviews of the preliminary version of this paper and suggested amendments, which have improved the resulting quality of the work.

2. Theoretical overview

Worry about the future economic condition of the family can be seen as a good indicator of the risk of social exclusion to which individuals are exposed and the risk of a reduction in social cohesion to which society is exposed (Donati 2010; 2012; Vella 2011; Mezzananza 2012).

Numerous theses have underlined, albeit with some differences, the constant decline in social trust and cohesion in Western societies (Godbout 1992; 1996; Caillé 1998; Misztal 1996; Prandini 1998; Helly 1999; Putnam 2000; Moody and White 2003). The main indicators that can explain this phenomenon are the progressive impoverishment of civic life, the decreased interest in politics, the weakened sense of solidarity among members of society and the decline in trust in some categories of social actors, in particular those that present themselves as points of access to public institutions (Giddens 1990). The responses to the decline in social cohesion can be identified in the actions directed at removing the causes of social exclusion and strengthening trust in institutions (economic, political, and so on).

The current economic context appears to be deeply unfavourable in terms of removing the causes of social exclusion and disseminating an attitude of trust among individuals, which, as Fukuyama (1995) claims, should instead be pursued for the wellbeing of the whole community. Uslaner (2002) put forward the theory that individuals tend to accrue a low level of individual optimism² and, consequently, a low tendency to grant trust if they lack the ability to forecast, if not control, the characteristics of the socio-economic environment that they live in.

Trust can refer to “an expectation of experiences that have positive value for the actor, accrued in conditions of uncertainty, but in the presence of a sufficient cognitive and/or emotional load to exceed the threshold of mere hope” (Mutti 1998, 42). The following can be underlined: (1) trust refers to an actor’s expectation that the surrounding social environment produces actions which are personally beneficial, or at least not negative; (2) this expectation is accrued in conditions of uncertainty (otherwise we would not be able to speak of trust); (3) the intertwining of cognitive and emotional elements allows the actor, albeit in a situation of uncertainty, to accrue a certain number of expectations of experiences with positive value.

Addressing the issue of worry about future economic wellbeing and in particular its socio-demographic determinants can enable us to understand one of the variables considered to be capable of forming a negative relationship with optimism and, consequently, the different forms of trust (specific/general individual, specific/general institutional) felt by individuals. As Rao (2007) summarised, there seem to be inextricable links between the concepts of a sense of insecurity and worry about the future, on one side, and trust, on the other side. In other words, a lack of worry about the future makes individuals more capable of feeling interpersonal and institutional trust (Mutti 1998; Prandini 1998; Uslaner 2002; Rao 2007).

After establishing the importance of the object of study of this article, I will now focus on the Italian context. To this end, it is useful to start by reflecting on some structural data supplied by ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, or the Italian National Institute of Statistics). Through a periodical survey conducted every month since 1982 starting from a methodological layout standardised at a European level, ISTAT measures the climate of trust among consumers, a complex synthetic indicator that makes it possible to give weight to the optimism and pessimism felt by Italian consumers. Until December 2010 this survey was conducted by the ISAE (Istituto di Studi e Analisi Economica, or Institute of Economic Studies and Analysis), while since January 2011 it has been carried out by ISTAT.

The climate of consumers’ trust in the future is one of the macro indicators of trust, showing the average expectations regarding the economic situation of Italy and the family, unemployment and future saving possibilities (this index is constructed on a base of 2005=100 and is seasonally adjusted) (ISTAT 2012). If we analyse this variable over the period 2009-2012, we discover that there has been a net deterioration, dropping from 103.9 in September 2009 to 76.9 in September 2012 (-27)³.

² Also determined by self-esteem and trust in oneself (Uslaner 2002).

³ For an overview of the economic crisis in Italy and its implications for the job market see Mezzananza (2012).

Within the framework of this context, the OFCS used its surveys to carry out in-depth analysis of the issue of worry about the economic situation of the family in the year following the year of data collection each time. Taking the data collected by the OFCS as my starting point, I intend to explore the trend regarding the state of worry over the years in question – 2009, 2010 and 2011 – in the wake of the more general data provided by the ISAE-ISTAT surveys.

I will also attempt to understand the trend of the state of worry among the weakest individuals, namely the poorest subjects or those who belong to categories that are tendentially more underprivileged from an economic point of view (women, young people, elderly people, and so on).

3. Method

The explorative aim of this work will be pursued by presenting data collected during the course of the first three surveys conducted by the OFCS.

Since 2009 the OFCS has carried out an annual sample survey on the issue of consumption by individuals aged 25 or over who are resident in Italy. SWG, an Italian research company, is responsible for the construction of the sample and data collection. Cases are extracted from a population of previously profiled subjects – around 60,000 individuals – and are interviewed through the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) system. As the profiled subjects cooperate with the research company by taking part in some of its surveys, it is a non-random sample of the resident population of Italy.

The quotas are set using recorded data for the resident population of Italy on 1 January in the year in which the data are collected. The following parameters are used to determine the quotas of subjects interviewed: gender, age group (25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 and over), geographical area of residence (North West, North East, Centre, South, Islands)⁴.

The data analysed here were collected: (1) in December 2009, from a sample of 2,022 individuals; (2) in November 2010, from a sample of 2,007 individuals; (3) in November 2011, from a sample of 2,008 individuals.

As stated above, the main focus of this study will be a variable used to measure the level of respondents' worry about their family's future economic situation. The question used was worded as follows: "When you think about your family's economic situation next year, you feel:", followed by these answer options: "not at all worried", "slightly worried", "worried", "extremely worried".

4. Results

4.1. The indicator of worry about the future

Table 1 shows the frequencies recorded for the variable, which made it possible to assess interviewees' expectations regarding the economic situation in the year following the year of data collection.

The effectiveness of the data collected by the OFCS in illustrating the phenomenon that is the focus of this article can be checked to an extent by observing the data provided for the same period by the ISAE and ISTAT. The ISAE-ISTAT surveys were conducted using random samples of the Italian population of approximately 2,000 individuals through the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system.

Table 2 shows the trend of the indicator with regard to Italians' expectations about their family's economic situation in the following twelve months. As we can see, in the scale of categories used by the ISAE and ISTAT there is an intermediate point expressing stasis and lack of change that is not present in the OFCS's answer options.

⁴ List of the Italian regions: - North West: Aosta Valley, Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria; - North East: Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna; - Centre: Tuscany, Marche, Umbria, Lazio; - South: Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria; - Islands: Sardinia, Sicily.

Tab. 1 – Worry about the economic situation of the family in the following year (%)

When you think about your family's economic situation next year, you feel:	December 2009	November 2010	November 2011
Not at all worried	8.0	7.4	3.9
Slightly worried	39.2	41.5	29.7
Worried	42.6	40.4	49.2
Extremely worried	10.2	10.7	17.2
Total	100	100	100
n	2,022	2,007	2,008

Source: OFCS data from 2009, 2010, 2011.

Despite the methodological differences between the research carried out by the OFCS and the studies conducted by the ISAE-ISTAT, it is possible to identify some interesting convergences between them.

Tab. 2 – Family economic situation: expectations about the following 12 months (%)

	December 2009	November 2010	November 2011
Will improve a lot	0.3	0.3	0.5
Will improve slightly	7.1	5.0	4.1
Will stay the same	78.7	79.5	71.1
Will deteriorate slightly	9.3	10.9	17.5
Will deteriorate a lot	1.5	2.5	4.2
NR	3.2	2.0	2.7
Total*	100	100	100

Source: ISTAT (2012).

* N.B: due to rounded figures, the total of percentages for the answer options for each question is not exactly 100.

These convergences relate to the ends of the scale. We will start with the data for 2009. Optimism (“not at all worried”) accounts for 8% of OFCS interviewees and 7.4% (“will improve a lot” + “will improve slightly”) of ISAE respondents. The extreme worry expressed by 10.2% of OFCS interviewees is also comparable to the 10.8% of ISAE respondents that predict deterioration (slight or major).

Little changes in 2010 with regard to comparisons between the surveys. A positive attitude about the economic future of the family is expressed by 7.4% of those who took part in the OFCS survey and 5.3% of cases selected by the ISAE. Instead, the most negative area accounts for 10.7% of OFCS interviewees and 13.4% of cases in the survey conducted by the ISAE.

Finally, the studies conducted in November 2011 reveal a lack of worry about the future among 3.9% of participants in the OFCS survey and 4.6% of cases in the research carried out by ISTAT. 17.2% of participants in the OFCS survey are extremely worried about the future economic situation, while 21.7% of subjects interviewed by ISTAT foresee a slight or major deterioration.

All the data presented report a serious deterioration in the level of trust placed in the future with regard to the economic situation of the family. In particular, OFCS data highlight the presence of worry (“worried” + “extremely worried”) among, respectively, 52.8% and 51.1% of interviewees in 2009 and 2010, and 66.4% of interviewees in 2011. As we have seen, ISTAT also recorded a radical deterioration in trust in the future in 2011.

4.2. Worry about the future and socio-demographic variables

I will now try to highlight the most important relationships between worry about the future and certain socio-demographic variables identified by the OFCS surveys. My aim is to understand whether there are different levels of worry among the various social categories.

The variables which will be used to make comparisons are gender, age and family income.

I will start by making cross-tabulations with the gender of the interviewees. In 2009 the cross-tabulation between gender and worry about the economic condition of the family produced a statistically significant relationship⁵, in the sense that women⁶ expressed worry in 48.4% of cases and extreme worry in 12.1% of cases, compared to respective figures of 36.4% and 8.1% for men⁷. The difference between women and men with regard to the number of subjects worried about their family's economic situation in the following year is therefore +16.0%.

The 2010 survey also provides evidence of a statistically significant relationship between gender and worry about the future⁸. 44.2% of women⁹ say that they are worried and 11.7% express extreme worry about their family's economic situation in the following year, compared to 36.3% of men¹⁰ who are worried and 9.6% who are extremely worried. In this case the difference between women and men in terms of being worried or extremely worried about the future is +10.0%.

As we have seen, there was a radical deterioration in the sense of worry about the future economic situation of the family in 2011. The 2011 survey provides another statistically significant relationship¹¹ where 49.0% of the total of women¹² are worried and 20.2% are extremely worried, compared to respective figures of 49.4% and 14.0% for men¹³. The difference between women and men who are worried or extremely worried drops to +5.8%, about half the difference recorded in 2010 and about a third of the figure for 2009.

To sum up, there is a major reduction in the difference between the sexes in tandem with the heightened sense of worry between 2009 and 2011. The drop in the measure of association, Cramér's V, also provides evidence of the weakened link between gender and worry.

Another set of potentially interesting cross-tabulations is with the age groups of the respondents: 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 and over. The database for 2009 brings to light a statistically significant relationship between this variable and worry about the future economic situation of the family¹⁴. For reasons of simplicity of data presentation, here follow the cumulated totals of percentages of "worried" and "extremely worried" answers selected in each age group: 25-34 years old¹⁵ = 47.7%; 35-44 years old¹⁶ = 59.1%; 45-54 years old¹⁷ = 53.6%; 55-64 years old¹⁸ = 51.1%; 65 years old and over¹⁹ = 51.6%. The age group that registered the highest incidence of worry includes subjects aged between 35 and 44 years old. Compared to the group with the lowest number of worried subjects, those aged 25-34 years old, there is a difference of +11.4%.

A statistically significant relationship can also be identified in the data collected in 2010²⁰. As before, here follow the cumulated totals of percentages in each age group: 25-34 years old²¹ =

⁵ Chi-squared test = 53.59; df = 3; Cramér's V = 0.16; $p < 0.001$.

⁶ n = 1,058.

⁷ n = 964.

⁸ Chi-squared test = 21.66; df = 3; Cramér's V = 0.10; $p < 0.001$.

⁹ n = 1,050.

¹⁰ n = 957.

¹¹ Chi-squared test = 18.73; df = 3; Cramér's V = 0.10; $p < 0.001$.

¹² n = 1,025.

¹³ n = 983.

¹⁴ Chi-squared test = 47.76; df = 12; Cramér's V = 0.09; $p < 0.001$.

¹⁵ n = 352.

¹⁶ n = 435.

¹⁷ n = 375.

¹⁸ n = 325.

¹⁹ n = 535.

²⁰ Chi-squared test = 52.99; df = 12; Cramér's V = 0.09; $p < 0.001$.

²¹ n = 349.

51.7%; 35-44 years old²² = 51.6%; 45-54 years old²³ = 60.1%; 55-64 years old²⁴ = 48.8%; 65 years old and over²⁵ = 45.6%. The “most worried” age group now includes subjects aged between 45 and 54 years old, registering a difference of +14.5% compared to the least worried group, those aged 65 and above.

Finally, no statistically significant relationship emerges from the data collected in 2011.

We shall now turn to relationships with income. The feeling of worry about the economic situation of the family in the following year will be cross-tabulated with the variable of respondents’ net monthly family income, divided into the following scale of categories: “up to 1,000 euro”, “from 1,001 to 2,000 euro”, “from 2,001 to 4,000 euro”, “greater than 4,000 euro”.

In the survey carried out in 2009, 16.9% of cases did not provide any data about their family income. As we might imagine, the statistically significant relationship that emerges is both strong and negative²⁶. As income increases, worry about the future decreases significantly. Here follow the totals of the percentages recorded for the “worried” and “extremely worried” answers in each income category: income up to 1,000 euro²⁷ = 87.3%; income between 1,001 and 2,000 euro²⁸ = 60.7% ; income between 2,001 and 4,000 euro²⁹ = 44.6%; income greater than 4,000 euro³⁰ = 21.4%. With regard to worry, the difference between the lowest and highest income categories is +65.9%.

The 2010 data include 16.6% of cases that did not provide any information about their net monthly family income. In terms of its significance, strength and negativity, the relationship identified is almost identical to the trend recorded in 2009³¹. Here follow the cumulated percentages of respondents who feel worried or extremely worried about their family’s future economic situation divided by income category: income up to 1,000 euro³² = 81.2%; income between 1,001 and 2,000 euro³³ = 61.3 % ; income between 2,001 and 4,000 euro³⁴ = 40.7%; income greater than 4,000 euro³⁵ = 25.0%. With regard to worry, the difference between the lowest and highest income categories is now +56.2%.

Finally, the data collected in 2011, which has no recorded information about family income in 15.2% of cases, can be used to identify a further statistically significant relationship that is both strong and negative³⁶. Here follow the cumulated percentages of worried or extremely worried subjects, divided according to their income category: income up to 1,000 euro³⁷ = 84.2%; income between 1,001 and 2,000 euro³⁸ = 75.1% ; income between 2,001 and 4,000 euro³⁹ = 60.3%; income greater than 4,000 euro⁴⁰ = 39.8%. With regard to worry about the future economic situation of the family, the difference between the lowest and highest income categories is +44.4% in 2011.

²² n = 432.

²³ n = 373.

²⁴ n = 320.

²⁵ n = 533.

²⁶ $\tau_c = -0.26; p < 0.001$.

²⁷ n = 102.

²⁸ n = 647.

²⁹ n = 781.

³⁰ n = 150.

³¹ $\tau_c = -0.26; p < 0.001$.

³² n = 117.

³³ n = 625.

³⁴ n = 767.

³⁵ n = 164.

³⁶ $\tau_c = -0.24; p < 0.001$.

³⁷ n = 133.

³⁸ n = 635.

³⁹ n = 759.

⁴⁰ n = 176.

It is clear that the difference between percentages has decreased significantly over the course of time, showing that the gap between the different income categories has diminished with regard to worry about the family's future economic situation.

4.3. The profiles of worry about the future

I will conclude the presentation of results by offering some profiles of the subjects interviewed in the three years covered by the research, constructed by applying the multivariate technique of cluster analysis (TwoStep procedure) to the following variables: worry about the economic situation of the family in the following year, gender, age, educational qualifications (none or elementary school diploma, middle school or professional school diploma, high school diploma, degree or university diploma, postgraduate qualification), number of subjects in the family (cohabiting under the same roof on a regular basis), number of dependent children (whether or not they cohabit with the rest of the family), net monthly family income, geographical area of residence (North West, North East, Centre, South, Islands).

When applied to the data for 2009, the clustering technique identifies a total of four groups of cases.

Tab. 3 – Clusters that emerge from the 2009 data

	Cluster				Total (100%) (n = 1,678)
	1 (29.0%)	2 (26.4%)	3 (18.8%)	4 (25.8%)	
<i>Worry</i>					
Not at all worried	14.9%	4.2%	66.0%	14.9%	100%
Slightly worried	26.8%	10.7%	28.6%	33.9%	100%
Worried	27.6%	42.6%	2.9%	26.9%	100%
Extremely worried	53.3%	41.8%	4.9%	0.0%	100%
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	3.9%	33.5%	35.3%	27.3%	100%
Female	54.6%	19.3%	2.0%	24.1%	100%
<i>Age</i>	53.98	44.75	53.57	49.13	-
<i>Educational qualifications</i>					
None/elementary school diploma	85.1%	1.9%	11.1%	1.9%	100%
Middle school or professional school diploma	65.9%	8.6%	25.5%	0.0%	100%
High school diploma	27.6%	27.1%	12.2%	33.1%	100%
Degree/university diploma	3.6%	42.9%	18.7%	34.8%	100%
Postgraduate qualification	23.4%	14.5%	41.4%	20.7%	100%
<i>No. of family members</i>	2.51	3.32	2.88	2.97	-
<i>No. of dependent children</i>	0.74	1.21	0.83	0.97	-
<i>Net monthly family income</i>					
Up to 1,000 euro	67.3%	31.7%	0.0%	1.0%	100%
From 1,001 to 2,000 euro	47.6%	43.7%	8.7%	0.0%	100%
From 2,001 to 4,000 euro	11.0%	15.0%	19.3%	54.7%	100%
Greater than 4,000 euro	16.0%	8.0%	73.3%	2.7%	100%
<i>Macro region</i>					
North West	34.3%	10.2%	17.2%	38.3%	100%
North East	25.8%	15.3%	19.5%	39.3%	100%
Centre	30.1%	13.5%	18.8%	37.6%	100%
South	25.8%	53.8%	20.4%	0.0%	100%
Islands	25.7%	55.7%	18.6%	0.0%	100%

Source: OFCS data for 2009.

Table 3 provides details of the four cluster profiles with the variables used to identify them. I intend to focus in particular here on analysing those shown as poles apart in terms of how worried their members are about the future. Cluster no. 3, which groups together 18.8% of respondents, could be defined as the group who are not worried. Indeed, it includes 66.0% of those who are not at all worried about their family's economic situation in the following year. 35.3% of men are positioned in this cluster along with only 2.0% of women, while the average age of members is 53.57 years old. The families which members of this cluster belong to consist of an average of 2.88 subjects with an average of 0.83 dependent children. 41.1% of those with a postgraduate

qualification are positioned in this cluster, along with 73.3% of those from families with a net monthly income greater than 4,000 euro a month. There are no particular differences between geographical areas, as the cluster includes approximately 20% of those who live in each macro region. Cluster nos. 1 and 2 contain about 55% of respondents overall, including almost all of those who feel extremely worried. Cluster no. 1 contains more than half of the women, while cluster no. 2 incorporates a third of the men. Subjects in the first cluster are on average older, less well educated and poorer, while those in the second cluster are younger, with university qualifications and a family income of no more than 2,000 euro a month. The cluster no. 1 attracts above all interviewees resident in the Centre and North of the country, while cluster no. 2 those who are resident in the South and in the Islands. These two profiles go some way to outlining those who were “worriers” in 2009. Both cluster profiles feature a specific mix of traditionally underprivileged categories in terms of indicators of wellbeing and economic stability.

If we apply the same multivariate technique to the data for 2010, the profile that emerges is a highly simplified version of the previously outlined description (tab. 4).

Tab. 4 – Clusters that emerge from the 2010 data

	<i>Cluster</i>		Total (100%) (n = 1,672)
	1 (50.4%)	2 (49.6%)	
<i>Worry</i>			
Not at all worried	15.2%	84.8%	100%
Slightly worried	37.6%	62.4%	100%
Worried	59.5%	40.5%	100%
Extremely worried	94.4%	5.6%	100%
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	42.3%	57.7%	100%
Female	58.9%	41.1%	100%
<i>Age</i>	50.22	51.47	-
<i>Educational qualifications</i>			
None/elementary school diploma	89.8%	10.2%	100%
Middle school or professional school diploma	84.5%	15.5%	100%
High school diploma	46.8%	53.2%	100%
Degree/university diploma	36.4%	63.6%	100%
Postgraduate qualification	34.9%	65.1%	100%
<i>No. of family members</i>	2.69	2.97	-
<i>No. of dependent children</i>	0.89	0.94	-
<i>Net monthly family income</i>			
Up to 1,000 euro	100%	0.0%	100%
From 1,001 to 2,000 euro	99.2%	0.8%	100%
From 2,001 to 4,000 euro	12.9%	87.1%	100%
Greater than 4,000 euro	4.3%	95.7%	100%
<i>Macro region</i>			
North West	39.7%	60.3%	100%
North East	47.8%	52.2%	100%
Centre	47.6%	52.4%	100%
South	60.5%	39.5%	100%
Islands	68.6%	31.4%	100%

Source: OFCS data for 2010.

There are now only two clusters, which basically divide the group of respondents in half. Cluster no. 1 contains most of the subjects who are worried about their family’s future economic situation and almost all of those who say that they are extremely worried. This cluster features subjects with low or very low educational qualifications and a monthly family income of no more than 2,000 euro. The cluster of “worriers” includes most interviewees resident in the South and in the Islands.

Instead, cluster no. 2 contains most of those who do not feel at all worried or only slightly worried about the future. The members of this cluster include most respondents that have a degree

or higher qualification and a net monthly family income of more than 2,000 euro. The cluster of “non-worriers” for 2010 incorporates most respondents in the Centre and North of the country.

Tab. 5 – Clusters that emerge from the 2011 data

	Cluster		Total (100%) (n = 1,703)
	1 (48.5%)	2 (51.5%)	
<i>Worry</i>			
Not at all worried	37.5%	62.5%	100%
Slightly worried	44.9%	55.1%	100%
Worried	47.1%	52.9%	100%
Extremely worried	61.1%	38.9%	100%
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	1.0%	99.0%	100%
Female	100%	0.0%	100%
<i>Age</i>	49.31	52.61	-
<i>Educational qualifications</i>			
None/elementary school diploma	70.5%	29.5%	100%
Middle school or professional school diploma	53.2%	46.8%	100%
High school diploma	50.0%	50.0%	100%
Degree/university diploma	42.6%	57.4%	100%
Postgraduate qualification	46.3%	53.7%	100%
<i>No. of family members</i>	2.86	2.77	-
<i>No. of dependent children</i>	1.02	0.90	-
<i>Net monthly family income</i>			
Up to 1,000 euro	74.4%	25.6%	100%
From 1,001 to 2,000 euro	55.7%	44.3%	100%
From 2,001 to 4,000 euro	42.7%	57.3%	100%
Greater than 4,000 euro	27.8%	72.2%	100%
<i>Macro region</i>			
North West	48.0%	52.0%	100%
North East	45.2%	54.8%	100%
Centre	48.8%	51.2%	100%
South	50.1%	49.9%	100%
Islands	51.8%	48.2%	100%

Source: OFCS data for 2011.

If we apply the multivariate analysis technique to the data collected in 2011, we can also identify two clusters (tab. 5). These two clusters are strongly characterised in terms of gender – the first consists of women and the second of men – and differ to some extent with regard to sense of worry about the future. Cluster no. 1 includes just over 60% of those who feel extremely worried, while cluster no. 2 contains just over 60% of those who are not at all worried. Furthermore, cluster no. 1 is characterised by the fact that it contains 70.5% of those whose educational qualifications are no more than an elementary school diploma and 74.4% of those who belong to families with a net monthly income up to 1,000 euro. Instead, cluster no. 2 includes 72.2% of those who earn more than 4,000 euro a month. Comparisons between the clusters on the basis of macro region of residence are largely irrelevant.

To sum up, with regard to the object of attention of this study the data collected in 2011 present an even more simplified general overview than the picture that emerged in 2010.

5. Discussion and conclusions

In terms of time, the comparative analysis of the data collected by the OFCS reveals a significant deterioration in the level of trust that individuals placed in their family’s future economic wellbeing between 2009 and 2011, in keeping with the trend recorded by the ISAE and ISTAT.

In 2009 and 2010, according to the surveys conducted by the OFCS one interviewee in two feels worried about his or her family's economic situation in the upcoming year, while this incidence increases in 2011 to affect two individuals in three.

As we have seen, in 2011 worry about future economic wellbeing becomes an extremely important element of an individual's capital of expectations and orientations. The economic crisis has become structural over the years and has deeply undermined the sense of trust that individuals have in their material means.

It might be thought that the increased sense of worry about the future is heightened in the categories that appear to be more underprivileged at this moment in time, namely women, young people, the elderly and, it goes without saying, those with lower earnings.

However, the analysis carried out using OFCS data reveals that the differences between social categories in terms of their sense of worry about their family's future economic wellbeing seem to have diminished over time. Therefore, between 2009 and 2011, instead of taking shape with more clarity and highlighting the structural character of the lack of trust in the future, the differences between men and women, age groups and income categories have abated and the scenario has become more uniform and undifferentiated.

The multivariate analysis conducted makes it possible to depict the scenario that emerged from the previous analysis work with a certain degree of expressiveness and clarity.

While the worry expressed by interviewees has been reliably demonstrated, the picture that emerges from this analysis is one of intense general widespread disintegration of the sense of trust in future economic stability, which might leave its mark on future consumption strategies.

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