

The ageing process and the labour market in Italy: two new surveys on the field¹

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¹ The surveys presented in this paper have been carried out by the Department of Demographic Sciences of “La Sapienza” University in Rome with the cooperation of Isfol Labour Market area. The research group in Rome includes A. Golini, who has also coordinated the research, D. Gilli, S. Basso, A. Busetta, R. Iacoucci, G. Linfante, C. Reynaud, and P. Vittori. The entire research will be dealt in a volume to be released in a second time.

1. Framework

The population ageing process in Italy is among the most intense and rapid ones in the world.

Naturally, such process involves all different segments of the population. Between 2001 and 2021 the working-age population in Italy will be affected by an intense decrease of people below the age of 40 (4.5 millions, with a percentage decrease of 26.7%), and an increase of people aged between 40-64 (more than 3 millions, with a 17% decrease) (<http://demo.istat.it>). This will result in a limited number of young people who will have to replace a large number of older workers. In Italy, a considerable increase of over 65s is expected – over 30% in the next two decades, more than 3 million people – and a strong ageing within this segment (a more than proportional increase of people aged over 80). The coincidence between the increase of elderly population, which is dependant and needs assistance, and the decrease of working-age population, which produces most of financial flux and pays for treatments, highlights the urge for new arrangements of social assistance and of the entire welfare system.

Through two sample surveys, this work aims at focusing on expectations, attitudes and behaviours with respect to the employment and the retirement on one hand of people aged between 50 and 70, and on the other hand of companies.

Summing up we have tried to estimate work demand and supply for an age segment that has a significant weight on the sustainability of the pension system.

2. Surveys on the field

As it results from a combined report by the European Commission and Council about adequate and sustainable pensions, most Europeans retire from work before the legal retirement age (EU Council, March 2003). Even if the employment of over 50s in Italy has slightly increased in the last four years (Istat, Forze di lavoro 2003), Italy is still among the last countries on the list: the rate of elderly employment on total employment is still well below European average, a further consequence of the expulsion of many “elderly” workers, aged between 40 and 50, due to corporate policies arranged during the 80s - as early retirement or a long exclusion from the production process – that were covered by the State (Contini, 2003). The Istat survey on work force shows that in 2003 only 44 men and 19 women between 55-64 are active workers. Participation rate for both sexes reaches 32%, while the European average is 40%.

In this context, two surveys seemed an extremely interesting tool.

The survey “Work and retirement at elderly age” has involved 2.010 people who have been contacted through the CATI system in July 2003 and they have been divided into two separate samples (between the age of 50 and 69, employed and pensioners²); samples have been formed according to quotas with a numerosness that is proportional to the relative reference universe. Samples have been stratified according to structural variables: sex, age, geographic distribution.

² Such samples have been arranged separately in order to allow esteems which would be equally reliable for the two reference targets (employed and pensioners) to the maximum level of aggregation and with a statistical margin of error limited between $\pm 3,1\%$ (in the hypothesis: $p=q=0,5$ and $P=0,955$).

The survey on companies, “Enterprise strategies facing work force ageing”, has been carried out between the end of 2003 and the beginning of 2004 through a questionnaire sent via the post to personnel or human resources managers of each company. The sampling has been determined through a stratification according to geographic distribution, prevailing economic sector and size of the company³. At the end of the survey, we have collected completed questionnaires from 153 companies with a total of 71,558 employees.

3. Some main findings

3.1. Policies and opinions

To face the raise of their own work force’s average age, companies choose firstly *to employ younger workers* and secondly *to favour the retirement of elderly personnel*⁴ (Figure 1). This data is confirmed - at macro level - by the increase in the number of the unemployed aged over 50, which went up from 13.7% in 2000 to 14.5% in 2003 (Istat, *Forze di lavoro*, different years).

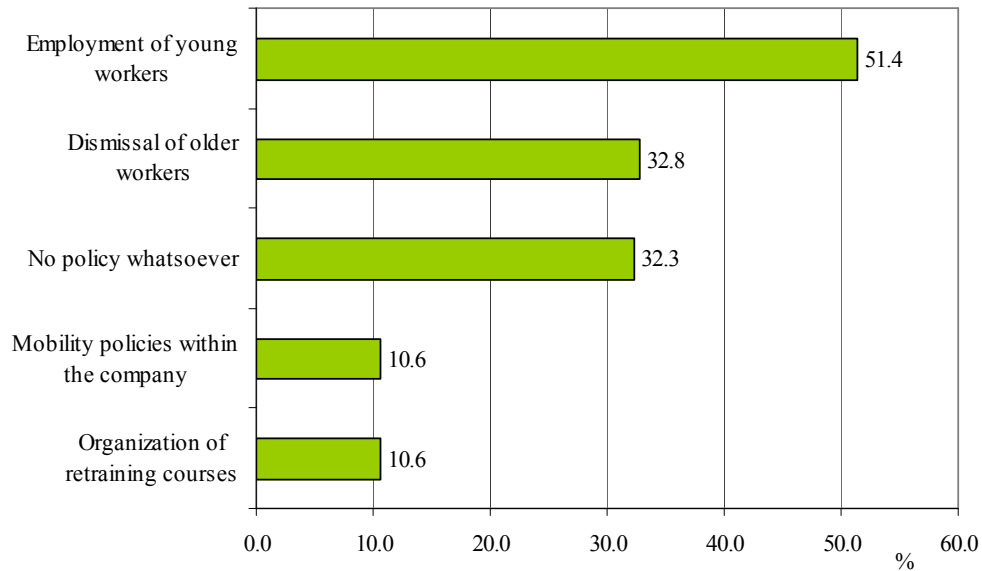
However, some analysis show that the two segments of labour market – younger and older workers – are not always directly interchangeable because there is no direct relationship between the rate of young unemployed and the rate of activity of over 50s (Figure 2).

³ ‘Medium size’ companies that have been involved in the survey have between 50 and 10.000 employees, and the large ones have more than 10.000 employees (results from large companies will not be exposed in this work and they have been excluded from the sampling system as they are considered self-representative).

⁴ This phenomenon has been set up by the *young in, old out* policies adopted by multinationals that since mid 90s have started to expel mature workers through different systems, usually dismissal and economical incentives.

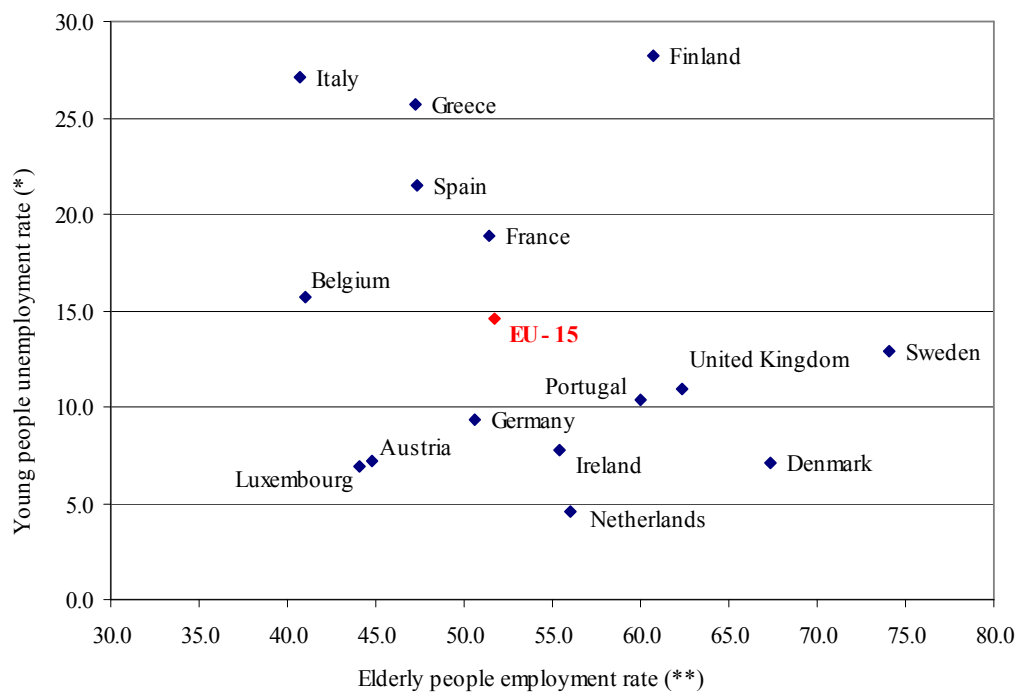
Figure 1 – Enterprises’ reaction to the rise of average age of personnel (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 12: How did the company react against the rise of the average age of its work force?



Source: survey data, Department of Demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Figure 2 – Relationship between older workers (50-64) employment rate and younger (15-24) unemployment rate (2002)



*15-24; ** 50-64

Source: Eurostat 2002 processed data

With respect to these aspects, interviewees have been asked to mention which was the attitude of their company towards workers aged over 50 (Figure 3a/b). Most of them (66% employed, 58% pensioners) believe that *the company would tend to keep their workers* or that *the company is indifferent to individual choices*. A smaller but significant percentage believes that their *company tends to favour workers dismissal* (16% employed, 26.2% pensioners). Those who have retired already perceive that their company is more discriminating towards older workers, probably because they have experienced the same treatment.

Figure 3a – The opinion of employed people about their company’s attitude on whether to keep or dismiss workers over 50

Q. 40: With respect to workers aged over 50, do you believe that your company or your employer tends to:

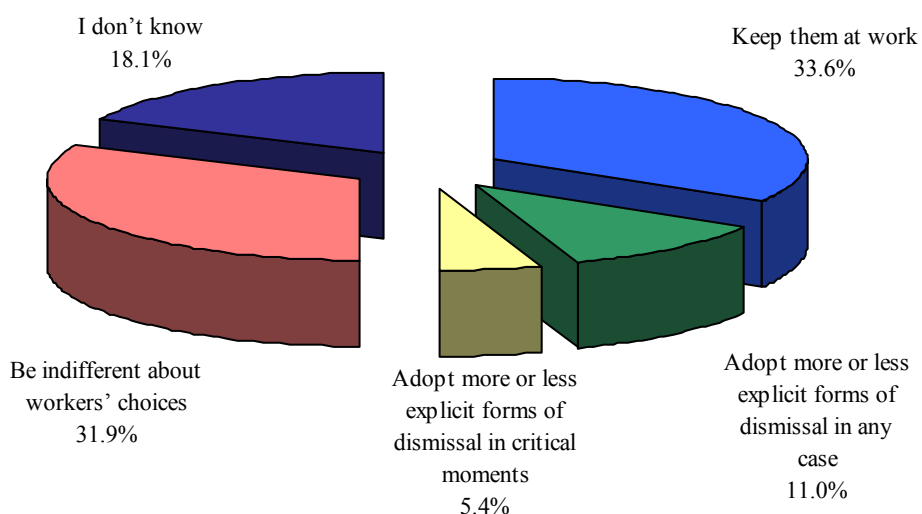
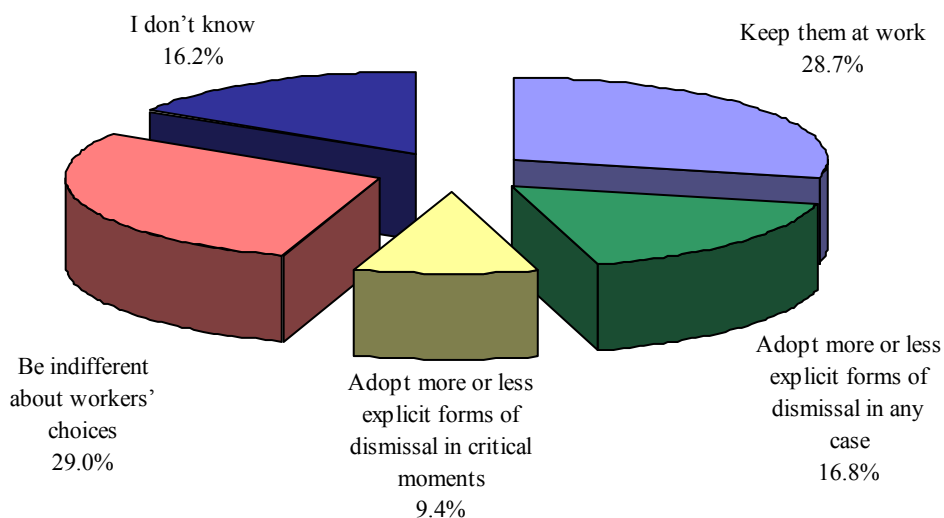


Figure 3b – The opinion of retired people about their company’s attitude on whether to keep or dismiss workers over 50

Q. 40: With respect to workers aged over 50, do you believe that the company you have worked for or your former employer tends to:

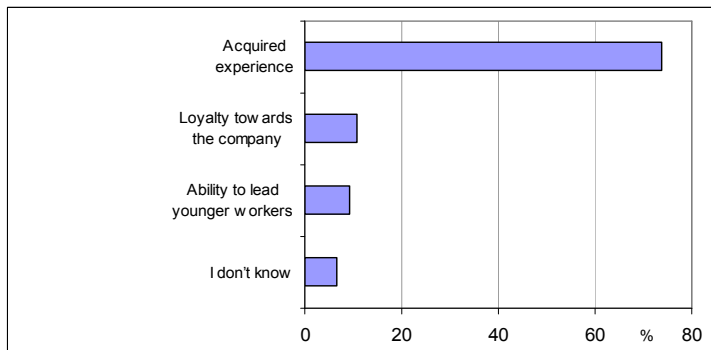


Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

According to interviewees, their *acquired experience* is the main reason that makes companies force them to stay in the company; the *higher work cost* is considered the main reason that makes companies expel older workers (Figure 4a/b).

Figure 4a – The opinion of employed personnel about the reasons that lead companies to keep or dismiss workers over 50

Q. 41a: Keeping them because of:



Q. 41b: Dismissing them because of:

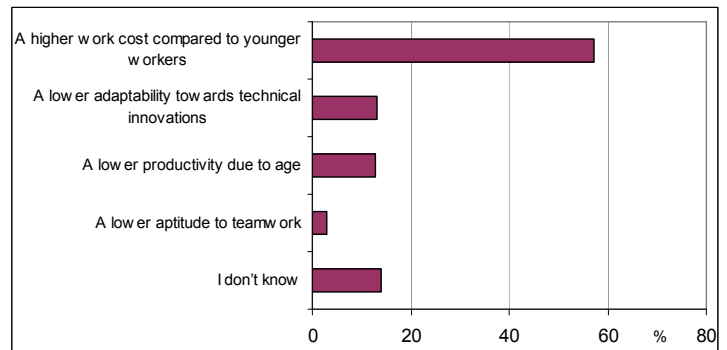
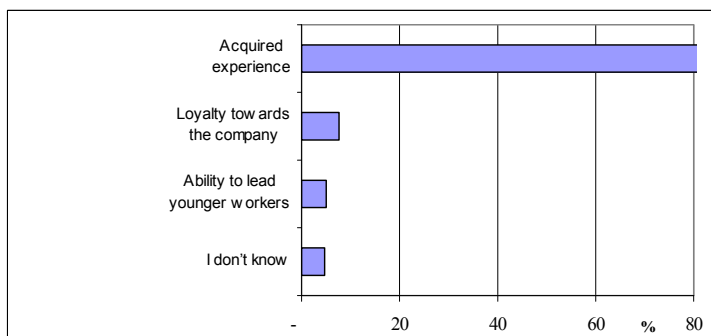
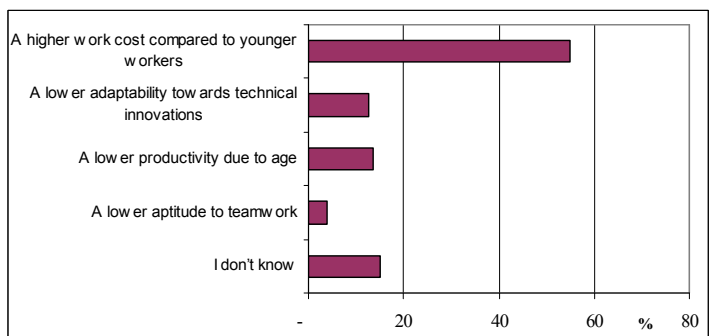


Figure 4b – The opinion of retired personnel about the reasons that lead companies to keep or dismiss workers over 50

Q. 41a: Keeping them because of:



Q. 41b: Dismissing them because of:

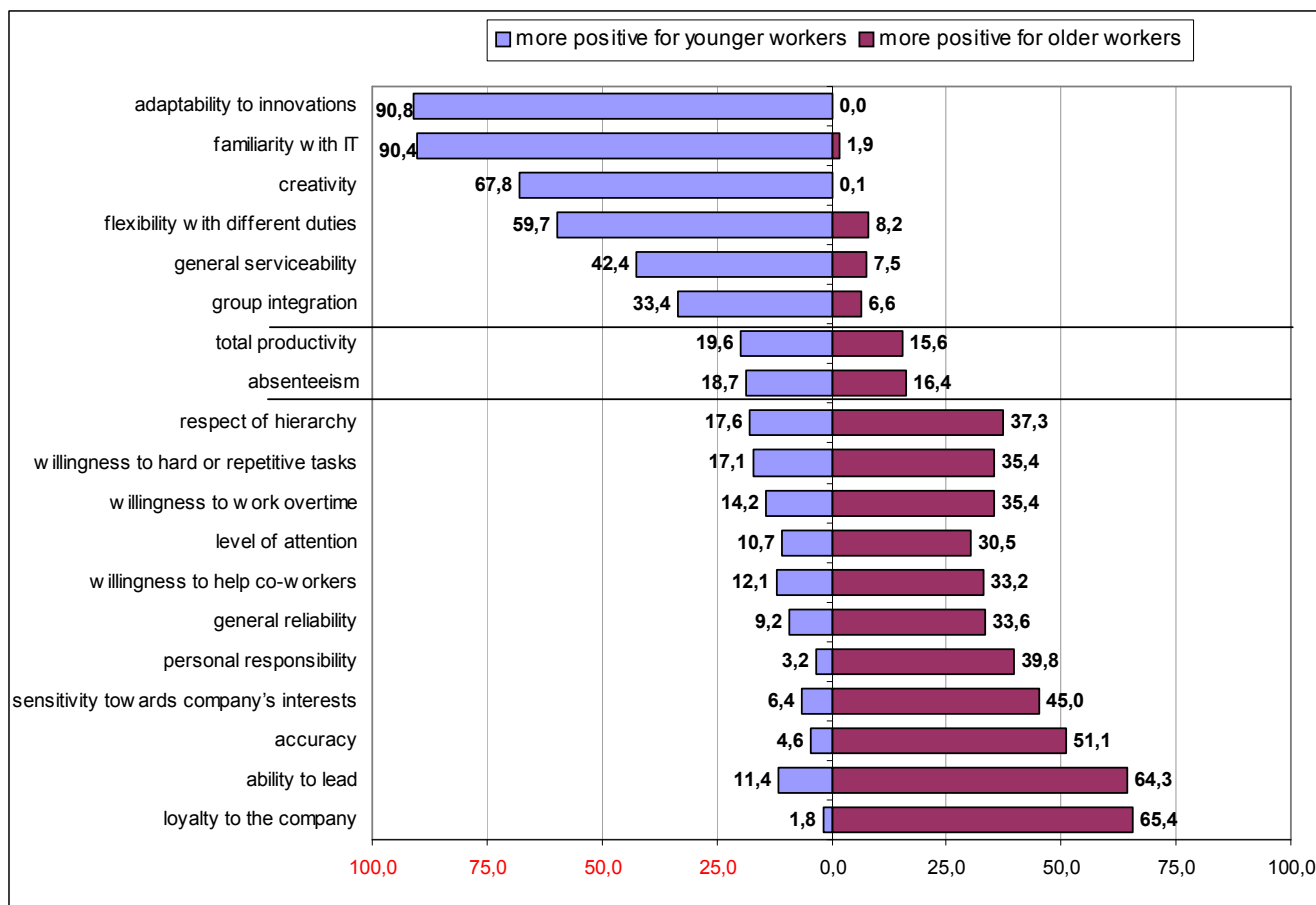


Source: survey data, Department of demographic Science and ISFOL

The results of the survey on companies confirms the opinion of workers. As a matter of fact, with respect to a comparison between younger and older workers on 19 specific features and aptitudes towards the work, older workers have received more positive evaluations than younger ones (11-6 items). In particular, workers' loyalty to the company, ability to lead others and accuracy favour older workers, while younger ones can offer a higher adaptability to innovations, familiarity with IT and creativity (Figure 5).

Figure 5 – Companies according to evaluations about skills and aptitudes of younger and older workers (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 15: According to the company's experience, compare younger (<35) and older (>50) personnel with respect to the aspects listed below



NB: the 100 difference is represented by the 'substantial equality'
 Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Older workers represent a firm foundation for the company, which through a upgrading programme for these workers could retrieve also the specific skills that are considered specific features of younger workers.

3.2. Training

According to the European Commission (Commissione europea, 2004), there is no empirical evidence about the fact that older workers are more or less productive than other workers. Productivity potentials of older workers is not compromised by age but by skills and qualifications that become old due to the introduction of new technologies. A solution to this problem is represented by *life-long learning*.

According to an Eurostat survey for the Commission, the percentage of manpower that is willing to take part to learning and training gradually decreases as the worker grows old; such tendency shows at an early stage of the workers' career⁵. In order to raise the level of training for older workers it is necessary to foster learning throughout one's lifespan. This would guarantee that future troops of old workers will have the skills that are necessary to adapt themselves to the evolution of the labour market (Commissione europea, 2004).

The great majority of interviewed companies (76.8%) provides for training and upgrading courses in order to face productive and market trends. About half of these companies (49.8%) address such courses to all their personnel, a very small amount of companies (6.6%) choose to invest in training for young workers only, while an insignificant percentage (0.1%) of companies gives specific attention to upgrading for older workers (Figure 6).

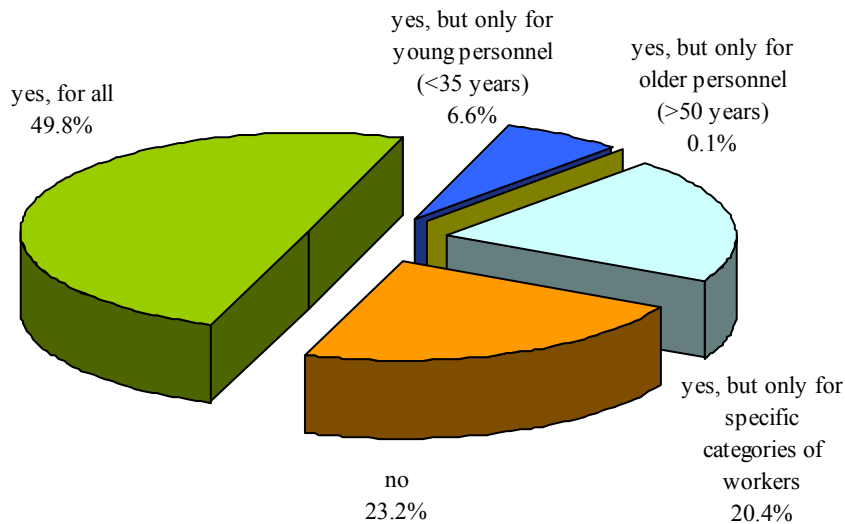
Despite the fact that the degree of education of current older workers is generally low and despite the fact that national and European bodies exert consistent pressures on the urge for life-long learning (particularly for over 50s), training courses addressed to older workers is not one of companies' priorities. After all, older workers show very little interest about these courses (Figure 7). On one hand, it seems that companies have entered a vicious circle (less specific courses for older workers, less specific interest of older workers), but on the other hand, questions should have had a different structure in order to observe this aspect in depth, as it is extremely interesting.

Some enlightenment comes from interviewees: 51% of employed people aged between 50 and 69 states that s/he has been involved, at one point of her/his career, in professional training and/or upgrading activities; among these, less than a half has received professional training during their last year. 41% of retired people, who belong to the same age segment, state that they have been involved in training activities, and among these 34.6% has received professional training after the age of 55 (Figure 8a/b). However, it is important to highlight that 70% of workers and 66% of pensioners believe that professional training and upgrading courses for over 50s are very or quite useful (Table 1). It is important to note that according to pensioners' answers, training and upgrading activities were much less diffused in the past.

⁵ The bias that still prevents companies from providing for training and retraining of older workers is the belief that this would bring a short economic gain: retraining an older worker means investing money on an individual who is too close to retirement to 'return' the investment to the company. It is more convenient to invest on younger workers, even if it may not mean the same in terms of 'loyalty'. As a matter of fact, a young worker will not necessarily use his training within the same company, while an older worker will hardly leave the company towards the end of her/his professional career.

Figure 6 – Companies by receiver of training, conversion and retraining courses (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

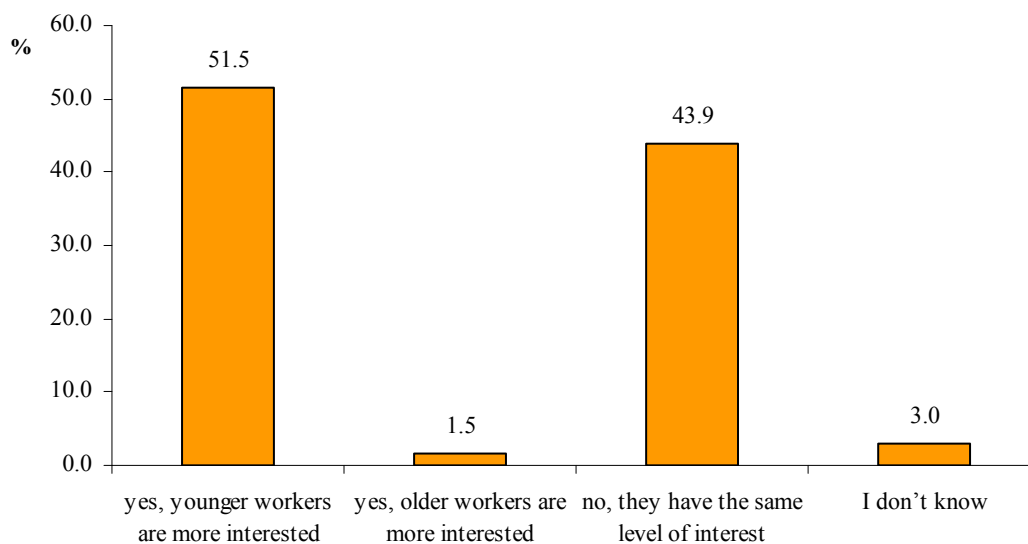
Q 25: In order to face productive and market trend, personnel policies provide for training, conversion and upgrading courses



Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Figure 7 – Companies by level of interest and participation of younger and older workers (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q 28: Has your company detected different levels of interest and participation between older (>50) and younger (<35) workers?



Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Figure 8a – Employed who have attended professional training and upgrading courses and period in which the course has taken place (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Q. 13: During your professional career, have you been involved in professional training and/or upgrading activities? If yes, Q.13a: When does your last course date back to?

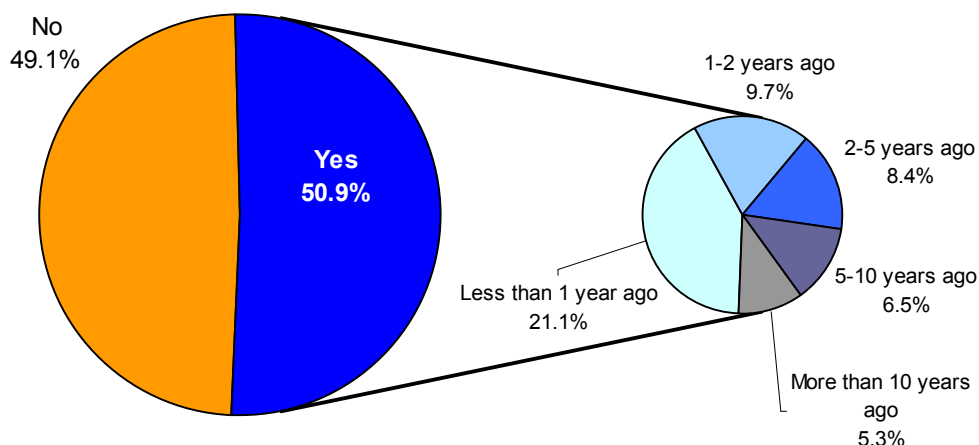


Figure 8b – Pensioners who have attended professional training and retraining courses and age in which the course has taken place (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Q. 13: During your professional career, have you been involved in professional training and/or retraining activities? If yes, Q.13a: How old were you when you attended to last course?

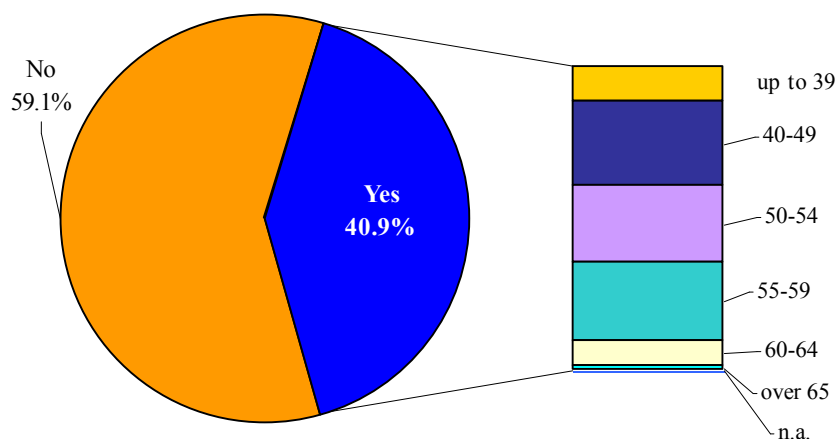


Table 1 – Employed and pensioners according to opinions on professional training and retraining for workers over 50 (percentage value; June-July 2003)

Q. 39: What is your opinion about professional training and retraining courses after the age of 50?			
	Useful or quite useful	Substantially useless or totally useless	I don't know
Employed	69.9	22.2	7.8
Pensioner	66.1	22.4	11.5

Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

3.3. Forms of flexible work

In order to exploit older workers' potentialities up to and after retirement age, companies should rely also on alternative forms of employment.

To evaluate companies' willingness to adopt such opportunities, they have been asked about their attitude towards the use of flexible forms of work during the last years of workers' careers (Table 2). More than 50% claims to be inclined to adopt the part-time option, even if 36.4% of companies does not believe in the adoption of alternative forms of work.

Table 2 – Companies according to inclination towards flexible forms of work to be adopted during the last years of workers' career (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 18: Which forms of flexible work, to be adopted during the last years of workers' career, could be useful for your company? [may give more than one answer]			
part-time	job sharing	other	none
53.0	12.8	8.5	36.4

Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

On the contrary, according to *Volkswagen's* proposal to adopt working hours that decrease gradually according to workers' age, 53.2% of companies does not agree while 26.3% does not express any opinion (Table 3).

Table 3 – Companies according to their opinion on Volkswagen's suggestion about a gradual decrease of working hours according to workers' age (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 19 – Would your company consider the suggestion of adopting decreasing working hours according to age (for example from 40 to 30 hours per week), as Volkswagen has recently suggested?		
Yes	No	I don't know
20.5	53.2	26.3

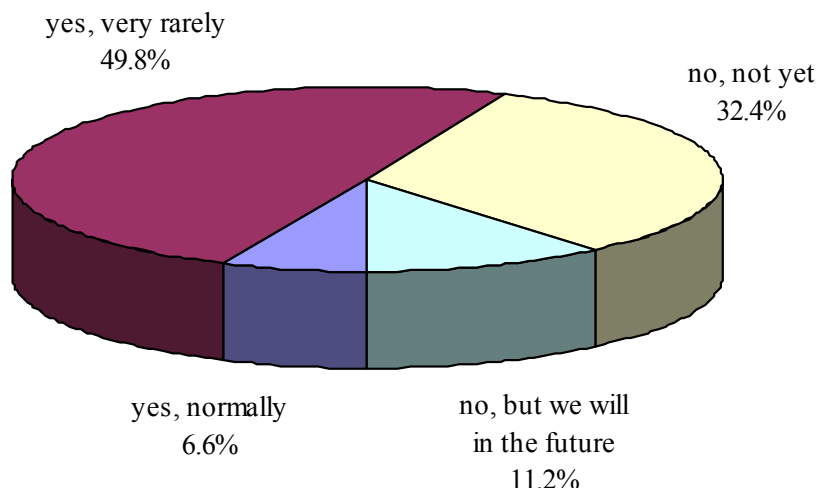
Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

These first results show that companies do not reject the option of different types of contract for over 50s *a priori*, but that they are more inclined to adopt more personalised measures for each individual. As a matter of fact, such a policy, as the one suggested by Volkswagen, is considered not entirely effective by the interviewed companies because it involves the company's entire workforce and it does not consider how much each worker can actually work during their last years.

Companies seem to be inclined to keep in some way workers aged over 50 who are not employed anymore but are still useful in terms of experience and accuracy. As a matter of fact, when asked if the company use over 50s as consultants (or other types of collaboration) in order to enhance personal skills and experience, 6.6% of the interviewed companies state that the company does that regularly, 49.8% does so very rarely, and 11.2% will do so in the future (Figure 9).

Figure 9 – Companies according to forms of consultancy adopted for people aged over 50 who are not employed anymore (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 21: Does your company adopt forms of consultancy (or other types of collaboration) for people aged over 50 who are not employed anymore, in order to enhance personal skills and experience?



Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Interviewees have been asked their opinion about a gradual retirement, id est a progressive decrease of working hours and therefore a salary that is integrated with a quota from pensions. Interviewees do not seem to have a clear opinion on the efficacy of this ‘approach’ to retirement. As a matter of fact, 44.8% of workers and 47.5% of pensioners have a negative opinion, 43.2% of employed is inclined to this option, while about 12% does not feel suited to evaluate this kind of suggestion (Table 4).

These results are affected by the fact that this form of retirement is unknown by many and its advantages are not visible yet. Anyway, among those who would enjoy a gradual form of retirement, the great majority is ready to ‘hand down’ their own experiences and skills collaborating with younger workers (Figure 10).

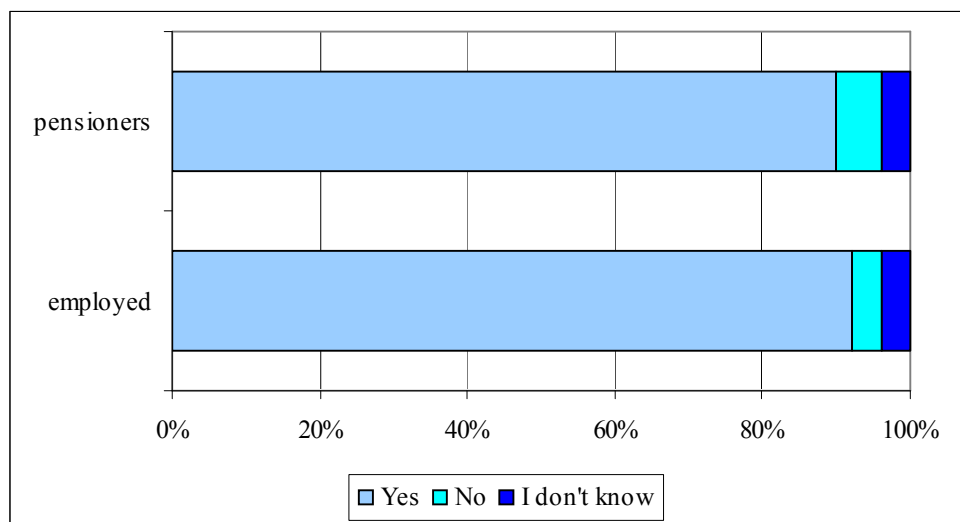
Table 4 – Workers and pensioners who would enjoy a gradual form of retirement (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 36: Would you chose (would you have chosen) a gradual form of retirement, which would allow you to have reduced working hours and a salary that is partially paid by your pension?			
	Yes	No	I don't know
Employed	43.2	44.8	12.0
Pensioner	39.7	47.5	12.8

Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Figure 10 – Employed and pensioner who would enjoy a gradual retirement and would collaborate with younger workers (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 37: And in this case, would you find appropriate to collaborate with a younger worker who would gradually take your place?



Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

3.4. Desire of retirement

It is well known that a changing work environments – not only in organizational and economical terms (salaries that increase according to age and seniority), but also in technological terms – may lead companies to expel older workers either through the use of social security cushions, as mobility and redundancy fund, or through pre-retirement. In many cases, workers themselves exploit the regulations that allow an early retirement from work.

During the first half of 2003, application for pensions to Inps (the Italian National Social Security Institute) have increased by 7% in comparison to the first half of 2002. Even if such data was fragmentary and unofficial, it highlighted a small trend towards retirement, probably provoked by the continuous call for pensions reform .

A survey carried out by Ires (Mirabile M.L., Carrera F., 2003) highlights that at least half of interviewed workers, aged over 45, would like to anticipate as much as possible the end of their professional activities.

This result is confirmed by our survey⁶: as a matter of fact, if such decision depends only on the worker's will, almost half of the employed would retire as soon as possible and only 17.3% would retire as late as possible (Figure 11a).

More than 66% of those who would retire as soon as possible, would do so only if they have favourable economic conditions; the same reason would lead 32% of those who would retire as late as possible. This result shows that the economic condition is a key element when taking a decision about retirement, regardless of age.

The work environment seems to affect less than the economic aspects, as only 16% would anticipate retirement due to their work environment and 38% would procrastinate it

⁶ Though the survey considered two different age segments.

(Figure 11a/b). It is interesting to notice that regardless of any conditioning factor, 18% would retire as soon as possible and 30% would do so as late as possible.

As for pensioners, more than one third has retired before the age of 54 (36.6%) – an early retirement if compared to conventional retirement age – and only 4.3% has done so after the age of 65 (Figure 11b).

Among those who have retired very early, before the age of 54, motivations are manifold and consequently the distribution is scattered. Most frequently, interviewees had reached the minimum contributions' limit for retirement (almost one third), but other occurring motivations are health and business climate (company's conditions or uncertainties about retirement regulations).

Among those who have retired at a late stage of their career, the most frequent motivation is naturally age, but a significant amount of interviewees (10.6%) has done so due to health conditions; there is a good percentage of workers who would like to keep working despite age and they would probably do so if they were not to face health problems.

Figure 11a – Employed workers opinion about their desire and motivations for retirement (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Q. 20: If it would only depend on you, would you retire:

Q. 21a: As soon as possible, and why?

Q. 21b: As late as possible, and why?

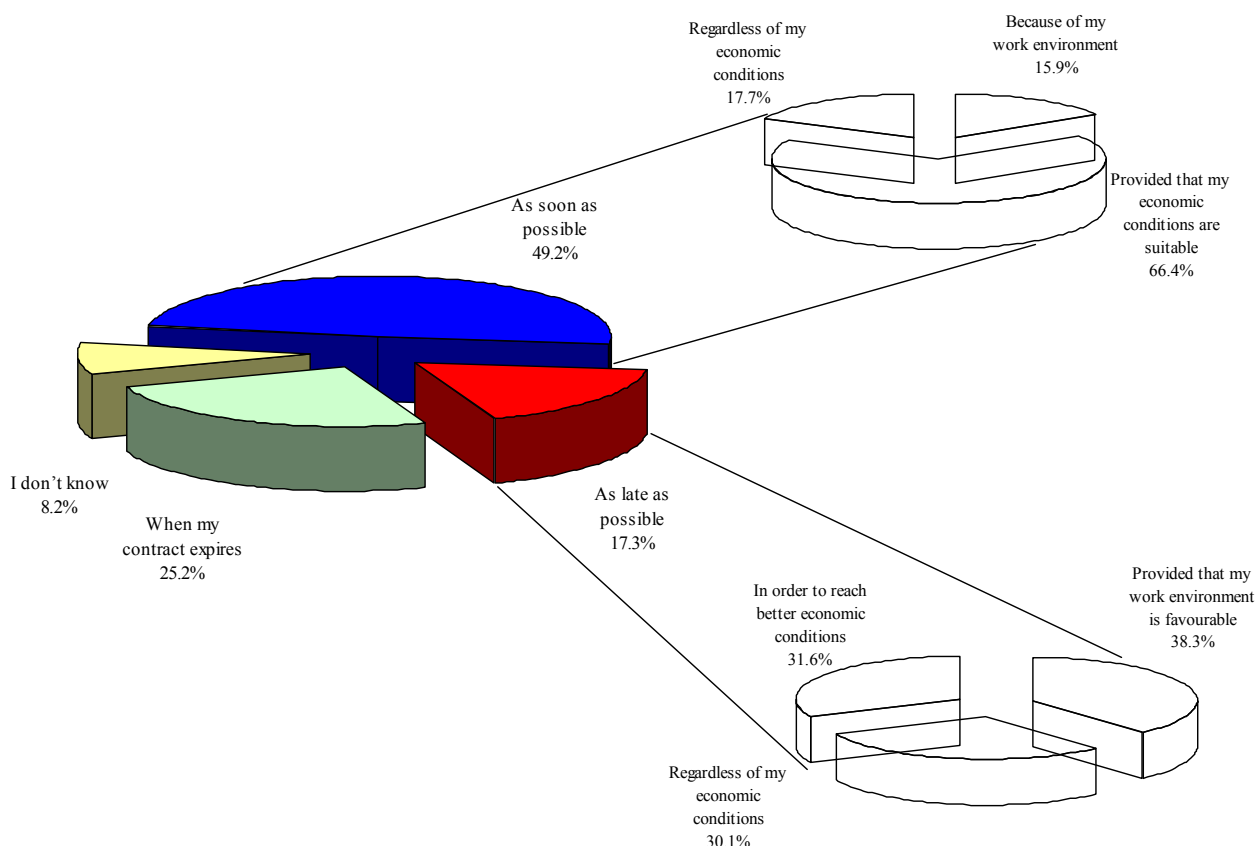
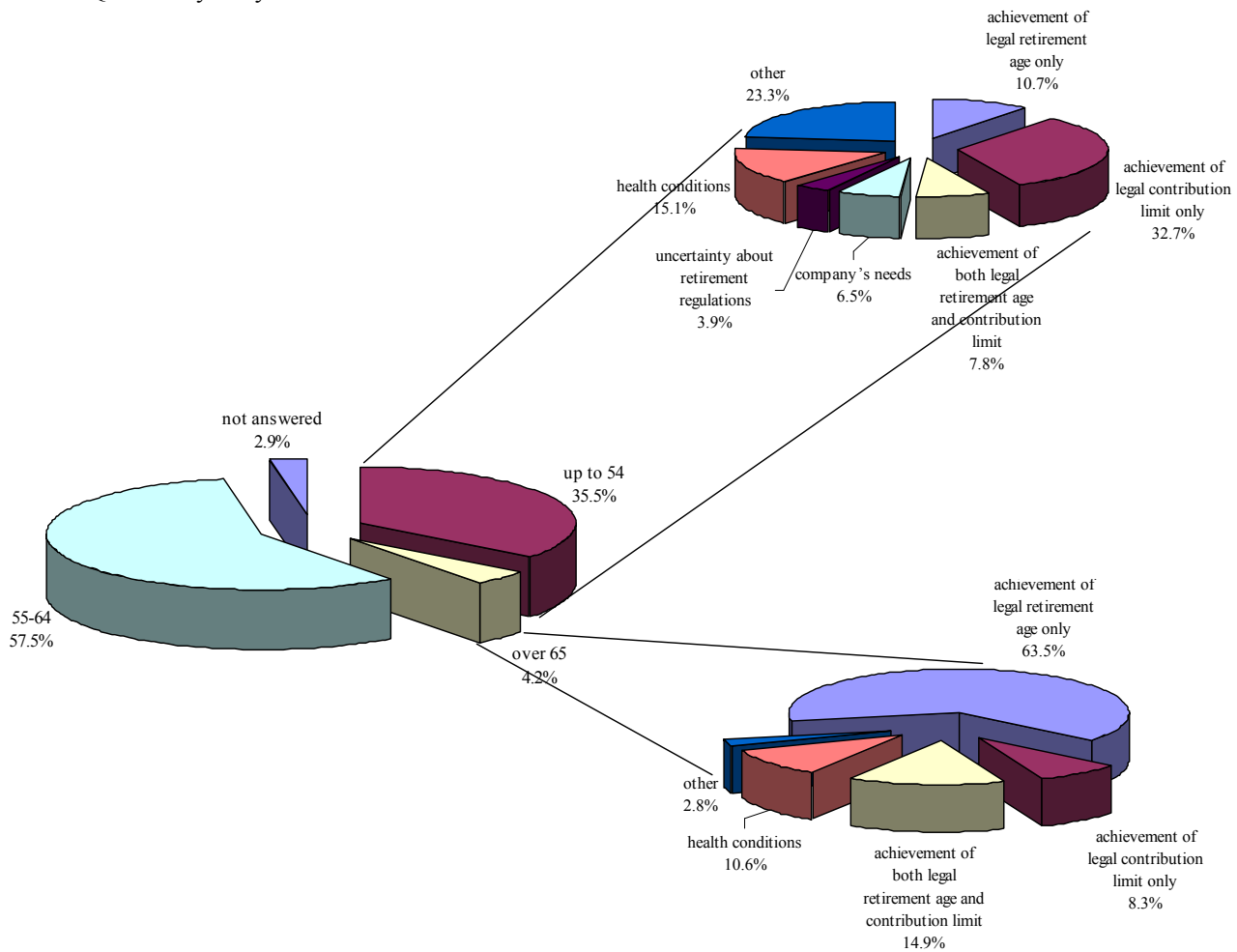


Figure 11b – Pensioners’ age at retirement and motivation for retirement

Q. 20: What was your age when you retired?

Q. 22: Why did you retire?

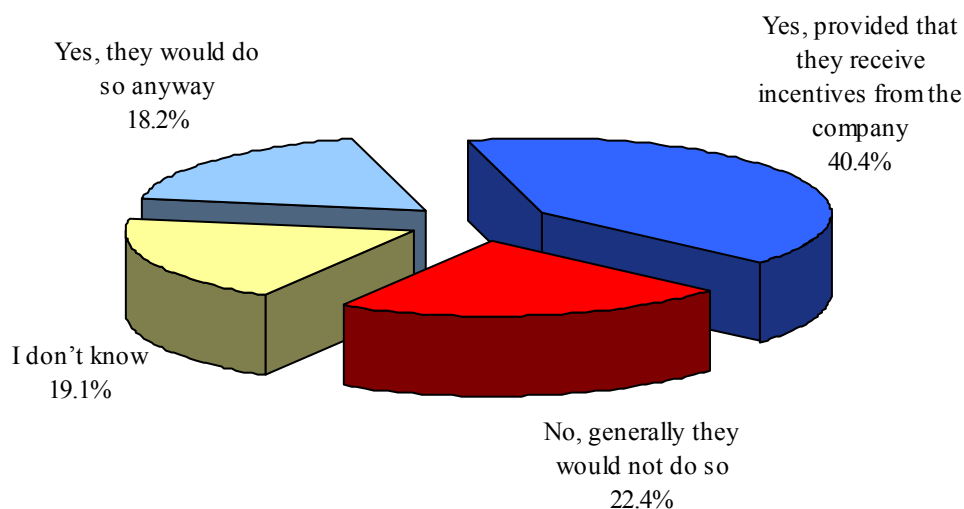


Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

As we have observed earlier, as there is a certain inclination on behalf of workers to anticipate retirement, it is necessary to understand how companies perceive workers’ desire for retirement. Interviews to companies show that 40.4% of them believe that workers *want to anticipate retirement if they have incentives by the company*, and 18.2% states that workers *would like to retire before the achievement of the legal age, even without any incentive* (Figure 12). More than 22% of companies states that their workers *want to keep working until legal retirement age*. A considerable percentage (19.1%) of companies states that they *cannot estimate their workers’ desire on retirement*.

Figure 12 – The opinion of companies about their workers’ desire to anticipate retirement (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 22: Do you think that workers would like to anticipate retirement before achieving the legal retirement age?



Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

3.5. Opinions on the need of raising retirement age

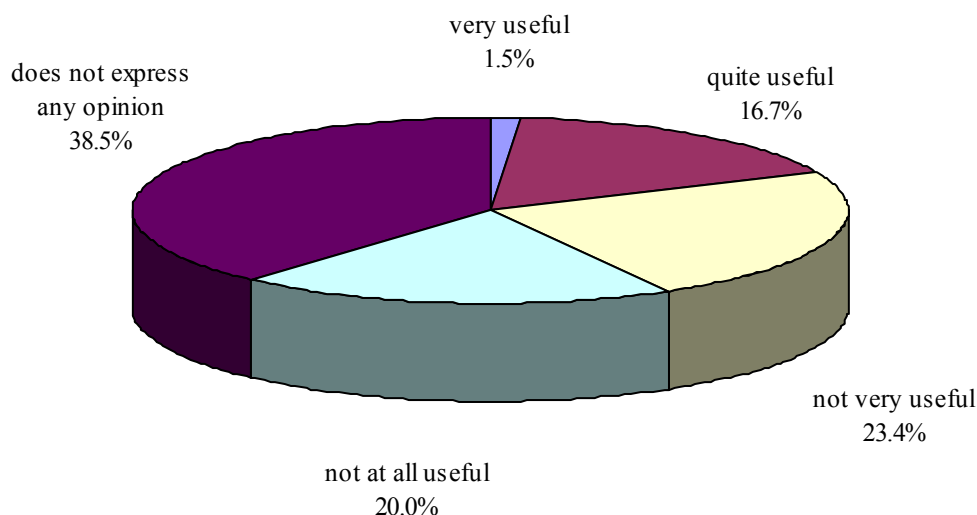
Population ageing process and the consequent lack of younger workers forecast an unbalance in the segment of working-age population, which supports the entire dependant population, especially the elderly.

A possibility that should be considered is that of extending the minimum legal period of contribution in order to extend the average working lifespan and keep a significant consistency and strength of the economically active segment of population.

When asked *if they would consider a five-year extension of the minimum contribution period for retirement*, 43.4% of companies has answered that they believed this is either not very useful or not at all useful (Figure 13).

Figure 13 – Companies according to opinions on a five-year extension of the minimum contribution period for retirement (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q.20 – With respect to the activities of your company, do you think that a five-year extension of the minimum contribution period for retirement would be useful?



Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

However, the same companies state they would be ready to do so in case they could receive some benefits from the State, as for example tax reductions (Table 6).

Table 6 – Companies according to their opinions on policies that could foster employment or older workers' permanence in the company (percentage values; end 2003 – beginning 2004)

Q. 5: Which one of these policies you think could foster employment or over 50s' permanence in the company: [may give more than one answer]	Companies (%)
Reduction on taxes	65.1
Upgrading and IT literacy courses	33.4
Other policies	8.5
Creation of public and private centre to make labour and market come closer	5.6
Variability of salary standard according to individual health conditions	5.2
Total	100.0
Total (a.v.)	14.527

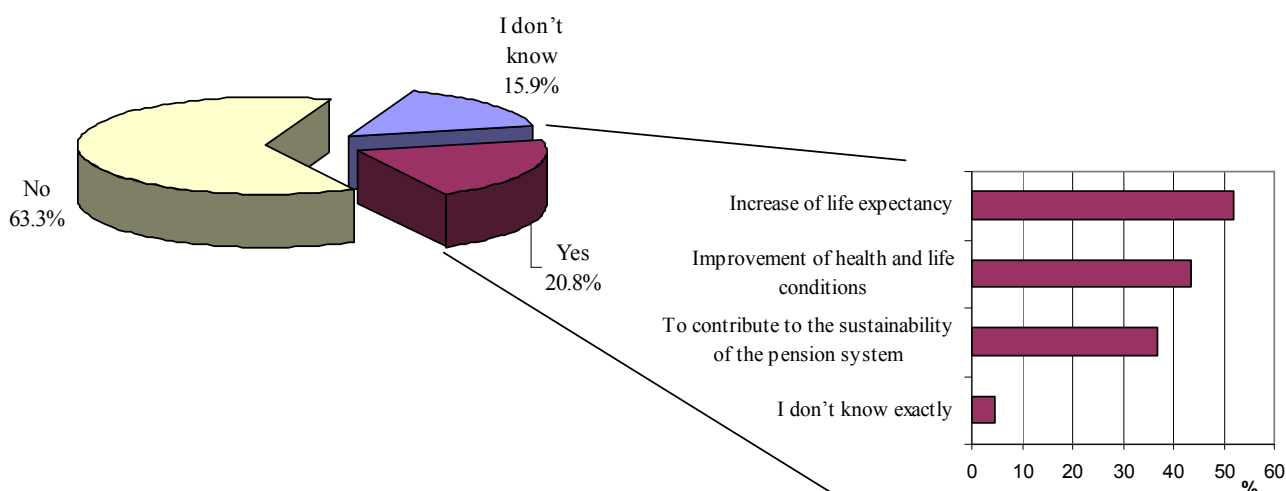
Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Similarly, when asked: “Do you believe it is necessary to raise retirement age?”, 63% of the employed and 56% of pensioners have answered that there is no such urge⁷; among the two segments, respectively 20.8% and 26.7% have answered that this is necessary, while 15.9% and 17.1% do not take any side on this issue (Figure 14a/b).

More than 50% of those employed workers who think raising the retirement age is necessary, and slightly more than 40% of pensioners state that this urge is determined by the extension of life expectancy, while the idea that raising retirement age is necessary in order to make the pension system sustainable is the less occurring motivation both from the employed (36.9%) and from pensioners (23.9%). However, individuals seem to notice more the cause than the effect that this process will determine on the sustainability of the pension system.

Figure 14a – The employed workers’ opinion on the urge for raising retirement age (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Q. 33: Do you think that is necessary to raise retirement age?
 Q. 34: If you think so, what does make it necessary?



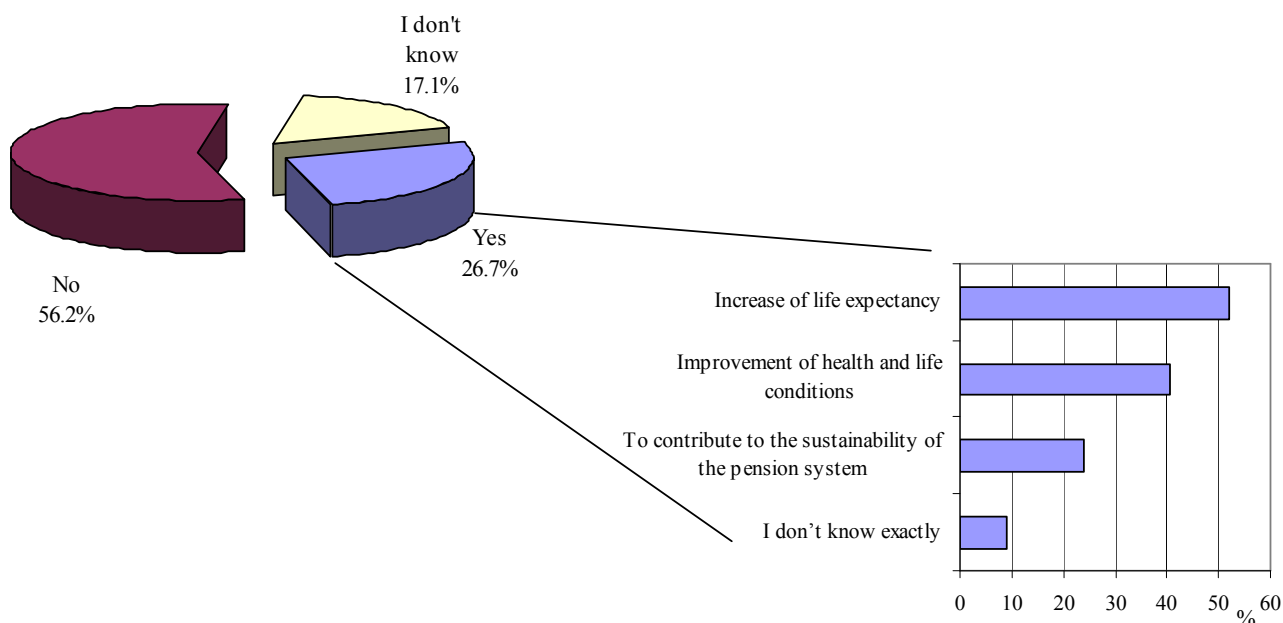
Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

⁷ As for workers, their perspective on their own ability does not correspond (at least for most employed) to their willingness to work. As a matter of fact, despite they believe they could work up to an old age, they intend to work as much as it is provided for by the contract.

Figure 14b – The opinion of pensioners on the need of raising retirement age (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Q. 33: Do you think it is necessary to raise retirement age for all?

Q. 34: If you think so, what does make it necessary?



Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Another element that confirms what has been presented so far is the answer to the question *how much do you agree with the following statement: "population ageing is changing the ratio between pensioners and workers in an unsustainable way"*? (Figure 15a/b).

Even if 72.3% of workers and 69% of pensioners state they agree with the statement (47.2% totally agree in both categories, respectively 25.1% and 21.8% partially agree) and understand the consequence of the ageing process, only 20.8% of employed and 26.7% of pensioners is in favour of retirement age raise (Table 7a/b). These percentages raise if we consider only those who agree totally or partially with the statement on ageing (24.9% and 31.6%), even if we do not reach the majority of them. Moreover, results show that pensioners agree less on ageing problems even if they are more in favour of raising retirement age, probably because they are no longer involved in this process or because they regret their choice.

Figure 15a – Agreement expressed by employed about the effects of the ageing process on the ratio between pensioners and workers (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Q.35 – Population ageing in Italy is changing the ratio between pensioners and workers in an unsustainable way. With respect to this statement you:

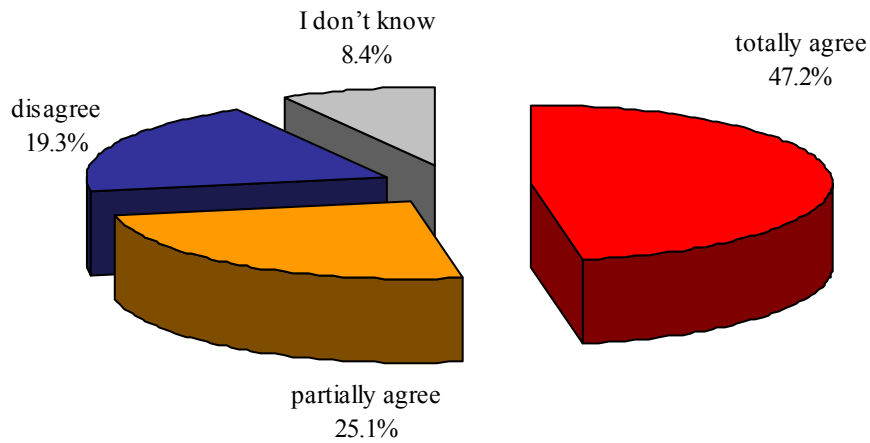
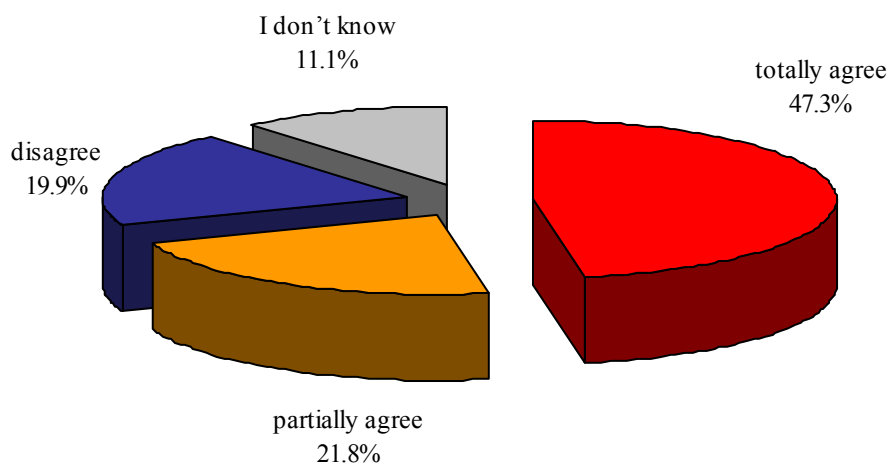


Figure 15b – Agreement expressed by pensioners about the effects of the ageing process on the ratio between pensioners and workers (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Q. 35 – Population ageing in Italy is changing the ratio between pensioners and workers in an unsustainable way. With respect to this statement you:



Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Table 7a – Agreement expressed by employed workers about the effects of the ageing process and their opinion on the need for raising retirement age (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Population ageing in Italy is changing the ratio between pensioners and workers in an unsustainable way. With respect to this statement you:	Do you think raising retirement age for everybody is necessary?			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Totally or partially agree	24.9	60.5	14.7	100.0
Disagree	11.3	74.4	14.3	100.0
Don't know	7.5	62.4	30.1	100.0
Total	20.8	63.3	15.9	100.0

Table 7b – Agreement expressed by pensioners about the effects of the ageing process and their opinion on the need for raising retirement age (percentage values; June-July 2003)

Population ageing in Italy is changing the ratio between pensioners and workers in an unsustainable way. With respect to this statement you:	Do you think raising retirement age for everybody is necessary?			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Totally or partially agree	31.6	52.8	15.6	100.0
Disagree	17.5	68.3	14.2	100.0
Don't know	12.9	55.7	31.4	100.0
Total	26.7	56.2	17.1	100.0

Source: survey data, Department of demographic Sciences and ISFOL

Conclusions

The age structure of Italian population is constantly changing and it shows a strong shift of a more and more significant population quota towards higher age classes. It is necessary to foster older workers' employment or permanence at work by either changing or adapting corporate policies in order not to weaken the working segment of the population, which supports older classes and keeps industry's production (and productivity) high against a fierce international competition.

So far, surveys show that opinions on these issues are contradictory.

On one hand we find companies and individuals who would rather shorten workers' lifespan, the former for economic gains produced by salary reduction⁸, the latter for an increased number of years to dedicate to leisure.

On the other hand we find companies and workers who begin to "see" the actual problem of 'population ageing' and have a positive approach. Companies acknowledge that older workers can offer positive features such as loyalty, experience, ability to lead others. But workers assert that the age limit for an individual to work in a reliable and accurate way is always high. This means that if we ask a 60 year old worker about his/her work potentialities, s/he will claim that s/he would be able to work for at least 5 more years.

The results of the surveys we have carried out highlight the need for instruments that allow an agreement between all the positions we have presented here, for example investing in life-long learning. This kind of activity could solve problems such as updating, flexibility, and efficiency of older workers and it would give them more dignity and the chance of feeling able to keep doing their work.

Even the new reform on the welfare system in Italy that has introduced a 'bonus' for those who choose to keep working (after achieving minimum legal age and contribution limit for retirement) has proven to be a valid option, as it relieves companies' costs of upward income mobility, as mentioned earlier. The Ministry of Welfare asserts that this intervention is a 'success': it would prove that there are actual opportunities to meet both the needs of companies and workers. This option can actually keep older workers, as companies aspire to, and prolong working lifespan for older workers.

The reform of welfare system and social security cushions should aim at keeping and reintegrate older workers rather than to expel and support them with benefits. We actually believe that workers at the age of 50 are too young to retire and not too old to continue to work.

⁸ Italy is a country in which older workers are mainly destined to an upward income mobility, which drives companies to dismiss older workers as soon as opportunities arise and employ younger workers with atypical work contracts.

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