

Child Care Choices by Working Mothers: the case of Italy**Daniela Del Boca, Marilena Locatelli, Daniela Vuri****daniela.delboca@unito.it / marilena.locatelli@unito.it / daniela.vuri@unifi.it****Novembre, 2004****Abstract**

In spite of relatively generous public subsidies and a reputation for high quality, only a very limited proportion of Italian families use public child care and a large proportion use informal care. In this paper we attempt to explore the determinants of the use of child care among dual workers families. Given the limitations of data available we match two different data sets: the Bank of Italy (SHIW) and ISTAT Multiscopo. We find evidence that the availability of public child care affects in an important way its demand. We also find that increases in costs of public child care reduce the use of public as well as private indicating a shift to informal child care. The presence of a grandmother who lives near and is in good health is an important explanation of the choice especially in presence of very small children. An understanding of the importance of these factors is relevant in the evaluation of child care policies. This is particularly important in Italy, where the majority of families with children have only one child and children would benefit also the socialization aspects of the child care system.

J.E.L Subject Codes: J2, C3, D1.

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