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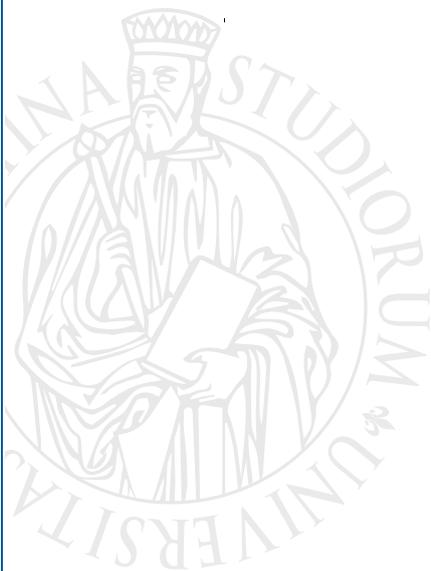
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Catching up!

**The sexual opinions and behaviour
of Italian students (2000-2017)**

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Catching up! The sexual opinions and behaviour of Italian students (2000-2017)

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Abstract

Over the past decades and particularly recently, sexual attitudes and behaviour have been exposed to tremendous changes across developed societies. Only partial or outdated studies are available for Italy. This paper aims to provide fresh insights into the sexual and emotional behaviour and attitudes of young Italians. Our analysis compares the results of two nationally representative surveys of Italian university students conducted in 2000 (n = 4,998) and 2017 (n = 8,094). The results highlight a clear pattern of anticipation of the sexual debut. In addition, the sexual behaviour and attitudes of boys and girls seem to be converging in several respects (contraception, casual sex, betrayal), even if some differences between men and women remain large, especially on double standards. Convergence is mainly driven by a 'feminisation' of male sexual life within the couple and a 'masculinisation' of female sexual life outside the couple. Finally, acceptance of homosexual experiences is rising substantially.

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1. Introduction

Although the first signs of the sexual revolution – the process that challenged traditional codes of sexuality – in middle-high income countries are well rooted in the past, during the last sixty years changes have accelerated (Laumann 1994; Barbagli et al. 2010). Among others, these changes include: premarital sex, an increased acceptance of sex outside traditional monogamous heterosexual relationships (primarily marriage) also for women, an increased stigma on partner betrayal when in a stable relationship, and a widespread acceptance of homosexuality.

The sexual revolution is part of a larger change – a revolution of intimacy – which also includes other aspects of affective, family and reproductive life and which is also solidly rooted in the past (Ariés 1960; Ariès and Duby 1985-87; Giddens 1990, 1992). This revolution is characterized by a noticeable acceleration in the second half of the twentieth century (van de Kaa 1987), and encompasses modern contraception, a systematic postponement of marriage and parenthood, rises in alternative forms of partnerships, parenthood outside marriage and an increase in couple disruption. All these phenomena have followed a similar clear-cut pattern of spatial diffusion: the forerunner areas were northwest Europe and overseas English-speaking countries, the latecomers were eastern Europe, southern Europe and the rich countries of east Asia, with the other richer countries lying in between (Laumann 1994; Bozon and Kontula 1998; Wellings et al. 2006; Billari et al. 2007; WHO 2016).

Although the incidence of new family behaviour remains less evident in Italy than in other western European countries, Italy has experienced remarkable changes in many family-related behaviours in recent decades (De Rose and Strozza 2015, pp. 74-77; Pirani and Vignoli 2016; Vignoli et al. 2018). Data from the Italian Statistical Office (Istat) document these trends well: in 1993, 2 in 100 couples were living in non-marital cohabitation, while in 2015 almost 20% of Italians had been cohabiters for at least a part of their relationship; in the same period, the incidence of marriage celebrated with a civil ceremony (of all marriages), which represents a clear marker of secularization, increased from less than 20% to just below 50%; the percentage of out-of-wedlock childbirths has tripled in the last 15 years; and data on legal separation rates show a clear increasing trend in marital disruption during the last 20 years. What still remains unclear is whether and how these changes in public family life courses have been mirrored by changes in the intimate sexual opinions and behaviour of Italians. Only partial or outdated studies on sexual attitudes and behaviour are available for Italy, where the last representative national survey was held in 2006 (Barbagli et al. 2010).

In order to address this last question, we examine data from the SELFY (Sexual and Emotional LiFe of Youths) survey, which provide fresh information on the sexual and emotional behaviour of about 8,000 young Italian university students. SELFY replicates an identical survey held in 2000-01 (henceforth, 2000) in which about 5,000 students were surveyed using the same national sampling procedure and the same data collection technique – a questionnaire self-completed in the classroom during an academic lesson (Dalla-Zuanna and Crisafulli 2004; Caltabiano et al. 2006; Billari et al. 2007). The pros and cons of this kind of data must be addressed up front. The main disadvantage is that we are not dealing with a sample representing the whole population (we discuss this point in section 5). Nonetheless, a sample made of university students has many advantages: mainly, a high number of respondents who are well disposed towards filling in a relatively long, although not complex, questionnaire. Within this group, there exists relevant heterogeneity with regard to both sexuality and affective behaviour, which makes university students relevant subjects of research (see, e.g., Keller 1959; Pitts and Rahman 2001; Weeden and Sabini 2007; Hines 2007; Billari et al. 2007; Stinson 2010). Most importantly, the full comparability between the two surveys of 2000 and 2017 represents a definite ‘plus’ for our study.

2. Sexuality in Italy: a late revolution

“A distinctive feature of Italy is to have experienced the change [in sexual behaviour] many years later than central-northern Europe. The decline of the ascetic and procreative sexual orientation and the affirmation of affective and hedonistic ones, the decrease of age at first intercourse, the voluntary control of fertility, masturbation, premarital relationships, oral sexual practices began in Italy later than in Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, France and Germany.” (Barbagli et al. 2010, p. 305).

This passage was written by the authors of the most complete study on Italian sexuality, carried out in 2006. Their results confirm a pattern among university students in nine developed countries (France, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, USA, Australia, Japan and Italy: Billari et al. 2007; Caltabiano 2006). The delay in Italy is also confirmed by comparing the different WHO (World Health Organization) surveys on early sexual intercourse in representative samples of young people living in most of the middle-high income countries (WHO 2016, pp. 179-190). It is easy to forecast that the trend – in Italy as in the other countries in southern and eastern Europe – follows in the footsteps of the forerunner countries in northern and western Europe and overseas English-speaking countries: the near and remote factors underlying these changes are propagating – more or less rapidly – in all the developed countries (Giddens 1990, 1992; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 1988).

The general delay in sexual changes in Italy is due to several factors, and we will mention just two which we think are particularly important in and specific to the Italian context: the influence of the Catholic Church and the strength of intergenerational bonds. In Italy the Catholic Church has maintained a strong presence in the process of socialization of young people for a long time, and this is more marked than in other European contexts, for example France or even Spain (Caltabiano et al. 2006). At the same time, several pieces of research emphasise an effective link between strong family ties and family life in Italy (Dalla-Zuanna and Micheli 2004; Rosina and Fraboni 2007; Schröder 2006). Since parents tend to discourage their offspring from non-normative behaviour, their adult children are confronted with strong pressure when making their own choices (Rosina and Fraboni 2007; Vignoli and Salvini 2014). In the diffusion of non-marital cohabitation, for example, the influence of the older generation proved to be crucial (see also Belletti et al. 2007).

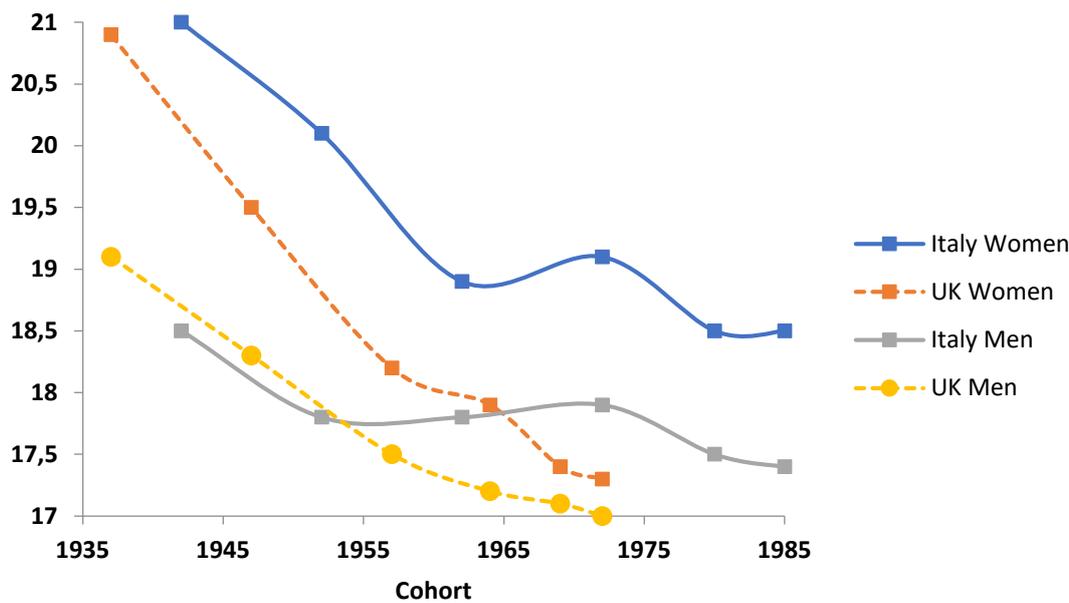
Taking the UK and France as reference for comparison helps to illustrate the Italian delay (Figures 1 and 2). These countries were trendsetters of the sexual revolution. In addition, the great attention by scholars in the UK and France to the analysis of sexual behaviour offers us systematic and updated data to refer to. The change over time in the median age at first sex is similar in Italy and the United Kingdom: much higher starting levels for women born around 1935, a decrease for both sexes, but faster for women for the cohorts until 1955, and then a convergence between the two genders. However, in the UK already for those born in the early seventies the median age at first sex was similar for men and women, while in Italy such a convergence was not yet realized among those born in the late eighties. Similar results are obtained by comparing the Italian and French cohorts for active oral sex. Among women this practice spread earlier in France, where the convergence between men and women was already almost complete for the cohorts born in the early sixties, unlike what happened in Italy.

The Italian delay takes the form of a variety of behaviours and also attitudes related to sexuality, for example a longer persistence of double standards, together with greater differences in the behaviour of men and women. Double standards involve not only the ways men and women act about sex, but also the fact that they are subject to diverse rules guiding their behaviour (Crawford and Pop 2003). Typically, in the past men’s sexuality outside wedlock, and also premarital sex, was accepted and even rewarded. For women, instead, such behaviour was discouraged and a source of a social stigma (Marks and Fraley 2006, Sagebin Bordini and Sperb 2014). Most of the international literature on sexual double standards considers the university-aged population (Allison and Risman 2013; Bradshaw, Kahn and Saville 2010; Conley et al. 2013). For Italy, early authors showed that there were diverse norms for male and female students regarding first sexual intercourse (Billari and Mencarini 2004). A qualitative study confirms the persistence of double standards for Italian men

(Ferrero Camoletto 2014) but little is known about the persistence of or changes in double standards in recent years in Italy because of a lack of representative data.

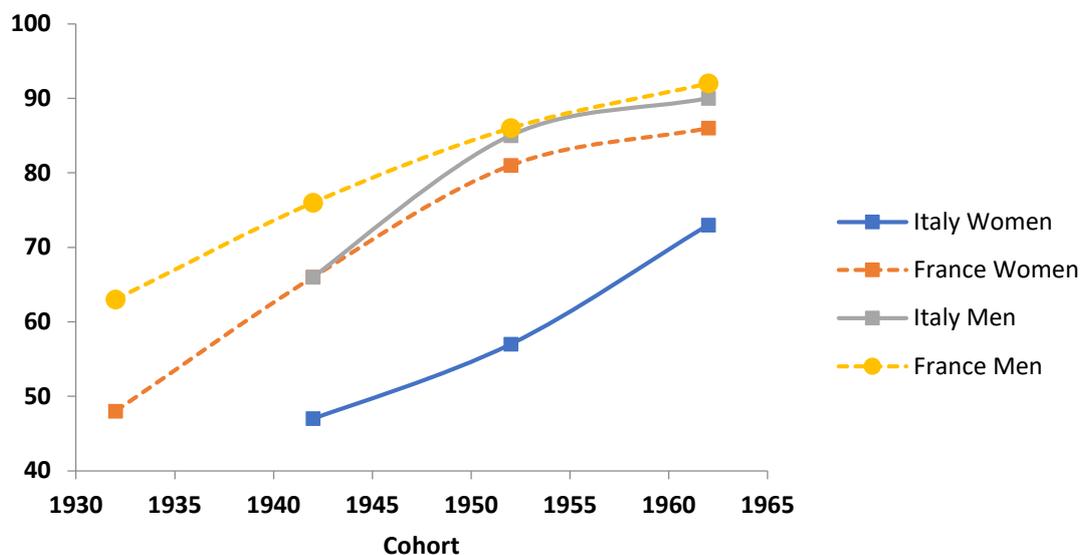
Nonetheless, the sexual revolution has unfolded in Italy too (Caltabiano 2006), although with some delay compared to other western countries (Billari et al. 2007). Even for women, sexuality has become increasingly disconnected from reproduction, while for men and women sexual pleasure begins to play an increasingly central role in the lives of both singles and couples (Barbagli et al. 2010). At the same time, the public discourse about sexuality has changed profoundly and even legislation has become increasingly less rigid (for example, homosexual unions were legalized in Italy in 2016).

Figure 1. Median age at first intercourse for men and women in Italy and the UK. Cohorts born in 1937-88 (Italy) and 1932-73 (UK)



Source: Italy: Barbagli et al. 2010 p. 45; UK: Bozon and Kontula 1998.

Figure 2. Proportion (%) of men and women who declared they had had active oral sex during their life in Italy and France in two surveys in 2006. Cohorts born in 1940-65 (Italy) and 1930-65 (France)



Source: Barbagli et al. 2010 p. 199.

An important characteristic of the spread of the revolution of intimacy in Italy is its territorial gradient. Changes in sexual and family behaviour began in the central and northern regions and subsequently spread in the South. This diffusion pattern has been confirmed for marital and reproductive behaviour during the first years of the 21st century (Castiglioni and Dalla Zuanna 2008; Salvini and Vignoli 2011; Pirani and Vignoli 2016; Caltabiano et al. 2019). On the other hand, recent analyses of the territorial gradient of sexual behaviour in Italy are lacking.

Against this backdrop, in this paper we offer a new timely overview of the attitudes and behaviour of young Italians regarding sexuality, addressing whether they are currently facing a still-persisting delay or whether the gap with the forerunner countries in the sexual revolution is closing. The other gap we aim to investigate is that between the behaviour of men and women. We scrutinize whether young men and women behave more and more similarly over the first years of the 21st century, not only in terms of the age at sexual debut but also other characteristics such as the number of sexual partners, casual sex, non-heterosexual experiences and so forth. In addition, we provide unique information about the time trends in opinions on sexuality – such as those toward homosexuality and partner betrayal – among contemporary university students in Italy.

3. The 2000 and 2017 surveys

This study is based on SELFY, a survey coordinated by a group of researchers from the Universities of Padua, Florence and Messina. The survey was carried out in the first half of 2017 in 28 Italian universities with the aim of drawing an updated picture of sexual and emotional attitudes and behaviour among Italian university students. It reiterates an almost identical survey carried out 17 years previously. In 2000 4,998 students were surveyed and in 2017 8,094, all attending undergraduate courses in economics and statistics in Italian public universities. Only a minority of students – strongly selected for income – attend private universities in Italy as the cost of studying in public university is much cheaper. The questionnaires were filled in during a one-hour lesson of a compulsory course under the discreet surveillance of both the teacher and a researcher, who presented the survey and was ready to answer any questions. Students were reassured about the anonymity and use of the data: after completion, the questionnaires were sealed in an envelope and all the envelopes were mailed to the directors of the survey for data entry. This process resulted in a practical non-existence of refusals to fill in the questionnaire in class, in both 2000 and 2017. Note that usually the refusal rate is at least 20-30% in face-to-face interviews held at home and 50% in postal, e-mail or phone questionnaires in Italy as elsewhere. Also for web surveys on this topic, the proportion of refusals is very high, and it is not easy to post-stratify data to obtain representative results.

The questionnaire – which contains about 200 closed questions (see Appendix) – was self-administered without any interference from the researcher. Indeed, this choice was also made, at least for intimate questions, in some big sample surveys such as the three NATSAL surveys of English people of 1990, 2000 and 2010 (Mercer et al. 2013), the general survey on American people's sexual behaviour at the beginning of the 1990s (Laumann et al. 1994), the IARD survey on the sexual behaviour of Italian youth of 1996 (Buzzi 1998) and a survey on sexual behaviour in Italy of 2006 (Barbagli et al. 2010). The high sample size is an important characteristic for a survey on sexuality, in order to also measure minority behaviours. However, the use of self-administered questionnaires has some drawbacks: it is difficult to use multiple filters and to ask complex questions, and there is the risk of raising the non-response rate for single questions. Moreover, as the students had to fill in the questionnaire sitting in a classroom close to their school-friends, we preferred to avoid some questions we considered intrusive (e.g. on some sexual practices like oral and anal sex).

The SELFY data allow a good comparison between 2000 and 2017 for four reasons. First, in both surveys we used the same questionnaire; second, we used the same criteria to define our sample (see Appendix); third, the sizes of the two samples give us room to perform a meaningful comparison; and fourth, unit nonresponses were practically absent on both occasions. By their very nature, our

samples are not representative of the population of Italian young people as a whole. However, to determine the direction of the differences with respect to the general population, in section 5 we show some comparisons between our students and other groups.

The data were recorded by operators on a spreadsheet, checking the range and using a few filters. Only 4.7% of questionnaires in 2000 and 3.1% in 2017 were eliminated because they were obviously filled in for fun or had a large majority of missing answers. Finally, the database included 4,762 questionnaires for 2000 and 7,842 for 2017. This final database appears to be sufficiently reliable to conduct even sophisticated event-history analyses, as has already been done with the 2000 survey data (see, for example, Caltabiano 2006; Caltabiano et al. 2006). For both 2000 and 2017, the data were post-stratified at the macro-region level to obtain representative results at the national level (see Appendix).

4. Methods

The study's analytical strategy consists of two steps. First, as a comparison with the results from other surveys shows that economics and statistics students in 2000 were less sexually precocious than their working peers (Carella et al. 2004), we check whether our respondents differ from the mean of their peers in terms of sexual behaviour, and in which direction. To this end, we compare some key indicators of the sexual behaviour of our 2000 and 2017 samples with identical indicators calculated for people aged 20-24 covered by a national survey on sexual behaviour in 2006 (Barbagli et al. 2010), splitting the latter sample according to education (degree and university students; 10-13 years of school; less than 10 years of school). Moreover, for the university of Padua in 2017 we also submitted our questionnaires to a group of 451 peer political science students to compare them with our sample of economics and statistics students. The political science programmes in Padua are traditionally seen as less intense and demanding than those in statistics and economics and so they attract students with very different characteristics.

Second, we show the incidence of thirty-one behaviours or attitudes by reporting the proportion of positive answers to the response variables for men and women in the two surveys. This enables us to also reflect on (changing) gender differences. These proportions are weighted to make them representative of university students of economics and statistics aged around 20 at the national level (see Appendix). All the indicators documented in this article – e.g. the median age at certain events – are weighted in the same way. The ages at first sexual intercourse for 2000 and 2017 are also calculated – separately for men and women – at the macro-region level. As mentioned above, in Italy territorial differences help to better understand the modality and speed of the diffusion of the revolution of intimacy. In addition, we explore how the sexual behaviour and attitudes of students changed during the first part of the 21st century. To explore temporal and gender differences, we fit a set of thirty-one logistic models on the merged databases from the two surveys, in each logistic model using the same explanatory variable: the combination *gender x time* with four subsets – Men 2000 (reference), Men 2017, Women 2000, Women 2017. The response variables measure different aspects of affective and sexual behaviour and attitudes to sexuality. Each of these models also include the same seventeen covariates that control for possible confounding factors (see Appendix. The complete logistic models are available on request).

5. Results

We discuss our results over four sections. We start by offering a comparison between the key characteristics of our sample with those of other surveys to validate the representativeness of our results. Then, we scrutinize Italian students' opinions regarding sexuality, spotlighting double standards, sexual behaviour and characteristics. The focus is on time and gender differentials.

Representativeness of the results

The sexuality of our sample of university students seems to be delayed and less intense than that of their less educated peers. In addition, it is in line with, or only slightly delayed and less intense than, that of university students in other fields of study.

Barbagli et al. (2010) surveyed 220 young people aged 20-24 in a national sample in 2006. We refer here to their results on first sexual intercourse before 16 years of age, focusing on educational differences. People who were still studying at university or had just graduated were sexually less precocious, among both males and females. For instance, among males, 29.6% of the interviewees with fewer than 10 years of schooling, 29.3% of high school graduates and only 12.0% of university students or graduates had experienced their first sexual intercourse before their 16th birthday. Our sample consisting of university students confirms that in 2000 12.5% of the respondents had had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 16. Among women, the 2006 study found the same educational gradient: 27.5% of the interviewees with fewer than 10 years of schooling, 18.7% of secondary school graduates and 12.3% of university students or graduates had experienced their first sexual intercourse before their 16th birthday. In our sample, we find that 9.1% of the female university students surveyed in 2000 had had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 16. Therefore, our samples are in line with the tertiary educated and university students in the nationally-representative 2006 research. In 2017, our survey shows that the same indicator had grown to 18.6% for males and 18.9% for females, i.e. proportions much lower than the levels for the less educated in the 2006 survey for both males and females. It is therefore likely that both in 2000 and in 2017 the students we sampled are less sexually precocious than the average of their peers, also confirming the results of other surveys on Italian young people (Panatto et al. 2012; Poscia et al. 2015).

To check the trade-off between the type of academic life and sexual practices, in 2017 we surveyed a sample of students from the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Padua. The sexual initiation of the students from the departments of Statistics and Economics in the same university show a delay with respect to the students of political science that is particularly pronounced for men: 12% of the boys attending courses in political science had had their first sexual intercourse before 16 years of age, whereas among male students in statistics and economics in Padua only 9% had. The political science students also had less traditional sexual behaviour: 9.6% of the male and 25.9% of the female students of political science had had same-sex experiences compared to 7.2% and 17.6% respectively of economics and statistics students in Padua. These results are in line with the previous literature: a strong investment in study, like that required of students of economics and statistics, corresponds with a less intense sexual life (see, e.g., Halpern et al. 2000; Olesen et al. 2012). Our findings corroborate the existence of a trade-off between the type of university study and sexual practices. We will return to these results in our discussion, rereading them also in the light of changes in the opinions and sexual behaviour of the students we surveyed between 2000 and 2017.

Opinions: trends, the gender gap and double standards

We focus on three dimensions: changes in opinions between 2000 and 2017, differences in the opinions expressed by men and women, and double standards, measured as differences in approbation or disapprobation of the same behaviour when the protagonist is a boy or a girl (Table 1).

For each odds ratio (OR) of the variable *gender x time*, we show the confidence interval ($p=0.05$). We employ a specific format to mark the statistical differences, emphasizing in the same model differences between 2000 and 2017 and between men and women. We write the odds ratio for 2017 in bold when the confidence interval does not include 1 (for men) or does not overlap the 2000 confidence interval (for women). The odds ratio for women is marked with an asterisk when the confidence interval does not include 1 (for 2000) or does not overlap the confidence interval for men (for 2017). Comparisons between ORs based on two confidence intervals give more conservative

results than those that would be obtained by modifying the baseline modality. In other words, when the confidence intervals of two ORs do not overlap we are sure that the difference between them would be statistically significant if either of the two modalities of the object of comparison were set as a baseline. In the models considered in Tables 1, 4 and 5, the opinions and behaviours of men and women for 2017 can be considered statistically different (and are therefore marked with an asterisk) in 23 of the 31 cases as the two confidence intervals do not overlap. If the same logistic models are fitted to our data but with the baseline changed (from Men 2000 to Men 2017), the differences between men and women for 2017 are statistically different in 29 of the 31 cases (when the confidence interval for the women's odds ratio includes 1, six extra cases are not significant in the models presented here).

In the first decades of the new millennium, the proportions of males and (especially) females who accept early sex, casual single sex, pre-nuptial and homosexual experiences increase. The doubling of the numbers of young people admitting homosexual experiences is perhaps the most salient result. This follows a path already found in the UK, where a comparison between the Natsal survey of 2012 with data from previous decades shows an increasing acceptance of homosexual intercourse (Mercer et al. 2013). Only when male students are asked about their tolerance of affairs during a stable intimate relationship does their tolerance decrease. During the 17 years studied, there are decreases both for when the partner is a boy and when a girl. For female respondents, the tolerance is very low in 2000 and in 2017 in both cases. Intolerance of betrayal has become one of the key features of contemporary sexual morality (Mercer et al. 2013).

Regarding gender-specific differences in opinions, the confidence intervals for males never overlap those for women. This means that the gender differences registered in 2000 are confirmed in 2017. Women are less tolerant than men, with the important exception of their opinions on homosexual behaviour. Nonetheless, the distance between men and women decreases for all the items in 2017 compared to 2000, suggesting that males and females still have diverse opinions, but less diverse nowadays than seventeen years ago. For example, male students' opinions on casual sex do not change between 2000 and 2017 (two thirds approve if the casual sex is experienced by males and half if it is experienced by females). The proportion of tolerant females, however, increases significantly: from 22% to 34% if the protagonist is a boy; from 16% to 31% if the protagonist is a girl. Female students are only more tolerant of homosexual intimacy than male students, especially of male homosexuality. In any event, for both genders those tolerating homosexuality more than doubles between 2000 and 2017. The absolute increase in tolerance is greater among girls than among boys, leading to an increase in the distance between the genders.

We compare two columns of frequencies using the difference between acceptance of male and female behaviour by gender and by year (Figure 3). If two of the frequencies on the same line are equal and the difference between them is zero (or close to zero), then there are not double standards. In both years, double standards are more pronounced in men's opinions than women's. Figures above zero mean that the behaviour is more accepted for boys than for girls. Double standards remain – although they are generally attenuated – in 2017. Looking at opinions on casual sex for singles, we see that 67% of men were tolerant in 2000 when the protagonist is male and 46% when the protagonist is female, a difference of more than 20 percentage points. In 2017, the difference in opinions remains but it is slightly less pronounced (71% for males and 53% for females). Girls' opinions are definitely different. The difference between their opinions on male and female behaviour was 6 percentage points in 2000 (22% accepted this behaviour for males and 16% for females) but only 3 points in 2017 (34% for males and 31% for females). Even more marked are the differences between men and women regarding double standards on homosexuality. Among girls there are no double standards in either 2000 or 2017, while among boys they are more pronounced in 2017 than in 2000, with greater tolerance of female homosexuality. All in all, these results on double standards show that – even though the opinions of men and women are closer than some years ago – the road to complete gender equality in attitudes towards sexuality among young Italians is still very long.

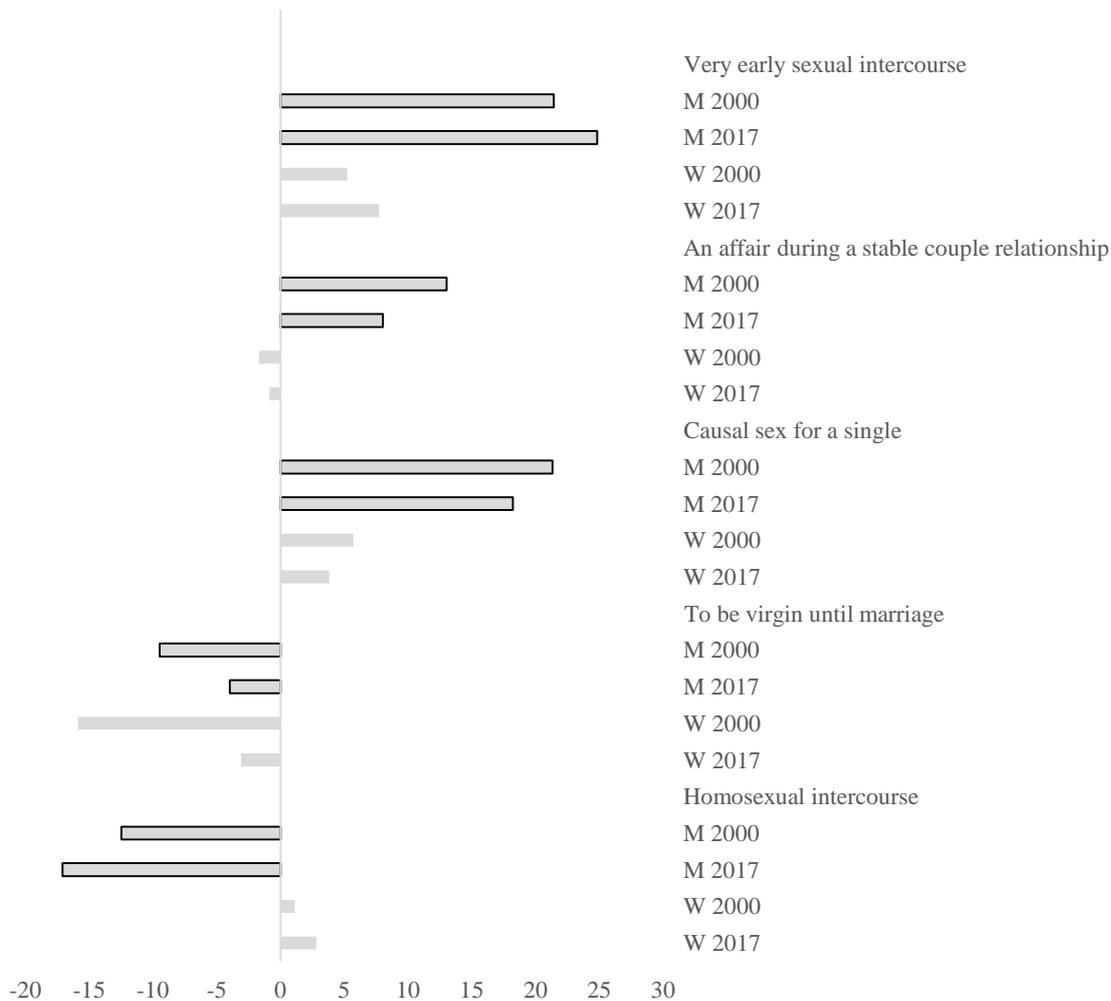
Table 1. The opinions on sexual behaviours of all the students surveyed. % frequency of the sum of ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ (in italics) and the odds ratios for the variable *gender x time* (Men2000=1): ten logistic models fitted on the merged 2000 and 2017 datasets¹

FOR A BOY I AGREE WITH...				FOR A GIRL I AGREE WITH...				
Odds ratio and Confidence (p=0.05)				Odds ratio and Confidence (p=0.05)				
	%	OR	Min	Max	%	OR	Min	Max
Very early sexual intercourse								
M 2000	<i>50.2</i>	1.000			<i>28.8</i>	1.000		
M 2017	<i>52.2</i>	0.916	0.802	1.045	<i>27.4</i>	0.790	0.682	0.916
W 2000	<i>13.7</i>	0.180*	0.153	0.213	<i>8.5</i>	0.292*	0.240	0.356
W 2017	<i>21.3</i>	0.242*	0.209	0.282	<i>13.6</i>	0.376*	0.317	0.447
An ‘escapade’ during a stable couple’s relationship								
M 2000	<i>26.0</i>	1.000			<i>13.0</i>	1.000		
M 2017	<i>17.9</i>	0.497	0.423	0.585	<i>9.9</i>	0.572	0.461	0.709
W 2000	<i>2.4</i>	0.071*	0.052	0.098	<i>4.1</i>	0.357*	0.269	0.474
W 2017	<i>2.9</i>	0.070*	0.053	0.092	<i>3.8</i>	0.224*	0.168	0.299
Casual sex for a single								
M 2000	<i>67.4</i>	1.000			<i>46.1</i>	1.000		
M 2017	<i>71.5</i>	1.006	0.872	1.161	<i>53.3</i>	0.971	0.848	1.111
W 2000	<i>21.8</i>	0.146*	0.124	0.171	<i>16.1</i>	0.261*	0.222	0.308
W 2017	<i>34.3</i>	0.201*	0.173	0.233	<i>30.5</i>	0.422*	0.364	0.488
Being virgin until marriage								
M 2000	<i>26.5</i>	1.000			<i>36.0</i>	1.000		
M 2017	<i>21.7</i>	0.814	0.696	0.951	<i>25.7</i>	0.703	0.608	0.812
W 2000	<i>37.0</i>	2.182*	1.869	2.547	<i>52.9</i>	1.603*	1.383	1.857
W 2017	<i>35.4</i>	1.555*	1.334	1.812	<i>38.5</i>	1.101*	0.953	1.273
Homosexual intercourse								
M 2000	<i>19.0</i>	1.000			<i>31.5</i>	1.000		
M 2017	<i>42.4</i>	2.792	2.378	3.279	<i>59.5</i>	2.735	2.376	3.148
W 2000	<i>28.1</i>	2.440*	2.048	2.908	<i>27.0</i>	1.061	0.907	1.241
W 2017	<i>69.5</i>	10.475*	8.843	12.407	<i>66.7</i>	4.243*	3.657	4.924

¹ The list of the control covariates and their distributions is reported in the Appendix

Note. **Bold** = the odds ratios for 2017 are significantly different to the odds ratios for 2000 for both men and women. For both years, * = the odds ratio for women is significantly different to that for men.

Figure. 3 Differences between acceptance of male and female behaviours by gender and by year



Sexual behaviour

The median age at first sexual intercourse decreased by 1.0 years for boys and 1.2 years for girls in the period 2000-2017 (Table 2). Among the cohort born at the end of the twentieth century, girls caught up with males: sexual initiation happens at the same age for boys and girls. The gap between boys and girls in the age at first sexual intercourse came to an end. This closing of the gap is essentially due to a rapid change in girls' behaviour in the south. In some regions in the centre-north, male and female students already began to have sex at similar ages at the beginning of the 21st century (Figure 4). The ages at first petting and the first couple relationship, on the other hand, did not change much. The interval between the first affective and sexual experiences of couples and the first complete sexual relations has therefore been shortened.

Table 2. Median age at certain sexual behaviours (*)

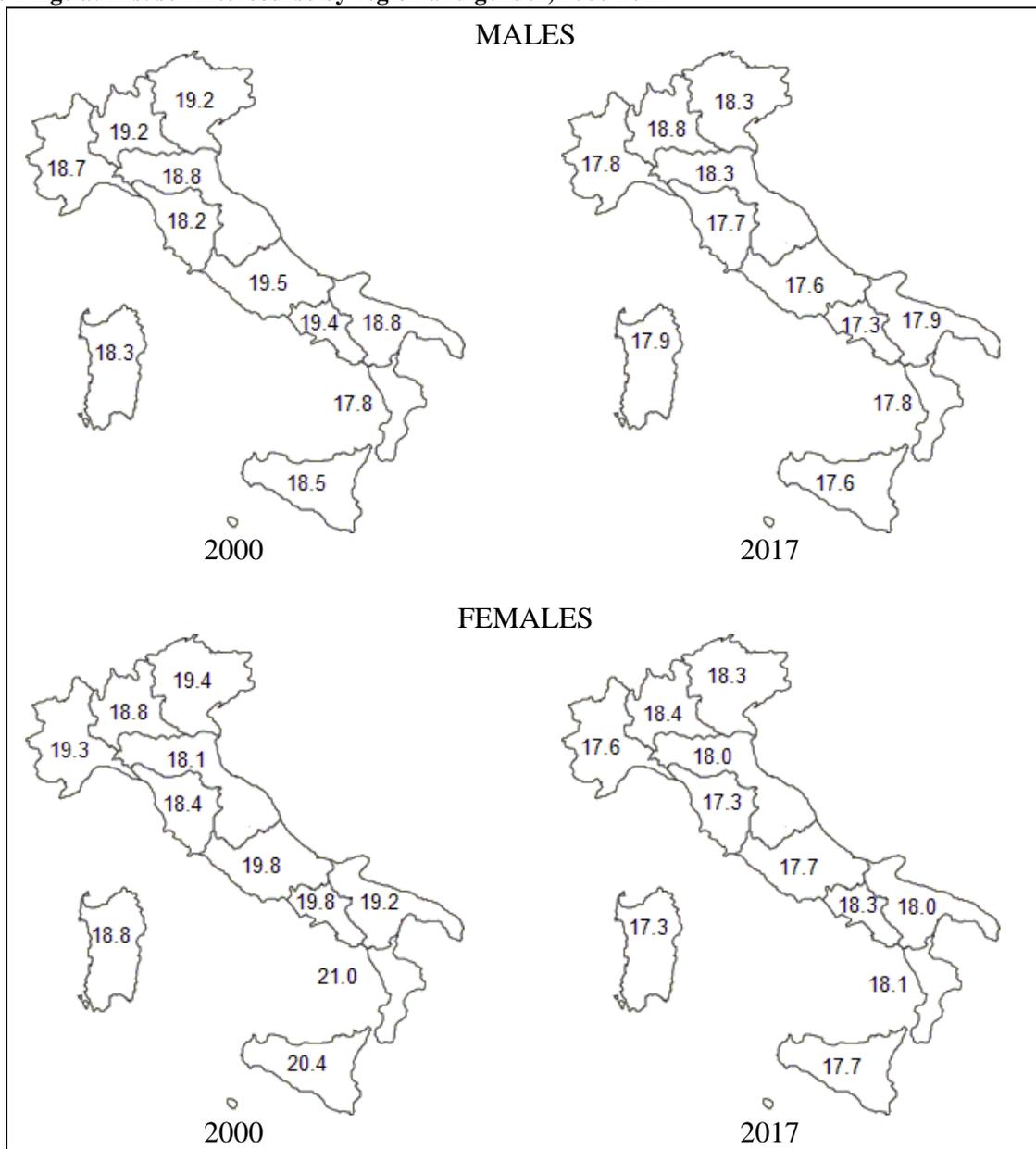
	Men		Women	
	2000	2017	2000	2017
First sexual intercourse	18.9	17.9	19.2	18.0
First petting	15.5	15.5	16.5	16.5
First couple relationship	16.5	16.2	15.8	15.8

(*) For first intercourse and the first relationship people were asked to recall the month and year. The age at these two events is calculated as the distance from the month/year of birth. On the contrary, for first petting people were only asked to recall the age (in years).

For some sexual behaviours (Table 3), we note both changes between 2000 and 2017 and differences between males and females. Odds ratios for men and women that show a statistically significant difference in 2017 compared to 2000 are indicated in bold. Those where significant differences between boys and girls are observed are indicated with an asterisk. Even when controlling for several confounding factors, between 2000 and 2017 the age at first sexual intercourse significantly decreases for both males and females. We also find a rise in very early intercourse (before the sixteenth birthday) for one in five students – both genders – in 2017. For other emotional and sexual experiences, the time change is irrelevant: the age at first petting; at the first couple relationship; the gender balance of friends; and at talking about sex with friends is between 16 and 18 years old. Only boys' experiences of talking about sex with friends and an earlier couple experience for girls significantly increased between 2000 and 2017.

Regarding the use of web pornography and homosexual experiences, both gender difference and time variation are relevant. An intensive use of pornography is essentially a male matter, with four in ten students admitting to visiting porn sites often or very often in 2017, almost quadruple the level in 2000 (when access to porn websites was less easy). Even for girls, intensive use of porn websites increased over time, but even in 2017 only 3% of the sample were intensive users.

Figure 4 Age at first sex intercourse by region and gender, 2000-2017



Note: we combined some regions due to small sample size.

Table 3. The sexual behaviour of all the students surveyed. % frequency (in italics) and odds ratios for *gender x time* variable (Men2000=1). Eight logistic models fitted on the merged 2000 and 2017 datasets²

	Odds ratio and Confidence (p=0.05)				Odds ratio and Confidence (p=0.05)			
	%	Value	Min	Max	%	Value	Min	Max
	First sexual intercourse before the 18 th birthday				First sexual intercourse before the 16 th birthday			
M 2000	<i>35.8</i>	1			<i>12.5</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>50.1</i>	1.544	1.353	1.762	<i>18.6</i>	1.429	1.190	1.716
F 2000	<i>33.1</i>	0.904	0.780	1.047	<i>9.1</i>	0.687*	0.546	0.864
F 2017	<i>49.9</i>	1.792	1.560	2.058	<i>18.9</i>	1.872	1.547	2.265
	First petting before the 17 th birthday				First couple relationship before the 16 th birthday			
M 2000	<i>52.5</i>	1			<i>44.8</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>53.2</i>	0.819	0.719	0.932	<i>47.5</i>	1.132	0.988	1.296
F 2000	<i>42.1</i>	0.680*	0.591	0.783	<i>51.6</i>	1.415*	1.224	1.635
F 2017	<i>46.3</i>	0.741	0.647	0.849	<i>52.6</i>	1.605*	1.394	1.850
	The same number of m. and f. friends at age 16-18				Often speaking about sex with a friend at age 16-18			
M 2000	<i>62.3</i>	1			<i>67.1</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>53.8</i>	0.856	0.753	0.972	<i>67.0</i>	0.936	0.818	1.071
F 2000	<i>61.8</i>	1.082	0.941	1.243	<i>48.3</i>	0.529*	0.459	0.610
F 2017	<i>56.9</i>	1.000	0.875	1.143	<i>46.3</i>	0.402*	0.350	0.462
	Often watching porn on the web during the last year				At least once homosexual experience			
M 2000	<i>10,4</i>	1			<i>6.4</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>39,5</i>	5.298	4.516	6.215	<i>7.2</i>	1.033	0.799	1.337
F 2000	<i>0,4</i>	0.071*	0.059	0.085	<i>4.3</i>	0.727*	0.537	0.985
F 2017	<i>2,8</i>	0.159*	0.137	0.185	<i>14.9</i>	2.327*	1.811	2.989

² The list of the control covariates and their distributions is reported in the Appendix

Note. **Bold** = the odds ratios for 2017 are significantly different to the odds ratios for 2000 for both men and women. For both years, * = the odds ratio for women is significantly different to that for men.

For homosexual experiences, we observe a kind of ‘gender revolution.’ In 2000, homosexual experiences were more frequent among males (but the difference was not statistically significant). On the contrary, in 2017 twice as many women as men claimed to have had homosexual experiences. A higher incidence among girls is confirmed for two other dimensions of homosexuality which were only surveyed in 2017. Non-heterosexual identity was slightly more widespread among women: 3% of boys (1.3% gay; 1.7% bisexual) and 3.7% of girls (0.8% lesbian; 2.9% bisexual) declared they were non-heterosexual. In addition, 10.7% of females claimed they had experienced some kind of sexual attraction to people of the same sex, compared to 5.7% of men. 19.8% of women responded positively to at least one of the three variables mentioned above, thus showing a proximity to homosexuality or bisexuality. The same happened to only 10.1% of males.

Some characteristics of the sexual behaviour of non-virgin people

A strong rise in the proportion of condom use during first sexual intercourse already took place in Italy for those born in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of campaigns against the AIDS epidemic (Barbagli et al. 2010 p. 81). Table 4 shows that the spread of modern contraception at first intercourse continues to grow, reaching almost 80% in 2017 (71.2% condom, 7.4% pill and 0.4% IUD). This figure is in line with fertility and voluntary abortion rates at age 15-24, which are among the lowest in Europe (Loghi et al. 2013, p. 100; UN Population Division 2015). However, still in 2017 one in five young students did not use any contraception or relied on *coitus interruptus* at their first sexual intercourse.

Table 4. The sexual behaviour of the students surveyed who had already had sexual intercourse. % frequency (in italics) and odds ratios for *gender x time* variable (Men2000=1): eleven logistic models fitted on the merged 2000 and 2017 datasets³

	Odds ratio and Confidence (p=0.05)				Odds ratio and Confidence (p=0.05)			
	%	Value	Min	Max	%	Value	Min	Max
	Condom, pill or IUD at first sexual intercourse				Occasional partner at first sexual intercourse			
M 2000	<i>74.6</i>	1			<i>35.5</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>79.9</i>	1.199	1.001	1.435	<i>29.4</i>	0.723	0.615	0.850
F 2000	<i>65.2</i>	0.684*	0.561	0.832	<i>9.1</i>	0.213*	0.169	0.269
F 2017	<i>78.5</i>	1.101	0.911	1.331	<i>11.8</i>	0.260*	0.214	0.317
	One sexual partner (until the survey)				Three sexual partners or more (until the survey)			
M 2000	<i>38.7</i>	1			<i>30.7</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>32.2</i>	0.954	0.808	1.126	<i>37.3</i>	1.187	1.010	1.395
F 2000	<i>58.2</i>	2.122*	1.769	2.545	<i>12.9</i>	0.406*	0.334	0.495
F 2017	<i>42.3</i>	1.294	1.091	1.536	<i>23.8</i>	0.750*	0.630	0.892
	Casual sex (at least once)				Betrayed the partner (at least once)			
M 2000	<i>47.4</i>	1			<i>27.2</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>52.7</i>	0.998	0.858	1.163	<i>22.7</i>	0.784	0.658	0.935
F 2000	<i>14.9</i>	0.171*	0.139	0.211	<i>12.1</i>	0.412*	0.327	0.519
F 2017	<i>27.6</i>	0.371*	0.313	0.440	<i>12.7</i>	0.389*	0.316	0.479
	Sex once a month or less (in previous 3 months)				Sex 2-3 times a week or more (in previous 3 months)			
M 2000	<i>43.8</i>	1			<i>27.6</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>44.8</i>	1.036	0.892	1.203	<i>25.9</i>	0.892	0.756	1.052
F 2000	<i>29.4</i>	0.496*	0.416	0.592	<i>30.7</i>	1.230*	1.020	1.482
F 2017	<i>30.9</i>	0.593*	0.504	0.697	<i>34.0</i>	1.267*	1.066	1.507
	Sexual experience at risk of HIV (at least once)				Had a sexually transmitted disease (at least once)			
M 2000	<i>32.1</i>	1			<i>4.2</i>	1		
M 2017	<i>37.8</i>	1.186	1.036	1.357	<i>7.0</i>	1.206	0.911	1.597
F 2000	<i>24.2</i>	0.738*	0.634	0.860	<i>6.3</i>	1.663*	1.231	2.246
F 2017	<i>34.3</i>	1.000	0.867	1.154	<i>11.6</i>	2.295*	1.734	3.038
	Casual sex without using a condom (at least once)							
M 2000	<i>26.0</i>	1						
M 2017	<i>39.1</i>	1.600	1.356	1.889				
F 2000	<i>18.8</i>	0.686*	0.559	0.843				
F 2017	<i>32.5</i>	1.257	1.051	1.504				

³ The list of the control covariates and their distributions is reported in the Appendix

Note. **Bold** = the odds ratios for 2017 are significantly different to the odds ratios for 2000 for both men and women. For both years, * = the odds ratio for women is significantly different to that for men.

In 2017, the proportion of students having their first sexual intercourse with occasional partners differed by gender (29.4% among men, 11.8% among women). Notably, this difference is smaller than in 2000, especially because of a reduction in the number of boys having first sex with an occasional partner. In the past, the vast majority of men had their first sexual intercourse outside of an intimate relationship and the vast majority of women during a couple relationship. The size of the gender gap was indeed bigger. Nowadays, boys behave much more similarly to girls. Consistently, the proportion of young adults who claim to have had their first sexual intercourse with a same-age person increases: from 56.3% to 67.5% among men; from 68.1% to 76.6% among women.

In short, among the students born at the end of the 1990s, the first sexual intercourse – even if it occurs at an earlier age than for the students born at the beginning of the 1980s – is experienced with greater contraceptive awareness. Moreover, the first sexual intercourse is increasingly rarely a sort of ‘initiation,’ traditionally very different for men and women. More and more often and with

few differences between young men and young women, the first sexual intercourse is experienced within a couple relationship with a same-age person.

The number of partners increases for both genders, also in the light of the one-year decrease in the age at first intercourse (whereas the mean age at the time of the survey does not change). In 2017, more boys than girls had had three or more partners and more girls than boys had had only one. However, the gender gap significantly narrowed. The number of girls who claimed they had had – at least once – occasional partners doubled. This number was still lower than for boys, but the gender gap seems to be vanishing. The change is not only due to infidelity happening within stable emotional relationships; it is also due to intercourse experienced by singles. The proportion of young students who claimed to have betrayed their partner decreased between 2000 and 2017. Putting these results together with those on the students' opinions, a 'dual mode' pattern seems to be emerging among both males and females: when you are single you are allowed to have more partners; when you are in an emotional relationship sexual fidelity is the 'social' norm.

The frequency of sexual intercourse is higher for girls than for boys, with few differences between 2000 and 2017. This happens because more girls (64.5% in 2017) than boys (47.3%) were currently engaged in a relationship with a non-virgin person, and in this circumstance sexual activity is significantly more intense than that of single people. For example, in 2017 the proportion of non-virgin people having sexual intercourse at least twice a week was 9.0% among single males, 11.1% among single females, 45.6% among males in a relationship and 47.7% among females in a relationship. As expected, being in a couple is a prerequisite for having frequent sexual intercourse and it helps both the intensity of and satisfaction with sexual life. Among non-virgins in 2017, the proportions of students quite or very satisfied with their current sex lives were 39.5% among single boys, 40.2% among single girls, 91.3% among boys in a couple and 92.9% among girls in a couple.

We conclude our exploration of the sexual lives of Italian students with a focus on risky sexual behaviour. The three questions included on this issue show a worrying increase in sexual relations at risk of HIV, the incidence of STDs and unprotected casual sex. An increase between 2000 and 2017 is visible and significant for both males and females, and this is only partially explained by the increase in the length of time of exposure to risk (due to the decrease in age at first sexual intercourse).

Conclusions

The main aim of this article has been to illustrate the major changes in the sexual behaviour of young Italian university students over the last two decades. We have used a gender lens to focus on whether – especially among females – the process towards earlier sexual initiation has continued, and whether the behaviour and opinions of boys and girls have tended to converge. At least five key findings have emerged.

First, there seems to be a *feminisation* of male behaviour within the couple. The first sexual intercourse occurs more and more often with a same-age girl and within an emotional relationship. Moreover, once in a couple, boys tend to betray less, converging with the behaviour of girls. This rejection of betrayal is also manifested in their opinions: among boys as among girls, sexual fidelity is increasingly considered indispensable within a couple relationship. Importantly, the change in the opinions and behaviour of young Italians follows that observed among the forerunner British young people (Mercer 2013). The emphasis on couple loyalty should be carefully studied to better identify causes and consequences. The growing non-acceptance of sexual betrayal could have distant roots related to the change in values brought about by the revolution of intimacy: affection and mutual attraction become the fundamental elements for couples. If being a couple is – essentially – a reciprocal choice, betrayal cannot be easily tolerated or forgiven. It would be interesting to understand – in another more focused study on the relationship between sexual and demographic behaviour – if the growth in couple break-ups in developed countries is somehow linked to the growth in intolerance of betrayal or in the number of relationships being terminated when a new partner has been found.

Second, we note a *masculinisation* of girls' sexual life courses in terms of their opinions and behaviour outside a couple relationship. There is a net drop in girls expecting other girls to remain virgin until marriage, and their acceptance of casual sex doubled in less than twenty years. Moreover, the number of girls' occasional partners increased substantially. The negative side of this change is a marked increase – among boys, but especially among girls – in unprotected sex with occasional partners, and in contracting a sexually transmitted disease. However, the social norm that a single girl should avoid casual sex has not yet been overturned, which is in accordance with findings on other countries where there is a long tradition of studies on young adults' sexuality (e.g. Petersen and Hyde 2011 for the UK). Nonetheless, there is certainly a progressive deviation by girls from traditional gender roles in this sphere and it is reflected in their behaviour.

Generally speaking, even if today Venus and Mars are closer than at the beginning of the century (Bertone 2010), we have not observed a complete gender convergence. If the early stages of sexual life (first petting, first relationship, first sexual intercourse) take place at a similar age and in a similar way between genders, casual sex is still more common among boys, who also use pornography much more often, talk more about sex with their friends and masturbate more often than their female peers. The differences between males and females in terms of opinions are profound too. Men are definitely more favourable to casual sex and affairs and more anchored to double standards.

Third, homosexual opinions and non-heterosexual behaviour deserve a special mention. The proportion of people who had had homosexual experiences (or felt free to declare them) increased over time, especially among girls. In 2017, homosexuality and bisexuality among Italian university students seems to be especially popular among girls. Acceptance of same-sex partnerships increased among boys and – again – especially among girls. This pattern also mirrors that observed in the UK during the first decade of the 21st century (Mercer et al. 2013, p. 1781). The pattern is likely to be connected with a new greater sexual freedom for girls who are not in a couple, since for them the change is more in behaviour than in sexual identity. The persistent acceptance by girls of homosexuality is in line with the only national survey on this issue, which was conducted by the Italian Statistical Office in 2011 (Istat 2012). This showed a greater acceptance of female and male homosexuality among women. Our study, however, has shown a greater difference to the national data regarding an increasing approval by male students over time, especially of female homosexuality.

Fourth, among males, the presence of double standards in sexual attitudes is still much more rooted. Although it was less marked in 2017 than in 2000, there were still many male students who approved or rejected certain sexual behaviours differently according to whether the protagonist is a boy or a girl. Among female students, on the other hand, double standards almost disappeared in the period 2000-2017. Little is known about the presence of sexual double standards in Italy. The literature shows that there are different norms for boys and girls regarding the first sexual intercourse (Billari and Mencarini 2004), and a recent qualitative study finds a persistence of double standards among Italian men (Ferrero Camoletto 2014). Our study confirms these findings for 2017. The link between double standards and risky sexual behaviour is positive, especially for males, who are pushed towards a more intense sexuality (Petersen and Hyde 2011). Our analyses have found an increase in risky behaviour.

Fifth, another important result is a 'closure' of the territorial differences within Italy concerning the age at first sexual intercourse for girls. In 2000, in the two most southern regions (Calabria and Sicily) female students' first sexual intercourse took place three years later than that of their male peers. In 2017, both Sicilian and Calabrian men and women had their first relationships at the age of 17-18, a figure in line with the national average. This is another part of the 'catching-up' by the south with the conjugal, sexual, reproductive and fertility behaviour already widespread in the north of the country (and – before that – in the north of Europe). This last result is a further confirmation of a diffusive process that is also present in our data.

Our study is not without its limitations. The specificity of the sample and the lack of data on some relevant sexual practices (such as oral and anal sex) are two important limits. To address the

first issue, we made some comparisons with other studies and populations. More traditional sexual opinions and behaviour (a lower prevalence of homosexual experiences and postponed first sexual intercourse) are over-represented in our data in comparison with the population as a whole. Nonetheless, our research design allows a meaningful comparison between 2000 and 2017. This is the greatest strength of this study and it will also be useful in future investigations. Another issue regards the data collection method, and this can only be overcome by other studies, possibly on smaller samples with higher budgets using other techniques (such as open questions and in-depth interviews). Moreover – as often happens in comparative surveys over time and space on ethically sensitive issues – it is difficult to say with certainty whether spatial or temporal differences are due to actual behavioural changes or instead to a variation in the respondents' disposition to admit to their behaviour (Caltabiano and Dalla Zuanna, 2013). Partly for this reason, in this general overview we have put emphasis on data on opinions, which should be less affected by this issue.

To conclude, it is possible to affirm that in the first two decades of the 21st century Italian students travelled along another stretch of the road towards the sexual opinions and behaviour already manifested in the countries of northern and western Europe and in overseas English-speaking countries. Moreover, the gap between boys and girls was wide in 2017, although less wide than it was seventeen years before. We also wish to underline that the present (and probably the future) does not show a sort of bond-free sexuality linked only to hedonism and physical attraction. This may be partially true for singles, but it is wrong for people in couples. In our opinion, the study of this dualistic world – in particular in terms of its coherence and contradictions – is a relevant research challenge for the future.

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Appendix. Sampling method, questionnaire and covariates

The sampling plan was the same in 2000 and 2017. Italy was divided into fourteen regions (Table A1). For each region r , using data from the Ministry of Education the total number N_r of students enrolled in undergraduate courses in economics and statistics in public universities was determined. Within each macro-region, some undergraduate courses were randomly identified and all the students attending a compulsory basic course (usually in statistics or economics) were surveyed during a class. In this way, n_r students were surveyed for each region. Since the proportion n/N of the students surveyed was not the same for all the regions, for all the students from region r the weight ($N_r/N / n_r/n$) was applied. All the frequency distributions presented in this article are weighted. For the regression models where the geographical variable is always considered as a covariate, the weighting was not necessary.

Table A1. The sample plans in 2017 and 2000

Macro –region	2017					2000				
	1 st year students		Our sample		Weight	1 st year students		Our sample		Weight
	N	F	n	f	P=F/f	N	F	n	f	P=F/f
Calabria	1,305	3%	406	5%	0.625	1,482	4%	302	6%	0.611
Campania	5,146	13%	524	7%	1.909	6,080	15%	155	3%	4.884
Emilia-Romagna	4,584	11%	362	5%	2.462	4,590	11%	125	3%	4.572
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	864	2%	71	1%	2.366	973	2%	160	3%	0.757
Lazio	4,317	11%	501	6%	1.675	4,754	12%	337	7%	1.757
Liguria	942	2%	639	8%	0.287	852	2%	362	7%	0.293
Piemonte	3,394	8%	117	1%	5.640	1,908	5%	180	4%	1.320
Lombardia	4,777	12%	209	3%	4.444	3,453	9%	790	16%	0.544
Marche, Umbria	1,488	4%	580	7%	0.499	1,816	5%	367	7%	0.616
Puglia, Abruzzi, Molise	3,513	9%	525	7%	1.301	4,702	12%	460	9%	1.273
Sardegna	1,059	3%	299	4%	0.689	983	2%	85	2%	1.440
Sicilia	2,163	5%	1,426	18%	0.295	3,166	8%	477	10%	0.826
Toscana	3,491	9%	1,086	14%	0.625	2,409	6%	681	14%	0.440
Veneto, Trentino-AA	3,294	8%	1,097	14%	0.584	2,971	8%	517	10%	0.781
ITALY	40,337	100%	7,842	100%	1.000	40,139	100%	4,998	100%	1.000

The questionnaire was the same in 2000 and 2017, with just marginal changes:

(1) Current sexual behaviour and sexual biographies.

Past sexual experiences

- first sexual experience without intercourse (if and when)
- sexual experiences with a same-sex partner
- first couple experience (if and when)
- first sexual intercourse (if and when, contraception, characteristics of the partner, and so on)
- extra-couple sexual intercourse (frequency)
- number of sexual partners
- experiences at risk of AIDS (frequency)
- sexually transmissible diseases (frequency)
- cohabitation (first, number)

Current sexual experiences

- frequency of intercourse
- contraception
- last couple relationship (when, partner's characteristics, sexual dialectic within the couple)
- use of pornography

(2) Variables which are potentially associated with youth sexuality.

Geographical area

- size of municipality during adolescence
- province: of birth, of residence during adolescence, of current residence
- biography of living arrangements

Family

- social class and level of education of both parents
- affective relationship with parents
- type of family upbringing (strict, libertarian, and so on)
- emotional communication and sexual education within the family
- parents' religious practice

School, employment, activities

- school grades
- type of school
- employment
- volunteer work
- sports activity

Friends

- biography of the groups of friends
- erotic conversations with friends

Religiosity

- Mass attendance (at 14, current attendance, year when weekly attendance was discontinued)
- biography of religious group attendance
- current value of religion

Free time

- biography of night-clubbing and discos
- biography of smoking
- biography of some 'risky' behaviours (drug use, alcohol abuse, reckless driving)

Other personal characteristics

- physical ailments during adolescence
- age at first menstruation (only for girls)
- weight, height and current satisfaction with own physical appearance

(3) Attitudes connected to sexuality.

- age limit for some sexual behaviour and marriage
- gender differences in sexual behaviour
- opinions of friends, of parents and of the respondent on some sexual behaviours
- more general attitudes
- global satisfaction with own sexual life

In 2017, we added two questions on homosexuality (*During your life, have you ever been attracted to people of your sex?* and *How do you define yourself? Heterosexual, Bisexual, Homosexual*), a question on the occurrence and frequency of sexting by mobile phone, and a question on the actual occurrence of masturbation.

Seventeen of these variables are included as covariates in the logistic models. Table A2 shows the weighted distribution of these covariates, considering men and women in 2000 and 2017 separately.

Table A2. Structural variables included in the logistic models, weighted column % frequencies

	Males		Females	
	2000	2017	2000	2017
Mean age at survey (years)	20.92	20.98	21.06	20.89
Area of residence during teens				
North-west	17.4	22.7	15.6	19.2
North-east	21.6	17.7	12.9	17.0
Centre	21.5	21.0	19.5	20.4
South and Islands	38.6	38.0	50.5	42.1
Abroad	0.9	0.6	1.6	1.3
Population size of the municipality of residence during teens				
< 10,000	24.8	22.2	32.3	25.6
10,000-100,000	45.3	48.6	46.4	52.5
> 100,000	29.9	29.2	21.3	21.9
Parents' education				
Both ≤ 12 years of education	34.2	17.9	45.5	25.6
Father ≤ 12 years of education, mother > 12 years of education	11.7	14.7	9.7	15.9
Father > 12 years of education, mother ≤ 12 years of education	13.5	8.8	12.2	11.3
Both > 12 years of education	40.7	58.6	32.6	47.2
Mother was working when the respondent was 14-15 (%)				
No	37.6	27.1	42.7	29.1
Yes	61.8	71.8	56.5	69.9
Do not know, deceased	0.7	1.2	0.8	1.0
Social class of father (%)				
High	32.1	35.2	21.6	29.0
Medium	29.1	24.9	31.5	22.4
Low	38.8	39.9	46.9	48.6
Talked with parents about his/her affective life when 14-15 (%)				
Never	58.6	58.9	47.9	47.3
Yes, superficially	35.1	35.6	40.6	40.6
Yes, in depth	6.1	5.4	11.4	12.0
Never met them, both deceased	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Parents divorced before the respondent was 16 (%)				
No	96.1	89.2	96.9	91.1
Yes	3.9	10.8	3.1	8.9
Reaction to parents' rules during teens (%)				
Accepted rules	16.6	21.3	16.7	21.9
Contracted rules	64.1	62.3	61.0	59.7
Refused rules	18.8	16.0	22.2	18.2
Never met them, both deceased	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.1
Parents allowed the student to come back home late on Saturday nights during teens (%)				
No	39.2	37.5	62.4	52.4
Yes	60.8	62.5	37.6	47.6
Importance of religion in respondent's life (%)				
Low	39.6	66.3	24.5	52.6
High	60.4	33.7	75.5	47.4
Mass attendance by parents when the respondent was 14 (%)				
Both never or irregular	62.3	75.0	61.2	73.9
Father never or irregular, mother regular	15.3	9.6	16.6	11.0
Father regular, mother never or irregular	2.2	2.7	2.6	2.8
Both regular	20.2	12.7	19.6	12.4
Body mass index at survey				
Underweight	1.6	1.5	7.6	6.9
Slightly underweight	1.8	2.0	13.6	12.5
Normal	83.5	81.9	71.3	70.1
Overweight	11.8	12.1	6.7	8.8
Obese	1.3	2.6	0.7	1.7
Had at least three health problems during teens (*)				
No	95.5	94.7	94.0	92.4
Yes	4.5	5.3	6.0	7.6
Satisfied with own physical appearance during teens				
No	6.8	7.7	15.5	18.1
Little	20.6	22.1	29.4	26.0
Enough	45.8	45.7	40.1	38.7
Very	26.8	24.5	15.0	17.2
Diploma score at junior / senior high school (%)				
Both low	42.3	45.7	26.8	27.4
High at junior high school, low at senior high school	12.4	14.4	11.3	13.6
Low at junior high school, high at senior high school	22.4	18.0	25.8	24.7
Both high	22.9	21.9	36.1	34.4
Type of high school attended				
General	55.4	64.0	54.5	62.7
Technical	42.7	33.1	42.0	34.1
Vocational	2.0	2.9	3.5	3.2

(*) The possible health problems were: eating disorders, insomnia, strong acne problems, speaking problems (stuttering), serious hearing or vision problems, excessive sweating of the hands, enuresis, halitosis.

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