

The Italian Political Science community, 2002-2022

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Abstract

What has been the evolution of the Italian Political Science community in the past 20 years? Have there been relevant differences from the career level, geographical, or gender-related viewpoints? This article aims at answering these questions, which are even more interesting on the eve of the start of a new career path for Italian academics, which should markedly modify especially the early stages of career. After discussing the numerical growth of Italian Political Science from 2002 until 2022, the article explores the differences related to career levels and geography. On the former point, there has been an increase in the importance of Associate Professors but also Non-tenure-track academics. In this regard, if the trend experienced in 2018-2022 continued in the following years, we would face a situation where the relative majority of political scientists do not hold a tenure-track position. On the latter aspect, universities located in Northern regions continue employing a relevant sector of the Italian Political Science community, with Central and, especially, Southern universities having a much more marginal role. Finally, the article explores gender-related differences. While there are noticeable signs of a growing prominence of women from the numerical and the growth rate viewpoints, opposite indicators point to a marked difficulty of women to climb the academic career ladder.

1. Introduction

This contribution deals with the evolution of the numerical, qualification-related, geographical, and gender-related distribution of the Italian Political Science community in the last 20 years. The general Research Question (RQ) is to understand the temporal and career-related trajectories of Professors, Researchers, and, for more recent years, Post-Doctoral Research Fellows working within the SPS/O4 Scientific Sector Code (SSD – *Settore Scientifico Disciplinare*).¹

The importance of this RQ is not simply related to the possibility of putting forward a long-term assessment of the changes in the Italian Political Science community. Rather, it is made even more evident at the onset of a new university career reform (Paterlini 2022): one of its most important components probably will be the change in the career track of Italian scholars. More specifically, after the PhD, a new Post-Doctoral research contract would be introduced, followed by a six-year Tenure-Track Researcher position leading to the Associate Professor position, and, finally, a Full Professor position (*ibidem*, Gavosto and Tedesco 2022). All in all, understanding the evolution and the status of the Italian SPS/O4 community just before the onset of the umpteenth Ital-

¹ I focus on scholars belonging to the SPS/O4 Scientific Sector Code following previous research on the topic (e.g., Capano 2005: 499; Capano and Verzichelli 2010: 115; Marino and Verzichelli 2020).



ian university reform can be of great interest also to try to understand the possible effects of this reform on the recruitment and career prospects of Italian Political Science scholars.

Data used in this contribution come from two sources: while, for the 2002-2017 period, I have relied on data collected by Luca Verzichelli, I have retrieved data for the 2018-2022 period.² The most important difference between the two sources is that data on Post-Doctoral Research Fellows (*Assegnisti di Ricerca*) are only available for the 2018-2022 time frame.³ As a consequence, when necessary, I will present data by including and excluding this academic career position to make it possible to compare more recent data with older data.

Another difference between the two data sources is that 2002-2017 data were collected at the beginning of each calendar year (i.e., January), while 2018-2022 data were collected in August.

This contribution is structured as follows: in the first section, I present data on the numerical changes in the Italian Political Science community both from a general viewpoint and by considering different academic career levels. The second section tackles the geographical differences across different subnational areas. The third section is devoted to the analysis of gender-related differences. A concluding section follows.

2. Numerical and career-related changes

Let us start by assessing the numerical evolution of the Italian Political Science community over time (Figure 1). The growth of such a community is quite evident, with the number of political scientists growing by more than 60% (from 157 in 2002 to 258 in 2022). Let us remember that, at the end of the 1980s, there were some 106 political scientists in Italy (Morlino 1989: 33). Moreover, the inclusion of Post-Doctoral Research Fellows makes the growth even more evident, with this enlarged Political Science community growing from 287 members in 2018 to 345 in 2022, a rough 17% increase (compared with an approximate 13% increase from 2018 to 2022 if we exclude Post-Doctoral Research Fellows from the count).

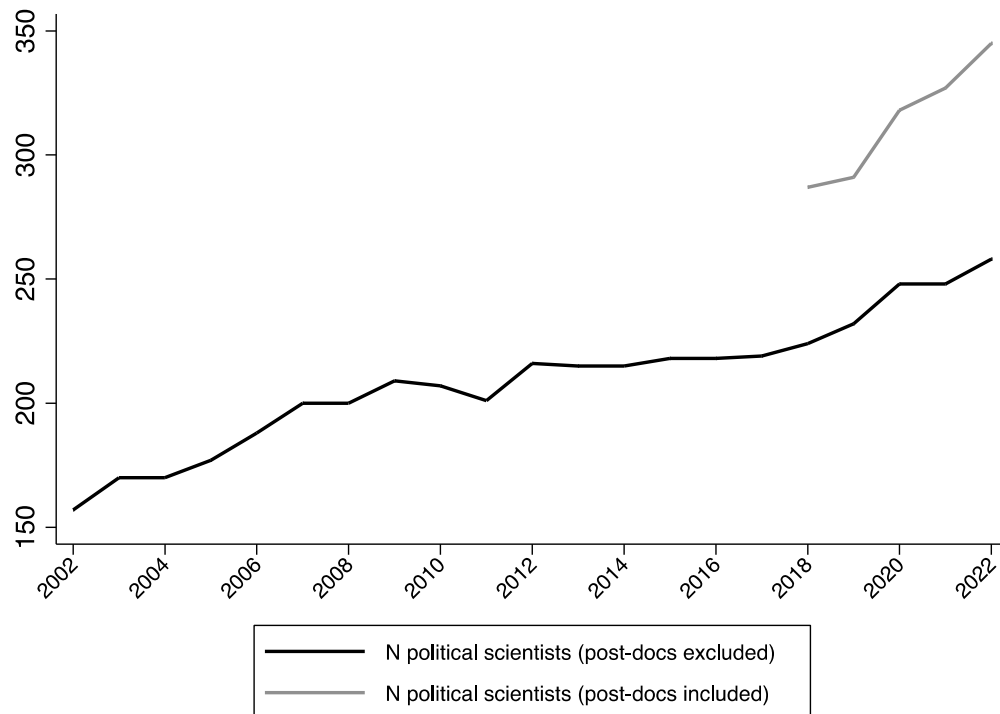
Figure 1 gives us just a general snapshot. More detailed information can be found if we disaggregate the data by focusing on the different career levels within the Italian SPS/O4 community. Here, we have a problem to solve, given that data from 2002 until 2022 include career paths according to two (partly) different career structures in Italian academia, an older one and a newer one.⁴ Thus, a recoding was necessary to present data that can be compared over time.

² More specifically, data for the 2018-2021 period have been collected within the project of the Italian Political Science Association (Società Italiana di Scienza Politica, SISP) which aimed at collecting information on Italian Political Science, its community, and its students.

³ Data have been downloaded from the CINECA website (<https://cercauniversita.cineca.it/php5/docenti/cerca.php>). Further, note that Post-Doctoral Research Fellows are not the sole non-tenure-track junior positions in existence in Italian academia: see the discussion in Rostan and Vaira (2011) and Grüning and De Angelis (2021).

⁴ The two career structures are those existing before and after the so-called 'Gelmini reform' of the Italian university, passed in 2010 (on the Gelmini reform see Capano 2011; Donina et al. 2015). Nonetheless, the replacement of the older structure with the newer one did not happen abruptly, meaning that the two structures have coexisted or still coexist (especially for some academic positions, as

Figure 1. Numerical evolution of the Italian Political Science community, absolute values, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows included and excluded)



Source: own elaboration.

Table 1 below describes the academic positions for which data were available according to the two career structures and their recoding, their (rough) English translation (starting from the categorization presented in Marino and Verzichelli 2020), and the related recoding.

The general idea was to create a categorization to enable the reader to navigate the different career structures easily, and travel across different countries and academic regulations. As explained later in this section, one of the main criteria for recoding was the (*de jure* or *de facto*) presence or absence of a tenure-track career perspective.

Before moving forward, the reader may have noticed the absence of non-tenure-track positions in the first (older) career structure presented in Table 1. Here, we are dealing with a problem of missing data: despite the fact that non-tenure-track positions were present in Italian universities even before the so-called ‘Gelmini reform’ in 2010 (e.g., see Moscati 2001; Grüning and De Angelis 2021), there are no available data on these positions before 2018 in the dataset used in this contribution, as already discussed above. Therefore, the recoding presented in Table 1 does not deal with all the possible career paths of Italian political scientists in the last 20 years. This limitation must be considered when evaluating and commenting on the data presented in this article.

shown later in the text). For more detailed information on the two career structures, see, for instance, Capano (2020).

Table 1. Recoding of academic positions in the two career structures of the Italian university

First (older) career structure			Second (newer) career structure		
Italian position	English translation	Recoding	Italian position	English translation	Recoding
			<i>Assegnista di ricerca</i>	Post-Doctoral Research Fellow	Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professor
			<i>Ricercatore a tempo determinato (Tipo A)</i>	Non-Tenure-Track Researcher	
<i>Ricercatore non confermato</i>	Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professor	Tenure-track Assistant Professor			Tenure-Track Assistant Professor
<i>Ricercatore</i>	Tenure-Track Assistant Professor		<i>Ricercatore</i>	Tenure-Track Assistant Professor	
		Associate Professor	<i>Ricercatore a tempo determinato (Tipo B)</i>	Tenure-Track Researcher	Associate Professor
<i>Associato non confermato</i>	Non-Tenure-Track Associate Professor				
<i>Associato confermato</i>	Associate Professor		<i>Associato confermato</i>	Associate Professor	
		Full Professor	<i>Associato</i>	Associate Professor	Full Professor
<i>Straordinario</i>	Non-Tenure-Track Full Professor				
<i>Ordinario</i>	Full Professor		<i>Ordinario</i>	Full Professor	
			<i>Straordinario a tempo determinato</i>	Temporary Full Professor	

Source: own elaboration.

Concerning the recoding, I have made some arbitrary choices. First, as regards the old career structure, I have grouped the categories of *Ricercatore confermato* (Tenure-Track Assistant Professor) and *Ricercatore non confermato* (Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professor) positions. Indeed, it has been argued that ‘although the position has to be confirmed in order to become fully permanent, the career advancement [from *ricercatori non confermati*] to *ricercatori confermati* is quite often a pure formality’ (Graziano 2006: 267). Notice that, in the dataset used for this contribution, over the years, all Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors but one became Tenure-Track Assistant Professors or even Associate Professors. Therefore, collapsing these two positions into the ‘Tenure-Track Assistant Professor’ category seems reasonable. Moreover, in recent years, this category has been the least populated one among the tenure-track positions (see Figures 2-3 below and Ballarino and Perotti 2012: 353).

As for the second choice of categorization, I have placed together Full Professors (*Professore Ordinario*) and Temporary Full Professors (*Professore Straordinario*) in the older career structure. The latter position was considered as a sort of preliminary passage before ending up in the former one (e.g., see Mattei and Monateri 1993). The idea behind the recoding was to create a single category for all the people who reached (or were about to reach) the highest position of the older Italian academic career structure. Another reason supporting the decision to merge these categories is that, in the dataset I have used, all Temporary Full Professors end up holding the position of Full Professors.

Let us then move to the newer career structure. Here (third choice of categorization), I have combined the position of *Ricercatore a tempo determinato (Tipo A)*⁵ (Non-Tenure-Track Researcher) and the position of *Assegnista di Ricerca* (Post-Doctoral Research Fellow) in the position I have called ‘Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professor’. Indeed, despite the differences existing between the two positions (e.g., in terms of salary or teaching duties), both can be safely considered non-tenure-track. More specifically, there is no formal or substantial guarantee of obtaining a tenure-track position after having been a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow or even a Non-Tenure-Track Researcher. To be fair, from the dataset, it emerges that some academics who were Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors did obtain a tenure-track position after some years. Nevertheless, such a promotion is not a sort of automatic passage, and this is why collapsing the two positions into the new one is a reasonable choice. The new position resulting from the recoding is the sole non-tenure track category in the entire categorization. Let us reiterate that this does not mean that non-tenure-track positions were not present in the past, but simply that there are no available data on such positions before 2018.

The fourth choice of categorization was to consider the *Ricercatore a tempo determinato (Tipo B)*.⁶ (Tenure-Track Researcher) jointly with the *Professore Associato* (Associate Professor) position. As argued by Capano (2020: 312), ‘after three years, associate tenure is substantially guaranteed if the [Tenure-Track Researcher] has the

⁵ Within this position, I have considered all the possible sub-positions of *Ricercatore a tempo determinato (Tipo A)*, that is, *tempo pieno* (full-time) and *tempo definito* (part-time). This position also includes, in line with Marino and Verzichelli (2020), the position of *Ricercatore a tempo determinato* (art.1 comma 14 L. 230/05) (Non-Tenure-Track Researcher, article 1, paragraph 14 of Law 230/05).

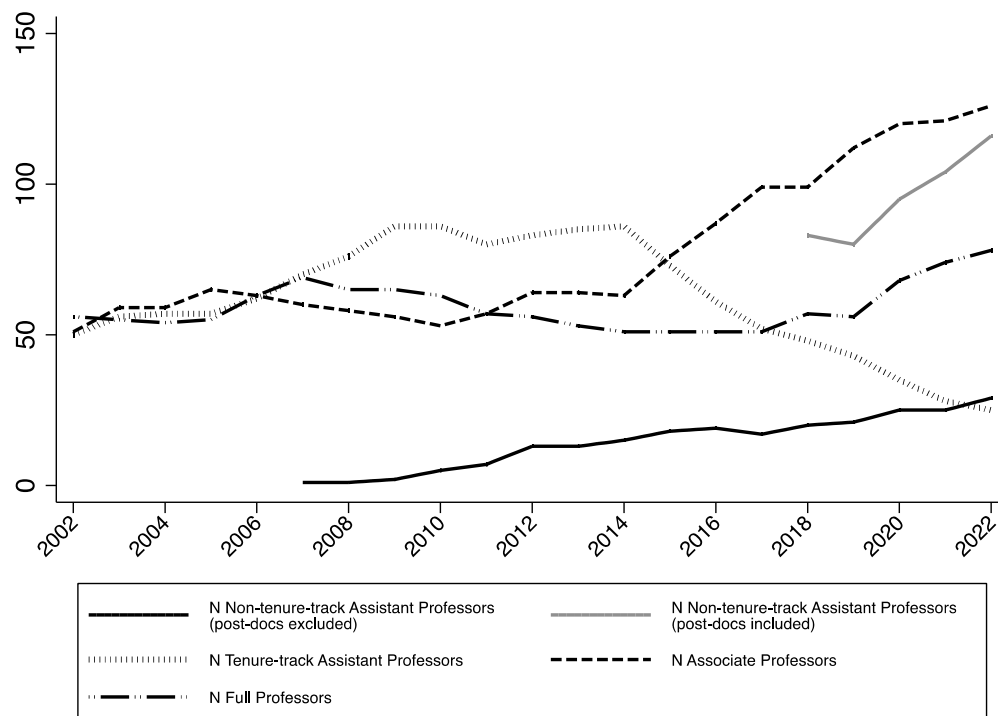
⁶ Also in this case, both the *tempo pieno* (full-time) sub-position and the *tempo definito* (part-time) sub-position are considered part of the position *Ricercatore a tempo determinato (Tipo B)*.

national qualification to be an [Associate Professor]'. Again, I am not arguing that the two positions are identical (e.g., there are noticeable salary differences), but simply that both include people who (*de jure* or *de facto*) hold a tenure-track position.

The fifth and final choice is related to jointly considering the position of *Professore Ordinario* (Full Professor) along with the position of *Professore Straordinario a Tempo Determinato* (Temporary Full Professor). Although the latter position's name is similar to one in the older career structure, in this case, we are just dealing with a fixed-term position which, in the dataset used in this contribution, is sometimes held not only by once Full Professors at the foreseeable end of their career⁷ but also by people external to academia (e.g., bureaucrats, military, diplomats, journalists) who have been granted a temporary professorship.⁸

All in all, we have four categories of scholars: Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors, Tenure-Track Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Full Professors. Figure 2 below reports the numerical evolution of these four categories over time in Italian universities. Post-Doctoral Research Fellows are both included and excluded from the calculus of Non-Tenure-Track Assistant professors.

Figure 2. Numerical evolution of different academic positions within the Italian Political Science community, absolute values, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows included and excluded)



Source: own elaboration.

⁷ See more information on the website of the Italian Ministry of Education, University, and Research (<https://www.miur.gov.it/reclutamento-nelle-universita>).

⁸ This two-faced attribution of Temporary Full Professorships to former Full Professors and people external to academia is also evident in this document issued by the *Consiglio Universitario Nazionale* (National University Council), an advisory body within the Italian Ministry of Education, University, and Research: https://www.cun.it/uploads/6995/ra_2018_11_08.pdf?v= .

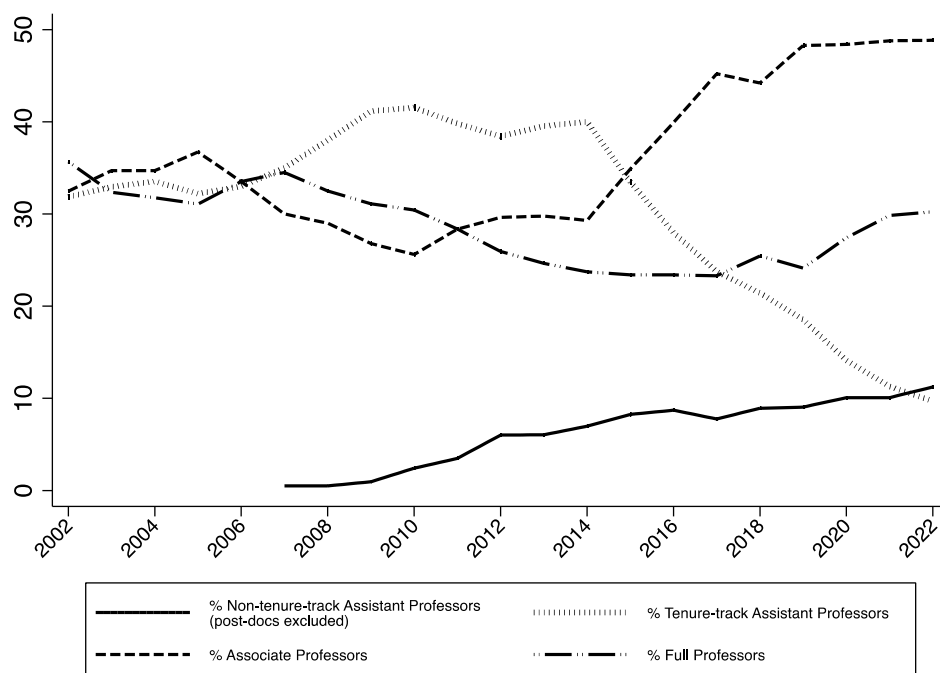
The first element we note is the sharp and sudden increase in Associate Professors between the mid-2010s and the early 2020s. In 2022, there were 126 Associate Professors belonging to the SPS/04 code in Italy. Note that, within this category, from 2014 until 2022, there was an almost constant increase in the weight of Tenure-Track Researchers (*Ricercatore a tempo determinato (tipo B)*), which totaled 1.6% of Associate Professors in 2014 but 19% in 2022.

Second, the number of Tenure-Track Assistant Professors has declined strongly; this category was the least populated in 2022. This last point is even more important if we consider that, between 2007 and 2014, Tenure-Track Assistant Professors were the largest component of the Italian Political Science community. It is worth remembering that these are quite expected findings, given that this category comprises academic positions related to the older career structure, and there have been no new openings for such positions in the last few years.

A final note concerns Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors: this category has become quite important in the last few years, surpassing Tenure-Track Assistant Professors. Obviously, such a relevance would be magnified if we included Post-Doctoral Research Fellows in the Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professor position, as indicated by the grey line in Figure 2 (showing available data for the 2018-2022 period, as explained above).

Having commented on the numerosity of the four categories of our variable related to the two academic career structures, Figure 3 below shows the weight of each category on the total number of Italian political scientists emerging from the 2002-2022 dataset. In this case, to facilitate the readability of the figure, Post-Doctoral Research Fellows have been excluded.

Figure 3. Numerical evolution of different academic positions within the Italian Political Science community, percentages, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows excluded)



Source: own elaboration.

A point worth noting emerging from Figure 3 (but also from Figure 2) is that, in 2002, the three categories of tenure-track political scientists in Italy were quite close to one another, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total of SPS/04 academics. More specifically, in 2002, the percentages for the three categories were: 31.8% for Tenure-Track Assistant Professors (50 academics), 32.5% for Associate Professors (51 academics), and 35.7% for Full Professors (56 academics). To give a reference point, approximately at the end of the 1980s, there were 37 Full Professors (34.9% of the total), 36 Associate Professors (34%), and 32 Tenure-track Assistant Professors (30.2%) (Morlino 1989: 33).

If we then look at 2022, we note a very different situation: approximately 50% of the Italian Political Science community is made up of Associate Professors, with Full Professors slightly declining to 30%.⁹ The imbalance favoring Associate Professors is evident.

Nonetheless, the figure also highlights another important point. Indeed, the (already evident) importance of Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors would be even more evident if we included Post-Doctoral Research Fellows in the count. Furthermore, Figures 2 and 3 align with the considerations in Marino and Verzichelli (2020) on the growing numerical consistency of non-tenure-track scholars in the Political Science community in Italy. However, there are two opposite points worth underlining.

On the one hand, we must be careful not to jump to conclusions: we cannot just look at Figures 2 and 3 and conclude that there is a growing numerical importance of Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors over time. Such a statement can be considered acceptable only for 2018-2022, when we have data also for Post-Doctoral Research Fellows. Given that we do not have data for Post-Doctoral Research Fellows or comparable positions *before* 2018, we cannot be certain that Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors (including people holding a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow position) were less numerous (or less important from a percentage viewpoint) *before* 2018 compared to the 2018-2022 period.

On the other hand, if we just focus on the 2018-2022 period, we can still point to a central element of discussion: Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors account for more than 30% of the Italian Political Science community¹⁰ and, if all the trends shown above continued in the future, such a category would become the largest one within a few years, surpassing Associate Professors. This is not something we should take for granted but is simply a (possible) trend to be mentioned and empirically analyzed in the future.

The data shown so far are related to the Italian Political Science community from a general viewpoint. However, what would happen if we focused on the differences at the subnational level over time? The next section answers this question.

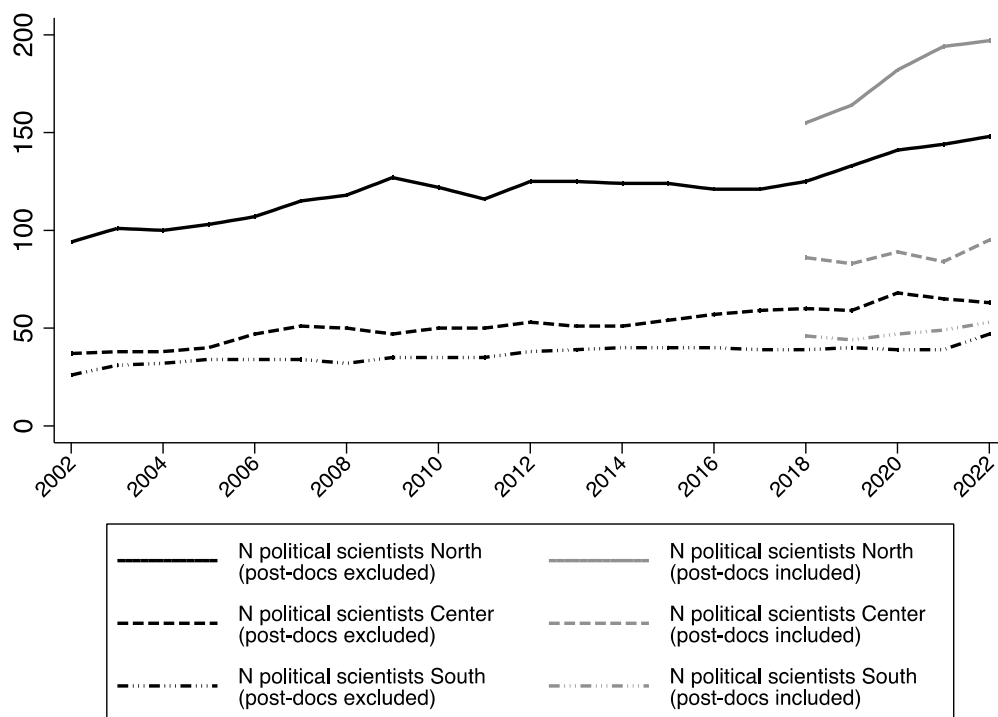
⁹ More specifically, in 2022, the percentages for the three categories were: 9.7% for the Tenure-Track Assistant Professors, 48.8% for the Associate Professors, and 30.2% for the Full Professors.

¹⁰ This piece of data emerges from the calculus of the percentage of SPS/04 scholars in this category in 2022 (also including Post-Doctoral Research Fellows), equaling 33.6% (116 academics out of 345).

3. Geographical differences

Figure 4 below reports the numerical evolution of our categories of Italian Political Science academics in different Italian areas: North, Center, and South.¹¹

Figure 4. Numerical evolution of the Italian Political Science community by areas, absolute values, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows included and excluded)



Source: own elaboration

The first element to be mentioned is the clear predominance of northern universities, where many political scientists work. Central and southern universities show much lower numbers: some 50 political scientists work in each of these two areas. It is also interesting to see that the number of political scientists in the center and south areas is very similar over time, with small temporal variations.

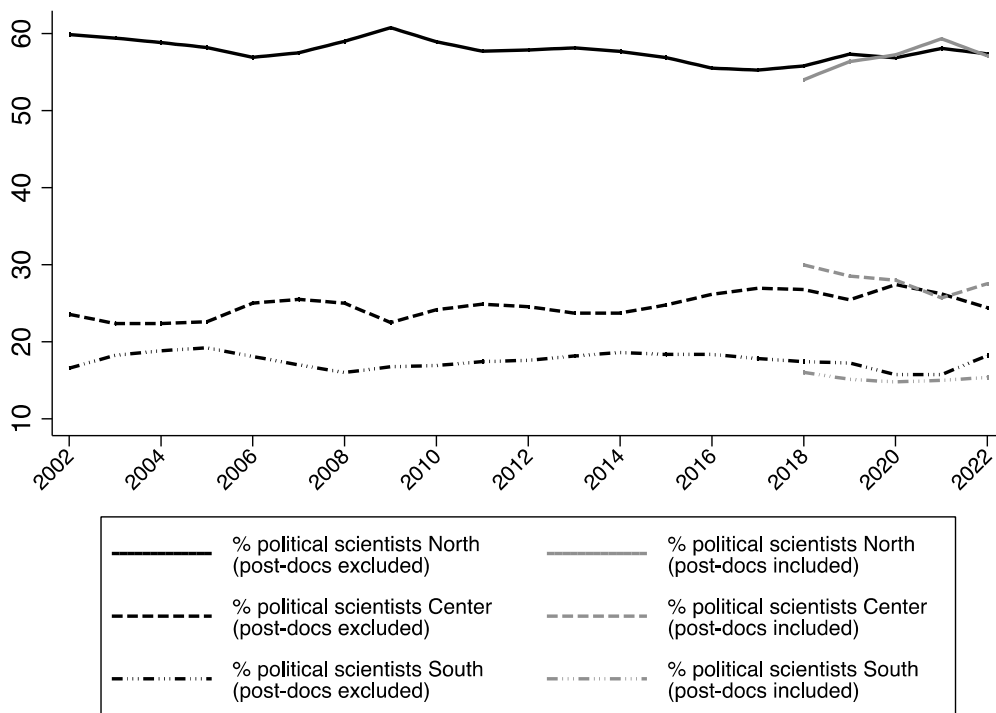
The second takeaway point is related to the difference in importance of Post-Doctoral Research Fellows in the three areas. The grey lines (showing the numerosity of political scientists in the three Italian areas when we include Post-Doctoral Research Fellows) tell us that the bulk of these non-tenure-track scholars work in northern and central universities, while just a small number work in southern academia. The scarcity of political scientists in Southern Italy has, of course, already been discussed (e.g., see

¹¹ North includes the following regions: Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardy, Piedmont, Trentino-Alto Adige, Valle d'Aosta, and Veneto. Center includes the following regions: Lazio, Marche, Tuscany, and Umbria. Finally, South includes the following regions: Abruzzo, Apulia, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Sardinia, and Sicily.

Marino and Verzichelli 2020) and is a long-standing trend (e.g., see Capano and Verzichelli 2010: 106-107), but it is a point worth mentioning.

Figure 5 below reports the same data accounted for in Figure 4, but showing, this time, the percentage of scholars (both including and excluding Post-Doctoral Research Fellows) working in universities in the three areas of Italy.

Figure 5. Numerical evolution of the Italian Political Science community by areas, percentages, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows included and excluded)



Source: own elaboration

While Figure 5 patently shows the strong and stable predominance of northern universities in attracting and employing a noticeable percentage of Italian Political Science academics, a small final addendum must be made. Including Post-Doctoral Research Fellows in the calculus (grey lines) makes a difference for central and southern universities. In the former case, including this category of scholars increases the percentage of political scientists. In the latter case, such an inclusion always decreases the weight of political scientists in this area. This is another clear sign of the marginality of southern universities not simply for tenure-track positions, but also for non-tenure-track ones.

A final, general, point from Figure 5 is the substantial stability in the weight of academics working in universities belonging to the three Italian areas we have identified. Nonetheless, this stability might hide relevant differences concerning the importance of each career position in each area. Therefore, let us focus on Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Numerical evolution of different academic positions within the Italian Political Science community, by area, percentages, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows excluded)



Source: own elaboration

Figure 6 (which excludes Post-Doctoral Research Fellows) reports the weight of each academic position for each Italian area (north, center, and south). For instance, in 2022, some 55% of political scientists working in northern universities fell into the category of Associate Professor. Preliminarily, the noticeable stability emerging from Figure 5 hides a much more complex pattern. With the partial exception of Full Professors in Southern Italy, there is not a single Italian area where the weight of each academic career level has remained constant over time.

Another, more substantial, piece of evidence is that the evolution in northern universities resembles that happening in all Italian universities (see Figure 3). This is not extremely surprising, given that we have just seen that northern universities employ some 60% of Italian political scientists.

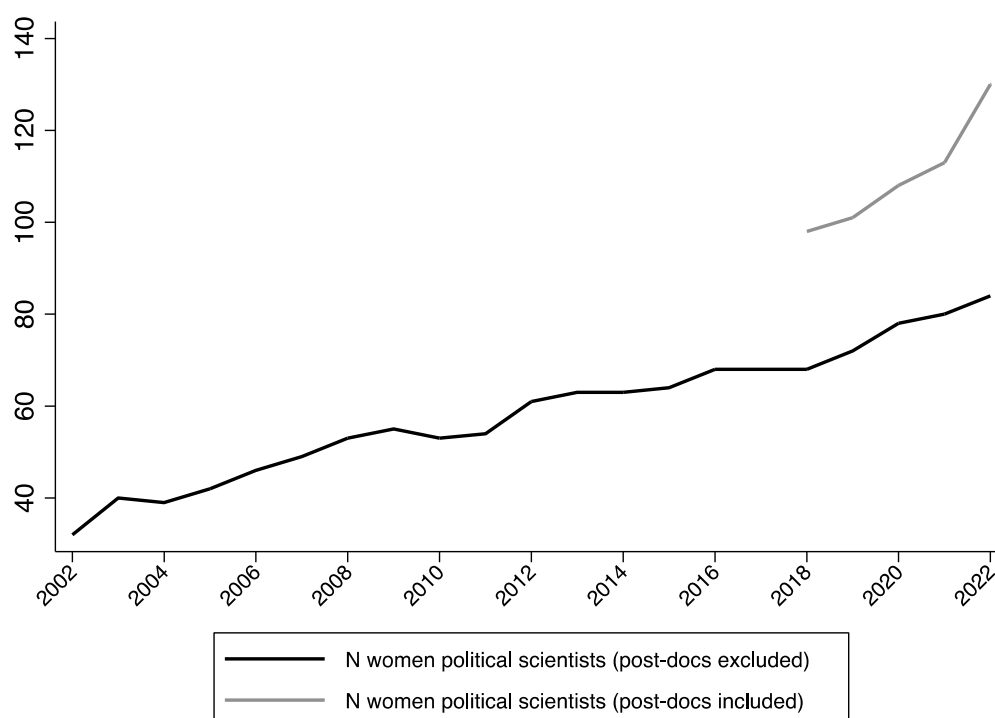
Nonetheless, such a similarity is not found in central and southern universities, which show a deviating pattern vis-à-vis the entire country. For instance, in the 2016-2022 period, in central universities, the Associate or Full Professor categories accounted for a similar percentage of political scientists, while, in Southern Italy, there was a much stronger imbalance between such categories, with the Associate Professor category in a clear leading position.

A final issue to tackle is related to differences between female and male Italian political scientists. The next section is devoted to this task.

4. Gender-related differences

Are there relevant gender-related differences in Italian Political Science (both from a general viewpoint and a career-related viewpoint)? This section starts by exploring the numerical evolution (in absolute values and percentages) of the presence of women in the SPS/O4 community. Let us focus on Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Numerical evolution of different academic positions within the Italian Political Science community, percentages, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows included and excluded)



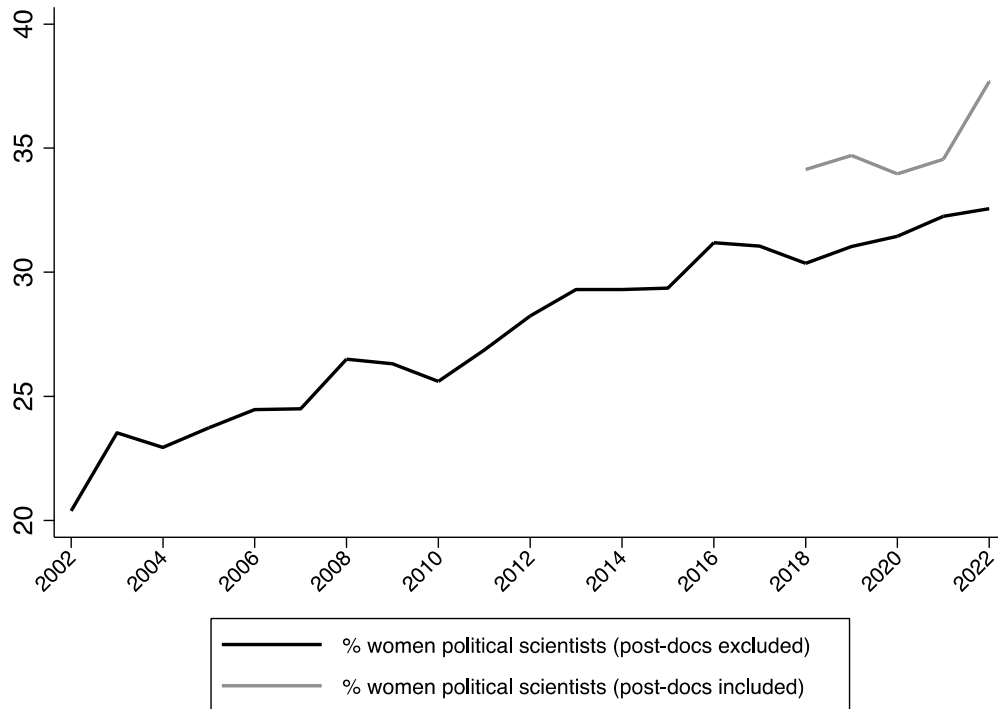
Source: own elaboration

Figure 7 tells us that, in absolute terms, the presence of women in Italian Political Science has increased from 32 academics (2002) to 84 academics (2022), corresponding to an approximate 160% growth. Let us note (see the data in Figure 1) that the corresponding increase in male Italian political scientists between 2002 and 2022 showed an approximate 40% growth.

The difference in the numerical growth rate of women and men in the Italian Political Science community is evident also if we include in our calculations Post-Doctoral Research Fellows. In this case, the number of women grew from 98 (2018) to 130 (2022) (corresponding to an approximate 33% increase), while, in the same period, the number of men increased by roughly 14% (from 189 academics in 2018 to 215 academics in 2022).

The next logical passage is to focus on the evolution of the percentage of women working in the SPS/O4 community. First, let us analyze Figure 8 below.

Figure 8. Numerical evolution of women in Italian Political Science community, percentages, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows included and excluded)



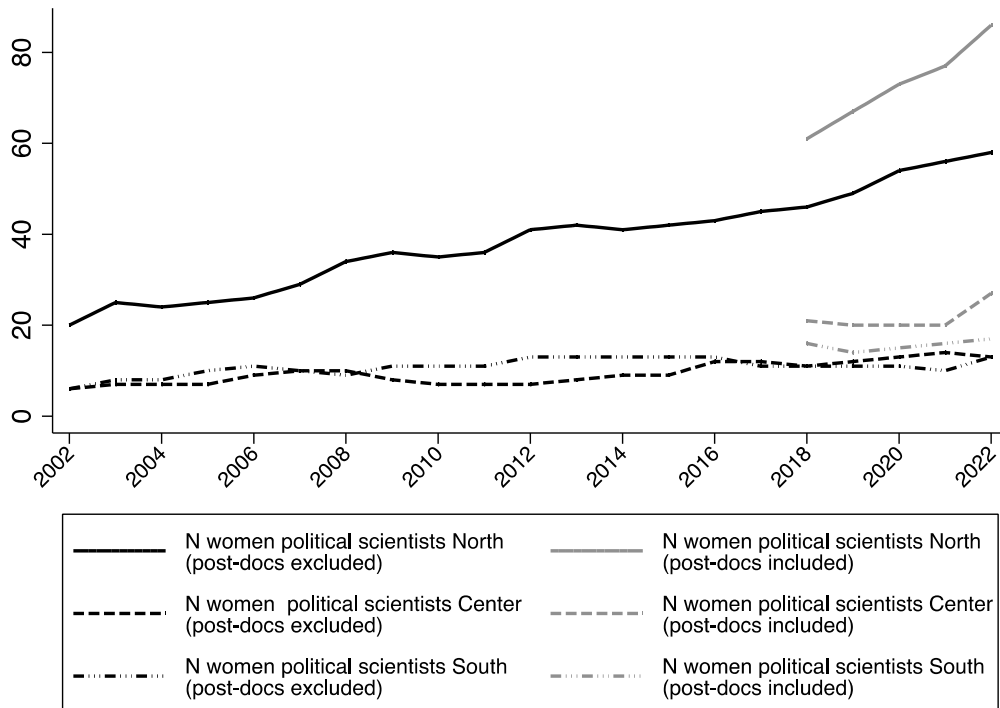
Source: own elaboration

As already shown in Figure 1, the data are reported both by excluding and including Post-Doctoral Research Fellows. There are two main points to note: first, if we exclude Post-Doctoral Research Fellows, the percentage of women grew from 20.4% in 2002 to 32.6% in 2022. This trend was not homogeneous, but this increase is undoubtedly worth mentioning. Second, if we include Post-Doctoral Research Fellows in the calculus, the presence of women in Italian Political Science is more marked: from 2018 until 2022, it grew from 34.1% (2018) to 37.7% (2022).

All in all, the presence of women in Italian Political Science has increased over time and at a faster rate compared to men. Nonetheless, this consideration is tempered by more specific questions. First, are there geographical differences worth mentioning? Second, are there differences related to different career positions?

To answer the first question, Figure 9 shows the number of women political scientists in the three Italian areas presented above. I have preferred to report absolute values instead of percentages to give a more precise snapshot of the numerical consistency of women, also given their scarcity in some Italian regions.

Figure 9. Numerical evolution of women in the Italian Political Science community by areas, absolute values, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows included and excluded)



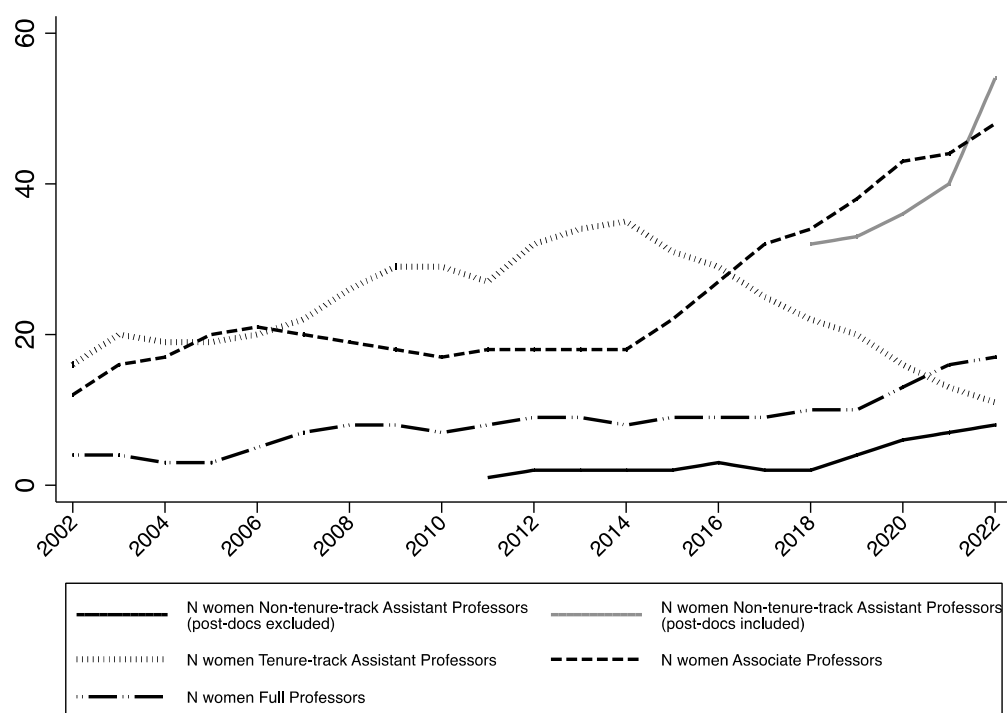
Source: own elaboration

Figure 9 shows the predominance of northern universities in terms of women political scientists. It should also be noted that northern universities are the only ones where the number of women substantially increases. Moreover, the figure shows that, in line with Figure 4, central and southern universities have a similar number of women SPS/o4 academics. A final observation is related to the importance of Post-Doctoral Research Fellows. If we include this category of scholars (grey lines), the northern predominance becomes even more evident, but we also note a somewhat sharp increase in the number of women working in central universities.

To answer the second question asked above, Figures 10 and 11 below show (in absolute values and percentages) the weight of women in different academic career categories.

Figure 10 is similar to Figure 2 (which reports data for the entire Italian Political Science community) from different viewpoints: the marked increase in the number of Associate Professors from 2014 onwards, the corresponding decline in the numbers of Tenure-Track Assistant Professors, the overall growing (but more variable) trend of Full Professors, and, finally, the much steeper increase in importance of Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors when we include Post-Doctoral Research Fellows in the calculus.

Figure 10. Numerical evolution of women in different academic positions in the Italian Political Science community, absolute values, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows included and excluded)



Source: own elaboration

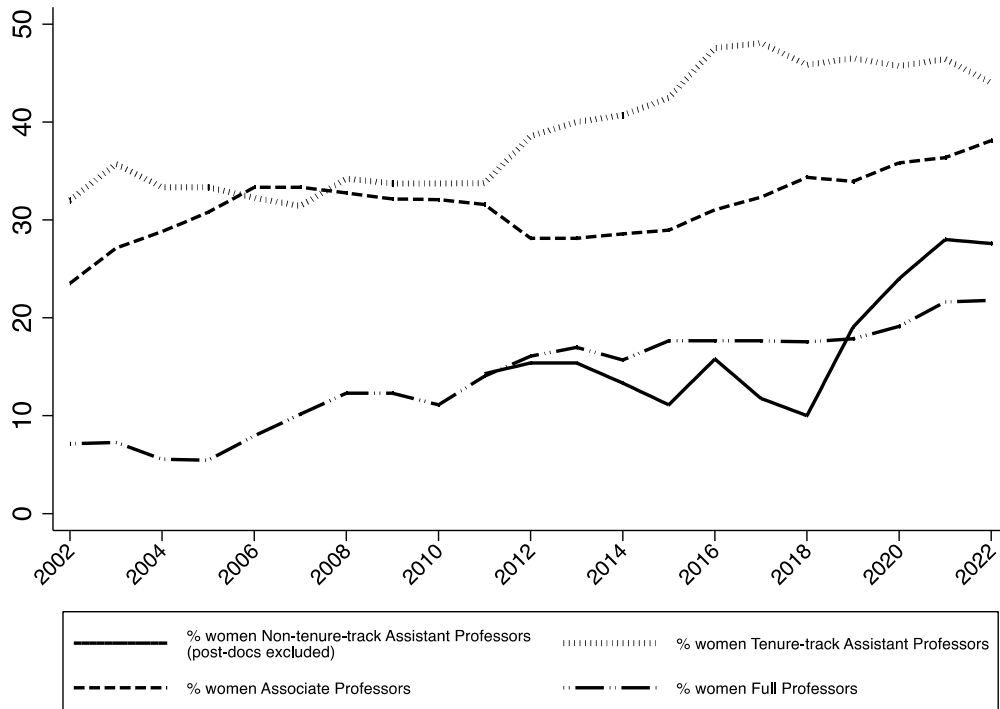
Thus, according to Figure 10, there seem to be no relevant differences between men and women in the numerical evolution of the different categories within Italian Political Science academics. Nonetheless, let us now focus on Figure 11, which reports the weight of women within each academic career category. As seen already in Figure 3, I have excluded Post-Doctoral Research Fellows to facilitate the reading of the figure.

A first element worth mentioning is that, except for the Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professor position and with the exception of some years, the higher the career position, the lower the number of women. In other words, and from a general viewpoint, it is less likely to find a woman holding a position in Italian Political Science as we move from the Tenure-Track Assistant Professor position to Associate Professor to Full Professor.

Figure 11 also shows that there is no single category within Italian Political Science where women constitute at least 50% of academics. In other words, there are always more men than women in all four categories we have considered.

Moreover, from 2012 onwards, there has been an increase in the weight of women in the Tenure-Track Assistant Professor category. Let us remember that this category has been less and less important from the numerical viewpoint in the past few years and also that, in the last years, there has not been any opening of new positions in this academic category in Italy. If we jointly consider all these pieces of information, Figure 11 tells us that, in the past few years, more men than women either exited academia from the Tenure-Track Assistant Professor position or were able to climb up the academic career ladder.

Figure 11. Numerical evolution of women in different academic positions in the Italian Political Science community, percentages, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows excluded)



Source: own elaboration

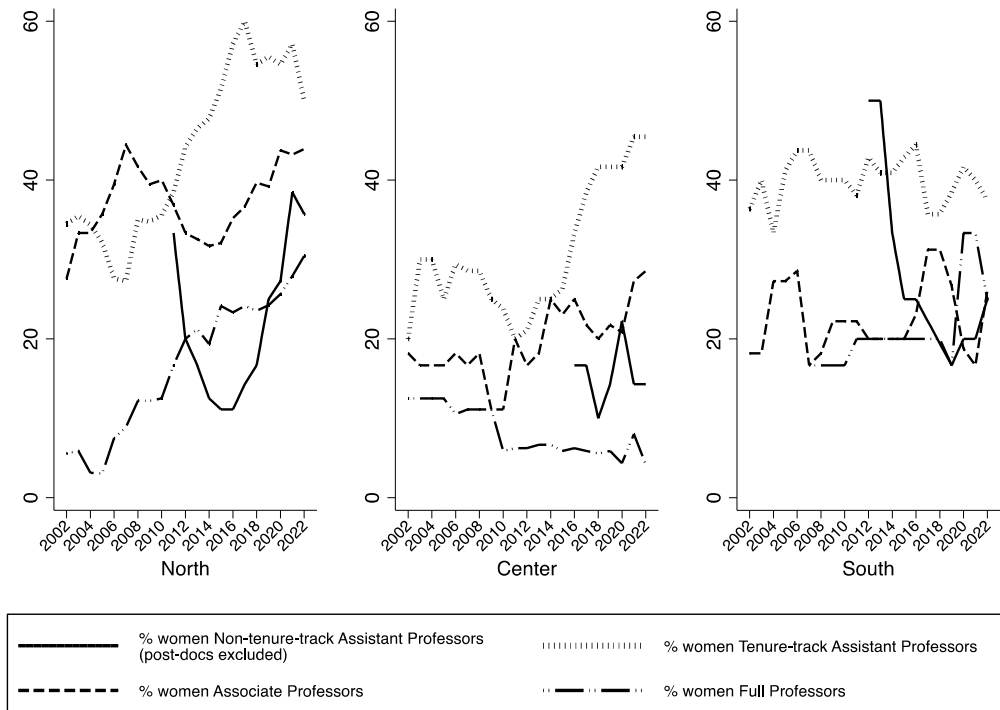
This consideration shall be nonetheless read vis-à-vis another element of discussion: from 2012 onwards, there has also been a certain increase in the weight of women within the Associate and Full Professor categories. This is even more important to mention if we consider Figure 2, where it emerges that these two latter categories have faced a marked numerical increase in the past few years.

Figure 11 reports data for the entire Italian Political Science community. Are there noticeable differences among universities in the three areas we identified earlier (north, center, and south)? Figure 12 below helps us answer this question.

Figure 12 reports the percentage of women in different academic positions in the three Italian areas. For instance, in 2022, some 40% of northern Associate Professors were women.

The first element worth mentioning is a confirmation of what we have already seen in Figure 11: there are very few instances of a stronger or equal presence of women political scientists compared to men. Such a presence can only be found in Northern Italy for Tenure-Track Assistant Professors in the 2015-2022 period and in Southern Italy for Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors in the 2012-2013 period. Notice that, as for Northern Italy, as already seen above (Figure 10), the number of Tenure-Track Assistant Professors has been decreasing over time. Moreover, as regards Southern Italy, the number of Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors in 2012 and 2013 was very low. In other words, there is not a higher academic position or a numerically consistent one where women are the majority of academics, and this is true for Northern, Central, and Southern Italy.

Figure 12. Numerical evolution of women in different academic positions in the Italian Political Science community, by area, percentages, 2002-2022 (Post-Doctoral Research Fellows excluded)



Source: own elaboration

A second important point emerging from Figure 12 is that some interesting intra-area patterns emerge. For instance, if we consider the Associate and Full Professors, the percentage of women has been increasing over time in northern universities (at least since the mid-2010s) but only partly increasing in central and southern ones (i.e., just for the Associate Professor position and, in some instances, only in the last few years).

A third and final point concerns inter-area differences: despite employing a similar number of women political scientists (see Figure 9), central and southern universities display diverging patterns. Thus, Figure 11 is supplemented by an addendum: there is noticeable inter-area variability in terms of a stronger or weaker women's academic presence.

Are these data similar to those available for Italy's broader social science community? Filandri and Pasqua (2021) present data for the entire 'Area 14', which includes not just SPS/04 academics but also academics belonging to other Scientific Sector Codes, such as Political Philosophy (SPS/01), General Sociology (SPS/07), or Sociology of Political Phenomena (SPS/11).¹² They show that, in 2012, 25.8% of Full Professors, 36.3% of Associate Professors, and 45.5% of Assistant Professors were women. Despite some differences between my categorization and theirs,¹³ their data are very helpful

¹² More information on the 'Area 14' and the Scientific Sector codes (SSD) included in this area is available (in Italian) here: https://www.anvur.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/VQR-2015-19_Rapporto_Area_GEV14.pdf.

¹³ Filandri and Pasqua (2021: 1536-137) have different aggregation rules than mine: for instance, their Associate Professor category does not include the Tenure-Track Assistant Professor category; then,

because they show that, in 2012, there was a higher percentage of men in all academic career levels considered. Moreover, ‘Area 14’ is not the one with the lowest percentage of women at each career level considered; so much so that if we jointly read their Table 1 and Figure 1 (Filandi and Pasqua 2021: 1538), the values of Area 14 are close to the average values of Italian academia concerning the percentages of women in their Full Professor, Associate Professor and (permanent or temporary) Assistant Professor categories.

Then, Cellini (2022) presents data related to 2015-2018 and shows that, while there is a substantial equilibrium between men and women enrolled in PhD programs in the ‘Area 14’, moving to Non-Tenure-Track and Tenure-Track positions (presumably, within ‘Area 14’), the percentage of women drops to 30%, reaching the lowest value in the Full Professor category (27%). Interestingly, this piece of information is somewhat compatible with the percentage of Full Professors (or equivalent positions) in Iceland, Norway, and Sweden in 2017 (Carlsson et al. 2021).

5. Conclusions

This contribution has been devoted to exploring the Italian Political Science community from 2002 until 2022, on the eve of the start of a university reform that will profoundly change the early stages of academic careers.

First, from a purely numerical viewpoint, Political Science in Italy experienced a noticeable growth, with slightly fewer than 350 academics (including Post-Doctoral Research Fellows) in 2022. Second, this growth was not homogeneous. For instance, universities located in Northern Italy continued to attract a relevant percentage of political scientists and, most importantly, many Post-Doctoral Research Fellows. Another sign of uneven growth is the evident increase in the numerical importance of Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors, a category including Post-Doctoral Research Fellows and Non-Tenure-Track Researchers (that is, the *Ricercatore a tempo determinato (Tipo A)*). If the trend seen in 2018-2022 continued in the next few years, we would face a situation where the relative majority of political scientists do not hold a tenure-track position.

A second key point emerging from this contribution is related to the presence of women in Italian Political Science. On the one hand, some evidence points to a stronger weight of these academics: the growing number of women academics, or the higher growth rate of women political scientists. On the other hand, there are other opposite elements worth mentioning: there is not a single academic career level at which women constitute the majority. Moreover, with some exceptions, the percentage of women decreases as we climb the ladder of the academic career. Finally, excluding the Tenure-Track Assistant Professor position (the old *Ricercatore* position, for which there have not been any appointments in the last few years), northern universities display a stronger gender balance than central and southern ones. Clearly, these are descriptive pieces of evidence: more refined future analyses can help us shed more light on the matter.

their Assistant Professor category likely includes both Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors and Tenure-Track Assistant Professors; finally, I am unsure whether the Post-Doctoral Research Fellow category is included or not within their Assistant Professor category.

Indeed, the results of the analyses presented in this article can open many paths for future research, both at the aggregate and individual levels.

Starting with the aggregate level, are the data of the other Scientific Sector codes included with 'Area 14' (where SPS/04 is located) different from the data presented in this article? Or are there similar patterns between, on the one hand, Political Science and, on the other, sectors such as Political Philosophy (SPS/01), General Sociology (SPS/07), or Sociology of Political Phenomena (SPS/11)? Furthermore, what has been the impact of the provision of funding to the so-called 'Departments of Excellence'¹⁴ on the recruitment and career progression of Italian political scientists? More generally speaking, how have changes in the funding of Italian universities impacted the careers of members of the Political Science community?

Moving to the individual level, what are the individual career paths of Italian academics? Are there relevant differences between, say, men and women? In other words, can we find conclusive evidence of gender inequality (e.g., see Engeli and Mügge 2020)?

Moreover, are there noticeable differences in the individual paths of scholars starting their career in southern universities vs. those starting their career in northern or central universities? If there are such differences, what are their determinants? Finally, what would happen if we included in our analyses not just Post-Doctoral Research Fellows as the lowest possible academic career level but PhD-holders and PhD candidates?

In a nutshell, the results of the analyses presented in this article can open many different research paths, each leading to potentially interesting research on the evolution of the academic career of Italian Political Science scholars.

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¹⁴ The 'Departments of Excellence' are a series of departments in Italian universities receiving a special funding after having obtained certain scores on their 'development projects' (<https://www.anvur.it/en/activities/departments/>).

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