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Job satisfaction of foreign-born women employed in personal care and household services: the case study of Italy

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ABSTRACT

Using the ad hoc module of the 2021 Italian Labour Force Survey, this study provides a nuanced and comparative analysis of job satisfaction among foreign-born women employed in Personal care and Household Services (PHS). Regression models show that foreign-born women employed in PHS do not report lower levels of job satisfaction than their native counterpart. Work-related characteristics associated with job satisfaction, however, differ between the two groups: discrimination at work and part-time employment are significantly associated with lower job satisfaction among native PHS workers, whereas underemployment and overeducation are significantly associated with lower satisfaction among foreign-born PHS workers. Relative Weight Analysis further indicates that foreign-born and native PHS workers assign different importance to specific dimensions of job satisfaction, reflecting divergent expectations, trajectories, and constraints: foreign-born women place greater emphasis on 'tangible' aspects such as wages and working hours, while native women prioritise intrinsic and developmental dimensions, including interest in the job and career opportunities.

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Job satisfaction; domestic work; foreign-born women; comparative approach; Italy

Introduction

The rapid ageing of the population across Europe, together with the increasing labour market participation of women, has been associated with a substantial expansion in the demand for Personal care and Household Services (hereafter PHS). According to the European Commission (Farvaque 2014), these services play a particularly important role in meeting the care needs of the older population (Shutes 2012; Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro 2023). This trend is especially evident in Italy, where older people account for almost a quarter of the population – 24.3 per cent in early 2024 and 24.7 per cent in 2025. Among the 14.6 million individuals aged 65 and over, the

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population aged 80 and above has continue to grow, reaching 4.59 million in 2025, almost 50,000 more than in 2024 (Istat 2025a). Despite this demographic pressure, public investment in care services remains fragmented and insufficient (Reyneri 2017), coinciding with an increased reliance on foreign-born labour to sustain the Italian welfare system.

Italy represents a particularly relevant setting for studying migrant women employed in PHS. The country has been described as a migrant-based care model (Da Roit, Ferrer, and Moreno-Fuentes 2013), in which limited public long-term care provision and strong family responsibility have favoured the development of a privately organised care market largely sustained by migrant labour. In this context, migrant women have become a structural component of care provision, filling gaps left by formal services and supporting the growing needs of an ageing population (Marchetti 2022; Marchetti, Cherubini, and Geymonat 2021). Migrant workers are disproportionately represented in the domestic work sector across Northern, Southern, and Western Europe, accounting for 54.6% of the workforce already in 2013 (ILO 2015). This proportion is even higher in Southern Europe, with Italy standing out as one of the largest employers of migrant domestic workers (ILO 2021). This concentration remains marked today: in 2024, foreign workers accounted for 30.9% of those employed in collective and personal services in Italy (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies 2025). Within our own analytical population, the specificity is sharper still: foreign-born women are employed in PHS at almost four times the rate of native women (24.7% vs. 6.7% as reported in the section 'Data and methods'). This concentration makes Italy an especially informative context for investigating how migration background and employment conditions shape job satisfaction (Spijker and Zueras 2020; Van Hooren 2012; Williams 2012). Foreign-born women constitute a key component of the PHS workplace. Although their numbers declined from 597,387 in 2013–502,200 in 2023, they still represent the majority of workers in PHS, far outnumbering Italian workers (236,268; INPS 2023). This structural reliance on migrant labour has generated considerable academic and policy interest, particularly with regard to the working and living conditions of these workers (Marchetti, Cherubini, and Geymonat 2021; Sweileh 2024; Van Hooren 2012).

Job satisfaction is a central indicator of individual well-being and an important dimension of job quality, work motivation, and social integration (Donegani and McKay 2021; Eriksson et al. 2023; Hebson, Rubery, and Grimshaw 2015). However, research conducted in the Italian context has, to the best of our knowledge, primarily documented inequalities in PHS (Buonomo, Gabrielli, and Strozza 2020; Fullin and Reyneri 2011; Marchetti 2022; Salaris and Tedesco 2020) or analysed job satisfaction and well-being among foreign-born workers as a broad and heterogeneous category (Piccitto 2022; Piccitto and Avola 2023; Shelemei and Ruini 2023). Only a limited number of studies have explicitly focused on the job satisfaction of foreign-born women employed in PHS (Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Ortensi 2019; Panzaru and Gravina 2024). Moreover, comparative analyses remain relatively scarce: few contributions distinguish between native and foreign-born women or compare foreign-born women employed in PHS with those working in other sectors (Marchetti, Cherubini, and Geymonat 2021; Sweileh 2024; Van Hooren 2012).

Foreign-born women employed in PHS play a crucial role in the Italian care economy, where welfare resources are limited and care provision is largely delegated to families and supported by the informal economy (Spijker and Zueras 2020; Williams 2012). In this

context, reliance on private care arrangements has favoured the emergence of the so-called 'migrant-in-the-family' model, in which predominantly employed women often live in their employers' house (Lightman 2021; Spijker and Zueras 2020; Van Hooren 2012). These features make Italy a particularly relevant case for deepening the analysis of job satisfaction among foreign-born women employed in PHS, a group that remains largely underexplored in quantitative research.

To address this gap, the present study analyses these workers by jointly considering their position as women, migrants and employees in PHS – three dimensions that together shape working conditions within a field historically characterised by undervaluation, vulnerability, and precarity (Fernández and Ortega 2008; Triandafyllidou 2022).

Using representative data from the 2021 ad hoc module of the EU Labour Force Survey on the 'Labour market situation of immigrants and their immediate descendant' which includes an oversample of the foreign-born population, we adopt a dual comparative perspective: (1) between foreign-born and native women employed in PHS, and (2) between women employed in PHS and those working in other sectors. This analytical framework allows us to assess whether, and to what extent, job satisfaction is associated with work-related factors (including job typology, overeducation, underemployment, discrimination at work) across four working groups, as well as the relative importance of tangible aspects of work (e.g. wages and working time) and intrinsic or aspirational dimensions (e.g. personal interest or career prospects) in shaping overall job satisfaction.

The study contributes to the literature in three main ways. First, it provides rare quantitative evidence on working conditions and job satisfaction among foreign-born women employed in PHS. Second, it introduces a comparative perspective that helps disentangles the role of migrant background and sector-specific employment conditions. Third, it offers policy-relevant insights based on robust, nationally representative data.

Although grounded in the Italian case, the study speaks to broader debates on the organisation of care in ageing European societies. As many EU member states increasingly rely on migrant women to fill structural gaps in long-term care provision, the working conditions and job satisfaction of PHS workers should be understood not as an Italian peculiarity, but as a systemic feature of contemporary European labour markets and welfare systems.

Theoretical background

Work-related characteristics and conditions in PHS: the penalizations of foreign-born women

European economies increasingly rely on migrant labour, yet the full integration of migrants into national labour markets remains uneven and is often characterised by persistent and complex challenges (Akgüç and Parasnis 2023). Within this broader landscape, labour market trajectories of foreign-born women in Italy are highly segmented: while access to employment may be relatively easy, jobs are frequently confined to marginal and unstable positions, regardless of prior qualifications or professional experience (Caselli and Traverso 2026). The growing dependence on foreign-born women to meet rising care needs has coincided with further informalisation of employment relations, reinforcing the structural vulnerabilities embedded in PHS. It stands out as a sector

marked by precarious employment, low wages, limited labour protections, scarce opportunities for career advancement, and high turnover (Fullin and Reyneri 2011).

These disadvantages intersect with well-documented mechanisms such as the *ethnic penalty*, which refers to discriminatory practices and unequal treatment affecting migrant workers regardless of their human capital (Avola 2015; Salaris and Tedesco 2020). Labour markets in destination countries often fail to recognise or adequately utilise the qualifications of foreigners-born workers, particularly women, resulting in widespread skill underutilisation and occupational downgrading compared to native-born workers. In Europe, this mismatch is compounded by ethnic segmentation within the care sector: for example, Filipino and Latin American women are predominantly employed in childcare, while Eastern European women are more frequently engaged in the care of older individuals (Triandafyllidou 2022). These patterns contribute to the consolidation of a labour market niche that is both feminised and ethicised.

Another key concept is the *care penalty*, which captures the systematic wage and contractual disadvantages affecting workers in care-related occupations (Lightman 2021). Despite requiring intensive emotional, physical, and cultural competencies (Marchetti, Cherubini, and Geymonat 2021; Williams 2012), these roles are undervalued and frequently classified as low-skilled. This undervaluation is further compounded by widespread underemployment. Many women employed in household services, particularly those with a migrant background, report working fewer hours than they desire or being constrained into part-time or informal work due to restrictive migration regimes and employer-tied permits – conditions that are associated with heighten exposure to discrimination at work, exploitation, and abuse (Fullin and Reyneri 2011; Williams 2012).

A substantial body of research shows that foreign-born women employed in PHS are particularly exposed to overlapping forms of disadvantages, often described as a *triple disadvantage* linked to gender, migrant background, and occupational segregation into undervalued and precarious roles (Fernández and Ortega 2008). Feminist perspectives on labour markets further underscore how women, especially in PHS, experience systematically worse conditions than men, including lower pay and greater job insecurity (Shutes 2012; Van Hooren 2012).

Personal care and household works are embedded in intimate and privatised settings that blur the boundaries between labour and emotional engagement. This context shapes working conditions in ways that differ from standard employment relationship: dependence on employers' households, expectations of flexibility, and the moralised nature of care work contribute to the persistence of inequalities, while also allowing room for relational dynamics that influence workers' experiences.

Although structural disadvantages are pervasive, recent studies emphasise that foreign-born women employed in PHS do not constitute a homogenous group. Their experience varies according to migrant background, age, education, and other individual and household characteristics, all of which shape work trajectories and everyday working conditions (Marchetti 2022).

Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Ortensi (2019), for instance, show sectoral segmentation coexists with forms of adaptation, agency, and daily negotiation that generate heterogeneous work experiences. Their study documents how many women develop stabilisation strategies even within poorly protected roles, finding forms of recognition and

economic continuity in care work. Research on Ukrainian and Eastern European employed women in Italy highlights how psychological well-being, transnational family arrangements, acculturative stress, and emotional strategies shape everyday work experiences (Shelemei and Ruini 2023).

Understanding job satisfaction among foreign-born women employed in PHS is essential not only for assessing job quality, but also for interpreting broader processes of social integration and labour market stratification that characterise contemporary European care regimes.

Job satisfaction among foreign-born employed women

Personal care and household works performed by foreign-born women are often depicted as undesirable due to their intrinsic characteristics, including social isolation, economic subordination, informal or unstable contracts, power asymmetries in employer–employee relationship, and limited opportunities for upward mobility. These works are frequently described as 'dead-end' jobs located at the margins of the formal labour market (Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Ortensi 2019).

Job satisfaction therefore emerges as a critical analytical lens for analysing how labour market inequalities are experienced, negotiated, and internalised. It captures the interplay between objective or structural aspects of work – such as wages, contract type and working hours – and more subjective or aspirational dimensions, including motivation, social integration, personal interest, recognition, and career prospects that shape workers' experiences in different environments. Individual characteristics and life trajectories also play a significant role in defining job satisfaction (Aleksynska 2018).

Research shows that the association between precarious or low-paid jobs and lower satisfaction is mediated by factors such as perceived work quality, future prospects, and a sense of control over one's career path (Judge et al. 2001). Job satisfaction is itself consequential: lower levels are associated with increased sick leave and mental health challenges, including burnout, depression and anxiety (Faragher, Cass, and Cooper 2005; Roelen, Koopmans, and Groothoff 2008). This is particularly relevant in PHS, where the emotional and physical demands of the job can contribute to psychosomatic stress. Conversely, when job conditions meet high standards of quality and satisfaction, workers often derive strong motivation from the perceived social value of care work (Iecovich 2011).

Improving job satisfaction in PHS is commonly associated with stable contracts, opportunities for professional growth, and decent working and living conditions (Bai et al. 2013; Iecovich 2011). However, many foreign-born PHS workers adjust their expectations downward, prioritising income stability over other job attributes (Fullin and Vercelloni 2009). This process – described as the normalisation of precariousness – reflects a subjective rationalisation whereby income security, often linked to transnational family responsibilities, takes precedence over the intrinsic quality of work. While this adaptation may function as a short-term coping strategy, it may also reinforce occupational segregation and constrain aspirations over time (Bai et al. 2013; Fullin and Vercelloni 2009).

Education plays an ambivalent role in shaping job satisfaction. On the one hand, more educated workers may develop stronger coping strategies and more realistic expectations, reporting higher levels of satisfaction (Iecovich 2011). On the other hand, the non-

recognition of qualifications and occupational downgrading in the host country can result in 'brain waste', generating frustration and reducing job satisfaction (Fullin and Vercelloni 2009). Recent evidence on Italy, however, shows that the negative association between overqualification and job satisfaction is markedly weaker among migrants – particularly those arriving in adulthood – pointing to an 'overqualification–job satisfaction paradox' that may reflect psychological adaptation, differing comparison standards, or selective attrition from the labour market (Trappolini, Kim and Alderotti 2026). This tension reflects the broader interplay between structural constraints and personal expectations and underscore the need to conceptualise job satisfaction as shaped by both structural and individual factors, rather than as a mere reflection of working conditions.

Although existing research has explored job satisfaction among foreign-born workers more generally, systematic comparisons between native and foreign-born workers in PHS remain scarce above all in the Italian context. Such comparisons are particularly relevant in light of the well-known 'job satisfaction paradox', according to which foreign-born workers, despite occupying more precarious and undervalued positions, often report levels of job satisfaction comparable to or higher than those of natives (Hodson 1985).

Recent evidence from Italy supports this pattern. Piccitto and Avola (2023) find that foreign-born women report higher job satisfaction than native women once work-related characteristics are taken into account, although certain conditions – such as part-time contracts, low-skilled occupations, and holding a tertiary qualification – are associated with substantially lower satisfaction.

Importantly, the determinants of job satisfaction differ between native and foreign-born workers. For natives, job satisfaction is more closely associated with work-related characteristics, such as contract stability, employment in the public sector, and, among women, access to part-time employment (Piccitto, Schadee, and Ballarino 2023). Individual characteristics play a more limited role: residing in Southern Italy tends to be negatively associated with job satisfaction, while marriage shows a positive association only among men. For foreign-born workers, by contrast, job satisfaction reflects a broader set of influences. While work-related factors remain important, additional aspects come into play. Language barriers, and social marginality may reduce job satisfaction, whereas age, cultural expectations, and language proficiency may facilitate adaptation and more positive evaluations of work (Piccitto, Schadee, and Ballarino 2023; Rice, McFarlin, and Bennett 1989; Wang and Jing 2018).

Taken together, these findings point to the need for a disaggregated and comparative approach to job satisfaction – one that acknowledges both the structural vulnerabilities experienced by foreign-born women employed in personal and household services (PHS) and the considerable diversity in their trajectories, expectations, and coping strategies.

Research questions and hypotheses

In light of the theoretical background and the existing literature outlined in the previous sections, we formulate the following research questions (RQ) and corresponding hypotheses (H).

RQ1: To what extent does the job satisfaction of foreign-born and native women employed in PHS differ from that of women employed in other sectors, and how do these differences change once individual, household, and work-related characteristics are taken into account?

> *H1a*: Employment in PHS is expected to be associated with lower job satisfaction than employment in other sectors for both foreign-born and native women, reflecting the structural undervaluation and care penalty characterising this field. Accordingly, job satisfaction differences observed across working groups in models without 'control variables' are expected to substantially decrease once individual characteristics and working conditions are included.

> *H1b*: In line with the 'job satisfaction paradox', foreign-born women employed in PHS are expected to report levels of job satisfaction that are comparable to, or not substantially lower than, those of native women in the same sector, despite the demanding nature of the work.

RQ2: Which work-related characteristics shape the job satisfaction of women employed in PHS, and how do these patterns differ between foreign-born and native workers?

> *H2*: Disadvantageous working-related conditions and characteristics – such as perceived discrimination, part-time employment, underemployment, overeducation, and manual and elementary work – are expected to be negatively associated with job satisfaction among both foreign-born and native PHS workers. However, the magnitude of these associations is expected to differ between workers employed in PHS and those in non-PHS sectors. In particular, perceived discrimination in the workplace is expected to have a stronger negative association with job satisfaction among foreign-born women than among natives in the same occupational sector, reflecting vulnerabilities linked to migrant background.

RQ3: How do specific dimensions of job satisfaction contribute to overall job satisfaction, and do these contributions vary by migrant background and occupational sector?

> *H3*: Foreign-born and native women are expected to assign different levels of importance to specific aspects of job satisfaction. Foreign-born women employed in PHS are expected to place greater weight on tangible working conditions (e.g. wages, working hours, contract stability) when evaluating their overall job satisfaction (H3a), whereas native women employed in PHS are expected to attach greater importance to intrinsic or prospective dimensions (e.g. career development, skill use, interest in the job) (H3b).

Data and methods

Data and sample selection

We use data from the ad hoc module of the 2021 Italian Labour Force Survey (IT-LFS) on 'Working conditions of immigrants and their immediate descendants'. This dataset provides detailed information on respondents' occupational status, along with a wide range of socio-economic, demographic, and regional characteristics.[1] It represents one of the most valuable microdata sources for studying foreign-born populations in Italy, primarily due to its over-sampling of the foreign-born population (Alderotti, Mussino, and Comolli 2023).

For the purpose of this study, the analytical sample is restricted to employed women aged 20–64 at the time of the survey. All analyses apply official IT-LFS weights to ensure representativeness of the observed population.

Based on the 3-digit ISCO-08 (International Standard Classification of Occupations), we define PHS workers as those employed in housekeeping services (code 515), personal

care occupations (codes 531 and 532), and domestic cleaning and helper occupations (code 911). All other employed women are grouped under the category 'non-PHS workers.' For increasing the homogeneity within this group, we exclude individuals employed in highly skilled occupations (Managers, Professionals, Technicians and Associate Professionals, ISCO-08 major groups 1, 2, and 3) as well as those in the armed forces (ISCO-08 major group 0), due to the very limited presence of foreign-born women in these categories (429 and 20 cases, respectively).

We distinguish four analytical groups by cross-classifying place of birth (native vs. foreign-born women) with occupational sector (PHS vs. non-PHS workers). As shown in Table 1, inactive women are predominantly native (52.1% vs 45.1% foreign-born), whereas unemployment is more common among foreign-born women (10.2% vs 7.3% among natives). Foreign-born women are disproportionally represented in the PHS sector (24.8%), compared with only 6.7% of native women. Conversely, native women are more prevalent in non-PHS sectors (33.9% vs. 20.0%).

Table 1. Employment status and type of work of women aged 20–64 by place of birth. Absolute and percentage values.

	Place of birth					
	Native-born		Foreign-born		Total	
Employment status and type of work	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%
Inactive	11,805	52.1	2,472	45.1	14,277	50.8
Unemployed	1,491	7.3	585	10.2	2,076	7.9
Personal and care workers [(1)] (ISCO08 codes 531 and 532)	704	2.9	717	12.0	1,421	4.5
Household services workers [(1)] (ISCO08 codes 515 and 911)	933	3.8	681	12.8	1,614	5.5
non-PHS workers[(2)]	7,657	33.9	1,139	19.9	8,796	31.3
Total	*22,590*	*100.0*	*5,594*	*100.0*	*28,184*	*100.0*

Notes: (1) PHS workers include personal, care, household services workers. (2) ISCO08-1d = 4-9 non-PHS. (3) ISCO-08 codes starting with 1, 2, and 3 were excluded from the analysis.
Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

The unweighted final analytical sample includes 11,831 employed women, of whom 3,035 are employed in PHS, and 8,796 in non-PHS sectors. Descriptive statistics for the four groups, disaggregated by individual, household, and work-related characteristics, are reported in Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix.

The IT-LFS includes only resident individuals and therefore primarily captures segments of the labour market characterised by relatively greater residential and employment stability and better access to basic rights (e.g. unemployment benefits, healthcare, pensions). As a result, a substantial share of PHS workers employed informally – often exposed to more precarious conditions – is not observed (Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Ortensi 2019). The scale of this under-coverage is considerable: nearly half of all workers employed by households as domestic workers and caregivers were estimated to be working irregularly in 2023 (48.8%), amounting to approximately 615,000 undeclared workers (ISTAT 2025b). Although ISTAT does not provide estimates of irregular employment by citizenship, the strong overrepresentation of migrants in the domestic care workforce (INPS 2026) suggests that foreign workers account for a substantial share of undeclared employment in this sector. The most vulnerable segments of the domestic and care workforce are therefore systematically underrepresented in our data, an issue we return to in the Discussion section.

Dependent and control variables

In all analyses, the main dependent variable is overall 'job satisfaction', measured on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). This measure has been widely used in previous studies (Piccitto and Avola 2023; Spector 1997) and is considered a valid indicator of workers' subjective evaluations. Due to missing information on job satisfaction, the analytical sample is reduced from 11,831 to 11,556 employed women.

We control for a broad set of individual and household characteristics. Socio-demographic controls include age group at the time of interview (20-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64), educational level (lower secondary or below, upper secondary, tertiary), marital status (single, married, separated/divorced, widowed), household composition (single-person, couple with children, couple without children, single-mother), and macro-area of residence (North-East, North-West, Centre, South, and Islands). For foreign-born women only, we additionally control for country/area of birth (Albania, Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, the Philippines, Morocco, Peru, other EU-28 and North American countries, other European non-EU countries, other Asian countries, other African countries, other Central-Southern American countries) and for years of residence in Italy (and its squared term).

Work-related characteristics are captured through a set of binary variables: manual and elementary work, part-time employment, underemployment, overeducation, and perceived discrimination at work.

Occupation is classified according to the Italian Classification of Occupations (CP2011), the official classification used in the 2021 Italian Labour Force Survey (IT-LFS) and aligned with ISCO-08. We distinguish manual and elementary occupations (major groups 6–8, corresponding to ISCO-08 groups 7-9) from service, sales and skilled agricultural occupations (major groups 4–5, corresponding to ISCO-08 groups 5-6). Manual and elementary occupations typically involve more physically demanding tasks and less favourable working conditions, factors that have been consistently associated with lower well-being and job satisfaction (Demerouti et al. 2001)

The remaining four characteristics are based on respondents' own assessments, drawn from the following questions. Part-time employment: *Do you work full-time or part-time?*; Underemployment: *Compared to the hours you usually work, would you like to work more hours?*; Overeducation: *Do you think you are doing a job that requires fewer qualifications than your education and skills warrant?*; Discrimination: *In your current job, have you ever been discriminated against – that is, treated worse than others by superiors, colleagues, clients, or anyone else – for any reason?*.[2]

In particular, overeducation captures the worker's own assessment of vertical mismatch. This self-assessment approach is one of the three established methods in this literature, alongside the job-analysis and the statistical (realised-matches) approaches (Leuven and Oosterbeek 2011; McGuinness, Pouliakas, and Redmond 2018). Different methods capture different aspects of educational mismatch: the self-assessment approach reflects the worker's own experience of being overqualified, whereas objective methods identify a discrepancy between education and occupational requirements regardless of how it is experienced. Since our hypothesis (H2) concerns the frustration arising from the underutilisation of one's skills, the self-assessment measure is the most theoretically

appropriate for our purposes. Hereafter, we refer to this measure simply as overeducation.

Descriptive statistics of individual, household, and work-related characteristics across four groups by migrant background and occupational sector are shown in Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix.

In addition to overall job satisfaction, we analyse satisfaction across six specific dimensions: wages, career opportunities, working hours, job stability, commuting time, and interest in the job. These dimensions are included in the Relative Weight Analysis (see the next section). Descriptive statistics of job satisfaction and its specific dimensions across the four analytical groups are reported in Table A3 in the Appendix.

Analytical strategy and main independent variables

In line with our research questions, we conduct a comparative analysis of job satisfaction among employed women, focusing on inequalities related to migrant background and occupational sector, and working conditions. In addition, we examine which specific dimensions contribute most to overall job satisfaction across the four analytical groups.

To address the first research question (RQ1), we estimate four stepwise ordinal regression models. The main independent variable is a four-category 'migration-sector status' variable that cross-classifies women by place of birth (native vs. foreign-born) and occupational sector (PHS vs. non-PHS): (1) native non-PHS workers – *reference category*, (2) native PHS workers, (3) foreign-born PHS workers, and (4) foreign-born non-PHS workers. The stepwise modelling strategy allows us to assess the robustness of group differences as covariates are introduced sequentially:

- Model 1 (M1): baseline model with no control variables;
- Model 2 (M2): adds individual and household characteristics (age group, educational level, marital status, household composition, and macro-area of residence in Italy);
- Model 3 (M3): adds work-related variables (part-time employment, self-reported discrimination at work, overeducation, underemployment, and manual and elementary work);
- Model 4 (M4): includes the full set of control variables listed above.

Associations between job satisfaction and individual, household, and work-related characteristics in the four stepwise models are reported in Table A4 in the Appendix.

To address the second research question (RQ2), we estimate four separate ordinal regression models, one for each migration-sector group: foreign-born PHS workers, foreign-born non-PHS workers, native PHS workers, and native non-PHS workers. This subgroup-specific strategy allows us to assess whether the associations between job satisfaction and work-related characteristics differ, controlling for individual and household characteristics, across the four analytical groups while avoiding the strong assumptions required for interaction effects in pooled models.

Associations between job satisfaction and individual and household characteristics in the four separate models across migration-sector groups are reported in Table A5 in the Appendix.

We replicated all the models by disaggregating the broad category of PHS workers into household service workers (ISCO-08 codes 515 and 911) and personal care workers (ISCO-08 codes 531 and 532). This additional analysis was motivated by the considerable heterogeneity within the PHS sector (OECD 2023). Although these occupations are often grouped together, they differ substantially in terms of job tasks, employment arrangements, skill requirements, working conditions, and levels of professional and social recognition (Oelz 2014). Such differences are likely to shape workers' experiences of job satisfaction and well-being.

The third research question (RQ3) is examined using Relative Weight Analysis (RWA), which decomposes the total explained variance (R^2) of overall job satisfaction into the relative contribution of six specific job satisfaction dimensions: wages, career opportunities, working hours, job stability, commuting time, and interest in the job. RWA is particularly appropriate in this context, given the substantial correlations among these dimensions, which may bias standard regression coefficients. The analysis is conducted separately for each of the four analytical groups, allowing direct comparison of the relative importance of each dimension across migrant background and occupational sector. Results are presented as percentages of the total explained variance in overall job satisfaction (set to 100%).

Results

Table 2 shows the coefficients from the four stepwise ordinal regression models assessing the association between migration-sector status and overall job satisfaction.

We find that the migration-sector status is significantly associated with overall job satisfaction, with varying intensity and significance depending on the covariates introduced in the models (RQ1). In the baseline model (M1), which includes no control variables, all three groups differ significantly from the reference category of native non-PHS workers, with foreign-born PHS workers and foreign-born non-PHS workers reporting substantially lower job satisfaction (coefficients – coef. – equal to −0.221 and −0.235, respectively), while the penalty for native PHS workers is smaller in magnitude (coef. = −0.138).

In Model 2 (M2), which adjusts for individual and household characteristics, these gaps remain significant. The disadvantage for foreign-born PHS workers (coef. = −0.298) and

Table 2. Associations between job satisfaction and four groups by place of birth and occupational sector. Stepwise ordinal regression models. Coefficients and *p*-values.

	M1		M2		M3		M4	
Place of birth and occupational sector	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
Native non-PHS workers (ref.)	*0.000*		*0.000*		*0.000*		*0.000*	
Native PHS workers	−0.138	***	−0.114	**	−0.029		−0.071	
Foreign-born PHS workers	−0.221	***	−0.298	***	−0.017		−0.053	
Foreign-born non-PHS workers	−0.235	***	−0.243	***	−0.147	**	−0.162	***
Pseudo R2	0.001		0.003		0.012		0.014	

Notes: (1) M1 – baseline model, with no control variables; M2 – adds controls for individual and household characteristics (age group, educational level, marital status, household composition and macro-area of residence in Italy); M3 – adds controls for work-related characteristics (part-time employment, self-reported discrimination at work, overeducation, underemployment, manual and elementary work); M4 – controls for all listed variables. (2) *p-value<0.1, **p-value<0.05, *** p-value<0.01. (3) Full models are displayed in Table A4 in the Appendix.
Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

for foreign-born non-PHS workers (coef. = −0.243) becomes larger. The penalty for native PHS workers decreases slightly but remains significant (coef. = −0.114).

In Model 3 (M3), which introduces only work-related characteristics, the coefficients for both native and foreign-born women employed in PHS become substantially attenuated and lose statistical significance, suggesting that working conditions account for much of the initial disadvantage.

In the fully adjusted model (M4), foreign-born non-PHS workers remain the only group with a statistically significant penalty in job satisfaction (coef. = –0.162). By contrast, no significant differences emerge between native and foreign-born women employed in PHS, indicating that, once individual and work-related characteristics are taken into account, employment in PHS is not in itself associated with lower job satisfaction.

Figure 1 presents the coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for selected work-related characteristics associated with overall job satisfaction across the four migration-sector groups (RQ2). Across them, disadvantaged working conditions are negatively associated with job satisfaction, although the patterns vary in each group. Since these models are estimated separately on four subsamples, we compare them in terms of the direction and statistical significance of the associations rather than the magnitude of the coefficients.

Manual and elementary work is generally not significantly associated with job satisfaction, with the exception of native non-PHS workers, for whom a statistically significant negative coefficient is observed.

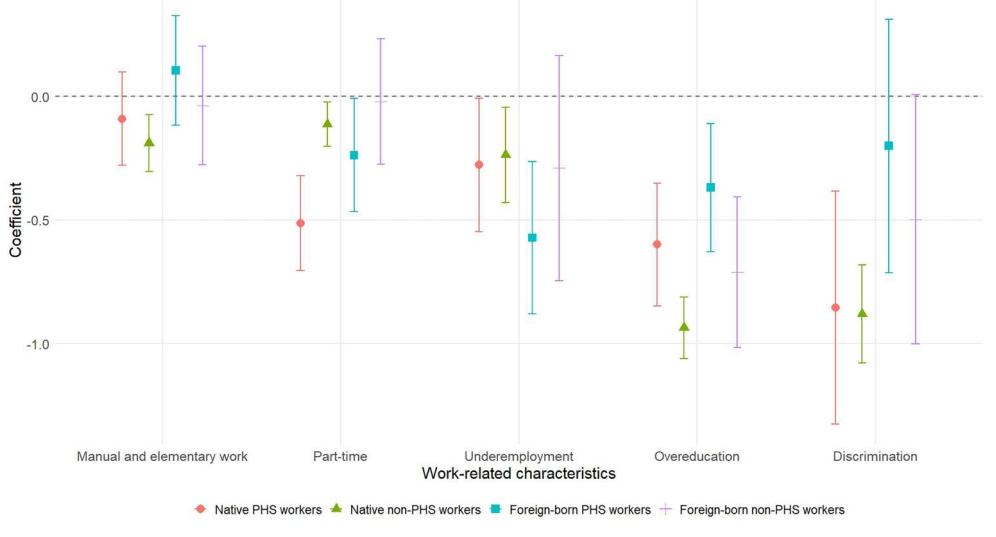

Figure 1. Associations between job satisfaction and work-related characteristics across four groups migrant background and occupational sector. Ordinal regression models. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals. Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

Notes: (1) Models include age group, educational level, marital status, household composition, and macro-area of residence. (2) For foreign-born only, models also include country/area of origin years of stay in Italy, years squared of stay in Italy. (3) Full models are displayed in Table A5 in the Appendix.

Holding a part-time job is significantly and negatively associated with job satisfaction among native women in both PHS and non-PHS sector, and among foreign-born PHS workers; it is not statistically significant for foreign-born women employed in non-PHS sectors.

The negative association of underemployment and of overeducation with job satisfaction are statistically significant across all four groups.

Perceived discrimination at work is significantly and negatively associated with job satisfaction among native women, in both PHS and non-PHS sectors; the association is only marginally significant for foreign-born non-PHS workers, and not statistically significant for foreign-born PHS workers.

In synthesis, a clear pattern emerges when the four groups are compared in terms of which adverse working conditions are significantly associated with job satisfaction. Among natives, all five conditions are significant, with the sole exception of manual and elementary work; among foreign-born workers, only overeducation and underemployment are statistically significant. These patterns refer to the regularly employed workforce observed in the IT-LFS; the job satisfaction of irregular and undeclared PHS workers, not captured by these data, may be shaped by different priorities and constraints, as we further highlight in the Discussion section.

Figure 2 presents the relative contribution, expressed as percentages, of six job satisfaction dimensions to overall job satisfaction across the four groups (RQ3). The results indicate both commonalities and differences by migrant background and occupational sector. In all groups, 'interested in the job' accounts for a substantial share of the explained variance in overall job satisfaction.

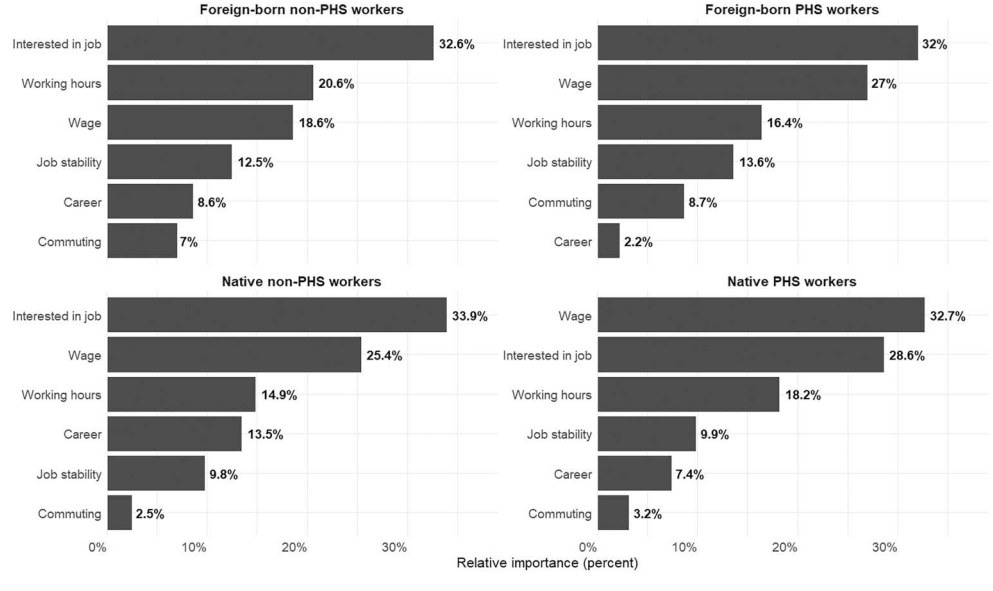

Figure 2. Relative contributions of job satisfaction's dimensions across four groups by migrant background and occupational sector. Relative Weight Analysis. Percentage values. Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

Among foreign-born PHS workers, interest in the job represents the largest contribution, followed by wages and working hours. Job stability and commuting time contribute to a lesser extent, while career opportunities account for a small share. A similar ranking is observed among foreign-born non-PHS workers, for whom interest in the job again represents the largest component. In this group, however, working hours contribute more strongly, while wages account for a smaller share. Job stability, career opportunities and commuting time also contribute to overall job satisfaction.

For native PHS workers, wages constitute the largest component, followed by interest in the job and working hours. Job stability and career opportunities play a more limited role, while commuting time contributes marginally. Finally, among native non-PHS workers, interest in the job accounts for the largest share, followed by wages. Career opportunities are more prominent in this group than in the others, while working hours and job stability make moderate contributions. Commuting time remains marginal.

Distinguishing personal care from household services workers

To assess whether the two components of PHS employment – personal care (ISCO-08 codes 531 and 532) and household services (codes 515 and 911) – differ in ways obscured by their aggregation, we re-estimated the models distinguishing the two, separately for native and foreign-born women (Tables 3 and 4). Sample sizes remain adequate for all four groups (between 667 and 904; see Table A1 in the Appendix).

The substantive conclusion of the main analysis is confirmed (Table 3). In the fully adjusted model, none of the four PHS subgroups differs significantly from native non-PHS workers, and foreign-born non-PHS workers remain the only group with a significant penalty; the penalties observed for household services workers in the baseline models are attenuated once individual and work-related characteristics are introduced. Disaggregation thus does not alter the finding that PHS employment is not, in itself, associated with lower job satisfaction – evidence of its robustness.

Table 3. Associations between job satisfaction and four groups by place of birth and type of work. Stepwise ordinal regression models. Coefficients and *p*-values.

	M1		M2		M3		M4	
Place of birth and type of work	Coef.	*p*-val	Coef.	*p*-val	Coef.	*p*-val	Coef.	*p*-val
Native others workers (ref.)								
Native personal/care workers	−0.060		−0.075		−0.048		−0.096	
Native household services wor.	−0.294	***	−0.269	***	−0.039		−0.068	
Foreign personal/care workers	−0.142	**	−0.247	***	−0.080		−0.151	
Foreign household services w.	−0.301	***	−0.351	***	−0.138		−0.057	
Foreginers non-PHS workers	−0.235	***	−0.243	***	−0.147	**	−0.162	**
Pseudo R2	0.001		0.003		0.012		0.014	

Notes: (1) M1 – baseline model, with no control variables; M2 – adds controls for individual and household characteristics (age group, educational level, marital status, household composition and macro-area of residence in Italy); M3 – adds controls for work-related characteristics (part-time employment, self-reported discrimination at work, overeducation, underemployment, manual and elementary work); M4 – controls for all listed variables. (2) Full models are not reported but results are similar to those displayed in Table A4 in the Appendix. (3) *p-value<0.1, **p-value<0.05, ***p-value<0.01.

Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

Table 4. Associations between job satisfaction and work-related characteristics across four groups by place of birth and type of PHS work. Ordinal regression models. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

	Place of birth and type of PHS work							
	Native personal and care workers		Native household services workers		Foregin-born personal and care workers		Foreign-born household services workers	
Work-related characteristics	Coef.	*p*-val	Coef.	*p*-val	Coef.	*p*-val	Coef.	*p*-val
Part-time (ref.: No)								
Yes	−0.471	***	−0.495	***	−0.053		−0.567	***
Underemployment (ref. No)								
Yes	−0.506	**	−0.173		−0.207		−0.505	***
Overeducation (ref. No)								
Yes	−0.757	***	−0.560	***	−0.449	**	−0.330	*
Discrimination (ref. No)								
Yes	−1.408	***	−0.638	**	−0.170		−0.057	
N	693		904		705		667	

Notes: (1) Models include age group, educational level, marital status, household composition, and macro-area of residence. (2) For foreign-born only, models also include country/area of origin; years of stay in Italy; years squared of stay in Italy. (3) full models are not reported but results are similar to those displayed in Table A5 in the Appendix. (4) *p-value<0.1, **p-value<0.05, ***p-value<0.01.

Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

The disaggregation does, however, refine how specific working conditions relate to satisfaction (Table 4). Two patterns stand out. First, perceived discrimination is significantly and negatively associated with job satisfaction among native women in both subgroups, even though it is especially pronounced among native personal care workers, while remaining non-significant among foreign-born women in either group. This sharpens our reading of H2: the muted role of discrimination among foreign-born women, consistent with a normalisation of adverse conditions, emerges most clearly once personal care is separated from household services. Second, part-time employment is negatively and significantly associated with satisfaction among native women in both subgroups and among foreign-born household services workers, but not among foreign-born personal care workers. Overeducation remains negatively and significantly associated with satisfaction across all four groups.

It should be noted that employment in manual and elementary work could not be included in these models, as it is almost perfectly collinear with the personal care/household services distinction: virtually all household services workers, and none of the personal care workers, are classified in manual and elementary work (see Table A2 in the Appendix). This overlap is itself informative, indicating that the skill-level contrast captured by the 'manual and elementary' indicator in the aggregate analysis corresponds, within PHS, to the distinction between the two occupational groups now modelled directly.

Discussion

Using representative survey data and adopting a comparative perspective, this study provides a nuanced and comparative analysis of job satisfaction among foreign-born women employed in Italy in PHS.

Consistent with H1a, regression analysis shows that women employed in PHS – regardless of migrant background – report lower levels of job satisfaction than native

women employed in non-PHS sectors. This pattern aligns with the well-documented care penalty and reflects the structurally undervalued and weakly protected nature of PHS employment (Lightman 2021; Marchetti, Cherubini, and Geymonat 2021; Williams 2012). The inclusion of individual and household characteristics reduces but does not eliminate these gaps. When work-related characteristics are added, differences between PHS and non-PHS workers – both native and foreign-born – attenuate and become statistically non-significant. This suggests that the initially observed disadvantage is largely associated with unequal working conditions rather than with PHS employment or migrant background *per se*, in line with prior literature on the structural precariousness of care work (Fullin and Reyneri 2011; Triandafyllidou 2022).

The findings also provide a more differentiated view of the job satisfaction paradox. While parts of the literature suggest that migrants may report equal or higher levels of job satisfaction despite objectively worse conditions (Aleksynska 2018; Hodson 1985), we do not observe this pattern among women employed in PHS in Italy: neither foreign-born women in PHS nor those employed in other sectors report higher job satisfaction than native women.

This supports interpretations that conceptualise the paradox not as a general rule, but as a context-dependent outcome shaped by expectations, migration trajectories, cultural frames of reference, and relative comparison with countries of origin. This reading is consistent with recent evidence showing the paradox to be conditional rather than general: among overqualified migrants in Italy, it emerges chiefly for those arriving in adulthood (Trappolini, Kim and Alderotti 2026). Although operating along a different dimension – age at arrival rather than occupational sector – this evidence reinforces the broader point that the paradox is not universal, which is consistent with its absence among foreign-born women in PHS. Several mechanisms have been proposed to account for this apparent contradiction, including the adjustment of expectations and the normalisation of precariousness (Fullin and Vercelloni 2009), as well as forms of relative satisfaction shaped by comparisons with prior work and life experiences, either in countries of origin or along cumulative trajectories of disadvantage (Donegani and McKay 2021; Flanagan and Lumley-Sapanski 2025).

In PHS – marked by emotionally and physically demanding tasks and limited institutional recognition – any potential 'advantage' linked to migrant background appears attenuated. In line with H1b, foreign-born women employed in PHS do not report significantly lower job satisfaction than native women in the same sector once all controls are included. By contrast, foreign-born women employed in non-PHS sectors continue to show a statistically significant disadvantage, suggesting that outside PHS dynamics associated with the ethnic penalty may remain more salient (Avola 2015; Salaris and Tedesco 2020). Taken together, these results indicate that mechanisms underlying the job satisfaction paradox may operate selectively across sectors and occupational contexts: adaptation of expectations can mitigate negative perceptions in demanding jobs, but this effect does not concern PHS.

Differences also emerge in the associations between work-related characteristics and job satisfaction across migration-sector groups (H2). Among native women employed in PHS, all of the adverse working conditions considered are significantly associated with lower job satisfaction, with the exception of manual and elementary work. Among foreign-born women, by contrast, only underemployment and overeducation

are significantly associated with lower job satisfaction, consistent with barriers to upward mobility, skill underutilisation, and occupational segmentation documented in previous studies (Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Ortensi 2019; Fullin and Vercelloni 2009). Contrary to expectations, perceived discrimination at work is significantly associated with lower job satisfaction among native women, but not among foreign-born women employed in PHS. This pattern, observed in earlier studies on care work (Eriksson et al. 2023), may reflect differences in expectations and reference frames: for foreign-born workers, especially those employed in PHS, discrimination, informality and power asymmetries may be normalised within migration pathways (Panzaru and Gravina 2024; Shelemei and Ruini 2023), whereas native workers may interpret similar experiences as sharper violations of fairness norms, with stronger implications for subjective evaluations of work.

The negative association between discrimination and job satisfaction among native women is particularly relevant among both personal care and household services workers, while remaining non-significant among foreign-born women in either group. This more granular pattern reinforces our interpretation: the normalisation of adverse workplace experiences along migration trajectories emerges consistently across both components of PHS job.

Finally, the relative weight analysis indicates that foreign-born and native workers attribute different importance to specific dimensions of job satisfaction, supporting H3 and demonstrating that job satisfaction is rooted in differing expectations, trajectories and constraints. Among foreign-born women employed in PHS, 'tangible' aspects such as wages and working hours play a relatively larger role in shaping overall job satisfaction (H3a), reflecting priorities related to income stability and transnational responsibilities that characterise many migration trajectories (Boccagni and Ambrosini 2012; Lutz et al. 2019). Native women, by contrast, assign greater weight to intrinsic and prospective dimensions, including interest in the job and career opportunities (H3b).

Although the data do not allow us to directly capture relational and emotional dynamics at work, the consistent importance of 'interest in the job' across all groups suggests that the affective and relational dimensions of care work remain central to subjective evaluations, as highlighted by previous studies on affective relations in care work (Eriksson et al. 2023; Panzaru and Gravina 2024).

Overall, the findings indicate that while the care penalty affects all women employed in PHS, the mechanisms through which job satisfaction is shaped vary by migrant background. For native women, employment in PHS may be experienced more often as a constrained or downward choice, with satisfaction closely linked to identity and vocational meaning (Carillo, Lombardo, and Venittelli 2023). For foreign-born women, PHS employment appears more strongly connected to economic utility and the pursuit of broader life projects. These results highlight the analytical value of integrating structural and subjective perspectives when analysing job satisfaction in specific occupational sector.

Although anchored in the Italian context, the study speaks to the European debates on the organisation of care in ageing societies. By applying an intersectional lens (Fernández and Ortega 2008; Triandafyllidou 2022), we examined PHS workers

as women, migrants and domestic-sector employees – positions that intersect to produce specific patterns of disadvantage in a field historically marked by undervaluation, vulnerability and precarity. Recognising these intersections is crucial for the development of labour and care policies that are both equitable and sustainable, particularly in a sector that is likely to remain increasingly dependent on migrant women in the coming decades.

Some distinct threats to inference should be acknowledged. First, as noted in the Data and Methods section, the IT-LFS covers resident individuals and therefore systematically under-covers the irregular and undeclared segments of the PHS workforce – a segment that, in this sector, is substantial. The job satisfaction of workers employed under informal arrangements may be shaped by different priorities and constraints, with income insecurity, lack protections and rights, and other conditions of vulnerability potentially playing a greater role than occupational status or career prospects. This coverage limitation of the sampling frame would require purpose-designed data collection.

This leads us to identify a second limitation regarding the observed data and our subsequent analyses. The 2021 IT-LFS ad hoc module does not collect additional information on the characteristics of the work activity; taking these into account could yield different results. For instance, earnings data – unlike in the main IT-LFS questionnaire – are not available in the dataset; the wage dimension enters our analysis solely in a subjective form, via the level of satisfaction with remuneration. Other work-related characteristics might include insurance and accident coverage; the management of vacation, parental leave, and sick leave; the alignment between actual and contractual working hours; and the number of employers.

Third, selection into PHS employment is not random. Women who enter care work may differ from those employed in other sectors on characteristics we do not observe – reservation wages, outside options, prior expectations, or the constraints under which employment is sought. Our comparison between PHS and non-PHS workers (RQ1) is therefore associational, and the absence of a satisfaction penalty for PHS employment in the fully adjusted models cannot be read as the causal effect of working in the sector. Selective attrition from the labour market may itself contribute to the satisfaction patterns we observe, a mechanism recently discussed in relation to the overqualification–job satisfaction paradox in Italy (Trappolini, Kim and Alderotti 2026).

Fourth, several of our work-related characteristics (i.e. perceived discrimination, underemployment, and overeducation) are, like job satisfaction itself, self-reported and measured contemporaneously. Although their low correlations with job satisfaction and the systematic heterogeneity of the associations across groups argue against a purely artefactual interpretation, the cross-sectional design does not allow us to establish the direction of these associations with certainty: less satisfied workers may be more likely to perceive and report adverse working conditions, as well as the reverse.

Our design supports the estimation of robust associations within groups, the decomposition of overall satisfaction across its constituent dimensions, and the comparison of these patterns across migration-sector groups. It does not support causal ordering, the modelling of within-person change, or the identification of selection on unobservable

individuals. Longitudinal data would address the time-based threats specifically: panel designs would net out stable individual dispositions (mitigating common-method and reverse-causality concerns), establish the temporal ordering of working conditions and satisfaction, and allow us to observe directly how satisfaction evolves with duration of stay and occupational mobility – the expectation-adjustment process that we can currently only infer. It would not, however, overcome the coverage limitation discussed above.

Taken together, these limitations bear directly on the confidence we can place in our central finding. The absence of a *satisfaction paradox* among foreign-born PHS workers is established for the regularly employed. Our findings should therefore be interpreted as referring primarily to the observable and more stable segments of the female workforce employed in PHS, and we cannot rule out that different patterns would emerge in the undeclared segment of the sector.

Notes

1. For further details see the following official link: https://www.istat.it/microdati/rilevazione-sulle-forze-di-lavoro-dati-trasversali-trimestrali/.
2. The correlations between the self-reported work-related characteristics and overall job satisfaction are low (−0.159 for self-assessed overeducation, −0.126 for perceived discrimination, and −0.088 for underemployment), indicating that these predictors are not redundant with the dependent variable.

Author contributions

CRediT: **Giuseppe Gabrielli:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Rocco Mazza:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Eleonora Trappolini:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Alessandra De Rose:** Supervision, Validation, Visualization; **Anna Paterno:** Supervision, Validation, Visualization.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Ethic statement

(if the research was performed on humans/animals): Not applicable.

Data availability statement

The data analysed in this study are available upon request in the ISTAT repositories: https://contact.istat.it/

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Appendix

Table A1. Individual and household characteristics of the sample by migrant background and occupational sector. Percentages.

	Migration-sector status			
Individual characteristics	Native PHS workers	Native non-PHS workers	Foreign-born PHS workers	Foreign-born non-PHS workers
Age				
20-34	14.5	23.7	12.2	28.8
35-44	15.6	24.1	25.8	32.9
45-54	34.8	32.5	37.2	26.6
55-64	35.1	19.8	24.8	11.6
Born country				
Italy	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Albania			5.0	9.4
Romania			25.4	21.6
Ukraine			11.1	4.3
Moldova			7.8	3.0
The Philippines			8.3	2.2
Morocco			3.9	2.4
Peru			5.6	1.7
Other EU-28 and North America			6.5	15.3
Other non-EU countries			3.7	12.8
Other Asia			6.6	11.7
Other Africa			5.8	5.0
Other Central-Southern America			10.4	10.6
Marital status				
Single	24.0	36.6	20.8	30.9
In a couple	58.7	51.9	49.1	54.8
Divorced/separated	14.4	9.9	22.4	12.1
Widowed	2.9	1.6	7.7	2.2
Educational level				
Lower secondary or below	54.0	26.6	42.7	37.2
Upper secondary	40.4	59.3	45.8	49.1
Tertiary	5.6	14.1	11.5	13.6
Macro-area of residence				
North-West	26.5	31.9	35.4	29.9
North-East	20.6	24.0	24.5	32.0
Centre	21.4	21.5	25.8	22.7
South	17.9	15.8	10.3	11.8
Islands	13.7	6.9	4.0	3.7
Household composition				
Single-person	12.3	11.4	35.3	15.1
Couple with children	51.9	59.0	34.6	53.5
Couple without children	20.8	15.8	13.7	17.9
Single-mother	15.0	13.8	16.4	13.5
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*

Note: Percentages should be read in column.
Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

Table A2. Work-related characteristics of the sample by migrant background and occupational sector. Percentages.

	Place of birth and type of work						
Work-related characteristics	Native personal and care workers	Native household services workers	Native non-PHS workers	Foreign-born personal and care workers	Foreign-born household services workers	Foreign-born non-PHS workers	Total
Manual and elementary work							
No	100.0	4.3	81.0	100.0	0.7	58.9	70.8
Yes	0.0	95.7	19.0	0.0	99.3	41.1	29.2
Part-Time							
No	50.6	38.8	64.7	68.8	28.1	67.8	60.4
Yes	49.4	61.2	35.3	31.2	71.9	32.2	39.6
Underemployment							
No	88.3	83.3	94.2	91.8	79.4	91.8	91.9
Yes	11.7	16.7	5.8	8.2	20.6	8.2	8.1
Overeducation							
No	86.6	76.4	86.1	72.1	62.4	81.0	82.9
Yes	13.4	23.6	13.9	27.9	37.6	19.0	17.1
Discrimination							
No	96.9	95.4	95.5	95.4	95.9	94.5	95.5
Yes	3.1	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.1	5.5	4.5
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*

Note: Percentages should be read in column.
Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

Table A3. Job satisfaction dimensions and overall satisfaction by migrant background and occupational sector. Mean values and standard deviations.

	Migration-sector status							
	Native PHS workers		Native non-PHS workers		Foreign-born PHS workers		Foreign-born non-PHS workers	
Job satisfaction dimensions	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Wages	6.43	2.11	6.84	1.95	6.76	1.70	6.74	1.79
Career opportunities	5.08	2.81	6.12	2.33	5.21	2.65	5.94	2.36
Working hours	6.95	1.95	7.28	1.73	6.94	1.74	7.13	1.65
Job stability	7.42	2.06	7.61	1.95	7.23	1.76	7.12	2.01
Commuting time	7.99	1.88	8.17	1.81	7.86	1.73	7.81	1.77
Interested in the job	7.51	2.12	7.84	1.66	7.17	1.66	7.49	1.70
Job satisfaction (overall)	7.44	1.99	7.58	1.83	7.48	1.60	7.42	1.73

Notes: Mean refers to mean values and SD refers to standard deviations.
Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

Table A4. Associations between job satisfaction and individual, household, and work-related characteristics. Stepwise ordinal regression models. Coefficients and *p*-values.

	M1		M2		M3		M4	
Characteristics	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
Migrant background and occupational sector (see Table 2)								
Age (ref. 20-34)								
35-44			−0.062				−0.067	
45-54			0.023				−0.011	
55-64			−0.053				−0.114	*
Marital status (ref. Single)								
Married			0.105	**			0.117	**
Divorced/separated			0.118	*			0.174	***
Widow			0.288	**			0.369	***
Ecucational level (ref. Lower secondary)								
Upper secondary			0.134	***			0.231	***
Third level			0.028				0.170	***

(*Continued*)

Table A4. Continued.

	M1		M2		M3		M4	
Characteristics	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
Macro-area of residence (ref. North-West)								
North-East			−0.102	**			−0.094	**
Center			−0.155	***			−0.164	***
South			−0.274	***			−0.260	***
Islands			−0.244	***			−0.242	***
Household composition (ref. Single person)								
Couple with children			−0.195	***			−0.170	***
Couple without children			−0.228	***			−0.215	***
Monoparental men			−0.426	*			−0.456	**
Monoparental woman			−0.112	*			−0.079	
Manual/elementary work (ref. No)								
Yes					−0.179	***	−0.119	***
Part-time (ref.: No)								
Yes					−0.171	***	−0.153	***
Underemployment (ref. No)								
Yes					−0.329	***	−0.317	***
Overeducation (ref. No)								
Yes					−0.689	***	−0.749	***
Discrimination (ref. No)								
Yes					−0.766	***	−0.807	***
/cut1	−4.628	*	−4.797		−5.131		−5.137	
/cut2	−4.150	*	−4.319		−4.651	*	−4.657	
/cut3	−3.892	*	−4.061	*	−4.392	*	−4.397	
/cut4	−3.531	*	−3.700	*	−4.027	*	−4.032	
/cut5	−3.110	**	−3.279	*	−3.600	*	−3.604	
/cut6	−2.244	**	−2.411	*	−2.723	*	−2.725	
/cut7	−1.328	**	−1.491	*	−1.779	*	−1.775	
/cut8	−0.349	**	−0.506	*	−0.766	*	−0.754	
/cut9	0.989	**	0.840	*	0.604	*	0.625	
/cut10	1.655	**	1.508	*	1.278	*	1.301	
Pseudo R2	*0.001*		*0.003*		*0.012*		*0.014*	

Notes: *p-value<0.1, **p-value<0.05, ***p-value<0.01.
Source: authors' elaboration on IT-LFS data, 2021.

Table A5. Associations between job satisfaction and individual and household characteristics across four groups by migrant background and occupational sector. Ordinal regression models. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

	Migration-sector status							
	Native PHS workers		Native non-PHS workers		Foreign-born PHS workers		Foreign-born non-PHS workers	
Characteristics	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
Manual/elementary work (ref. No)								
Yes	−0.091		−0.189	***	−0.104		−0.038	
Part-time (ref.: No)								
Yes	−0.514	***	−0.113	**	−0.238	**	−0.022	
Underemployment (ref. No)								
Yes	−0.277	**	−0.237	**	−0.572	***	−0.291	*
Overeducation (ref. No)								
Yes	−0.599	***	−0.936	***	−0.369	***	−0.712	***
Discrimination (ref. No)								
Yes	−0.854	***	−0.880	***	−0.201		−0.498	*
Age (ref. 20-34)								
35-44	0.135		−0.111	*	0.304	*	−0.210	
45-54	0.208		−0.089		0.345	*	−0.167	
55-64	0.083		−0.246	***	0.418	**	−0.304	
Years of stay in Italy (discrete)					0.010		0.022	
Years squared of stay (discrete)					0.001		0.001	
Born country (ref. EU-28 and North America)								

(*Continued*)

Table A5. Continued.

	Migration-sector status							
	Native PHS workers		Native non-PHS workers		Foreign-born PHS workers		Foreign-born non-PHS workers	
Characteristics	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
Albania					−0.663	**	0.116	
Romania					−0.642	***	−0.224	
Ukraine					−0.668	**	−0.434	
Moldova					−0.795	***	0.535	
The Philippines					−0.403		−0.263	
Morocco					−0.441		−0.628	
Peru					−0.820	***	−0.649	
Othe non-EU countries					−0.471		0.065	
Other Asia					−0.380		−0.613	***
Other Africa					−0.781	***	−0.618	**
Other Central-Southern America					−0.414		−0.100	
Marital status (ref. Single)								
Married	−0.198		0.162	***	0.290	*	0.061	
Divorced/separated	−0.096		0.219	**	0.228		0.288	
Widow	−0.012		0.441	**	0.517	**	0.173	
Ecucational level (ref. Lower secondary)								
Upper secondary	0.336	***	0.111	**	0.131		0.328	**
Third level	0.070		0.023		0.260		0.463	**
Macro-area of residence (ref. North-West)								
North-East	0.085		−0.048		−0.500	***	−0.196	
Center	−0.164		−0.094		−0.345	***	−0.294	*
South	−0.315	**	−0.128	**	−1.103	***	−0.600	***
Islands	−0.152		−0.205	**	−0.616	**	−0.340	
Household composition (ref. Single person)								
Couple with children	−0.072		−0.154	**	−0.432	***	−0.238	
Couple without children	0.057		−0.225	**	−0.460	**	−0.335	
Monoparental men	−0.732		−0.492	*	−0.213		2.113	
Monoparental woman	−0.230		−0.057		−0.152		0.016	
/cut1	−5.175		−5.093		−7.706		−5.609	
/cut2	−4.746		−4.686		−5.712		−4.775	
/cut3	−4.457		−4.492		−5.156		−4.222	
/cut4	−4.085		−4.112		−4.771		−4.069	
/cut5	−3.433		−3.706		−4.554		−3.712	
/cut6	−2.607		−2.853		−3.271		−2.710	
/cut7	−1.643		−1.971		−1.867		−1.685	
/cut8	−0.829		−0.952		−0.681		−0.399	
/cut9	0.405		0.506		0.573		0.948	
/cut10	0.935		1.178		1.476		1.720	
Pseudo R2	*0.021*		*0.016*		*0.025*		*0.024*	