Title: Italian workers at risk during the COVID-19 epidemic

Authors: Teresa Barbieri, INAPP (t.barbieri.ext@inapp.org); Gaetano Basso, Bank of Italy (gaetano.basso@bancaditalia.it); Sergio Scicchitano, INAPP (s.scicchitano@inapp.org)

Abstract: We analyze the content of Italian occupations operating in about 600 sectors with a focus on the dimensions that expose workers to contagion risks during the COVID-19 epidemics. We find that several sectors need physical proximity to operate: the workers employed in Italy in sectors whose physical proximity index is above the national average are more than 6.5 million (most of them in retail trade). Groups at risk of contagion and complications from COVID-19 (mainly male above the age of 50) work in sectors that are little exposed to physical proximity, currently under lockdown or can work remotely. The sectoral lockdowns put in place by the Italian Government in March 2020 seem to have targeted sectors who operate in physical proximity, but not those directly exposed to infections (the health industry is not subject to lockdown). Most workers who can operate from home have not been put under lockdown and are currently working. Therefore, the number of workers who are not in workplaces could be up to 3 million higher than those whose sector has been shutdown.

Data description: We leverage extremely detailed and granular information from ICP, the Italian equivalent of O*Net. Then, we combine these data with the three most recent waves, from the first to the third quarter of 2019, of the ISTAT Italian labour force survey (LFS). The analysis is run at the 4-digit sectoral level, which we match to the ICP occupational data based on a crosswalk constructed on the 2018 LFS data, by weighing each occupation-specific index by the occupational employment share in each sector.

JEL No.: J28, J81, H12, I18

Keywords: Working conditions, Safety, Crisis policies, COVID-19 epidemics

1 Corresponding author: Gaetano Basso (draft available upon request). The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Bank of Italy nor those of INAPP.