



# *Cultural and historical heritage of minorities in Italy*

Italy, a patchwork of people.  
Italian Minorities from History to Today

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# The principal Historic Minorities

Italy has always been a patchwork of peoples, gradually assimilated. The current 12 ethnic-linguistic groups (overall, about 300 thousand people) are benefited by laws that protect bilingualism, customs and rites. Some areas have local/regional administrative autonomy (Valle d'Aosta, Trentino A.Adige, Friuli V. Giulia, Sicily, Sardinia). Their members have always been active citizens, present in all different facets: from work to art, from politics to the administration of public affairs, etc.

Map of the spread of Historical Minorities



## Historical Minorities in North Italy from West to East



- Region Valle d'Aosta: France speaking
- Region Trentino A. Adige- South Tyrol: German speaking
- Region Friuli V. Giulia: Slovenians

These groups share language, tradition and culture with populations across the border (respectively: France, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia).



*Traditional Alto Adige dresses*



*Coumba Freida*: in Val d'Aosta is already  
*Carnival*

## Historical Minorities in Center-South Italy



- Regions Molise and Puglia: Croatians
- Regions Sicily and Calabria (mainly present in): Arbresh-Albanians
- Regions Calabria and Southern Puglia (Salento): Grecani/Greeks

The last two groups are interesting: the first settled in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, following the Ottoman conquest of Albania and the second perhaps fragment of the ancient colonies of Magna Graecia or following the Byzantine dominion in Salento- South Puglia and in Calabrian marinas. Both groups pass on language, customs, songs and habits of considerable charm. Finally, the island of Sardinia, whose diversity is due to secular isolation which has also favored its cultural autonomy.



*A party in Piana degli Albanesi (Sicily)*



*Traditional Sardinian dress*



*Taranta Dance: from Salento*



*Municipality of Rossano Calabro  
(comune di rossano - YouTube)*



*Sardinian Symbols: the Nuraghes,  
Prehistoric fortress-houses*



*Interior of a traditional house in  
Salento*



*Grazia Deledda from Sardinia:  
1926, Nobel prize- Literature*



*Lilli Gruber from A. Adige:  
television reporter*



*Reinhold Messner from A. Adige:  
mountain climber*



*Italo Svevo from  
Friuli V. Giulia: a leading novelist*



*Antonio Gramsci: Sardinian and  
Arbresh; political scientist*

Some personality of Italian Historical Minorities

# The Current Minorities (Immigrants)

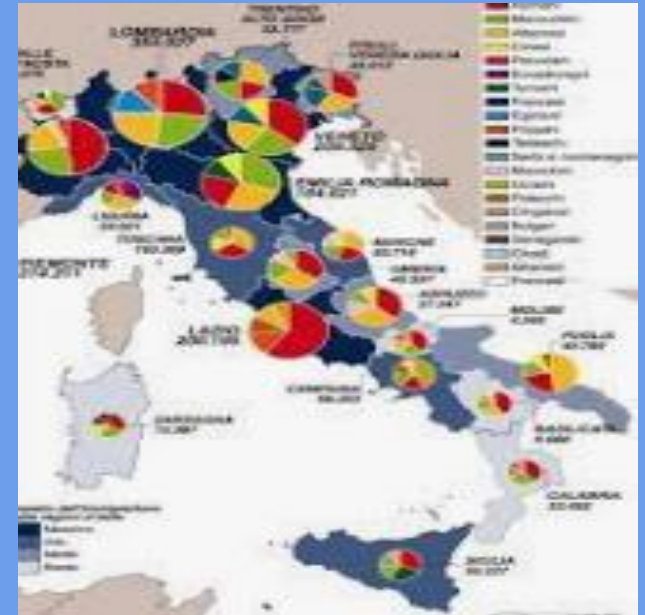
## **NUMBERS:**

**5,035, 643** (8,5% of entire population)

**900,000** (with citizenship)

**600,000** (irregular Immigrants)

## Geographic Distribution of Immigrants





# The largest communities: countries of origin and presences in Italy

Paese	2005 <sup>[8]</sup>	2010 <sup>[27]</sup>	2015 <sup>[28]</sup>	2019 <sup>[19]</sup>	2020 <sup>[29]</sup>
 Romania	248 849	887 763	1 131 839	1 143 859	1 145 711
 Albania	316 659	466 684	490 483	423 212	421 591
 Marocco	294 945	431 529	449 058	406 112	414 249
 Cina	111 712	188 352	265 820	283 430	288 923
 Ucraina	93 441	174 129	226 060	227 867	228 560
 Filippine	82 625	123 584	168 238	158 049	157 665
 India	37 971	105 863	147 815	147 153	153 209
 Bangladesh	35 785	73 965	115 301	131 023	138 895
 Egitto	52 865	82 064	103 713	119 864	128 095
 Pakistan	35 509	64 859	96 207	116 631	121 609
 Moldavia	54 288	105 600	147 388	122 762	118 516
 Nigeria	31 647	48 674	71 158	114 096	113 049
 Sri Lanka	45 572	75 343	100 558	104 763	107 598
 Senegal	53 941	72 618	94 030	105 277	106 198
 Tunisia	78 230	103 678	96 012	90 615	93 350
 Perù	53 378	87 747	109 668	91 859	91 662
 Polonia	50 794	105 608	98 694	88 803	86 743
 Ecuador	53 220	85 940	91 259	74 661	72 644
 Bulgaria	15 374	46 026	56 576	56 593	56 645
 Macedonia del Nord	58 460	92 847	77 703	60 581	55 816
 Brasile	25 823	44 067	42 587	49 445	51 790
 Ghana	32 754	44 353	50 414	49 797	49 543

# The phenomenon of immigration in a nutshell

Although very small groups have arrived since the 60-70s (from Somalia, Eritrea, Morocco, China), the real phenomenon of immigration is quite recent: until the end of the Eighties of the last century, the presence of immigrants was limited to a few thousand people, often seasonal workers and with rare settlements, especially from the Philippines, Cape Verde Islands and Latin America. As a result of wars, pogroms and growing poverty, from the Nineties the Italian coasts have become the landing place for millions of people in search of the future.

Suffice it to recall the arrival in Bari (Puglia) of the Vlora ship which landed more than 20 thousand Albanians in a single day. (1991). Since then, millions of people from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe have landed in Sicily, Sardinia, Calabria or arrived by land, many of them have continued the journey, others have remained in Italy, giving life to our new minorities. And they keep coming.



# When they arrived? Timeline: the first flows of the different communities

60s	70s	80s	90s	2000s
Somalia	China	Philippines	Poland	Egypt
Eritrea	Morocco	Capo Verde Isl.	Moldova	Bangladesh
Jewish from	Argentina	Brasile	Albania	Sri Lanka
Libia		Peru	Romania	Syria
		Equador	Bulgaria	Senegal
		India	Ukraine	Ivory Coast
			North Macedonia	Ghana
			Pakistan	Congo
			Afghanistan	Camerun
			Tunisia	Mali
			Nigeria	Benin

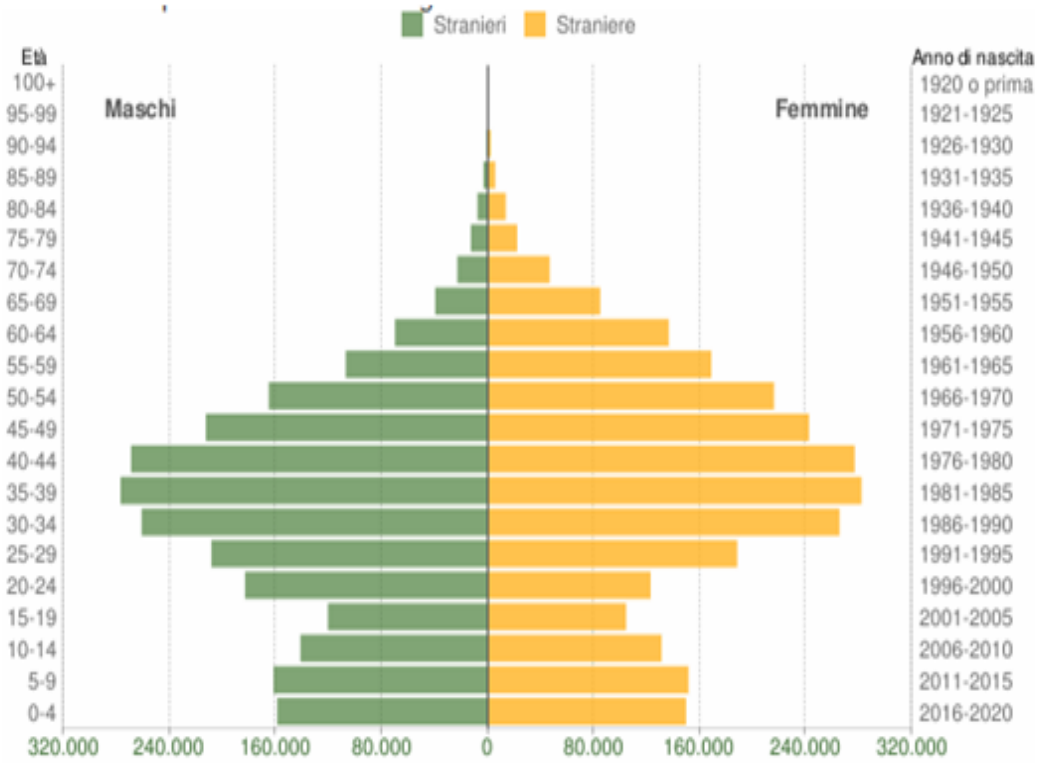
# Where they live, where they work, how they fit in

Their distribution in Italy is maximum in large cities (Rome, Milan, Turin) but is rather spread throughout the territory. Their physical presence depends on job opportunities, as well as contacts and reunions with families and friends. The main sectors of activity are:

**manufacturing industry,  
construction,  
agriculture,  
retail trade,  
catering and bar,  
services to family and persons,  
logistic services,  
delivery.**



As can be seen, most of the resident foreigners are quite young: this is correlated with a substantial contribution to the Italian economy in many sectors: In fact, we must consider that immigrants are not only a resource for the economy, but are an element of revitalization of society. In a country with one of the highest population aging rates in Europe (in 2020: 179.3 per 100 young people) and a low birth rate (1.27 per woman), their economic contribution is vital.



Source: ISTAT. Legend: in GREEN male foreign population, in YELLOW female foreign population

There is more: the immigrants are not only a resource for the economy, but are an element of revitalization of society. We find the same energy used in work in the need for relationships that always characterize the different groups: the commitment that the numerous cultural associations promoted by immigrants undertake not only to preserve and pass on language and customs but also to collaborate with Italian bodies, institutions, organizations that operate in the field of interculturality and mutual knowledge. Also very active are companies and musical groups, especially African and Asian, while the catering department is one of the most popular Italian-foreign mixed aggregation points. And also sport.



Photo 1. Primary school (Modena)

Photo 2. Multicultural Association (Trento)

Photo 3. Piazza Vittorio Orchestra multi-cultural (Roma)

# Focus on the 4 large communities of Immigrants

## ROMANIANS



With about 1,200,000 member, Romanians are the most important community. Their flows started from 1989 (the regime of Ceausescu was overthrown) and became more intense starting from 2002-2007 following the entry of Romania into the EU, which allowed them free movement. They are very well integrated, invest in the education of their children and try to improve their working conditions, often creating small artisan family companies in construction, plumbing, cleaning, transport, blacksmiths, etc.). Women are very active in the personal services sector in order to increase family income both in Italy and in Romania. The women have been and still are the real driving force of integration.

## ALBANIANS



My friend Arber, medical student and volunteer in an aid association for young migrants.

They are the second largest community in Italy (421,501 members), migrated *en masse* from 1991, after the fall of the Hoxa regime, in 1994 due to the war in Kosovo and in 1997 following the economic crisis. However, we remember that the Albanian presence in Italy is secular since the first ancient *Arbresh* to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These enclaves welcomed and helped the Albanians who arrived in the 20th century and facilitated their integration. More skilled than other ethnic groups, Albanians are employed in industry, in the hotel and catering sector, in commerce and much less in services. Their social integration can be testified by two elements: the high rate of unionization and the high presence in the educational system at all levels.



## MOROCCANS



Photo 1. Moroccan Hammam (Rome)

Photo 2. Meeting of Moroccan women on politics (Parma)

Is one of the peoples with a long history of emigration: if in the 70s it was the poorest and old who emigrated alone, practicing street vendors, from the 80s to the 2000s there was an increase in the quality of the presences - younger and more educated - not rarely accompanied by families. The Moroccans showed themselves ready to enter in agriculture, construction, small industry, cleaning services, gasoline distributors and commerce. It was also about a number of students who have found an outlet in Italian universities and have helped to raise the cultural level of the Moroccan community, acting as mediators, educators and social workers. Nowadays, Moroccans are a little more 400,000, are well integrated: their strong point is the commercial sector where they demonstrate their skills.

## CHINESE PEOPLE



Photo 1. A street of Chinatown (Milan)

Photo 2. Costumed women for Chinese New Year



Only 402 people registered in 1975 carrying out itinerant, restaurant and laundry activities. The real flow starts from the 80s up to the 2000s, due to the liberalization adopted in the country of origin which depopulates the countryside and creates strong tensions in the labor market. Relying on families already present in Italy, the newcomers expand and refine the restaurant business, establish themselves in the import-export, textile and leather goods sectors and, above all, they create a new dynamic way of businesses, also thanks to a very young and educated demographic component. Today, they are just under 300,000. The current third generation of Italian-Chinese have a degree and are fully integrated and similar to their Italian peers, with whom they share tastes and behaviors. Chinese success is therefore not only economic but also relational. The birth of the Chinatowns in the big cities, far from being an anchor to the past, are the relational bridge between traditions and current events, between folklore and interculturality.

# Finally, some personalities among the new Italians

*Not just sport but also art and politics*



*Paola Egonu: captain of National Volley team from Nigeria*



*Cécile Keingé: former Minister (2013) from Congo*



*Malika Ayane, singer from Morocco*



*Kleidi Kadiu, dancer from Albania*

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**