

Immigration in Italy in 2015. Key facts

Immigration in Italy is a complex phenomenon which, in 2015, is characterized by **two seemingly opposite traits**.

On the one hand, there were **many irregular immigrants** (154,000 arrivals) consisting of both asylum seekers fleeing from wars and persecution, and economic migrants trying to advance their economic and professional prospects. These arrivals, although less numerous compared to the more than 1 million people arrived in Europe from Asia and Africa, required a significant financial investment (3.3 billion euros, according to government sources) and a hurried research for their accommodation: about 120,000 places, including both ordinary (20,000) and extraordinary ones (100,000) - a number which is constantly increasing.

On the other hand, **permanent migration remained stable**. Out of the 244 million migrants in the world, Italy's share is 4% (10 millions), half of which consisting of Italians who settled abroad. The other half are the 5,026,153 foreign citizens residing in our Country. In the last year, they have increased only by 12,000 units, whereas the number of Italians who settled abroad (more than 5 millions) increased by about 200,000, half of whom following other expatriates (most of them have a higher education level).

The globalization level of our Country is rising, due not only to Italian migrants living abroad but also to the impact that foreign citizens currently residing in Italy have on their countries of origin, thanks to their network of contacts with family members, relatives and friends - and even more so in the case of those who come back to their homeland after a period spent in Italy. In this regard, students who came to Italy to enroll in one of our universities in 2015 (70,339 total enrollments of which 12,439 new enrollments) or for other study reasons (in particular the study of the Italian language (10,000 visas granted in 2015) as well as those who arrived for religious reasons (28,000) are worth noting. Some of them will return to their countries of origin and will share their experience in Italy, thus allowing a widespread cultural globalization which improves the knowledge of our country in the world. In turn, this is positive at both the commercial and tourist level, thanks to the Italian communities in the world as well as to the relatives and friends of immigrants in Italy (this is clearly highlighted in the yearly survey published by the Bank of Italy).

Remittances are a significant sign of globalization, with a total of 431.6 billion dollars sent to the so-called developing countries in 2015 (29.3 billion

euros from EU Member States and 5.3 from Italy alone – that is, 2 billion less than the maximum value recorded some years ago).

2015 has been also characterized by increased mobility, **with 250,000 new foreign citizens registered** in Italy and 72,000 children born of foreign parents (almost one-sixth of the total births in our country). Despite these numbers, the total foreign population has not increased because the number of naturalized immigrants was exceptionally high compared to previous years (178,000 in 2015), bringing the **Italian foreign-born population** to 1.150 million units. In addition, although at a lesser extent, 64,000 non-EU citizens had to return to their countries because their permits were not renewed (155,000 cases in 2014).

Residing immigrants, which account for 10.5% of the total workforce, represents a **positive contribution to the Italian society** (even during this period of economic downturn which brought their unemployment rate at 16.2%). Despite their education level, which is about the same as their Italian counterparts, immigrants are willing to perform any kind of job: only 6.8% of them are qualified workers and almost half of immigrant women are employed in households as caregivers - a job which continues to be snubbed by Italian women.

The long economic crisis seems not to have affected the immigrant **entrepreneurial spirit**, as their enterprises account for 9.1% of the total active businesses in Italy. They are also performing well in the **real estate and mortgage sectors** (with an incidence of 8.7% and 13.6% respectively in 2015, according to surveys by Scenari Immobiliari and Tecnocasa Group). As in previous years, in 2015 **social security contributions** paid by immigrants were high (10.9 billion euros), whereas the percentage of pensioners was very low (only 0.3% of all pensioners in Italy). Due to this and other factors examined by the *Dossier*, the balance between contributions paid by immigrants and **the amount of state expenditure is positive by 2.2 billion euros**.

Immigrants also play a **very important role for the demographic balance of our country**, which is currently negative (162,000 more deaths than births in 2015) and will worsen in the period 2011-2065. According to the mid-variant case scenario projected by Istat, the deficit will be no less than 11.5 million people (28.5 million births vs 40 million deaths), which will be partially compensated by new migration flows, with a positive balance of 12 million people (17.9 million entries vs 5.9 exits).

Immigration is destined to play a key role in Italy's future, as the immigrant population is expected to double by 2050, in addition to a strong increase of naturalizations. Such inflows will cause obvious problems, but they are necessary for the demographic balance of our country. The goal of this *2016 Statistic Dossier on Immigration*, therefore, consists in providing statistical data which may lead us to an unbiased view of the immigration phenomenon, as well as urging policy makers to enact new and adequate migratory policies. So far, Italy's economy has remained weak, but if (and when) it starts to grow again (currently the biggest problem for Italy), immigration will represent an indispensable force and the reasons for cohabitation will be better understood.