
Caritas-Migrantes, more than 5.3 million immigrants in Italy. Declining trend and no health emergency

What has been the impact of the coronavirus on immigrants residing in Italy? How did it affect the poorest segments of the population, employment, public education and healthcare? What are the true numbers of what is perceived as an "invasion" but does not correspond to the actual figures? The 24th Immigration Report 2020 published by Caritas Italy and the Migrantes Foundation, titled "Knowing in order to understand", provides the answers to these questions. Like every year, the comprehensive publication examines the diverse situations of 5,306,548 immigrants living in Italy, accounting for 8.8% of the population. A trend that has been growing for decades is now declining.

The main migration countries are Romania, Morocco, Albania, China, Ukraine and India.



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[Between 2018 and 2019 there were only 47,000 more residents and 2,500 more residence permit holders, with a decrease in the births of immigrant children - from 67,933 in 2017 to 62,944 in 2019. Citizenship acquisitions also dropped from 146,000 in 2017 to 127,000 in 2019.](#)

[The tendency towards permanent residence is confirmed with 62.3% of long-term resident status.](#)

[A mere 5.7% of the permits are related to asylum and international protection, with only 1.5% of study permits. There were 860,000 foreign students in schools, 64% born in Italy. In 2019, approximately 860,000 foreign students were enrolled in Italian schools, i.e. 10% of the total. 64.4% of foreign students were born in Italy but are not Italian citizens. Caritas and Migrantes are asking "to](#)

change the old law, overcoming political impediments that harm minors because of a situation that is hostage to politics." **5.1% tested positive, "no health emergency."** Between May and June 2020 only 0.4% of 59,648 foreigners registered in asylum seekers' reception facilities tested positive to Covid-19. As of April 22, 2020 only 5.1% of 179,200 persons diagnosed with the virus in Italy were of foreign nationality. "In recent months - is underlined in the Report - there was no health alarm linked to the presence of foreign nationals." **38.4% poor because of the lockdown. Educational poverty risk.** During the three-month lockdown, Caritas supported 445,585 people in various ways, exceeding the annual average of about 200,000 persons. Of these, 38.4% were foreigners. Out of 129,434 "new poor" who turned to Caritas during the same period, 32.9% were non-nationals. The pandemic and remote learning had a strong impact, however, as foreign children receive no help from their families "owing to poor computer and language skills." Another year of blended and distance learning risks exacerbating "disparities between non-native and Italian students." Bengali and Pakistani families were among those experiencing the greatest difficulties. **207,542 applications for regularization, 85% for domestic workers.** The regularization act enacted by the government during the lockdown, to cope with the lack of foreign labour, resulted in "merely" 207,542 applications, mostly for domestic work (85% of the total) with the remaining for other sectors, primarily agriculture. In Italy there are 2,505,000 foreign workers, representing 10.7% of total employment. 87% of foreign workers are subordinate workers. **54.1% are Christians. Increasing numbers of Catholics, Muslims unchanged.** The vast majority of foreigners resident in Italy (as of January 1, 2020) are Christian (54.1%), an increase compared to the beginning of 2019 (they amounted to 53.6%). In 2019, foreign Christians resident in Italy increased by 97 thousand (+3.4%), after the sharp drop (145 thousand individuals) of the previous year, standing at over 2.9 million believers and prospective believers, including minors. Among Christians, the absolute majority is Orthodox.

The highest growth recorded in 2019 is among Catholics, with 103 thousand more faithful (+10.5%).

The number of Muslim foreigners resident in Italy remained unchanged during 2019 (-0.4%), slightly less than 1.6 million. Most of them were Moroccan, Albanian and Bangladeshi. There are also about 174 thousand Buddhist foreigners in Italy (3.2% of immigrants resident in Italy), 96 thousand Hindus (1.8%), 51 thousand Sikhs (1.0%) and 44 thousand foreigners belonging to other religions (0.8%). **Security and Immigration bill:** Caritas Italy and the Migrants Foundation welcomed "the amendments" to the bill, pointing out that "legality and integration must follow suit". They voiced "satisfaction" for the amendments to the security and immigration bill in the hope that "policy-makers will continue to pursue the path of legality and integration, sustaining it not only with the relevant regulatory reform process, but also with proactive support policies", fostering "compliance with legal migrant pathways." Just over 28 thousand residence permits were granted pursuant to the norms stipulated in the Security and Immigration bill, but "there is always a risk of falling into irregular situations."

It is estimated that approximately 650,000 people living in Italy are illegal immigrants.

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