

Foreigners in Italy: characteristics and behaviours' changes over the last ten years

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Abstract The immigrated family presents a strong dynamism due to the continuous efforts of re-composition and renewal, to which the definition of patchwork family well adapts. The topic of family reunification is becoming evermore important in Italy from a numerical point of view too. Data on the permits to stay enable to analyse the family reunification process. Survey on marriages represents yet another precious source for monitoring the phenomenon of families with at least one foreign member. One of the most significant new aspects of the last decade is surely the increase in marriages in which one or both spouses are foreigner.

For family formations and reunifications, we can observe a large variability by citizenship. The aim of this paper is to analyse the different characteristics and behaviours of the main citizenships present in Italy observing the changes occurred in the last ten years.

Keywords: Immigration; family; demographic behaviours

1 General framework

Migration flows have greatly increased in Italy in the last decades. The first flows of foreigners started to arrive in Italy during the 1970s. As from 1980s mainly young men arrived in Italy, initially from North Africa. Subsequently, the role of Italy as country of immigration became more consolidated involving a growing number of sending countries. Later, the inflows of women became relevant too, either for reunification processes or as breadwinners, thereby revealing a progressive feminisation of the immigration. Gender dimension of migration can be considered as

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the result of the different migration projects and perspectives. The classic iconography of the male breadwinner does not apply as regards some foreign communities in Italy.

The immigrated family presents a strong dynamism due to the continuous efforts of re-composition and renewal, to which the definition of patchwork family well adapts. The topic of family reunification is becoming evermore important in Italy from a quantitative point of view too. The main obstacles to family reunification are represented by the bureaucratic difficulties (especially in the country of origin and which often end up in corruption) but also the psychological-relational or yet economic aspects have to be considered (Istat, 2007b).

Data on permits to stay enable to analyse the family reunifications. The share of permits to stay issued for family reasons is definitively on the increase, from 14.2% in 1992 to 33 % in 2008. The trend of the family permits to stay appears over time strongly linked with the various regularisation procedures (Istat, 2005). In particular, some family members of foreigners already living in Italy could be involved as workers in the regularisation that began in 2002.

Furthermore, the citizens of the EU member countries, since 2007, are not anymore obliged to have a residence permit but they have the possibility to register directly in Municipal Registers. The permits are now referable only to countries not EU members.

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2 Description of recent trends

The main structural characteristics of the foreign population with a regular residence permit have radically changed over time: both the share of women (from 40% in 1992 to 48% in 2008) and the share of married couples (from 41% in 1992 to 56% in 2008) have increased. Thus, the immigrant communities in Italy are evermore characterised by a balanced gender ratio and by a high diffusion of family groups, thereby indicating their progressive stabilisation.

The geographical areas of origin of citizens who reunite with their family have deeply changed over time. The most evident increases regard citizens from Central-eastern Europe and, in particular, Albania and countries of the former Yugoslavia. A similar evolution, but at a less sustained increasing trend, has been registered in the case of African, Asian and South American citizens.

It does change though when considering the incidence of family reasons, which, on average, equals 33.0 percent (Table 1). The first positions regard Brazil (63.2%), Macedonia, former Republic of Yugoslavia (FYROM) (43.4%), Albania (43.0%), Morocco (35.6%), Serbia-Montenegro² (35.4%), Tunisia (34.0%), India (33.5%) and Ghana (32.0%).

The share of family permits issued to women is 75.4%. However, stronger is a community characterised by forerunner women, lower will be such share. This is real,

² Montenegro in 2006 became an independent State; however the information today available don't allow yet distinguishing by citizenship the persons of the two different States.

for example, for women from the Philippines (56.8% of women) and Peru (65%). China presents a different situation, as the ratio between genders has been relatively more balanced ever since the beginning.

Table 1: Permits to stay for family reasons by main countries of citizenship on January 1st, 2008

<i>Main countries of citizenship</i>	<i>Permits to stay for family reasons</i>	<i>Per 100 permits</i>	<i>Ratio females permits for family reasons (%)</i>
Albania	130709	43.0	76.5
Bangladesh	13114	25.8	85.7
Brazil	22386	63.2	80.4
China	34046	24.7	67.6
Ecuador	13230	24.4	66.1
Egypt	15051	28.4	70.8
Philippines	13463	16.1	56.8
Ghana	9162	32.0	76.8
India	22081	33.5	78.9
FYROM	20889	43.3	77.0
Morocco	98719	35.6	76.5
Moldova	16224	22.4	71.1
Nigeria	8522	28.2	77.6
Pakistan	11075	28.1	73.8
Peru	15100	26.1	65.0
Senegal	7637	15.2	66.0
Serbia and Montenegro	21632	35.4	77.1
Sri Lanka	13585	26.6	81.3
Tunisia	22826	34.0	71.7
Total number of permits to stay	680225	33.0	75.4

Source: elaboration on Istat data.

Survey on marriages represents yet another precious source for monitoring the phenomenon of families with at least one foreign member. One of the most significant new aspects of the last decade is surely the increase in marriages in which at least one spouse is foreigner (Istat, 2007a; Istat, 2007b). In 2007, 34.6 thousand marriages, with at least one foreign spouse, were celebrated, thus equalling 13.8% of all marriages registered in Italy. Such share, though still rather limited, is very significant, as it reveals a continuous and rapid increase (only 4.8% of all marriages in 1995), and because a marriage with a foreign citizen represents one of the most important indicators regarding the stabilisation and integration process of the immigrant communities in Italy.

Mixed marriages³ represent the most consistent share of all marriages with at least one foreign spouse and totalled, in 2007, about 23,500 marriages (9.4 percent).

Mixed marriages are particularly interesting since they are an example of the melting pot of cultures and of the non-complete sharing of the traditional values that

³ We intend for mixed marriages the marriages celebrated between Italian and foreign citizens.

these unions generate and which rest on a series of general and specific factors. They indeed represent a threefold bet for who emigrates: one with himself or herself, one with the family of origin and one with the host society. Among the various types of mixed marriage it is possible to mention: marriages of convenience, facilitator marriages for a quicker integration, marriages through an agency (following a choice made when “at a distance”), marriages for cultural reasons (to break all links with the culture of the clan of origin). Nonetheless, the available official sources do not allow identifying and distinguishing the various types (Tognetti, 2001).

As regards the mixed couples, the most frequent type is the one with Italian groom and foreign bride: 7 marriages out of 100 at a national average level (in Central-northern Italy, this share rises to 11.9 marriages out of every 100) and for a total of 17.7 thousand marriages celebrated in 2007. Italian women who chose a foreign partner account for a little less than 6 thousand (more than 2% of the total of female spouses).

Italian men and women present a different propensity when marrying a foreign citizen not only in terms of frequency but also regarding important characteristics of the spouses, such as the citizenship (Table 2).

Table 2: Marriages with at least one foreign spouse by main countries of citizenship. Year 2007 (percentages)

<i>Main countries of citizenship</i>	<i>Italian groom and foreign bride</i>	<i>Main countries of citizenship</i>	<i>Foreign groom and Italian bride</i>	<i>Main countries of citizenship</i>	<i>Both foreign spouses (a) (b)</i>
Romania	13.0	Morocco	19.4	Romania	16.8
Ukraine	10.4	Albania	10.1	China	11.6
Brazil	9.8	Tunisia	8.0	Nigeria	9.4
Poland	6.6	Egypt	5.8	Morocco	8.2
Russia, Federation	6.0	Brazil	4.9	Ecuador	7.9
Moldova	4.8	United Kingdom	4.6	Peru	6.5
Albania	4.2	Germany	3.5	Moldova	5.0
Morocco	3.8	USA	3.3	Albania	3.3
Peru	2.7	Senegal	3.2	Ukraine	2.9
Cuba	2.6	France	2.6	Brazil	2.6
Ecuador	2.3	Cuba	2.4	Poland	2.3
Germany	2.1	Romania	2.1	Ghana	2.3
Nigeria	2.0	Spain	1.6	Senegal	1.4
Dominican, Republic	1.8	Nigeria	1.3	FYROM	1.4
Colombia	1.5	Pakistan	1.2	Cote d'Ivoire	1.2
Others	26.5	Others	25.9	Others	17.1
Total (a. v.)	17663	Total (a. v.)	5897	Total (a. v.)	5372

Source: elaboration on Istat data.

(a) Bride's citizenship.

(b) Only marriages with at least a spouse resident in Italy.

Italian men who marry a foreigner show a preference for women from Europe (Romania, Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Moldova and Albania) and from central-south America (mainly Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Cuba). Italian women who marry a foreigner prefer men from North Africa, mainly Morocco and Tunisia, and citizens from Europe, mainly Albania and Romania.

Marriages between two foreign spouses are a minority (4.4 percent of the marriages) and are even further halved when considering only marriages in which at least one of the spouses resides in Italy. Italy appears to be very attractive to many citizens coming from advanced countries (especially Europeans, Americans and Japanese), who choose it as country to celebrate their marriage.

Foreign resident citizens present different attitudes as regards getting married in Italy, an attitude that is not directly to be referred to the demographic relevance of each community. If, on the one hand, marriages between Romanian people are the most common, on the other hand, citizens from Morocco, another numerous community among the resident ones, rarely get married in Italy.

The reasons behind these different attitudes toward marriage are most likely to be searched in the different migratory models of each community. Foreign citizens got married in their own country of origin in many cases live together the migratory experience, in other cases they reunite subsequently in Italy when one of the two has been living stably in our country.

Data on births of the resident population allow completing the context of the immigrants' family behaviours. Evermore frequently, foreign men and women choose to fulfil their reproductive process in Italy. Such decision is very important in the life history of a parent, as it indicates a long-term project that involves not only the parents but also their descendants (Istat, 2007b).

To give birth to a child represents a settlement behaviour, a signal of the stability of their presence, correctly measured by the data on births of the resident population. Children born from couples with both foreign parents represent an ever-higher share of the total of births. Out of the 556 thousand births enlisted in the municipality registers, in 2007, 11.3% (63 thousand births) were foreigner, that is, with both foreign parents. This rate rises to 15.9% when considering also the children born from mixed couples. Comparing the types of couples, the situation related to the births is completely different from the one related to the marriages; in this last case mixed couples largely exceed those where both spouses are foreigner, given that family reunifications largely regard immigrants who are already married.

The Maghreb, Albanian and Chinese communities present a very high homogamy, just as all Asian and African communities. On the other hand, Ukraine, Polish, Moldovan, Russian and Cuban women have more frequently children with Italian partners rather than with men of the same citizenship. The Romanian community, at last, is characterised by a high homogamy (about two thirds of the births), but shows also a non-negligible propensity towards having children with an Italian partner.

3 Description of MFA main results

Observing the different characteristics of the main citizenships in Italy, it is interesting to enucleate specific aspects of migratory models. It is possible to evaluate such aspects, taking into account at the same time a series of indicators that synthesise the main structural characteristics of the foreign communities. The indicators are: sex ratio, percentage of permits to work, percentage of permits for family reasons, birth rate, percentage of marriages with foreign bride and Italian groom, percentage of marriages with Italian bride and foreign groom, percentage of marriages with both foreign spouses, percentage of long-term presence (at least ten years)⁴.

To synthesize the phenomenon into a limited number of dimensions, we used a Multiple Factorial Analysis (MFA) which deals with data table in which a set of individuals is described by several sets (Bolasco, 1999). In this analysis, we considered twenty citizenships (first 20 per number of resident population excluding EU member countries⁵) and three different periods: 1999-2000, 2003-2004 and 2007-2008⁶. In particular, the 2003-2004 supposes to reflect the effects of the “great regularisation” occurred in 2002.

The cumulated variability of the first two axes accounts for more than 67%.

The first axis could be defined as “gender axis”. The positive semi-axis indeed shows a high sex ratio (more foreign men than foreign women), a large share of mixed marriages where the groom is foreigner, a high birth rate (especially in the second period) and, for the first period considered (1999-2000), a high share of permits to work. It refers to situations where the man plays the role of breadwinner. On the other hand, the negative side registers a high incidence of mixed couples where the bride is foreign and, for the first period (1999-2000), a high share of permits for family reasons.

The second axis reveals an evident opposition work/family. The positive side of the axis presents the highest share of permits to work and a high level of marriages with foreign brides. The negative side of the axis indeed indicates a clear prevalence of family permits accompanied, for the period 1999-2000, with a large share of marriages with foreign grooms. The percentage of marriages with both foreign spouses seems not to characterise strongly the factorial plan but it is possible to find this indicator in the positive side of this axis.

Hence, we can observe two alternative family formation processes: on the one hand, the re-composition of a previously broken family groups through the reunification procedures, and, on the other hand, the constitution of a new family on the Italian territory. For the first period, the marriages with foreign grooms strongly characterise the second axis; for the second period, the reunification process seems to be the most relevant variable; for the last period, the two phenomena show almost the same influence on the second axis.

The projection of the considered units (in this case each citizenship) onto the plane defined by the first two factorial axes provides additional indications to clarify the

⁴ In a second step we excluded this indicator from the analysis because in a first exploratory attempt it came out not much representative.

⁵ The EU member countries have been excluded from the analysis (also for previous periods in which data on EU members countries were available) in order to use the data on permits to stay in a comparable way.

⁶ The first year refer to flow data, the second to stock data at first January.

analysis (Figure 1). In the figure, we can observe, for each country, the average points and, for the countries for which it is possible to draw longer trajectories, also the points referred to the different periods considered.

In particular, among the citizenships characterised by a large male share, there are some communities with a great number of marriages and a quite high level of births rate. They are Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Tunisia. Peculiar is the behaviour of Senegal that appears essentially work-oriented even if in 2008 this characteristic seems to be less marked.

Among the "female" citizenships, Ukraine and Moldova show the highest propensity to the marriage. The migration projects of female breadwinners seem not to exclude family formation in Italy. As a matter of fact, women from Ukraine, Moldova, Sri Lanka, Peru and Philippines appear as good examples of conciliation of work and family projects. Different is the case of Brazilian women that show a large propensity for the family reunification.

Considering the longest trajectories, it is interesting to observe the distance between the period 1999-2000 and 2003-2004 probably due to the influence of the 2002 regularisation. This procedure involved in particular some "new" communities such as Ukraine and Moldova.

After the regularisation process for work reasons occurred in 2002, the opposition between work and family - that characterises in particular the second factor - comes out as an element of particular interest and seems to acquire a cross-citizenship significance. On the other side, for the aspects connected to the family formation it is more difficult to find trend lines.

For many citizenships, it is interesting to single out that intermediate values are registered in 2007-2008. As a matter of fact, a regularisation process for work reasons is generally followed by an increase in family reunifications. This increase seems to partially re-equilibrate the shift towards work reason observed in the previous period.

Furthermore, some communities seem to draw an integration path after the regularisation period. It is in particular the case of Egypt that passes from a model tied to the forerunner male, observed in 2004, to a model more focused on family, in 2008.

The familiar behaviours of foreigners living in Italy reflect the cultural models of their country of origin, their different migratory projects and the different stabilisation and integration degree of the various communities. These behaviours are interesting to be studied in order to underline differences and similarities between different communities across the time.

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Figure 1: Countries of citizenship projected on the first factorial plan

