



**ETHNIC COUNCIL
OF SHEPPARTON AND DISTRICT Inc.**

Reg. No. A6321

Italian Community Profile



September 2017

Country Background

Official Name

Republic of Italy

Location

Italy is located in Southern Europe, between latitudes 35° and 47° N, and longitudes 6° and 19° E. To the north, Italy borders France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia, and is roughly delimited by the Alpine watershed, enclosing the Po Valley and the Venetian Plain. To the south, it consists of the entirety of the Italian Peninsula and the two Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia, in addition to many smaller islands. The sovereign states of San Marino and the Vatican City are enclaves within Italy, while Campione d'Italia is an Italian exclave in Switzerland.

The country's total area is 301,230 square kilometres (116,306 sq mi), of which 294,020 km² (113,522 sq mi) is land and 7,210 km² (2,784 sq mi) is water. Including the islands, Italy has a coastline and border of 7,600 kilometres (4,722 miles) on the Adriatic, Ionian, Tyrrhenian seas (740 km (460 mi)), and borders shared with France (488 km (303 mi)), Austria (430 km (267 mi)), Slovenia (232 km (144 mi)) and Switzerland (740 km (460 mi)). San Marino (39 km (24 mi)) and Vatican City (3.2 km (2.0 mi)), both enclaves, account for the remainder.¹



Population

Italy has 60,656,000 inhabitants according to estimates current as of January 1, 2016 (ISTAT) Its population density, at 201 inhabitants per square kilometre (520/sq mi), is higher than that of most Western European countries. However the distribution of the population is widely uneven. The most densely populated areas are the Po Valley (that accounts for almost half of the national population) and the metropolitan areas of Rome and Naples, while vast regions such as the Alps and Apennines highlands, the plateaus of Basilicata and the island of Sardinia are very sparsely populated.

The population of Italy almost doubled during the twentieth century, but the pattern of growth was extremely uneven due to large-scale internal migration from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North, a phenomenon which happened as a consequence of the Italian economic miracle of the 1950-60s. In addition, after centuries of net emigration, from the 1980s Italy has experienced large-scale immigration for the first time in modern history. According to the Italian government, there were an estimated 5,000,073 foreign nationals resident in Italy.

High fertility and birth rates persisted until the 1970s, after which they started to dramatically decline, leading to rapid population aging. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, one in five Italians was over 65 years old. However, as a result of the massive immigration of the last two decades, in recent years Italy experienced a significant growth in birth rates. The total fertility rate has also climbed from an all-time low of 1.18 children per woman in 1995 to 1.41 in 2008.

Since the 1984 Lateran Treaty agreement, Italy has no official religion. However, it recognizes the role the Catholic Church plays in Italian society. 87.8% of the population identify as Catholic, 5.8% as non-believers or atheists, 2.6% as Muslims, and 3.8% adhere to other religions.

History

The history of Italy begins with the arrival of the first hominins 850,000 years ago at Monte Poggiolo. Italy shows evidence of habitation by anatomically modern humans beginning about 43,000 years ago. It is reached by the Neolithic as early as 6000-5500 BC Cardium Pottery and Impressed ware. The Italian Bronze Age begins around 1500 BC, likely corresponding to the arrival of Indo-European speakers whose descendants would become the Italic peoples of the Iron Age; alongside the early Italic cultures, however, the Etruscan civilization in central Italy, Celts in northern Italy and Greek colonies in the south flourished during 8th to 5th centuries BC.

Among the Italic peoples, the Latins, originally situated in the Latium region, and their Latin language would come to dominate the peninsula with the Roman conquest of Italy in the 3rd century BC. The Roman Republic and later the Roman Empire dominated Italy for many centuries, and furthermore established the culture and civilization of Western Europe in general, including the adoption and subsequent spread of Christianity as state religion at the end of the 4th century.

The decline and collapse of the Western Empire by the end of the 5th century is taken to mark the end of Late Antiquity. A Lombard Kingdom of Italy was established, although parts of the peninsula remained under Byzantine rule and influence until the 11th century. The Lombard kingdom was incorporated into Francia and ultimately the Holy Roman Empire, although the rise of city-states, and especially the powerful maritime republics in the medieval period led to political fragmentation. Ultimately, after the disastrous Italian Wars, the peninsula was divided among the major foreign powers of Early Modern Europe, Spain and Austria, and later fell to the French Empire under Napoleon I, the Papal States being reduced to the control of the Holy See over Rome.

With the rise of nationalism and the idea of the nation state in the 19th century, the peninsula was unified in the late 19th century. The new Kingdom of Italy, established in 1861, quickly modernized and built a large colonial empire, colonizing parts of Africa, and countries along the Mediterranean. However, many regions of the young nation (notably, the South) remained rural and poor, originating the Italian diaspora. Part of the victorious allied powers of World War I, Italy defeated its historical enemy, the Austrian Empire. Soon afterwards, however, the liberal state collapsed to social unrest: the Fascists, led by Benito Mussolini, took over and set up an authoritarian dictatorship. Italy joined the Axis powers in World War II, falling into a bloody Civil War in 1943, with the Fascist faction finally defeated in the spring of 1945.

In 1946, as a result of a Constitutional Referendum, the monarchy was abolished. The new republic was proclaimed on 2 June 1946. In the 1950s and 1960s, Italy saw a period of rapid modernization and sustained economic growth, the so-called Italian economic miracle. The country, coming back to international politics among Western democratic powers, joined the European Economic Community (which has later constituted the European Union), the United Nations, NATO, the G7 and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Italy plays a prominent role in regional and global military, cultural and diplomatic affairs.

Ethnicity, language and religion

Ethnicity

In 2014, Italy had about 4.9 million foreign residents, making up some 8.1% of the total population. The figures include more than half a million children born in Italy to foreign nationals—second generation immigrants, but exclude foreign nationals who have subsequently acquired Italian nationality; this applies to about 130,000 people a year. The official figures also exclude illegal immigrants, which were estimated in 2008 to number at least 670,000.

Starting from the early 1980s, until then a linguistically and culturally homogeneous society, Italy began to attract substantial flows of foreign immigrants. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and, more recently, the 2004 and 2007 enlargements of the European Union, large waves of migration originated from the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe (especially Romania, Albania, Ukraine and Poland). An equally important source of immigration is neighbouring North Africa (in particular, Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia), with soaring arrivals as a consequence of the Arab Spring. Furthermore, in recent years, growing migration fluxes from the Far East (notably, China and the Philippines) and Latin America (mainly from Peru and Ecuador) have been recorded.

Currently, about one million Romanian citizens (around one tenth of them being Roma) are officially registered as living in Italy, representing thus the most important individual country of origin, followed by Albanians and Moroccans with about 500,000 people each. The number of unregistered Romanians is difficult to estimate, but the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network suggested in 2007 that there might have been half a million or more. Overall, at the end of the 2000s (decade) the foreign born population of Italy was from: Europe (54%), Africa (22%), Asia (16%), the Americas (8%) and Oceania (0.06%). The distribution of immigrants is largely uneven in Italy: 87% of immigrants live in the northern and central parts of the country (the most economically developed areas), while only 13% live in the southern half of the peninsula.

Language

Italy's official language is Italian. It is estimated that there are about 64 million native Italian speakers while the total number of Italian speakers, including those who use it as a second language, is about 85 million. Italy has numerous regional dialects, however, the establishment of a national education system has led to decrease in variation in the languages spoken across the country during the 20th century. Standardisation was further expanded in the 1950s and 1960s thanks to economic growth and the rise of mass media and television (the state broadcaster RAI helped set a standard Italian).

Twelve historical minority languages are legally recognised: Albanian, Catalan, German, Greek, Slovene, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian (Law number 482 of 15 December 1999). French is co-official in the Valle d'Aosta—although in fact Franco-Provençal is more commonly spoken there. German has the same status in South Tyrol as, in some parts of that province and in parts of the neighbouring Trentino, does Ladin. Slovene is officially recognised in the provinces of Trieste, Gorizia and Udine.

Because of significant recent immigration, Italy has sizeable populations whose native language is not Italian. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics, Romanian is the most common mother tongue among foreign residents in Italy: almost 800,000 people speak Romanian as their first language (21.9% of the foreign residents aged 6 and over). Other prevalent mother tongues are Arabic (spoken by over 475,000 people; 13.1% of foreign residents), Albanian (380,000 people) and Spanish (255,000 people). Other languages spoken in Italy are Ukrainian, Hindi, Polish, and Tamil amongst others.

Religion

Roman Catholicism is, by far, the largest religion in the country, although Catholicism is no longer officially the state religion. In 2010, the proportion of Italians that identify themselves as Roman Catholic was 81.2%.

The Holy See, the episcopal jurisdiction of Rome, contains the central government of the entire Roman Catholic Church, including various agencies essential to administration. Diplomatically, it is recognised by other subjects of international law as a sovereign entity, headed by the Pope, who is also the Bishop of Rome, with which diplomatic relations can be maintained. Often incorrectly referred to as "the Vatican", the Holy See is not the same entity as the Vatican City State, which came into existence only in 1929; the Holy See dates back to early Christian times. Ambassadors are officially accredited not to the Vatican City State but to "the Holy See", and papal representatives to states and international organisations are recognised as representing the Holy See, not the Vatican City State.

Minority Christian faiths in Italy include Eastern Orthodox, Waldensians and Protestant communities. In 2011, there were an estimated 1.5 million Orthodox Christians in Italy, or 2.5% of the population; 0.5 million Pentecostals and Evangelicals (of whom 0.4 million are members of the Assemblies of God), 235,685 Jehovah's Witnesses, 30,000 Waldensians, 25,000 Seventh-day Adventists, 22,000 Latter-day Saints, 15,000 Baptists (plus some 5,000 Free Baptists), 7,000 Lutherans, 4,000 Methodists (affiliated with the Waldensian Church).

One of the longest-established minority religious faiths in Italy is Judaism, Jews having been present in Ancient Rome since before the birth of Christ. Italy has for centuries welcomed Jews expelled from other countries, notably Spain. However, as a result of the Holocaust,

about 20% of Italian Jews lost their lives. This, together with the emigration that preceded and followed World War II, has left only a small community of around 28,400 Jews in Italy.

Soaring immigration in the last two decades has been accompanied by an increase in non-Christian faiths. In 2010, there were 1.6 million Muslims in Italy, forming 2.6 percent of population. In addition, there are more than 200,000 followers of faiths originating in the Indian subcontinent with some 70,000 Sikhs with 22 Gurudwaras across the country, 70,000 Hindus, and 50,000 Buddhists. There were an estimated 4,900 Bahá'ís in Italy in 2005.

The Italian state, as a measure to protect religious freedom, devolves shares of income tax to recognised religious communities, under a regime known as Eight per thousand (Otto per mille). Donations are allowed to Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu communities; however, Islam remains excluded, since no Muslim communities have yet signed a concordat with the Italian state. Taxpayers who do not wish to fund a religion contribute their share to the state welfare system.

Family Values

Italian society is very family-oriented. Parents, elders, children, and extended relatives often gather together to enjoy a home-cooked meal or commemorate religious functions. As such, it is important to have an understanding of how the members of the family interact with one another and their roles within the group as a whole.

Italian families typically employ a traditional positional power-authority structure. As a result, the power is distributed amongst the members of the family in a hierarchical manner. The most powerful family members reside at the top of the hierarchy, while the least powerful members (usually the youngest), are at the bottom of the chain. Children in Italian families typically live at home longer than their counterparts in other Western nations. When he or she does wed, it is not uncommon for the child and his or her spouse to live near the parents of one or both parties in the marriage. Sometimes, they even live in the same building or the same home! Older members of the family are highly respected. Aunts, uncles, and many cousins often grow up under the watchful eye of their grandparents, who are the most honoured members of the family.

Parents of Italian families often exhibit an authoritarian attitude towards making decisions about their children. This is to reinforce the notion that the strongest members of the family hold the most power. As a result, the decision-making structure of Italian families could be classified as one based on accommodation. One person (or sometimes two people) decide what is best for their particular family unit, and the remaining members of the family must accommodate the will of those making the decisions.

Education and Economy

Education

Education in Italy is free and mandatory from ages six to sixteen, and consists of five stages: kindergarten (scuola dell'infanzia), primary school (scuola primaria), lower secondary school (scuola secondaria di primo grado), upper secondary school (scuola secondaria di secondo grado) and university (università).

Primary education lasts eight years. The students are given a basic education in Italian, English, mathematics, natural sciences, history, geography, social studies, physical education and visual and musical arts. Secondary education lasts for five years and includes three traditional types of schools focused on different academic levels: the liceo prepares students for university studies with a classical or scientific curriculum, while the istituto tecnico and the Istituto professionale prepare pupils for vocational education. In 2012, the Italian secondary education has been evaluated as slightly below the OECD average, with a strong and steady improvement in science and mathematics results since 2003; however, a wide gap exists between northern schools, which performed significantly better than the national average (among the best in the world in some subjects), and schools in the South, that had much poorer results.

Tertiary education in Italy is divided between public universities, private universities and the prestigious and selective superior graduate schools, such as the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. The university system in Italy is generally regarded as poor for a world cultural powerhouse, with no universities ranked among the 100 world best and only 20 among the top 500. However, the current government has scheduled major reforms and investments in order to improve the overall internationalisation and quality of the system.¹

Economy

Italy has a capitalist mixed economy, ranking as the third-largest in the Eurozone and the eighth-largest in the world. The country is a founding member of the G7, G8, the Eurozone and the OECD.

Italy is regarded as one of the world's most industrialised nations and a leading country in world trade and exports. It is a highly developed country, with the world's 8th highest quality of life and the 25th Human Development Index. The country is well known for its creative and innovative business, a large and competitive agricultural sector (Italy is the world's largest wine producer), and for its influential and high-quality automobile, machinery, food, design and fashion industry.

Italy is the world's sixth largest manufacturing country, characterised by a smaller number of global multinational corporations than other economies of comparable size and a large number of dynamic small and medium-sized enterprises, notoriously clustered in several industrial districts, which are the backbone of the Italian industry. This has produced a manufacturing sector often focused on the export of niche market and luxury products, that if on one side is less capable to compete on the quantity, on the other side is more capable of facing the competition from China and other emerging Asian economies based on lower labour costs, with higher quality products.

The country was the world's 7th largest exporter in 2009. Italy's closest trade ties are with the other countries of the European Union, with whom it conducts about 59% of its total trade. Its largest EU trade partners, in order of market share, are Germany (12.9%), France (11.4%), and Spain (7.4%). Finally, tourism is one of the fastest growing and profitable sectors of the national economy: with 48.6 million international tourist arrivals and total receipts estimated at \$45.5 billion in 2014, Italy was the fifth most visited country and the sixth highest tourism earner in the world.

Italy is part of the European single market which represents more than 500 million consumers. Several domestic commercial policies are determined by agreements among European Union (EU) members and by EU legislation. Italy introduced the common European currency, the Euro in 2002. It is a member of the Eurozone which represents around 330 million citizens. Its monetary policy is set by the European Central Bank.

Italy has been hit very hard by the Great Recession and the subsequent European sovereign-debt crisis that exacerbated the country's structural problems. Effectively, after a strong GDP growth of 5–6% per year from the 1950s to the early 1970s, and a progressive slowdown in the 1980-90s, the country virtually stagnated in the 2000s.

The political efforts to revive growth with massive government spending eventually produced a severe rise in public debt, that stood at over 135% of GDP in 2014, ranking second in the EU only after the Greek one (at 174%). For all that, the largest chunk of Italian public debt is owned by national subjects, a major difference between Italy and Greece, and the level of household debt is much lower than the OECD average.

A gaping North–South divide is a major factor of socio-economic weakness. It can be noted by the huge difference in statistical income between the northern and southern regions and municipalities. The richest region, Lombardy, earns 127% of the national GDP per capita, while the poorest, Calabria, only 61%. The unemployment rate (11.9%) stands slightly above the Eurozone average, however the average figure is 7.9% in the North and 20.2% in the South.

Italian Community in Australia

Italians have long played an important role in Australia's history. As early as 1676, a Dominican missionary based in Manila prepared a map that featured the Australian land mass. A Venetian was aboard Captain Cook's ship, the Endeavour.

In the nineteenth century, Italian priests carried out missionary work in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory and the Italian linguist Raffaello Carboni, played a significant role in the Eureka Stockade revolt of 1854. Hundreds of Italians were lured to Victoria and Western Australia by the 1850s gold rushes, creating Italian communities that catered to miners on the goldfields.

In 1885 a group of 300 migrants from northern Italy established a traditional Italian community called 'New Italy' in northern New South Wales, in what is now called Woodburn. Italian fishermen also established communities along the south coast of New South Wales, Port Pirie and Fremantle. During this period, Italian labourers arrived in Queensland to work in the cane fields. By the late 1930s, one-third of all Australia's Italian migrants lived in the cane-growing regions of Queensland. Italians also became involved in market gardens, comprising about 40 per cent of Queensland's market gardeners.

After World War II Italian immigration increased dramatically. In 1947 Australia's Italy-born numbered 33,632 and by 1971 this had increased to 289,476. Most Italian migrants came from Sicily, Calabria and Veneto and settled in metropolitan areas. The majority were young single men.

Italy experienced economic buoyancy after 1971, which prompted many Italians to return to Italy. This led to a decline in the size of the Italy-born population in Australia

The Italian Community in Goulburn Valley and Greater Shepparton

History

The Italian migration started in the Goulburn Valley region in 1920s and they were one of the earliest migrants groups to arrive in the region. Now there are over 5000 people in our community who have Italian heritage.

According to the community leaders in the region the main influx of Italian community to the region was from 1950s to 1970s after World War II.

Most of them came from small towns and had a farming background. They were attracted by availability of work in the fruit industry and they could find plenty of work in farms and orchards. Eventually they bought farms and orchards, after working there for several and started growing vegetables and fruits. They introduced traditional Italian vegetables such as eggplant, zucchini, broccoli and turnips. They also introduced their own farming methods.

Regardless whether they were from north or south of Italy, the Italian community work together and built their social and sports clubs in Shepparton, Tatura, Kyabram, Echuca, Cobram and Wangaratta.

Italians are very family oriented and main language spoken by Italians in the region is Italian.

Most of the Italians are Catholics however some of them are Jehovah's Witnesses.

Most of the first generation Italians have passed away and second generation of Italians are now retired. There were farmers, business owners, builders, plumbers and electricians.

Third generation Italians have absorbed into the mainstream community and they involve in each and every sector of employment such as medical, accounting, legal and business.

Issues

The issues identified in the Italian community generally relate to language and 95% of the community is well established. The official language in Italy is Italian, but often, in Australia, a dialect from the many regions is spoken, especially by older Italians.

Not all Italians have had the opportunity to learn English. Many Italians migrated before English proficiency was a criterion to gain entry into the country, and English classes for migrants were either not provided or not easily accessible. Some studies suggest that in excess of 50% of Italian older people have little or no knowledge of the English language. In addition, older Italians may be frustrated and isolated by the younger generation's inability to speak Italian.

Many Italians are unfamiliar, and sometimes may be uncomfortable with interpreters, and may insist on family or friends to act as interpreters. This can cause problems with both the quality of the translation and censoring.

Family members who act as interpreters may not pass on all the information to the older person. In addition, older Italians are unlikely to be able to process information presented in written Italian, as they may have had little education or have bad eyesight for reading.

Older people may have had little interaction with the health system and may be bewildered by Australian health system. This should be handled with great sensitivity.

Being in hospital may be traumatic because of the separation from family and friends.

Ageing population is a significant concern in the Italian community. Traditionally, the family is responsible for looking after older parents and relatives. They are bit reluctant to utilise services available for the elderly and nursing homes.

The care for the Italian aged usually falls on the women of the family. There may be gossip about a family if older people re moved out of the family home, and a daughter may be criticised if a parent is moved to a residential aged care facility.

Awareness of women's health issues among Italian migrant women tends to be poor, with low rates of women having a Pap test, breast examination or a mammogram, or even having heard of these screening measures. They may only seek services for serious illness, not for screening. Younger women have an increased knowledge of health issues.

However older members of the Italian community still need some assistance with English Language and computer literacy and depend on their children and grandchildren.

Language and cultural differences may cause generational issues to arise between older Italians and their Australian-born children and grandchildren.

Contacts

Atillo Borzillo

President – Le Belle Arti

Phone: 0407 099 345

Nello Giansiracusa

President – Tatura Italian Social Club

Phone: 03 5824 2333

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