



THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Annual Report on the Presence of Migrants
Executive Summary



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For nearly a decade, the *Direzione Generale dell'immigrazione e delle politiche di integrazione* (General Directorate of Immigration and Integration Policies) has aimed to provide a detailed and balanced account of the complex phenomenon of the presence of foreigners in Italy and to do so by setting forth the various distinct aspects of the question while analysing the characteristics noted and also anticipating today's trends. The Directorate does so by means of its *Rapporto nazionale sui migranti nel Mercato del lavoro italiano* (National reports on migrants in the Italian labour market) (tenth edition), the *Rapporti nazionali sulla presenza in Italia delle principali Comunità straniere* (National reports on the main foreign communities in Italy) (ninth edition) and the *Rapporti sulla presenza dei migranti non comunitari nelle 14 città metropolitane italiane* (Reports on the presence of non-EU migrants in the 14 metropolitan cities of Italy) (fifth edition).

The series of national reports on the presence of the main foreign communities aims to investigate and study in depth the presence on Italian soil of the more numerically significant non-EU nationals: Moroccans, Albanians, Chinese, Ukrainians, Indians, Filipinos, Bangladeshis, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Moldovans, Nigerians, the Senegalese, Sri Lankans, Tunisians, Peruvians and Ecuadorians.


For each grouping, the main features from the socio-demographic and employment dimensions are considered, alongside presence of minors and their education, occupational integration and welfare policies. Each report starts with comparison among the various communities. The data used for the analysis relate to periods prior to the spread of the SARS-COV-2 virus. Therefore, this edition of the reports does not provide for an overview of the effects of the pandemic crisis on the social and labour integration of migrants.

Again, this year we duly acknowledge the contributions of institutions and bodies that have provided information in their possession. These entities include the Italian National Institute of Statistics; the General statistical and actuarial coordination body of INPS (National Social Security Institute); the Ministry of Education, University and Research; the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture; the CeSPI (Centre for Politics and International Studies); the trade unions CGIL, CISL, UIL and UGL; and the *Divisione Studi e Ricerca* (Study and Research Division) of ANPAL Servizi.

The full series of *Rapporti Comunità* (Community reports), editions 2012 - 2020, can be accessed – in Italian and in the main foreign languages – in the section “Studi e statistiche” (Studies and Statistics) on the institutional website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – www.lavoro.gov.it and on the institutional portal www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it. These addresses also provide access to a statistical annex providing information that supplements the reports or that, within a comparative framework among the main national communities considered, enables in-depth study of the data analysed.

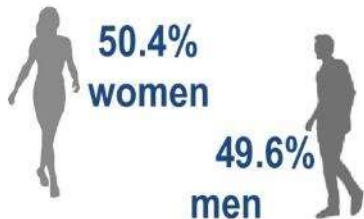
Within the ambit of the projects, *Assistenza tecnica per il Supporto alla governance integrata delle politiche migratorie tra lavoro e integrazione sociale* (PR.Au.D. - *Protezione, Autonomia, Dignità dal lavoro*) and *Supporto nelle politiche per l'immigrazione e di cooperazione bilaterale con i Paesi di origine*, ANPAL Servizi has drawn up and translated the 2020 edition of its *Rapporti nazionali sulle principali Comunità straniere* (National reports on the main foreign communities) – analytic reports provided in summary form.

Executive Summary



301,073
Legally residing Chinese citizens
Ranking 3rd for number of presences

8.3% of non-EU citizens in Italy



50.4%
women

49.6%
men

43.4% under the age of 30



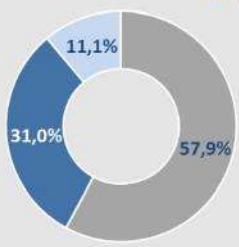
78,876
Minors under the age of 18

Present in:

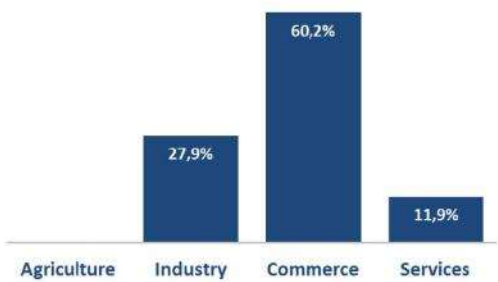
- 23.5%** Lombardia
- 19.3%** Toscana
- 12.7%** Veneto

60.1%
 Long-period residents

39.9% Short-term permits



- Work (57.9%)
- Family (31.0%)
- Other reasons (11.1%)



75.5% employment rate
81.2% male 69.8% female

34.8%
 wholesale and retail trade
 employed workers




58.7% sales workers

2nd position in sole proprietorship ranking (13.9%)

53,297 sole proprietors (+0.6%)
46.7% Chinese female sole proprietors (+1.4%)

36% sole proprietorship in the **Commerce** sector



Demographic characteristics

301,073 Chinese citizens hold a residence permit that was valid on **1 January 2020** (8.3% of non-EU citizens in Italy).

The Chinese community ranks third for number of legally residing members and shows a marked propensity for the development of autonomous entrepreneurship and a family-type migration pattern. Despite a history of recent migration in Italy, this pattern has allowed a **balanced gender composition**, in line with that of non-EU citizens as a whole: 49.6% of Chinese citizens legally residing in Italy are men while 50.4% are women. The high quotient of minors in the community (26.2% vs 22% of non-EU citizens as a whole) proves the strong presence of families. On average, the community is also younger than the non-EU citizens as a whole and, overall, 43.4% of citizens of Chinese origin are under 30 (the quotient falls to 39.7% of the non-EU population as a whole). We note the scarce presence of senior people: only 8.8% of the resident Chinese members are over 55 vs 14% of the non-EU population as a whole.

In terms of geographical distribution of this community, Northern Italy is the zone most favoured, where 56.7% of Chinese citizens reside (a value lower compared to the number of non-EU citizens residing in Italy, i.e., 61.5%). Accordingly, two of the three top regions for numbers of Chinese residents are Lombardia (which hosts 23.5% of Chinese residents, vs ¼ of non-EU citizens as a whole), and Veneto (ranking third for number of Chinese citizens) with an incidence of 12.7% (for non-EU citizens the incidence falls to 10.2%). A particularly significant quotient reside in Toscana, which ranks second for number of Chinese residents, where 19.3% of Chinese citizens received or renewed their residence permit, with an incidence that is approx. 11% higher than for migrants of non-EU origin as a whole. While as few 11.2% as of this community reside in Southern Italy (a value slightly lower than for non-EU citizens legally residing in Italy as a whole). The concentration in the Province of Prato (hosting 10% of this community) is particularly noteworthy.

The marked extent of stability or entrenchment of this community is confirmed by an analysis of **residence permits**: the quotient of long-term permit holders (holders of residence permits that are not subject to renewal) among Chinese citizens totals 60.1% (approx. 3% lower than the value recorded for non-EU citizens as a whole). However, it increased by more than 3% compared to the previous year, while the non-EU population as a whole experienced a weaker increase (+0.8%).

The main pull-factor is work, which affects approximately 58% of the permits subject to renewal (vs 29.4% of non-EU citizens as a whole). Just under 1/3 of the permits is ascribable to family reunifications (for non-EU citizens the quotient rises to 46.7%). The Chinese community is characterized by the high quotient of residents for study reasons (9.4% vs an average of 3.8%). Indeed, among the main non-EU communities, the Chinese one ranks first for the incidence of this reason.

Current trends

For the first time, after years of stability in the presences, we note a significant reduction in the number of legally residing members compared to the previous year: -2.7%. The presence of non-EU citizens in Italy decreased by 101,580 units between 1 January 2019 and 1 January 2020. The reduction concerns all the main foreign communities with the exception of Indian and Bangladeshi, which record increases of 1.7% and 1.8%, respectively. The most significant reductions concern the Nigerian community (-8.2%), which from ranking eleventh now ranks fourteenth, the Ecuadorian community (-6.2%) and the Chinese community (-5.3%).

Two main opposite factors affect the trends of presences: on the one hand, the new permits issued attesting to an inflow impacting the stock of legally residing members, and, on the other, the granting of citizenship (which latter practice entail a replacement effect in the statistics as those who become Italian citizens are removed from the stock of foreign citizens).

Turning to admissions, 2019 marks a negative record with approx. 177 thousand new residence permits, 26% less vs 2018; this is the most significant reduction recorded since 2012 and the first six months of 2020 seem to consolidate the negative trend, with a further decrease of 57.7% vs the same period of 2019¹. The reduction concerns all reasons for admissions, and it is particularly relevant for permits ascribable to the request or possession of a form of protection: -57.5%. This is a value ascribable to the sharp reduction of the so-called "unexpected flows", with a sharp decline in the number of migrants landed on the Italian coasts: 11,471 in 2019, i.e., 51% less than 2018 and 90.4% less than 2017².

The growth trend in the quotient of new permits issued for family reunification consolidates, thus reaching 56.9% of admissions in 2019 (vs approx. 51% in 2018), while the percentage relating to the request or possession of a form of protection decreases 15.6% of new permits³ vs 28.8% in 2018. The percentage relating to study reasons (11.5% vs 9.1% in 2018) and work reasons (6.4% vs 6% in 2018) is slightly on the rise. On the other hand, the failure to plan entry flows for job purposes, with the exception of seasonal work, has now led to a sharp decrease in new permits issued for this reason.

The new residence permits issued in 2019 for Chinese citizens were 8,889, a sharp decrease compared to the previous year (approx. -22%). The high quotient of admissions for study purposes (approx. 50% of new permits) proves the strong propensity to begin or continue a course of study in Italy. More than 1/5 of non-EU citizens who entered Italy in 2019 to study come from China.

The reduction in admissions and simultaneous emigration from Italy led to a sharp decrease in the number of Chinese residents in Italy (-5.3%). This reduction is only partially ascribable to the acquisition of citizenship (1,460 in 2019, i.e., only 1.3% of the total). In the overwhelming majority of cases (approx. 72%), these are acquisitions of citizenship linked to transmission from parents or acquisition at the age of 18. 21.6% of citizenship is granted by naturalization while only 6% is ascribable to marriage to an Italian citizen. On the other hand, the Chinese community, despite the large number, is one of the least involved in marriages with Italian citizens: 350 marriages celebrated in 2018⁴ involving a spouse of Chinese nationality and one of Italian nationality (307 relate to an Italian husband and a Chinese wife, 43 relate to a Chinese citizen who married an Italian woman), i.e., 2.1% of the mixed marriages celebrated in 2018 in Italy.

Minors and educational paths

As noted above, this community is characterised by the high presence of families and minors within it. As on 1 January 2020, there were **78,876 Chinese minors**, i.e., 10.1% of the non-EU minor as a whole. Many are also Chinese children born in Italy: 3,309 in 2018 (6.6% of non-EU children born in 2018). In all, between 2010 and 2018, more than 42,000 Chinese children were born in Italy.

The incidence of the community in Italy is in line with the presence of **Chinese minors in the Italian school circuit**: the 55,907 students of Chinese citizenship enrolled in Italian schools of different levels in the school year 2019/2020 represent 8.1% of the non-community school population. Primary school involves most Chinese students, with an incidence of 35.8%, followed by junior secondary school with 26.2% of the community's students.

The incidence of the Chinese community in **university education** is significant: **7,747 university students** of Chinese citizenship represent 10.3% of the non-EU academic population. The Chinese community ranks for the number of students enrolled in Italian universities, followed by the Albanian community.

Among the main non-EU communities, this community records the lowest number of **NEETs** (i.e., persons aged between 15 and 29 not in employment, education or training). Young NEETs of Chinese citizenship amount to approx. 5,000 (i.e., a mere 11.2% of Chinese youngsters in this age bracket, while the quotient vs the non-EU population as a whole stands at 33.1%).

¹ Istat, *Cittadini non comunitari in Italia*, Statistica Report, ottobre 2020.

² http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2019.pdf

³ In all likelihood, the reduction in the number of permits linked to the possession of a form of protection is affected by the entry into force of the decree-law no. 113/2018 from 5 October 2018, converted with amendments by Law no. 132/2018, which abolished the residence permit for humanitarian reasons, replacing it, only under certain specific conditions, with some residence permits for "special circumstances".

⁴ Latest available reference year.

Work and employment

The Chinese community has made its way into the Italian business world and now leads strategic economic sectors. Indeed, the distribution of Chinese employees among the various businesses is quite different from that of non-EU citizens as a whole: the sector of other public, social and personal services (a priority for third-country workers), employees approx. 8% of Chinese workers, **especially in sectors such as commerce and catering** (approx. 60% of the employed vs 24% of non-EU workers). The Chinese community is also strongly employed in industry (27% Chinese employed vs 18.7% of non-EU citizens). The Chinese community has an excellent position in the Italian labour market, as clearly indicated by the main indicators:

- ✓ the employment rate (the incidence of employed persons in relation to the population aged 15-64) of the Chinese community in Italy stands at 75.5%, a value significantly higher than that recorded for non-EU citizens as a whole (60.1%);
- ✓ among the main non-EU citizens - the Chinese community is the one recording the lowest unemployment rate: 2.9%, vs an overall average of 13.8% among citizens from Third Countries.

The large participation of Chinese female workers in the labour market contributes to such positive data. Within the community, the gender gap between male (81.2%) and female (69.8%) employment rates are much smaller than those recorded the non-EU population as a whole (74% vs 46.5%). The levels of female inactivity and unemployment for the Chinese community also lower than the mean recorded for non-EU citizens, with an inactivity rate standing at 27.6% (vs 43.9% for non-EU women) and an unemployment rate standing at 3.6% (vs 16.7% for non-EU women). Among the main non-EU citizens, the Chinese community ranks second only after the Filipino community for the highest female employment rate, while it ranks first for the lowest female unemployment rate.

As a matter of fact, in 2019, the quotient of Chinese citizens granted unemployment benefits by INPS (National Social Security Institute) is extremely low (1,063 workers, i.e., 0.2% overall, almost entirely benefiting from agricultural unemployment benefits). Among the **beneficiaries of wage subsidies** granted by INPS (in the event of interruption or reduction of production), the number of Chinese citizens is rather small (390, i.e., 0.7% of non-EU beneficiaries). This percentage is very small when considering that 6.6% of the non-community workforce belongs to the Chinese community.

The Chinese community in Italy is strongly involved in the **world of entrepreneurship**. It ranks third for number of presences in Italy among non-EU citizens with 53,297 sole proprietorships (13.9% of the total). The community ranks second for the number of owners of sole proprietorships. We note a strong presence of Chinese women (46.7%) among the owners of sole proprietorships. Thanks to this factor, the Chinese community ranks first for the number of female entrepreneurs. The three most relevant sectors for Chinese-owned companies coincide with the main employment sectors for the community's workforce: Commerce (36%), manufacturing (about 1/3 of the companies is Chinese, i.e., approx. 57% of non-EU companies in the sector are run by a Chinese-born owner) and hospitality (14.2%). There are more than 7,500 sole proprietorships run by Chinese citizens in this ambit, i.e., approx. 1/3 of the non-EU companies in the sector (32.2%).

During 2019, the employment relationships activated for Chinese citizens were 108,626, i.e., 2.8% more than the previous year. In contrast with the data regarding non-EU citizens as a whole, among the employment relationships activated for Chinese workers, we note an absolute predominance of permanent contracts (69.7% of new employment relationships in 2019 vs 24.1% of non-EU citizens as a whole). On the other hand, approx. 26% relates to fixed-term contracts. Most of the Chinese workers recruited 2019 (approx. 56%), were placed in the Services sector (the first reference sector also for non-EU workers as a whole) with a slightly more marked incidence compared to the Chinese community (58.6%). In this scenario, *industry* ranks second (40% of new employment relationships activated for Chinese citizens vs 10% of non-EU citizens). On the other hand, the incidence of recruitment in the agricultural sector stands at 1% for the Chinese community, thus confirming its poor involvement in this ambit, while the quotient rises to 25% for non-EU citizens as a whole.

Socio-economic conditions

On analysis of data provided by INPS (the National Social Security Institute) on **monthly salaries**, it is noted that employees belonging to this community earn **monthly salaries** that are lower on average than those of non-EU employees as a whole: 818 euros vs 1,191 euros (i.e., lower by 373 euros per month). It is in any case noted that Chinese female workers are at a slight disadvantage as regards pay. The gender pay gap for employees within this community is most sustained, making for a difference between males and females of approx. 70 euros. This gap is not so relevant mainly due to a levelling down of the community's salaries: male Chinese employees receive an average monthly salary lower than that received by all non-EU men (- 460 euros), while for Chinese women the gap drops to -156 euros.

Among Chinese citizens employed in Italy, low levels of education prevail. Approx. 85% of workers in this community hold, at best, a junior secondary school leaving certificate; 10.2% hold at least a senior secondary school leaving certificate and 4.7% obtained a higher education certificate.

The level of **social assistance measures** provided by INPS (solely welfare services for the most vulnerable, due to age conditions reached or civilian invalidity) by Chinese citizens is low: 2,229 beneficiaries i.e., 2.2% of non-EU beneficiaries. These are mainly social benefits (37%), attendance supplements (37%) and attendance allowances (27%).

With reference to **monetary transfers to families** (maternity benefits, parental leave and family allowances provided by INPS), in 2019 a total of 304,465 women received maternity benefits, 9.1% of whom were non-EU citizens (27,714) (3.1% less than the year before). During the same period, the beneficiaries of maternity allowances with Chinese citizenship totalled 1,460, i.e., 5.3% of non-EU female beneficiaries. Among the Chinese, the beneficiaries of maternity allowances fell by 7.4% vs 2018.

On the other hand, the number of beneficiaries of parental leave decreased: in 2019, they were 299,028, i.e., 10.3% less compared to 2018, 7.2% of which of non-EU origin (21,564). 321 Chinese citizens, (1.5% of non-EU citizens) benefited from this measure in 2019, a significant decrease compared to the previous year (-13.9%). Family allowances are the family assistance measure granted to a greater number of people: 2,446,795 beneficiaries in 2019, (-13.8% vs the year before). 12.5% of beneficiaries are non-EU citizens (305,000), i.e., -13.5% vs 2018. Within the community in question, 5,902 people benefited from family allowances in 2019, with an incidence on non-EU citizens as a whole close to 2%. Again, we note a significant reduction compared to 2018 (-15.6%).

As to transfers made by the Chinese in Italy to their country of origin, China (until a few years ago main destination of remittances sent from Italy), today does not rank among the top twenty nations of destination of remittances sent from Italy in 2018 (approx. 11 million euros, a mere 0.2% of the total outgoing remittances).

