

# THE TUNISIAN COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Annual Report on the Presence of Migrants  
*Executive Summary*



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 international political studies organisation, CeSPI; 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](http://www.lavoro.gov.it) and on the institutional portal [www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it](http://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



**99.779**  
legally residing Tunisian citizens

*Ranking thirteenth for number of presences*

**113.979** “new Italians” in 2019 (2.4% are Tunisians)



**39,4%**  
women

**60,6%**  
men



**28.358**

minors under the age of 18

*447 unaccompanied minors (+78,1%)*



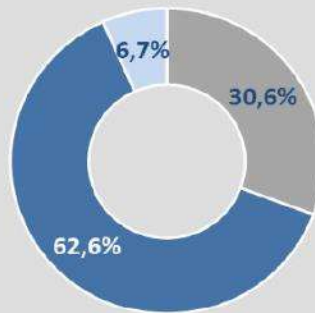
Present in:

**20,2%** Emilia-Romagna

**19,4%** Sicilia

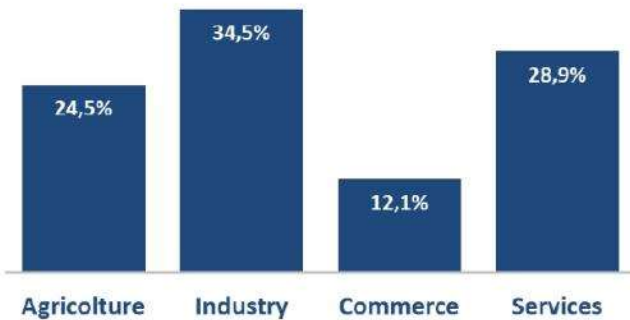
**18,6%** Lombardia

**73%**  
long-term residents



**27%** short-term permits

- Work
- Family
- Other reasons



**51,9%** employment rate

*72% male 20,7% female*

**25,3%** employed in Industry



**48,6%** skilled manual workers

**Ranking eighth for number of sole proprietorships (3,8%)**



**14.391** sole proprietors

*8,7% Tunisian female sole proprietors*

**51%** sole proprietorships in the **Construction sector**

## Demographic characteristics

**99,799** Tunisian citizens are holders of a residence permit valid as on **1 January 2020**, accounting for 2.8% of the non-EU citizens in Italy.

The Tunisian community ranks thirteenth for number of legally residing members. It is one of the most stable foreign communities, this also being due to its long track record of migration to Italy and consolidated relationship between Italy and Tunisia.

On analysis of the main demographic characteristics of Tunisian citizens legally residing in Italy as of 1 January 2020, we note:

- **a gender imbalance, with men prevailing:** women account for a mere 39.4% vs 48.5% recorded for non-EU citizens legally residing as a whole;
- **a high quotient of minors**, accounting for 28.4% of the community vs 22% for non-EU population as a whole.

As to territorial distribution, approx. 56% of Tunisian citizens reside in Northern Italy, a value more than 5% lower than that recorded for non-EU citizens as a whole in Italy. However, two of the first three regions in terms of number of Tunisian presences are Northern: **Emilia-Romagna**, which accounts for just over 1/5 of Tunisian presences, vs 11.2% of non-EU citizens as a whole. **Lombardia** ranks third for the number of Tunisian citizens (18.6% of the community), a figure lower than the overall mean value (approx. 25%). Historically, the Tunisian population in Italy is characterised by the strong concentration in **Sicilia**, the second region in terms of number of Tunisian presences, where 19.4% of the community received or renewed the residence permit compared to 3.2% of non-EU migrants as a whole. The presence of this community in central Italy is low (17.2%), with **Marche** alone recording percentages higher than non-EU citizens as a whole: 4.2% of Tunisians in Italy reside in this region, vs 2.8 % of non-EU citizens.

The analysis of residence permits reveals an advanced stabilisation process of this community. Accordingly, the quotient of long-term residents (holders of residence permits not subject to renewal) among Tunisian citizens amounts to 73% as of 1 January 2020 (vs 63.1% of non-EU citizens as a whole). Among short-term permits, those issued for **family reunification** prevails (62.6% of the permits subject to renewal of migrants belonging to the community, vs 46.7% of non-EU citizens). Permits issued for work reasons, on the other hand, account for 30.6% of the total.

## Current trends

For the first time, after years of stable number of presences, a sharp decrease (-2,7%) can be noted in the number of legal residents compared to the previous year. Indeed, the presence of non-EU citizens in Italy decreased by 101,580 units between 1 January 2019 and 1 January 2020. Such decrease concerns all the main foreign communities except for Indian and Bangladeshi communities which increased by 1.7% and 1.8% respectively. The most significant reductions can be noted in the Nigerian community (-8.2%), which went from ranking eleventh to ranking 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 2019<sup>1</sup>. 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%.

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<sup>1</sup> Istat, *Cittadini non comunitari in Italia*, Statistica Report (Non-EU citizens in Italy, Statistics Report), October 2020.

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 2017<sup>2</sup>.

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 permits<sup>3</sup> 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.

With **3,573 new residence permits**, the Tunisian community ranks thirteenth in terms of number of new residence permits issued in 2019, largely motivated by family reunification (75%) Other reasons for issuing are study and elective acquisition/religion/health (both at 7.8%), although we note an overall decrease vs the previous year (-14.3%).

As to **residence permits**, out of a total of 113,979 permits granted to non-EU nationals in 2019, those issued to Tunisian migrants were 2,471 (2.2% of the total). The main reason for citizenship acquisition is transmission from parents or elective acquisition at the age of 18 (53%).

The degree of settlement of the Tunisian community in Italy is also proven by the number of marriages with Italian citizens: in 2018<sup>4</sup>, 416 marriages between Tunisian and Italian citizens were celebrated (92.4% of the 450 marriages in which at least one spouse was of Tunisian nationality): 98 concern an Italian husband and a Tunisian wife, 318 a Tunisian husband and an Italian wife.

### Minors and educational paths

As of 1 January 2020, there are **28,358 Tunisian minors**, accounting for 3.6% of non-EU minors as a whole. 1,485 Tunisian children were born in Italy in 2018, accounting for approx. 3% of non-EU children born in the same year. Overall, between 2010 and 2018, over 17,000 Tunisian children were born in Italy.

**As regards admission of Tunisian minors into the Italian schooling circuit**, 20,642 students of Tunisian origin enrolled for academic year 2019/2020 (3% of the non-EU school population as a whole). Compared to the previous year, the students of this community increased in number by 4.5%. This growth rate was higher than that displayed by non-EU students as a whole (+2.6%). The number of enrolled students rose especially in secondary schools: +6.5% and +8% in junior and senior secondary schools, respectively. The incidence of students from this community vs non-EU students as a whole is slightly higher in junior secondary schools, where 3.1% of the enrolled are Tunisian nationals. In the context of universities, there are 1,161 students of Tunisian nationality, +8.4% vs the previous year, and account for 1.5% of non-EU students as a whole.

In this community, the quotient of **NEETs** (i.e., persons aged between 15 and 29 not in employment, education or training) is significantly higher than the non-EU mean. The young NEETs of Tunisian citizenship total 6,010, accounting for approx. 46.7% of Tunisian young people in this age bracket. This quotient drops to 37.5% for the male component of the population (vs approx. 56% for females).

### Work and employment

The Tunisian community in Italy shows the **prevalence of the male component**, mainly employed in the sector of Industry, Agriculture and Fishing. Gender bias in this community is therefore also revealed by the job market analysis, where we note a strong engagement of Tunisian workers (especially men) in the industrial sector and, to a lesser extent, in *Agriculture, Hunting and Fishing*.

For Tunisian citizens, employment in *Industry* - also including the *Construction* sector - has a higher incidence than that recorded among non-EU citizens as a whole (34% vs 27%). The quotient of employed in the industrial sector

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto\\_statistico\\_giornaliero\\_31-12-2019.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2019.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 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".

<sup>4</sup> Latest reference year

accounts for 25.3%, while  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Tunisian workers are employed in the sectors of Agriculture and Fishing (vs 6% of non-EU workers). Analysis of labour market reveals that the employment conditions of the Tunisian community in Italy are worse than those of non-EU workers as a whole: the **employment rate** stands at approx. 52% vs 60.1% recorded for non-EU citizens as a whole. The inactivity rate is higher than the mean value (+5%) and, among Tunisian citizens, stands at 35.2%. Finally, the unemployment rate stands at 19.6% (vs 13.8% for non-EU population as a whole). The low incidence of employed within the female population (20.7%, more than -20% than non-EU women), contributes to an overall employment rate lower than the mean value recorded for non-EU women.

Within the community, there are only 2,150 beneficiaries of **wage subsidies**, mostly men (98.5%). We note mainly CIGO (ordinary redundancy fund) beneficiaries (2,017), while 133 beneficiaries are granted CIGS (extraordinary redundancy fund) payments. The beneficiaries of wage subsidies of Tunisian citizenship account for 4% of non-EU beneficiaries as a whole. On the other hand, 4.1% of non-EU nationals granted **unemployment benefit** are Tunisian: 19,236 beneficiaries who mainly receive NASPI (*Nuova Prestazione di assicurazione sociale per l'impiego*, a social employment insurance scheme) and 8,755 beneficiaries of agricultural unemployment benefits (*Disoccupazione agricola*). Men are the prevailing gender among the beneficiaries of any type of benefit, although in the case of NASPI the gender bias is less marked.

During 2019, **48,772 new employment relationships** were activated for citizens of Tunisian origin (approx. 3.2% more than the previous year). Indicating that women from this community are drawn to the labour market to a decidedly lesser extent than men, the data provided by the *Comunicazioni Obbligatorie* (mandatory notices) reveal that only 13.7% of Tunisian citizens recruited are women (vs 31.3% for non-EU citizens as a whole, almost -18%).  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the new subordinate and para-subordinate jobs that began during 2019 for Tunisian workers were in the agriculture sector. Gender analysis indicates that the incidence of contracts activated in 2019 in this sector drops to 25.6% for Tunisian women (approx. 70% of the recruitments involving Tunisian women were in the *Services* sector).

We note the prevalence of *skilled manual workers* within this community, accounting for 49% of workers (vs 28% of non-EU workers as a whole). Numerically speaking, we then note the presence of unskilled manual workers (37%), a value slightly higher than that found among non-EU workers as a whole (36%). 11% of Tunisian are employed in *offices, in sales and personal services*, while the incidence of *managers and professionals in the intellectual and technical fields* stands at 4%.

This community plays a leading role in the world of entrepreneurship, with **14,391 sole proprietors** (3.8% of non-EU sole proprietors in Italy). Construction is the sector where most investments take place, where approx. 51% of companies operate, twice as much as sole non-EU proprietors considered as a whole.

## Socio-economic conditions

Employment in the industrial sector and professional specialisation, while making Tunisian workers more vulnerable to economic trends on a national and international scale, ensure a stronger financial condition than other communities: data show that the employees of this community receive **monthly salaries** slightly higher than those granted to non-EU workers (+36 euros): 1,227 euros vs 1,191 euros. In the case of agricultural workers, however, the difference becomes negative: non-EU workers as a whole receive the best salary (625 euros vs 557 euros recorded for Tunisian agricultural workers).

Among Tunisian citizens employed in Italy, a **medium-low level of education** prevails: more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the workers belonging to this community have obtained, best case scenario, a junior secondary school leaving certificate (approx. 70%), a value more than +10% than the value for non-EU population as a whole; 22.3% hold a senior secondary school leaving certificate, while a mere approx. 8% also hold a higher education certificate (vs 11.4% recorded for non-EU citizens as a whole).

Within this community, women have higher levels of education than men: 19% of employed women hold a university degree vs approx. 6% of men, a value higher than that recorded for the non-EU female population as a whole (16,3%).

The quotient of **IVS (disability, old-age and survivors') pensions** granted to non-EU citizens has always been rather small. In 2019, this quotient stood at 0.5% of the total (out of almost 14 million pensions, 65,926 regard non-EU citizens). Non-EU citizens receive old-age pensions (in 43% of such cases), followed by survivors' pensions (37.4%); 19.8% are granted disability pensions. As regards the Tunisian community, we note a distribution between

the various types of social security measures different from that recorded for the total of non-EU migrants as a whole: disability pensions prevail, with a quotient of just over 50%, followed by survivors' pensions (31.4%), while old-age pensions account for 17.7%. Overall, with 1,964 IVS pensions, the Tunisian community accounts for 3% of the total of non-EU citizens who are granted these benefits. Between 2018 and 2019, the number of IVS pensions paid to migrants from Tunisia recorded a slightly lower increase than that recorded for non-EU citizens as a whole: + 10.3% vs + 12.3%. In particular, for the community, beneficiaries of old-age pensions increased by 15.2% (vs 17.1% of non-EU citizens as a whole).

The level **social assistance measures** provided by INPS to citizens belonging to the Tunisian community in 2019 stands at 3,040 beneficiaries (3% of those granted to non-EU migrants). In 19% of cases, these are social benefits, while attendance allowances and constant attendance supplements are on the same level (40.5% for each type). Compared to 2018, attendance allowances (+11%), constant attendance supplements increased (+6.2%), and the number of beneficiaries of pensions and social benefits (+1.1) increased.

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 Tunisian citizenship totalled 407 (1.5% of non-EU female beneficiaries, +4.4% vs 2018). As to parental leave, in 2019 there were a total of 299,028 such beneficiaries, denoting a 10.3% decrease vs 2018, 7.2% of whom were of non-EU origin (21,564). A total of 849 Tunisian nationals benefited from this measure in 2019 (4% of non-EU beneficiaries). As to the Tunisian community, a decrease can be noted compared to the previous year: -3.1%. The benefit that is most frequently received consists in family allowances. During 2019, as many as 2,446,795 beneficiaries were granted family allowances (-13.8% vs the year before). 12.5% of the beneficiaries were non-EU citizens (approx. 305,000) denoting a 13.5% decrease vs 2018. 11,198 members of this community were granted family allowances in 2019 (3.7% of non-EU citizens as a whole). In the Tunisian community their number also decreased vs 2018: -11%.

As to transfers made by Tunisian community in Italy, in 2019 over 62 million euros were sent to Tunisia (1.2% of the total outgoing remittances). Compared to 2018, we note an increase in remittances sent to Tunisia: + 12.1%.



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