MINISTERO del LAVORO
e delle POLITICHE SOCIALI

THE TUNISIAN COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Migrant population annual report
Executive summary

2022

Curated by the General Directorate for Immigration and Integration Policies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Annual Reports on the main foreign communities in Italy investigate and analyse the presence in Italy of the largest populations of non-EU migrants: Moroccan, Albanian, Chinese, Ukrainian, Indian, Filipino, Bangladeshi, Egyptian, Pakistani, Moldovan, Sri Lankan, Senegalese, Tunisian, Nigerian, Peruvian and Ecuadorian.

A key factor also in the 2022 edition is the contribution of the Institutions and Bodies that provided the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies with the necessary information, subsequently processed by the ANPAL Servizi Integration Services Area. Sincere thanks are due to ISTAT – National Institute of Statistics, INPS – General Statistical Actuarial Coordination, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University and Research, the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture; CeSPI, the CGIL, CISL, UIL, UGL trade union confederations and U.O. Data Science Applications – ANPAL Servizi Studies and Research Division. The financial inclusion section was curated by Daniele Frigeri, Director of the National Observatory on Financial Inclusion of Migrants.

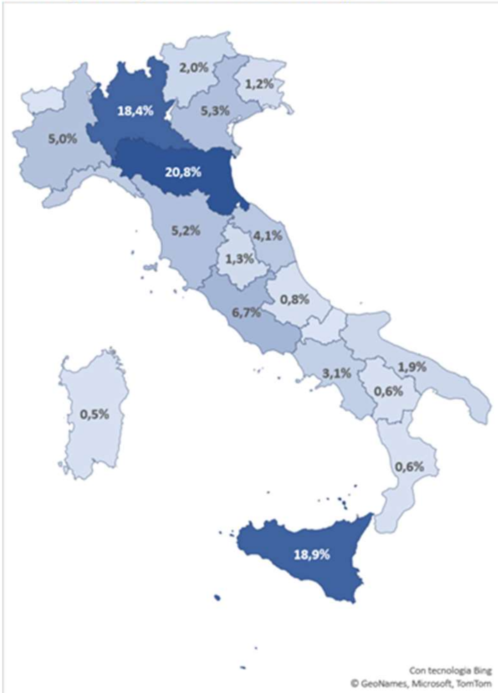
The unabridged volumes of the 2021 – 2022 editions of the Reports on the Main Foreign Communities in Italy are available, in Italian and in the main foreign languages, in the "Documents and Research – Reports by the Immigration and Integration Policies DG" area of the portal www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it and in the 'Studies and Statistics' area of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies website – www.lavoro.gov.it. A statistical annex is also available at the same addresses, containing additional information with respect to the reports, or with insights on the existing analysis, with a comparison between the main nationalities.

The 2022 edition of the National Reports on the Main Foreign Communities, the translation of the overviews into the main vehicular languages and the Monitoring Report were produced by the "Services for Integration Policies" Area of ANPAL Servizi, in the framework of the project "START-Support to Integrated Multiannual Programming on Employment, Integration and Inclusion".

The Tunisian community in Italy

With a significant present in Italy since the late 1960s, the Tunisian community is among the first to have settled in our country, thanks to the geographical proximity and thousands of years of relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The region that attracted most Tunisian nationals to Italy was Sicily: starting in 1968, the Trapani area, and in particular Mazzara del Vallo, became the epicentre of this exodus of Tunisian workers, mainly from the coastal areas of the African country (Chebba, Mahdia and Sfax), lured by the inviting prospects of the Italian labour market. At the time, the lack of a visa system facilitated migration of Tunisian nationals, who were mainly attracted by the growing demand for foreign labour in the farming and fishing industry, still the main economic sector for jobs in the area. This first wave was followed by others between the 1980s and the 1990s, when the oil crisis hit Tunisia and the first measures to limit immigration to Europe emerged, as well as the initial regulations to formalise the position of migrants and encourage family reunification ("Martelli" Law for example). Since 2000, there has been another phase of Tunisian migration to Italy, which resulted in more than doubling of the Tunisian community, from 50,000 to over 120,000 in 2013: this surge was mainly due to the signing of various bilateral agreements between Italy and Tunisia, signed with the dual purpose of limiting illegal immigration and promoting formal immigration procedures.

Distribution of the Tunisian population legally residing in Italy. Data as at 1 January 2022



Source: Anpal Servizi SpINT Area analysis of ISTAT data

There were 100,113 Tunisian nationals legally residing in Italy as of 1 January 2022[1], a population that places the community in thirteenth position in terms of numbers among the main non-EU citizens. Up 6.2% year-on-year, Tunisian citizens account for 2.8% of non-EU citizens in Italy.

In terms of a breakdown by age group, the Tunisian population in Italy is pre-eminently young, with more than 37.8% of the community under 30 (in line with the 37.3% recorded for the non-EU population overall). There is a significant presence of minors in the community, constituting the predominant age group and above the average for all non-EU citizens: 26.5%, compared to around 21% for the non-EU population overall. The community ranks third of the main non-EU communities in terms of the presence of minors. In relation to minors, a highly distinctive feature of the Tunisian community is the presence of unaccompanied minors, considering also growth of this phenomenon versus the prior year (+15.4%). At 31 December 2022, with 1,800 minors Tunisia is the third largest country of origin of unaccompanied foreign minors in Italy: Tunisian UFMs represent 9% of the total. For the specifics of Tunisian UFMs, almost all (98.7%) are boys and close to the majority age (59% of Tunisian UFMs are 17 years of age).

The proportion of over 60s is lower than in non-EU immigrant population globally: 7.3% vs 10.2%. It follows that the community has a fairly low average age (34) and a significant gender imbalance (women represent about 39% of the community).

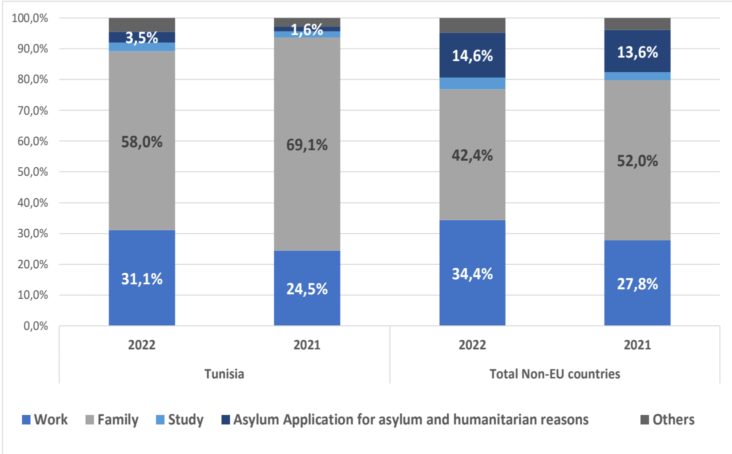
With regard to geographical distribution of the community, 56.4% of Tunisian nationals reside in the north of Italy, in particular in Emilia-Romagna, which has the highest number, accounting for almost 21% compared to 11.3% of non-EU citizens overall, and in Lombardy (the third region of settlement for the community) with 18.4% of the total Tunisian immigrant population. Although only 17.2% of the community resides in Central

[1] Data on legal residents is supplied by ISTAT.

Italy, the figure for Lazio stands out, with 6.7% of legally resident Tunisian citizens. Due mainly to the over-representation of the community in Sicily, the proportion of Tunisian citizens in the south is higher than average: more than one in four Tunisian nationals legally residing in Italy live in the south, compared to 14.6% of non-EU citizens as a whole. In fact, the community is concentrated in the Sicily region which, with a share of 18.9%, ranks second in terms of the number of Tunisian immigrants (the share drops to just 3.1% for non-EU nationals overall).

Analysis of the type of residence permits confirms the high level of stabilisation achieved by the community: the share of long-term Tunisian residents on 1 January 2022 was around 74%, a figure that is more than 8 percentage points higher than that recorded for non-EU citizens overall. In line with figures recorded for the total non-EU population, in which long-term residents increased by 7.8% compared to 2020, the proportion grew also in the Tunisian community, albeit slightly more modestly (+6.3%). Among short-term residence permits there is a clear prevalence of family reasons, with a 58% share of total fixed term permits for the community, a prevalence in line with that found for non-EU nationals as a whole, but with a more marked incidence.

Short-term residence permits by type and citizenship (v%) Data as at 1 January 2022 and 1 January 2021



Source: SpINT Area analysis of Anpal Servizi on ISTAT-Ministry of the Interior data

In 2021, after the drastic drop recorded in 2020 due to the movement restrictions introduced globally to counter the spread of the SARS-COV 2 virus, there was a general increase in the issue of new permits, also due to the illegal labour emergence provision (legislative decree 34 of 2020), which allowed regularisation of non-EU citizens already in the country: in the clear majority of cases, Tunisian citizens who arrived in Italy in 2021 came for family reasons (around 57%), an increase of more than 108% compared to the prior year. Of these new arrivals in the community, 2,217 were minors, around 58% of the new permits for family reasons; in relation to non-EU citizens overall the proportion of minors stands at 55.5%. Compared to the prior year, the marked increase in the number of new work-related entries stands out: +1,019.4%; in 2020, only 98 Tunisian citizens entered Italy for work-related reasons, while the figure was 1,097 in 2021 (16.3% of Tunisian national arrivals).

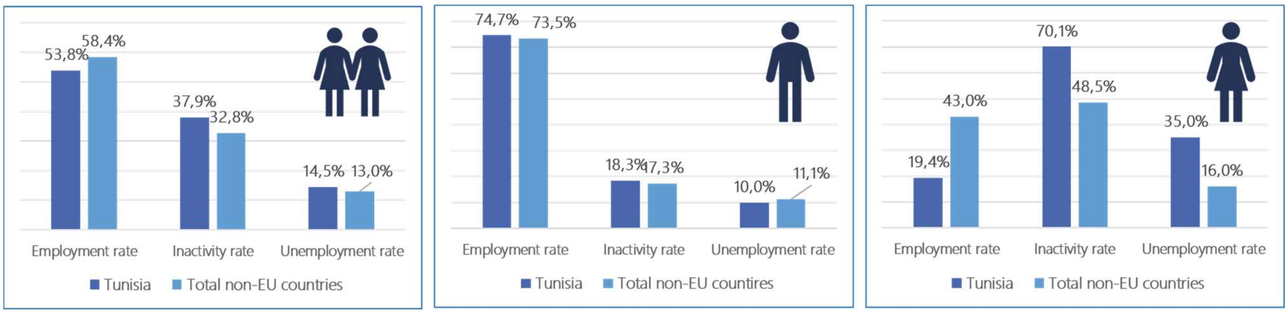
Labour market data[2] show a marked channelling of the community into the agricultural-fisheries sector, which is prevalent, providing jobs for one in five of Tunisians employed in Italy (21.6%). This is closely followed, in terms of sector incidence, by *Industry in the strict sense*, in which around 20% of Tunisian workers are employed. The community also features a high level of occupation in the *transport and business services* sector, the third largest area of employment, which employs 14.4% of the working population of the Tunisian community. This is followed by *Construction* (11.2%), *Public, Social and Personal Services* with 10.8%, and the hospitality sector a short distance behind (10.4%). The final sectors in terms of incidence are *Trade* (6.8%) and *PA, education and health* (4.8%).

An analysis of the main labour market indicators reveals inferior employment performance than that recorded for the non-EU population overall: in the first half of 2022, around 54% of the Tunisian population aged 15-64 in Italy was employed, a lower percentage than that recorded for the non-EU population as a whole (58.4%); the inactivity rate for the community in question, on the other hand, is around 38% (versus the non-EU average of 33%), while the unemployment rate stands at 14.5%, compared to around 13% for the non-EU population overall. A gender analysis reveals poor labour market integration of Tunisian women:

[2] Labour market data were provided by ISTAT RCFL at H1 2022.

there is a large gap with respect to the community's men, with a share of women in employment of 19.4% compared to 74.7% for men, high inactivity (around 70% for Tunisian women compared to 18.3% for their male counterparts), and unemployment that is decidedly higher than that of men (35% compared to 10%) and more than double that of non-EU women overall (16%).

Main job market indicators by gender and citizenship (v.%). H1 2022



Source: SpINT Area analysis of Anpal Servizi on RCFL - ISTAT microdata

Although the community does not have a high level of education (the share of university graduates is around 4% compared to 10.5% for the total number of non-EU citizens), it has been carved out a place on the Italian job market through specialisation in manual labour, an area that is notoriously unable to find sufficient Italian nationals to meet the demand for work.

With regard to occupational types, in fact, manual work - skilled or unskilled - is the prevailing type for the community, involving more than 76% of Tunisian workers: skilled manual work concerns 45% of the community's workers, while unskilled manual work accounts for 31.4%. Conversely, 21% of Tunisians are employed in the *clerical, sales and personal services* sectors, while the incidence of *Executives and professionals in the intellectual and technical fields* is 2.6%.

The community's prominence in the entrepreneurial sphere is significant, occupying ninth place, among non-EU countries, in terms of the number of sole proprietors: in fact, there were 14,138 sole proprietors of Tunisian origin as of 31 December 2021, or 3.6% of non-EU entrepreneurs in Italy, this number having fallen versus 2020 (-2.1%). Women account for around 9% of Tunisian sole proprietors, up 1.2% on the prior year. With regard to the investment sectors of Tunisian businesses, the importance of the construction sector emerges with a share of 51.4% and hence clearly prevalent: the 7,263 individual Tunisian construction companies represent 8.2% of all non-EU companies in the sector. The second most important area of investment for Tunisian companies is commerce (24.2%), albeit with a lower percent incidence than that recorded for the companies of non-EU nationals as a whole (around 41%), for whom it is prevalent; finally, Business Services is in third place, with a share of 4.5%.

Regarding the use of welfare measures[3], 2.2% of non-EU wage supplement recipients are Tunisian, this figure rising to 3.5% in the case of the ordinary redundancy fund (CIGO). The incidence of unemployment benefits is similar: 2.6% of non-EU social employment insurance (NASPI) recipients are Tunisian. There were 12,657 family allowance recipients in the Tunisian community in 2021, with an incidence of 3.6% of all non-EU nationals.

Lastly, there is a rather significant incidence of the Tunisian community, among the recipients of the Basic Income (Reddito di cittadinanza) and Basic Pensions (Pensione di cittadinanza): the 9,363 Tunisian households represent 4.2% of the non-EU recipients, indicating a fragility of the community's socio-economic conditions.

[3] Source: INPS (National Social Security Institute) - General Statistical Actuarial Coordination as at 2021.

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