



# THE ALBANIAN COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Migrant population annual report  
*Executive summary*



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22

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 2012 – 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](http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it) and in the “Studies and Statistics” area of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies website - [www.lavoro.gov.it](http://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 and 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 Albanian community in Italy

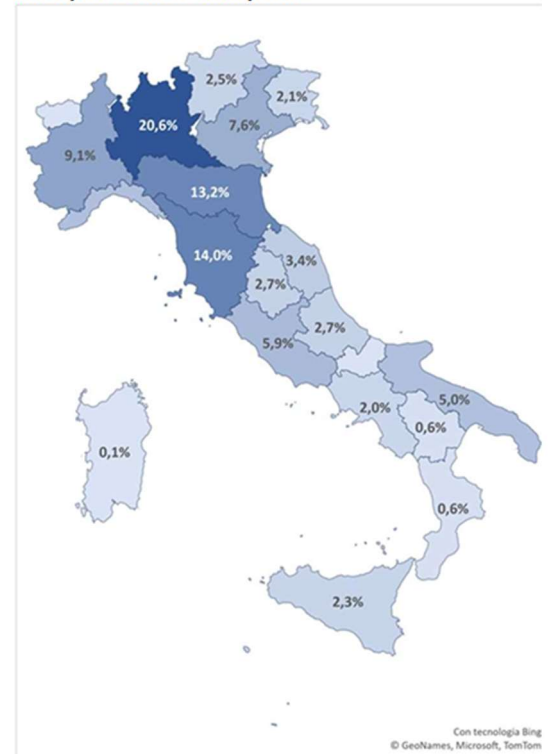
For many years, Albanian immigrants have formed one of the largest foreign communities in Italy with one of the most consolidated settlements among all non-EU nationals. Albanians have a long tradition of migration to Italy, rooted also in the numerous Arbëreshë peoples who settled in the south of the country and on the islands from the 15th century onwards continue to be one of the country's ethnolinguistic minorities, with a population of around 100,000. The biggest impetus for Albanian migration to Italy was in the early 1990s with the collapse of Enver Hoxha's regime; 2021 marked the 30th anniversary of the arrival of the cargo ship *Vlora* in the port of Bari with some 20,000 Albanian refugees aboard, in an event that contributed to the recognition that Italy had become a destination country for immigrants rather merely a country of emigration. That first migratory wave was followed by others during the 1990s. In 1997, following their country's severe economic crisis, many Albanians arrived in search of new opportunities; later, with the outbreak of the Kosovo conflict in 1999, about 100,000 Albanians were forced to flee their country, seeking political asylum as Kosovar citizens<sup>1</sup>. It is precisely the succession of these migratory flows that led the community to become the second largest settlement of non-EU citizens in Italy.

The Albanian community in Italy was composed of **396,918** legal residents<sup>2</sup> as of 1 January 2022 (about 11% of Italy's non-EU population). Compared to the previous year, there was an increase of 4.1% (the total number of non-EU nationals increased by 5.6%).

**Three-fifths of the Albanian citizens in Italy are in the north of the country**, particularly in Lombardy (the first region of Albanian settlement), which hosts just over one-fifth of Albanian citizens, and in Emilia-Romagna (the third region for the number of Albanian citizens) home to 13.2% of the community. The Albanian population in Italy has high numbers in Tuscany, the second placed region in terms of number of immigrants, where 14% of the community has received or renewed a residence permit. Although only about 13% of the community is settled in the south of Italy, the numbers residing in Apulia, which hosts 5% of the country's Albanian citizens, is noteworthy. This figure is most likely linked to the peak period of the community's migratory flows towards our country, when the ports in Apulia were the initial disembarkation points.

The community has a perfect gender balance (women 49.3%, men 50.7%) and a significant concentration in the young age group: 41.4% are under 30 (compared to 37.3% of the non-EU population as a whole), so they are younger on average than the overall non-EU population (34.5 years of age compared to 35.6). High presence of minors: 97,000, or 24.6% of the community (versus 20.9% for non-EU residents overall); this figure is linked to the extensive presence of family units, which points to the high level of stabilisation

**Distribution of the Albanian population legally residing in Italy. Data at 1 January 2022**



Source: Anpal Servizi SpINT Area analysis of ISTAT data

<sup>1</sup> Notes on the History of Albanian Immigration in Italy, in Ead., "L'immigrazione albanese in Italia- Profili sociologici e politiche di controllo", Orkida Mehillaj, 2010, <http://www.adir.unifi.it/rivista/2010/mehillaj/>

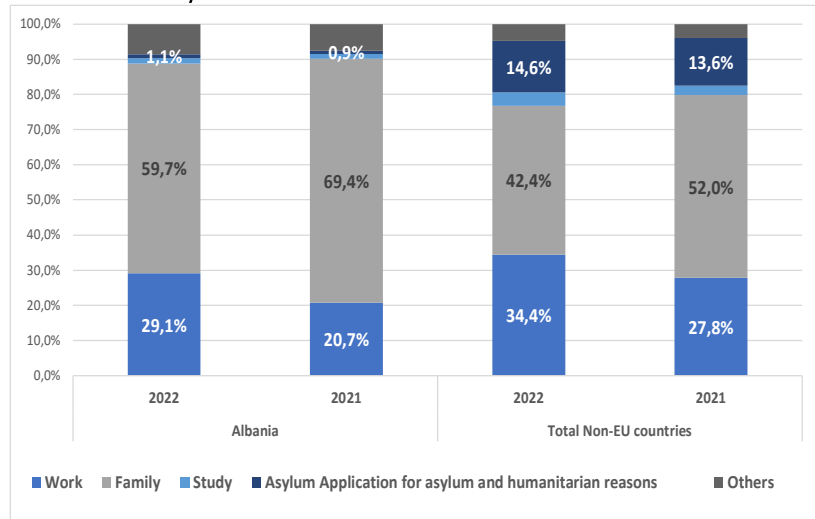
<sup>2</sup> Statistics on legally residing non-EU citizens include all foreigners from non-EU countries who are in possession of a valid residence document (national residence permit or long-term EU residence permit). Not all legally resident foreign citizens are including in the total count of residents in Italy: the statistical source employed therefore also includes foreign nationals who for whatever reason have yet to qualify for official residence in Italy.

achieved by the community in Italy. The community is also highly involved in the phenomenon of UFM<sup>3</sup> since, with 1,347 minors – up 13.6% from the previous year and 6.7% of the total – it is the **fourth country of origin** as of 31 December 2022.

Data on residence permits<sup>4</sup> confirm the advanced level of stabilisation achieved by the community due to the high **proportion of long-term residents<sup>5</sup> (68.2%)** and the incidence of family reasons among short-term residence permits (59.7% versus 42.4% for all non-EU citizens).

In 2021, following the steep drop in 2020 due to the mobility restrictions introduced globally to combat 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) that allowed the regularisation of non-EU citizens already present in the country: new residence permits issued to Albanian citizens in 2021 totalled **29,520**, more than double the number issued in the previous year, in line with the overall trend of entries. In

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

the majority of cases, Albanian citizens who entered the country in 2021 did so for family reasons (around 59%). There was a very significant rise in the issue of new permits for work-related reasons: +559%; in 2020, only 911 Albanian nationals had entered Italy for work reasons, while the number in 2021 was 6,006 (for the non-EU population as a whole, the increase is +395%, largely due to the aforementioned regularisation measure). Further underscoring the marked level of stabilisation, the community ranks first in terms of the number of **acquisitions of citizenship**; in 2021 out of a total of 109,584 concessions for third-country nationals, 22,493 were for citizens of Albanian origin, i.e., about one fifth of the total.

While not having a high **level of education** overall (the share of university graduates among the employed population is 8.8% versus 10.5% for all non-EU citizens), the community has carved out a special place on the Italian job market by specialising in manual work, an area that notoriously lacks sufficient Italian nationals to meet the demand. The **prevalent** – though not exclusive – **profile** of the Albanian workforce is that of **skilled manual worker** (this definition includes 49% of Albanian job-holders) employed in the **construction industry** (a sector in which 26.6% of Albanian workers are employed). The employment sectors proceed with *industry in the strict sense*, with an incidence of 18.8%; the share of employees in *transport and business services* (around 15%) is significant, and higher than that recorded for non-EU nationals overall.

Analysis of the main labour market indicators reveals employment performance in line with that recorded for the non-EU population as a whole: **the employment rate is around 59%** (versus 58.8% for the non-EU population as a whole), the **inactivity rate is 32.5%** (for the non-EU population as a whole the indicator is around 33%), while the **unemployment rate stands at 12.8%**, versus 13% for the non-EU population overall.

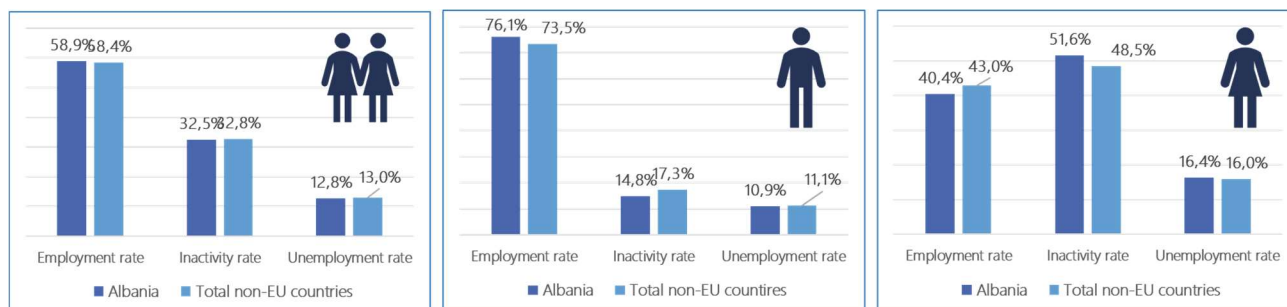
<sup>3</sup> The expression unaccompanied foreign minor (UFM) refers to a “minor without Italian citizenship or citizenship of any other EU member state, who is in the country for any reason, or who is otherwise subject to Italian jurisdiction, without the assistance and representation of his/her parents or other legally responsible adults according to the laws in force in the Italian legal system” (See art. 2, L. 47/2017).

<sup>4</sup> The report shows the stock figure for the total number of third-country nationals authorised to reside in Italy in the reference year.

<sup>5</sup> A long-term EU residence permit may be issued to a foreign national who has held a valid residence permit for at least five years, provided they can prove that they have a minimum income that is no less than the family allowances calculated annually.

A gender analysis reveals a wide **gap** between the **male** (76.1%) and **female** (40.4%) **employment** rate. These differences, which became acute during the pandemic, have been partially bridged by the subsequent recovery, as the value for men increased by about 3 percentage points compared to the previous year, while the value for women rose by more than 8%.

#### Main labour market indicators by gender and nationality (v.%). H1 2022



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

The community's prominence in the **business sphere** is significant, where it ranks third - among the non-EU communities - in terms of the number of sole proprietorships (after Moroccan and Chinese): the number of **sole proprietors of Albanian origin** on 31 December 2021 is in fact **36,342**, or about 9% of the non-EU sole proprietors in Italy, with an increase of 4.6% compared to 2020. Analysis of the world of sole proprietorships also confirms the **community's orientation towards construction**, an area in which some 67% of Albanian sole proprietorships operate: as seen above, this level of specialisation is a characteristic feature of the community under consideration, responsible for 27.8% of non-EU sole proprietorships in the sector. The second most important investment sector for Albanian companies is *commerce and transport*, although with a much lower percentage incidence than for the total number of enterprises owned by non-EU citizens (9.4% compared to 42.9%).

The high level of integration of the Albanian community is also reflected in the extensive use of certain welfare measures, notably wage subsidies<sup>6</sup>: 15.7% of non-EU wage subsidy recipients are Albanian, a percentage that rises to 24.6% in the case of the ordinary redundancy fund. The use of family assistance measures is also high, reflecting the presence of family units: almost a quarter of non-EU *maternity benefit*<sup>7</sup> recipients are of Albanian nationality, a share that is 17.7% in the case of parental leave and 22% for COVID-related parental leave ex legislative decrees 18/2020 and 34/2020. There were 66,268 family allowance recipients in the Albanian community in 2021, with an incidence of 19.1% of all non-EU nationals.

Finally, 11,261 Albanian households benefited from Basic Income (Reddito di cittadinanza) or Basic Pension (Pensione di cittadinanza) support, amounting to 5.1% of non-EU recipients. The rather low incidence of the community in this area seems to suggest the achievement of a certain level of economic stability that has enabled Albanian citizens to withstand even the difficulties created by the pandemic crisis.

<sup>6</sup> They include the extraordinary redundancy fund (CIGS) (which shows very low absolute values because it was not used as a support tool for companies and workers during the epidemic), the redundancy fund in derogation (CIGD) (a measure adopted during the pandemic to support workers employed by companies not covered by other income support measures) and the ordinary redundancy fund (CIGO).

<sup>7</sup> Otherwise known as 'compulsory abstention allowance', this is a form of income support in lieu of salary and is paid to female workers for maternity leave and childbirth for a total of 5 months.

