



# THE NIGERIAN COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Migrant population annual report  
*Executive summary*



20  
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, Nigerian, Moldovan, Sri Lankan, Senegalese, Tunisian, Pakistani, 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, as 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 the Data Science Applications Operating Unit - 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, 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 Nigerian community in Italy

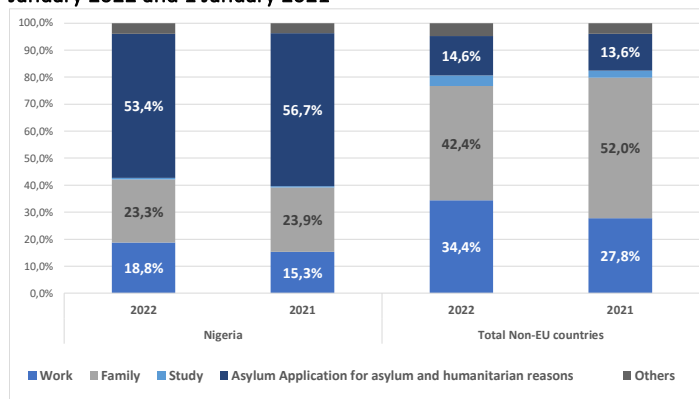
Nigeria, the “Giant of Africa”, is a country of 200 million inhabitants made up of 36 states with more than 300 different ethnic groups, criss-crossed by powerful forces of identity and shaken by constantly emerging social tensions that impact the country's internal and external migratory forces. Social and economic instability, with consequent widespread poverty, make Nigeria a country with powerful emigration forces and with a high incidence of asylum seekers: there are more than 1.2 million Nigerian migrants worldwide, divided mainly between five countries (USA, UK, Cameroon, Niger and Italy). The most significant migratory flows to Italy began in the early 1990s, with a relatively constant trend up to the present. The first actors of the migratory chain from Nigeria were women, often greatly exposed to the risk of human trafficking, a circuit also fuelled by economic difficulties, limited job opportunities, illiteracy and discrimination.

There were **98,692 Nigerians legally residing** in Italy as of 1 January 2022, a figure that places the community in 14th position in terms of numbers among the main non-EU nationals. Nigerian citizens represent 2.8% of the total non-EU population, up 7.7% from 2021.

The age pyramid of the Nigerian community in Italy is features a majority of young people: half are under the age of 30 (compared to around 37% of all non-EU citizens). In particular, the class of minors prevails, reaching an incidence of 26%: the more than 25,000 Nigerian minors represent 3.5% of the non-EU minors present in Italy on 1 January 2022. This is linked both to increasing family reunifications and to the high birth rate within the community, which ranks fourth among the main non-EU communities in terms of the proportion of minors. As a result, the community has a rather low **average age** (29) and displays a modest **gender imbalance** in favour of the male component (women represent 45% of the community).

The analysis of **residence permit** types reveals a relatively underdeveloped level of stabilisation: the share of long-term residents of Italy on 1 January 2022 was 38.3%, a figure that is significantly below the average of non-EU nationals (65.8%). In fact, the community is last among the 16 largest non-EU communities in terms of the incidence of long-term residents. Among **short-term residence permits**, permits issued for **asylum seeking, asylum or other forms of protection**, represent the main reason (53.4%), with an incidence almost 39 percentage points higher than that recorded for non-EU citizens as a whole (14.6%), confirming not only the difficult context in the country of origin but also a recent migratory presence and a stabilisation process *in* the making. Permits for family reasons take second place: 23.3%, compared to 42.4% for the non-EU population overall, up slightly versus the prior year (+7%). Residents for family reasons are minors in 75.5% of cases.

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 sudden 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 non-EU citizens already residing in Italy to formalise their position. In the majority of cases, Nigerian citizens who entered the country in 2021 did so for family reasons (44.4%), an increase of 115.4% over the prior year. Of these community admissions, 2,940 were minors, about 85% of new permits for family reasons. Permits to apply

for asylum or for a form of protection also grew (+119%), this being the second reason for the arrival of Nigerian citizens in 2021: the community is second, after Pakistan, in terms of the incidence of this reason for entry. Work-related permits - 5.8% of the total - are the only ones to have shown a decrease (-7.1%), while they rose significantly (+395%) for the non-EU population overall, largely thanks to the aforementioned regularisation measure.

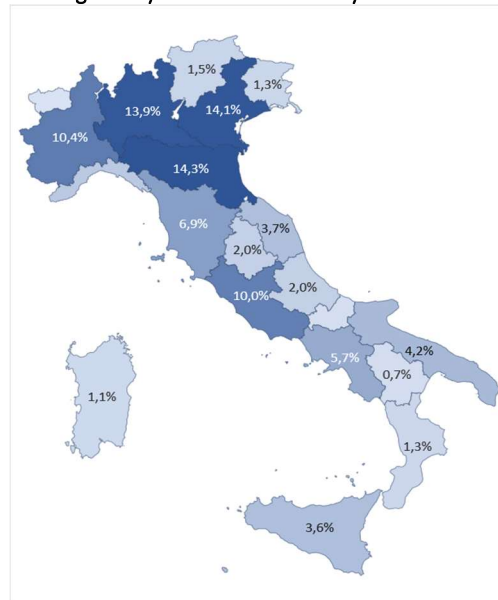
In terms of **geographical distribution**, Nigerian nationals are **concentrated in the north of the country (58.3%)**. **Emilia-Romagna** is the first region for the presence of Nigerian immigrants (14.3%), followed by Veneto where 14.1% of the community is located, and Lombardy (14%). The Nigerian population in Italy is has a higher-than-average presence in the southern regions, where just over 19% of the community has applied for or renewed a residence permit, compared to 14.6% of the total non-EU population: the highest concentration of Nigerian nationals is in Campania (5.7%) and Apulia (4.2%).

**Labour market data**<sup>1</sup> show that the community is not characterised by strong channelling into any particular employment sector but is spread across different sectors. With an almost equal incidence, *Transport and other business services* (23.1%) and *Industry in the strict sense* (23%) are the main employment sectors. These are followed by *commerce*, where 16.4% of Nigerian workers are employed, and *social and personal services* (11.4%); *Agriculture* (around 11%) and the *Hospitality sector* account for around 11% and 10% of Nigerian workers, respectively.

An analysis of key labour market indicators reveals **worse employment performance** of the Nigerian community **than that of the non-EU population as a whole**: In the first half of 2022, less than half of the Nigerian population aged 15-64 in Italy was employed (45.5%), a much lower share than that of the non-EU population as a whole (58.4%); the inactivity rate stood at 37.1% and unemployment at around 28%. The low presence of the female component of the community in the world of work also has an impact: only 33% of job holders in the African community are women; the employment rate for the female component stands at about 33% (compared to 56.2% for men) while inactivity affects about 52% of women (for men 23.8%).

The community is not **among those with the highest levels of education**: university graduates are 7% compared to 10.5% for the total non-EU nationals, while school diploma holders are 23.2% (versus 32.8% for the wider group). Despite these data, the Nigerian workforce is finding a specific place on the Italian labour market by specialising in unskilled manual work, an area that is notoriously unable to attract sufficient resources among Italian nationals to meet the labour demand.

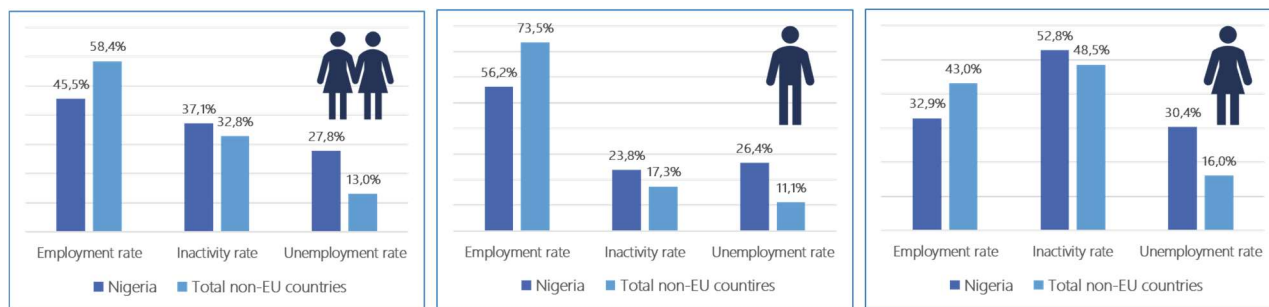
**Distribution of the Nigerian population legally residing in Italy. Data as at 1 January 2022**



Source: Anpal Servizi SpINT Area analysis of ISTAT data

<sup>1</sup> Labour market data were provided by ISTAT RCFL at H1 2022.

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



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

In terms of **occupational types**, manual labour is the predominant type of work for the community under review, providing employment for almost 80% of Nigerian workers: *skilled manual labour* concerns 24.1% of the community's workers, while *unskilled manual labour*, which is also the predominant type of employment for the non-EU community overall, accounts for 55.7%. Nigerians employed in *clerical positions, sales and personal services* make up just under 20% of the community's workforce, those employed as *executives or in intellectual and technical professions* are just 0.8%.

The Nigerian community is characterised by significant prominence in the entrepreneurial sphere: fourteenth in terms of numbers, it is seventh in terms of number of sole proprietorships.<sup>2</sup> There were 18,255 sole proprietorships of Nigerian origin as of 31 December 2021, or about 4.6% of non-EU sole proprietorships in Italy, a number that has followed an upward trend compared to 2020 (+4.4%). The share of female entrepreneurs within the community is significant: 37.1%, the community in fact is in second place among those analysed in terms of the proportion of women in charge of sole proprietorships. With regard to sectors of economic activity, there is a concentration in the commercial sector, which is clearly dominant, with a share of around 66%.

With regard to the use of **welfare** measures<sup>3</sup>, the data on some welfare measures and in particular on wage subsidies show that the path of integration into the Italian socio-economic fabric is still relatively immature among the Nigerian community. In fact, only 1.6% of non-EU wage subsidy recipients are Nigerian. The community is also not among the primary recipients of unemployment benefits, considering that only 2.2% of non-EU unemployment recipients are Nigerian, or in *IVS pensions*, for which the incidence of Nigerian recipients is very low (0.7%), considering also the young age of the community members and their recent presence on Italian territory. Data on *Welfare Pensions* are more significant, with Nigerians representing some 1.9% of non-EU recipients. More positive signs emerge in the area of family assistance measures. The incidence of Nigerian female recipients of maternity benefits is 2.7% (677 women), a significant percentage considering that the community represents 2.8% of the non-EU presence and that the female component is poorly integrated into the world of work. Underscoring the high precariousness of Nigerian citizens are more than 20,000 recipients of a Basic pension (*Pensione di cittadinanza*) and Basic income (*Reddito di cittadinanza*), with an incidence of close to 9.2% of the total non-EU population.

With 3.6% of outgoing remittance volumes from Italy, Nigeria is the 9th ranked country in terms of outflows to the rest of the world. This flow of resources increased very significantly over the last four years, up from 74 million euro in 2018 to 292 million euro in 2022.

<sup>2</sup> The following analysis focuses on sole proprietorships, as this is the only form of business that allows for the identification of the individual non-EU nationality of the owner.

<sup>3</sup> Source: INPS (National Social Security Institute) - General Statistical Actuarial Coordination as at 2021.

