MINISTERO del LAVORO
e delle POLITICHE SOCIALI

# THE BANGLADESHI 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, 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 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”.

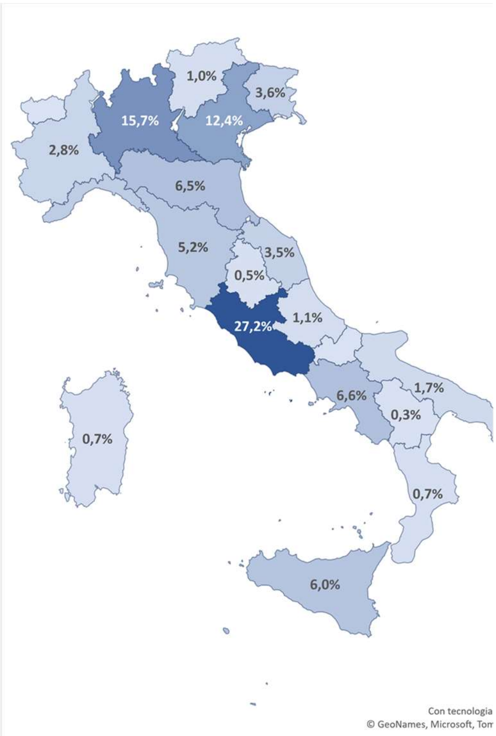
# The Bangladeshi community in Italy

The presence of Bangladeshi nationals in Italy rose sharply during the 2000s, with a sixfold increase between 2002 and 2022, from 22,000 to over 150,000 legally registered immigrants. The emigration rate from the Asian country is among the highest in the world, due to several chronic contextual, socio-economic, political and climatic factors. Moreover, as for many other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the domestic situation, limiting economic activities and nullifying several of the economic achievements of the past decade. In 2020, the pace of poverty reduction slowed, exports decreased, inequality increased and the poverty rate rose from 21% to 41%. Bangladesh is currently striving to recover from the aftermath of the health emergency so significant inflows of financial remittances coupled with a rebound of the export market are gradually helping the economy to recover. The central role played by remittances for the country's economy is also made evident by the primacy assumed in Italy, where Bangladesh is the top destination country for outbound financial flows, accounting for 15% of total remittances, this result being achieved thanks to a significant increase in volumes, especially in the last two years (remittances to Bangladesh grew by 37% in the last year), exceeding the figure of 1 billion euro.

With 150,692 legal residents[1] as of 1 January 2022 (an increase of 8.8% from the previous year), the Bangladeshi community ranks eighth in terms of numbers among the main non-EU communities.

Approximately 46% of Bangladeshi nationals live in northern Italy, particularly in Lombardy (the second region of residence of Bangladeshis, with 15.7%) and Veneto (the third region of residence with 12.4%). The south of Italy hosts 17.4% of the community in question, concentrated mainly in Campania (6.6%) and Sicily (6%), while 36.4% reside in central Italy. One of the key features of the Bangladeshi population in Italy is its high concentration in the Lazio region, which is the main area of residency, hosting 27.2% of Bangladeshi immigrants. There is a very clear concentration in the metropolitan city of Rome, home to the largest Bangladeshi community in the European Union: 38,004 individuals, or 25.2% of the community in Italy.

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




*Source: Anpal Servizi SpINT Area analysis of ISTAT data*

The Bangladeshi community displays a marked gender imbalance, with 71.7% men and 28.3% women. This is because the main Bangladesh migrants are young men, recipients of emotional and economic investments of their families in the country of origin.

On the demographic level, the Bangladeshi population in Italy has a high concentration in the young age group: 57.3% are under 35 (compared to 47.2% for non-EU residents overall). The presence of minors, who constitute the main age group in the community, is higher than among non-EU citizens as a whole: 21.9%. This is mainly related to the high birth rate[2] in the community (20.2 ‰), second only to the Nigerian community in

[1] 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.

[2] The birth rate is the ratio between the number of births in a community or population during a time period and the average population in the same period per thousand.

terms of this parameter[3]. On the subject of minors, note also the high presence of UFMs[4], with a total of 571 as of 31 December 2022.[5] There was however a clear reduction compared to the prior year: -79.9%.

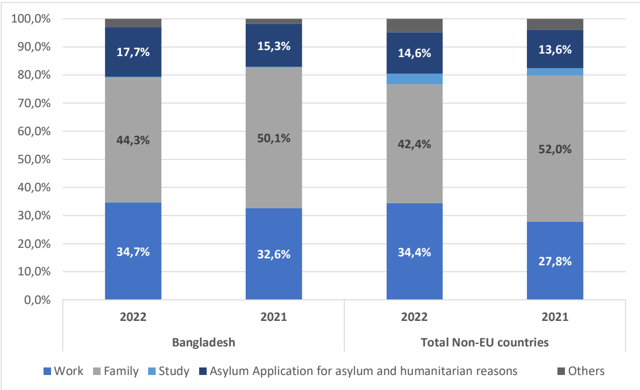
The full analysis of the demographic characteristics of the community and of the modes of residence reveals a process of transformation, with the presence of substantial inflows that increase the number of workers and migrants forced to seek a form of protection (whose presence is evident among unplanned flows, of which Bangladesh is the third country of origin in 2022, and in the large number of UFMs).

In 2021, after the abrupt 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) that allowed for the regularisation of non-EU citizens already present in the country: new residence permits issued during 2021 to Bangladeshi citizens totalled 15,974, more than double compared to the previous year. The Bangladeshi community ranks third in terms of the number of new residence permits issued in 2021, a total of 6.6%. The majority of entries are related to family reasons (around 44%), an increase of some 66% compared to the previous year. One striking factor in comparison with the previous year is the marked increase in new work-related residence permits: +626.6%; in 2020, only 286 Bangladeshi citizens entered Italy for work purposes, while the number was 2,078 in 2021. As mentioned above, this community is a major contributor to unplanned migrant flows and forced migration: the proportion of entries linked to applications for or possession of forms of protection is 30.8%; around one sixth of new permits connected to this reason issued in 2021 were for Bangladeshi citizens.

An analysis of residence permits confirms that the Bangladeshi community's stabilisation process in Italy is not yet fully mature: **the share of long-term residents**[6] **in Italy at 1 January 2021 was 56.2%**, versus the 65.8% for all non-EU citizens.

The majority of short-term residence permits are issued for family reasons (44.3%), a slightly higher incidence than that recorded for non-EU citizens overall (42.4%). Work is the second most important reason for residence, appearing in around one third of short-term permits issued. The incidence of permits connected to the application for or possession of a form of protection is higher than for non-EU nationals overall: 17.7% versus 14.6%.

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




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

Occupational performance in the Bangladeshi community is worse than for the non-EU population overall[7], with a lower employment rate (51.5% versus 58.4%) and a higher inactivity rate (42.8% versus 32.8%), mainly due to the very low inclusion of the community's women in the labour market. There is a very wide **gap** between the **male** (77.4%) and **female** (6.5%) **employment** rate, which seems impervious to improvement trends:

[3] The rate drops to 14% for the non-EU population overall, and to 6.5% for the Italian population.

[4] 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).

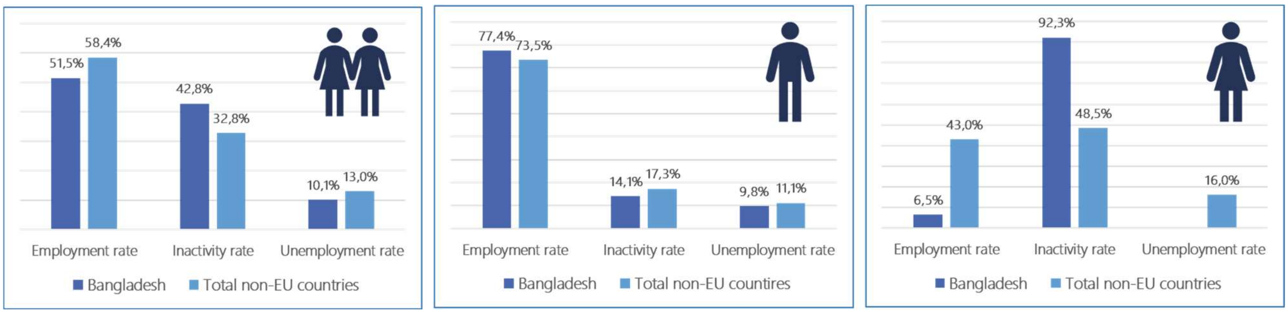
[5] Updated data on the presence of unaccompanied foreign minors are always available on the dedicated page of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies website https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Pagine/Dati-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati.aspx.

[6] 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 of no less than the family allowances calculated annually.

[7] Source: RCFL-ISTAT – H1 2022.

between the first half of 2021 and the first half of 2022, the female employment rate increased by 1.3%, compared to +2.7% for men, while female inactivity, already very high (92.3%), increased by 2.8 percentage points (1.5% decrease recorded for men). Among the main non-EU immigrant communities, Bangladeshi settlers are simultaneously first in terms of the female inactivity rate, and second to last in terms of the employment rate.

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




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

Gender distribution among job-holders confirms a troubling trend among the community's women on the Italian job market: although women account for around 28% of Bangladeshi nationals legally residing in Italy[8], only 4.6% of them are in employment.

29.7% of Bangladeshi nationals working in Italy are employed in the *hotel and restaurant* sector, while 29.3% are in the area of *commerce*. Occupation in the strictly industrial sector is also significant, accounting for around one fifth of the Bangladeshi workforce.

The Bangladeshi community is extremely active in running businesses: eighth among non-EU citizens in Italy in terms of numbers, but fourth in terms of number of sole proprietorships[9]. There were 30,700 Bangladeshi sole proprietors as at 31 December 2021, i.e., 7.8% of the non-EU sole proprietors in Italy. A *commerce* specialisation is also confirmed in the business sphere: 64.1% of Bangladeshi sole proprietors operate in the commerce sector (compared to 41.2% for non-EU residents overall). The second sector of investment for Bangladeshi enterprises is *Business Services*, with a percentage incidence more than double that of non-EU nationals' enterprises overall (12.3% versus 6.2%); 15.5% of non-EU sole proprietors investing in this sector were born in Bangladesh. Another outstanding aspect is the community's incidence in the information services and communications sector: the 625 ICT enterprises run by Bangladeshi citizens account for 16.5% of non-EU sole proprietorships in the sector.

[8] As already seen in Chapter 1, women make up 28.3% of the community.

[9] The following analysis focuses on sole proprietorships, this being the only form of business that allows for identification of the individual non-EU nationality of the owner.

ANPAL
Servizi