



# THE BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Annual report on the presence of migrants  
*Executive summary*



20

23

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, Ukrainian, Chinese, Indian, Bangladeshi, Egyptian, Filipino, Pakistani, Moldovan, Sri Lankan, Senegalese, Nigerian, Tunisian, Peruvian and Ecuadorian.

A key factor also in the 2023 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 Integration Services Area of Sviluppo Lavoro Italia. 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 B.U. - Studies and Research Division of Sviluppo Lavoro Italia. 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 – 2023 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 website [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 2023 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 Sviluppo Lavoro Italia, in the framework of the project “START-Support to Integrated Multiannual Programming on Employment, Integration and Inclusion”.

## The Bangladeshi community in Italy

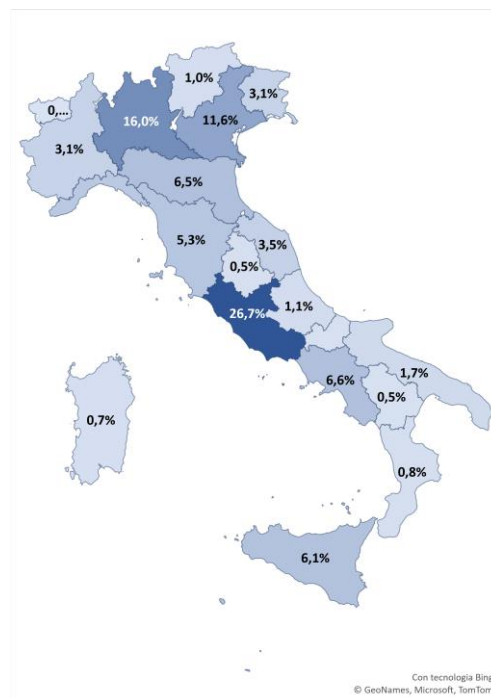
As at 1 January 2023, there were **162,641**<sup>1</sup> Bangladeshi citizens legally residing in Italy, accounting for 4.4% of all third-country nationals in the country. Year-on-year, the Bangladeshi community increased by 7.7%, while the overall growth rate was +4.7%. This notable increase places the Bangladeshi community in **sixth place** among the main non-EU citizens in Italy in numerical terms, rising from the eighth position of the previous year.

The territorial distribution of Bangladeshi citizens in Italy differs markedly from that of the non-EU population as a whole, with a lower concentration in northern Italy (46.2% vs. 61%), in favour of a higher presence in the centre (36% vs. 23.7%) and in the south and the islands (17.8% vs. 15.3%). In particular, the Bangladeshi population in Italy is characterised by a high concentration in Lazio, the first region of settlement, which hosts 26.7% of the community. The concentration in the metropolitan city of Rome, which is home to the largest Bangladeshi community in the European Union, is very high: 39.658 people, or 24.4% of the total number of Bangladeshi citizens in Italy. The second region of Bangladeshi settlement is Lombardy, where 16% of the community has applied for or renewed a residence permit, compared to around 26% of the non-EU community as a whole. This is followed by Veneto, which hosts 11.6% of the community. In the south, Campania (6.6%) and Sicily (6.1%) register significant settlements.

The Bangladeshi community in Italy has a clear gender imbalance: men make up 72%, while women account for the remaining 28%. This figure places the Bangladeshi community in third place among the main non-EU communities with the lowest presence of women, surpassed only by the Pakistani and Senegalese communities. Migration from Bangladesh has historically been male-dominated, and the migration pattern adopted is circular. In this context, wire transfers play a key role: Bangladesh is, indeed, the main country of destination for these financial transactions.

From a demographic point of view, there is a strong concentration in the younger age group: 57.8% of the Bangladeshi community in Italy is under the age of 35 (vs. 46.9% of non-EU citizens as a whole). Minors are the predominant age group, with a slightly lower incidence than that recorded for the non-EU population as a whole (20.3% vs. 20.6%). Given the low presence of females, this is mainly attributable to the community's high **birth rate**<sup>2</sup> (22 ‰), which is second only to the Nigerian community<sup>3</sup>. On the subject of minors, the

Distribution of the Bangladeshi population legally residing in Italy. Data as at 1 January 2023



Source: Processing by SpINT, Sviluppo Lavoro Italia, based on ISTAT data

<sup>1</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 included 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.

<sup>2</sup> Birth rate is the ratio between the number of births in a community or population during a period of time and the size of the average population in the same period per thousand.

<sup>3</sup> For the non-EU population as a whole, the rate drops to 14%, and for the Italian population to 6.5%.

presence of unaccompanied minors should also be highlighted<sup>4</sup>: these were 383 as at 31 December 2023<sup>5</sup>, down significantly over the previous year: (-32.9%). The share of over-50s, instead, is very low compared to the non-EU population as a whole (5.5% vs. 23.5%).

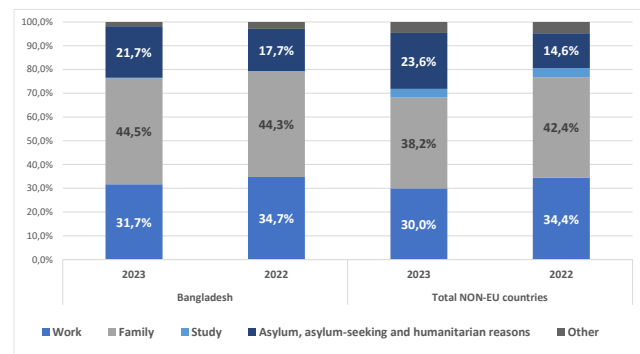
Confirming the community's widespread circular migration pattern, the share of single-person households is significantly higher than that found among the non-EU population as a whole: 19.6% vs. 16.2%.

The year 2022 marked a positive record for the total number of new residence permits issued: 449,118, up 85.9% over the previous year. This increase can be linked both to the war in Ukraine, which led to the entry of about 148,000 citizens fleeing the Eastern European country (mainly with temporary protection permits), and to the regularisation of citizens already present in the territory based on Italian Leg. Decree 34 of 2020<sup>6</sup>, whose applications were largely examined in 2022. The Bangladeshi community ranks third in terms of the number of new residence permits issued in 2022, over 24,000, accounting for 5.5% of the total. Predominant reasons for the entry into Italy of Bangladeshi nationals were asylum, asylum-seeking, humanitarian reasons and other forms of protection, accounting for almost two-fifths of all entries (39.2%). The number of entries related to these reasons almost doubled compared to the previous year (+95.6%). The Bangladeshi community - along with the Ukrainians and Pakistanis - is one of the few for which seeking or holding a form of protection was the most prevalent reasons for entry, confirming the major contribution to unplanned migrant flows that has characterised the Bangladeshi population in recent years<sup>7</sup>. Family reunification (35.9%) and work (18.5%) follow as the next main reasons for entry. One striking factor in comparison with the previous year is the marked increase in new study-related residence permits, which - although very few - rose by a resounding 230.5%. In 2021, only 59 Bangladeshi citizens had entered Italy for study purposes, while in 2022 there were 195.

An analysis of long-term residence permits confirms a low level of stabilisation for the Bangladeshi community in Italy: **the share of long-term residents within the community<sup>8</sup> on 1 January 2023 was 51.5%**, a figure that is more than 8 percentage points lower than that recorded for non-EU nationals as a whole and that has decreased over the previous year by almost 5 percentage points (due to the significant number of new entries).

With reference to the reasons for issuing short-term residence permits, it is worth noting that 44.5% of the community's permits are linked to family reasons, which represent the main reason for residing in Italy, with a higher incidence than that recorded for non-EU nationals as a whole (38.2%). Work is the second most important reason for the community seeking residence in Italy and accounts for about one third of the short-

**Short-term residence permits by type and citizenship (v%) Data as at 1 January 2023 and 1 January 2022**



Source: Processing by SpINT, Sviluppo Lavoro Italia, based on ISTAT-Ministry of the Interior data

<sup>4</sup> The expression 'unaccompanied foreign minor' (UFM) refers to "a minor who is not a citizen of Italy or of another EU Member State, who is, for whatever reason, in the national territory, or otherwise subject to Italian jurisdiction, without the legal assistance and representation of his parents or of other adults legally responsible for him, pursuant to current Italian law" (see art. 2 of Italian Law no. 47/2017).

<sup>5</sup> Up-to-date information on the presence of unaccompanied foreign minors is always available on the dedicated page of the website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Pagine/Dati-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup> Art.103 of Italian Leg. Decree no. 34 of 19 May 2020 introduced an illegal labour emergence provision in the following sectors: agriculture, livestock and animal husbandry, fishing and aquaculture and related activities, personal care, domestic work to support family needs.

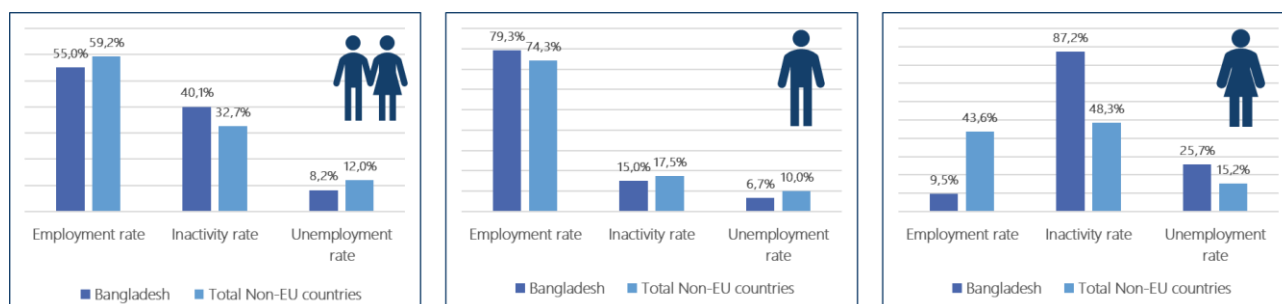
<sup>7</sup> As at 31 December 2022, it was the third largest nationality declared at the time of landing.

<sup>8</sup> A long-term EU residence permit may be issued to foreign nationals who have 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 social allowance calculated annually.

term residence permits, while the incidence of permits linked to seeking or holding a form of protection is 21.7%.

The Bangladeshi community shows a worse labour performance than the non-EU population as a whole<sup>9</sup>, with a lower employment rate (55.0% vs. 59.2%) and a higher inactivity rate (40.1% vs. 32.7%), mainly due to the very low inclusion of the community's female element in the labour market. Indeed, there is a large **gap** between the employment rate for men (79.3%) and that for women (9.5%), and this has not been mitigated by the upward trends registered (+ 2.1% in the employment rate for women between 2021 and 2022, vs. +1.6% for men). In particular, the most striking factor is the very high rate of female inactivity: 87.2%, up 3.3% over 2021 (vs. +2.1% for men). Among the main non-EU communities, the Bangladeshi community stands out as having the second highest rate of female inactivity (after Pakistan) and the third lowest rate of employment. Although women make up 28% of Bangladeshi people legally residing in Italy, their presence among the employed is only 6%.

#### Population (15 years and over) and main labour market indicators by gender and citizenship (v.%) Year 2022



Source: Processing by SpINT, Sviluppo Lavoro Italia, based on RCFL - ISTAT microdata

With regard to the distribution of employed persons of Bangladeshi origin across **different economic sectors**, the community is characterised by a marked presence in the hospitality and industrial sectors. In particular, 30.4% of Bangladeshi people employed in Italy are employed in the *Hotels and restaurants* sector, and 25.6% in *Industry in the strict sense*. Also significant is the Bangladeshi integration in the trade sector, which employs 23% of the community's workers.

The Bangladeshi community plays an important role in the entrepreneurial sphere: ranking sixth among the main non-EU citizens in Italy in numerical terms, the community ranks fourth in terms of the number of sole proprietorships<sup>10</sup>. As at 31 December 2022, the number of sole proprietorships of Bangladeshi origin was 30,569, or 7.8% of the non-EU sole proprietorships in Italy. In the entrepreneurial sphere, the community registers a significant presence in the trade sector: 63.5% of Bangladeshi sole proprietors operate in this sphere (vs. 39.9% for the non-EU population as a whole). The second largest investment sector for Bangladeshi enterprises is *Business services*, with a much higher percentage share than that recorded for non-EU sole proprietorships (11.4% vs. 6.2%); 14.3% of the non-EU sole proprietors operating in this sector were born in Bangladesh.

The presence of Bangladeshi sole proprietorships in the *Information and communications technology* sector is also significant: the 569 ICT businesses led by Bangladeshi nationals account for one sixth of the non-EU sole proprietorships in this sector.

<sup>9</sup> Source: RCFL-ISTAT – Average for 2022.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

