

# THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Annual Report on the Presence of Migrants  
*Executive Summary*



For nearly a decade, the *Direzione Generale dell'immigrazione e delle politiche di integrazione* (general immigration and integration policies directorate) has aimed to provide a detailed and balanced account of the complex phenomenon of the presence of foreigners in Italy and to do so by setting forth the various distinct aspects of the question while analysing the characteristics noted and also anticipating today's trends. The directorate does so by means of its *Rapporto nazionale sui migranti nel Mercato del lavoro italiano* (national reports on migrants in the Italian labour market) (ninth edition), the *Rapporti nazionali sulla presenza in Italia delle principali Comunità straniere* (national reports on the main foreign communities in Italy) (eighth edition) and the *Rapporti sulla presenza dei migranti non comunitari nelle 14 città metropolitane italiane* (reports on the presence of non-EU migrants in the 14 metropolitan cities of Italy) (fourth edition).

The series of national reports on the presence of the main foreign communities aims to investigate and study in depth the presence on Italian soil of the more numerically significant non-EU nationals: Moroccans, Albanians, the Chinese, Ukrainians, Indians, Filipinos, Bangladeshis, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Moldovans, Nigerians, the Senegalese, Sri Lankans, Tunisians, Peruvians and Ecuadorians.

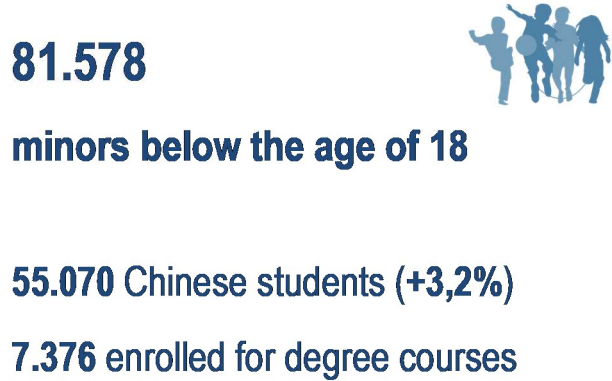
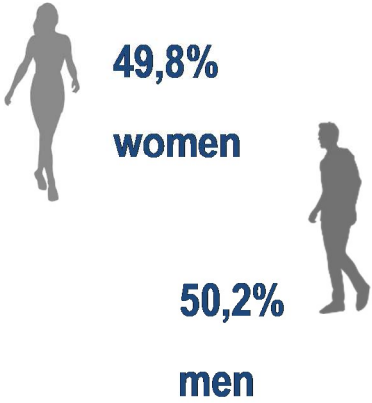
For each grouping, the main features from the socio-demographic and employment angles are considered, alongside presence of minors and their education, occupational integration, welfare policies and processes of integration. Each report starts with comparison among the various communities.

Again, this year we duly acknowledge the contributions of institutions and bodies that have provided information in their possession. These entities include the Italian National Institute of Statistics; the general statistical and actuarial coordination body of INPS (National Social Security Institute); the Ministry of Education, University and Research; the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture; the international political studies organisation, CeSPI; the trade unions CGIL, CISL, UIL and UGL; and the *Divisione Studi e Ricerca* (study and research division) of ANPAL Servizi. We are also most grateful to dottor Daniele Frigeri, the Director of the *Osservatorio Nazionale sull'Inclusione Finanziaria dei Migranti* (national observatory on financial inclusion of migrants) who drew up the focus reports on remittances and access to credit.

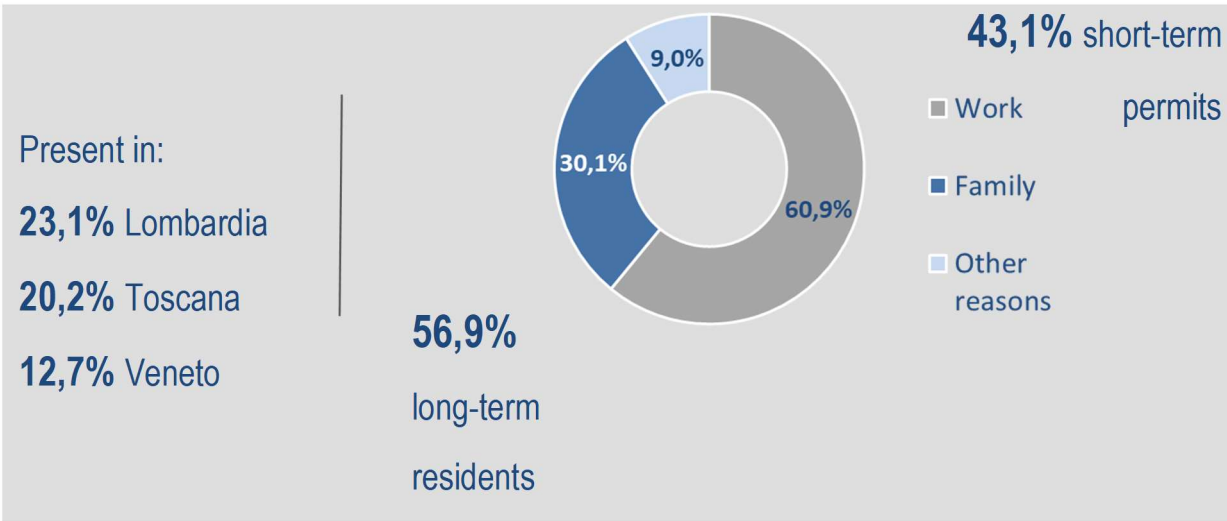
The full series of *Rapporti Comunità* (community reports), editions 2012 - 2019, can be accessed – in Italian and in the main foreign languages – in the areas *Paesi di origine e comunità* (countries of origin and communities) and *Rapporti di ricerca sull'immigrazione* (immigration research reports) on the institutional portal, [www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it](http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it). This portal also provides access to a statistical annex providing information that supplements the reports or that, within a comparative framework among the main national communities considered, enables in-depth study of the data analysed.

Within the ambit of the project, *Supporto nelle politiche per l'immigrazione e di cooperazione bilaterale con i Paesi di origine* (support for immigration and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin) ANPAL Servizi has drawn up and translated the 2019 edition of its *Rapporti nazionali sulle principali Comunità straniere* (national reports on the main foreign communities) – analytic reports provided in summary form.

# Executive Summary



*43,1% are under 30 years old*



## Demographic characteristics

There are **318,003 Chinese citizens** who hold a residence permit that was valid on **1 January 2019** (8.6% of non-EU citizens in Italy).

The Chinese community, ranking third for number of legally residing members, is one of the longest standing foreign communities in Italy.

Various indicators clearly show the degree to which the Chinese community has become a stable presence in Italy. From the socio-demographic angle, two indicators point to settlement or entrenchment:

- a practically perfect **gender balance**: women account for 49.8% of this community (vs 50.2% men);
- a high **quotient of minors** (indicating the presence of families). Minors (more than 81,000 units) make up more than ¼ of the number of legally residing Chinese citizens. This community is on average younger than is the case for non-EU communities as a whole. Nearly ½ of the citizens of Chinese origin are aged less than 30 (43.1% of the total).

In terms of geographical distribution of this community, Northern Italy is the zone most favoured, where nearly 6 out of 10 Chinese citizens reside. Accordingly, two of the three top regions for numbers of Chinese residents are Lombardia (which hosts slightly more than 1/5 of Chinese residents, vs ¼ of non-EU citizens as a whole), and Veneto (ranking third for number of Chinese citizens) with an incidence of 12.7% (for non-EU citizens the incidence falls to 10.4%). A particularly significant quotient reside in Toscana, where 20.2% of Chinese citizens received or renewed their residence permit, with an incidence that is approx. 12% higher than for migrants of non-EU origin as a whole. While as few 11.2% as of this community reside in Southern Italy (a value slightly lower than for non-EU citizens legally residing in Italy as a whole), the concentration in Campania (hosting 3.4% of this community) is particularly noteworthy.

The marked extent of stability or entrenchment of this community is confirmed by an analysis of **residence permits**: the quotient of long-term permit holders (holders of residence permits that are not subject to renewal) among Chinese citizens totals **56.9%** as on 1 January 2019 (vs 62.3% for non-EU citizens as a whole), and among short-term permits issued, work permits prevail, accounting for more than 60% of permits subject to renewal issued to Chinese migrants. Permits issued for family reasons, on the other hand, account for approx. 1/3 of the total.

## Current trends

Compared to 1 January 2018, the number of non-EU citizens in Italy is basically stable (+2,472 units). This apparent stability is in any case the result of the algebraic sum of opposing variations in the diverse communities. Indeed, the geography of origins of migrants sees significant changes taking place. For the first time, changes are noted also in the top 5 in the ranking for number of presences. The key increases are noted in the communities from the Indian subcontinent: namely, the Pakistani community (+4.9%), the Bangladeshi community (+4.5%) and the Indian community (+3.5%). The rise of the Nigerian community is also significant (+3%), ranking eleventh in terms of number's presences, having risen from fourteenth the year before. The most significant downturns regard the Tunisians (-4.6%), Moroccans (-2%) and Moldavans (-1.8%).

Two main factors are noted in regard to trends relative to residence: new permits issued constituting an inflow into the stock of legal residents; and the granting of citizenship, conversely, determining a replacement effect, since the recipients clearly no longer count among the foreign citizens.

Turning to admissions, in 2018, 242,009 new residence permits were issued (approx. 21,000 less than during 2017). Despite the downturn, the growth trend remains, as noted over the last few years, regarding admissions for family reunification (+8.2% vs 2017), which is the reason for issuance of most of the new residence permits (50.7%). There is a downturn in the number of applications for, or entitlements to, a form of protection (-35.9% vs 2017). Only 6% of the new residence permits were issued on the basis of work-related considerations.

With its 11,367 new residence permits – with family reunification clearly prevailing (49.6%) – the Chinese community ranks fifth for number of admissions. We note, however, a significant downturn in the number of Chinese presences vs the previous year (-5.5%).

The extent of settlement or entrenchment of this community in Italy is also evident in the numbers of **marriages with Italian citizens**. In 2017, 407 mixed marriages took place, involving Chinese citizens (53.8% to an Italian husband; approx. 40.3% to an Italian wife; in 5.9% of cases, the spouses were both foreign).

### Minors and educational paths

As noted above, one of the indicators of geographical stabilization of a community is the high presence of families and minors within it. As on 1 January 2019, there were **81,578 Chinese minors**, i.e. 10.1% of the total for non-EU minors. Many are also Chinese children born in Italy: 3,873 in 2017 (7.5% of non-EU children born in 2017). In all, between 2010 and 2017, more than 39,000 Chinese children were born in Italy.

**Admission of Chinese minors into the Italian schooling circuit remains high.** China ranks third as country of origin of non-EU students. Indeed, 55,070 students of Chinese origin enrolled for academic year 2018/2019 (8.2% of the non-EU school population as a whole). Compared to the previous year, the students of this community increased by 3.2%. The growth rate was higher than that displayed by non-EU students as a whole (+2.6%). The number of enrolled students increased especially in secondary schools: +5.6% and +10.2% in junior and senior secondary schools, respectively. The incidence of students from this community vs non-EU students as a whole is higher in junior secondary schools, where 10% of the students who enrolled are Chinese citizens. At preschool institutions, the quotient drops to 7.1%.

Among the main non-EU communities, this community ranks highly also as regards the number of **NEETs** (i.e. persons aged between 15 and 29 not in employment, education or training). Young NEETs of Chinese citizenship amount to approx. 5,000 (i.e. a mere 15% of Chinese youngsters in this age bracket).

### Work and employment

The Chinese community's workers joined important sectors of the Italian economy, such as commerce and catering, above all. This sector employs 62% of this community (vs 24% of non-EU citizens as a whole). The quotient of Chinese workers in industry is equal to the mean value for non-EU workers (26%). Their total absence from the primary sector is most noteworthy, and the data also attest to a low level of employment within the ambit of Public, Social and Personal Services (9%), employment in which sector instead prevails among non-EU workers as a whole (31%). A mere 3% of the Chinese are employed in the sector of Transport and Business Services (vs 12% for non-EU citizens as a whole).

On examination of the main labour market indicators, it is noted that the employment levels for this community are higher than the mean value for non-EU workers. Indeed, the **employment rate** stands at 77.2% (vs 60.1% for non-EU citizens as a whole). The **inactivity rate** (20%) is approx. 10% lower than the mean value. The **unemployment rate** is a mere 3.5% of the Chinese population (vs 14.3% for the non-EU population as a whole). Within this community, there are no significant differences in the male and female employment rates (82.1% and 72.4%, respectively), these values being significantly higher than non-EU mean values (45.5%).

During 2018, **105,633 new employment relationships** were activated for citizens of Chinese origin (approx. 1.1% less than the previous year). The data provided by the *Comunicazioni Obbligatorie* (mandatory notices) reveals that 46% of hirings regard females from this community (vs 46% for non-EU citizens as a whole). Most of the new subordinate and para-subordinate jobs that began during 2018 for Chinese workers were in the *Services* sector (a level approaching 55%). A further significant quotient (41%) is accounted for by the industrial sector.

There is a prevalence among Chinese employed persons of tradespeople and catering workers, accounting for approx. ¼ of hirings (22.3%). The percentage is high also for hirings for textile, clothing and similar industries as machine operators (14.1%). In any case, the number of qualifications of artisans and of skilled workers is higher than that noted for non-EU citizens in the leather goods, hide and footwear sectors (65.4%), as is the case for machine operators for textile, clothing and similar industries (64.3%) and artisans and skilled workers in textiles and clothing (63.5%).

Lastly, involvement of the community in question in **the world of entrepreneurship** appears to be most significant. Indeed, with its 52,953 sole proprietorships, this community ranks second, after Morocco, in terms of number of sole proprietorships. The retail and wholesale sector is the sector within which most investment takes place for Chinese sole proprietors: 36.9% accounting for 11.7% of non-EU enterprises active in this ambit.



## Economic conditions

On analysis of data provided by INPS (the National Social Security Institute) on **monthly salaries**, it is noted that employees belonging to this community earn **monthly salaries** that are lower on average than those of non-EU employees as a whole: 796 euros vs 1,166 euros (i.e. lower by 370 euros per month). It is in any case noted that Chinese female workers are at a slight disadvantage as regards pay. The gender pay gap for employees within this community is most sustained, making for a difference between males and females of approx. 70 euros.

Among Chinese citizens employed in Italy, low levels of education prevail. 86.3% of workers in this community hold, at best, a junior secondary school leaving certificate; 9.3% hold at least a senior secondary school leaving certificate and 4.5% obtained a higher education certificate. Within this community, educationally speaking, women are more highly qualified than men: approx. 11% hold a secondary school leaving certificate (vs 6.7% among men); 2.5% of female employees hold a higher education certificate (vs 4.8% among male employees).

The quotient of **IVS (disability, old-age and survivors') pensions** that are made over to non-EU citizens has always been rather small. In 2018, this quotient stood at 0.4% of the total (out of almost 14 million pensions, 56,071 regard non-EU citizens). Non-EU citizens receive old-age pensions (in 42% of such cases), followed by survivors' pensions (36.3%); 21.6% are in receipt of IVS pensions, provided for migrants with non-EU citizenship during 2018, and linked to disability. In the Chinese community, social benefits prevail (38.5%), among which disability pensions total 33.5% and constant attendance supplements total 28%. Overall, with its 2,026 IVS pensions, the Chinese community accounts for 2% of the total for non-EU citizens who are in receipt of such benefits. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of IVS pensions made over to migrants from China saw a slightly more modest increase than that noted for non-EU citizens as a whole: +9.6% vs +13%.

With reference to monetary transfers to families (maternity benefits, parental leave and family allowances provided by INPS), in 2018 a total of 321,157 women received maternity benefits, 8.8% of whom were non-EU citizens (28,414) (7.6% less than the year before). During the same period, the beneficiaries of maternity allowances with Chinese citizenship totalled 1,552, or 5.5% of non-EU female beneficiaries. Among the Chinese, the beneficiaries of maternity allowances fell in number by 15.6% vs 2017. As to parental leave, in 2018 there were a total of 344,529 such beneficiaries, denoting a 6.2% increase vs 2017, 6.8% of whom were of non-EU origin (23,445). A total of a mere 390 Chinese citizens benefitted from this measure (1.7% of non-EU beneficiaries). During 2018, as many as 2,836,868 beneficiaries were in receipt of family allowances (a value that was basically stable vs the year before). This is the benefit that is most frequently accorded. 12.4% of the beneficiaries were non-EU citizens (approx. 353,000) denoting a 3.7% increase on 2017. 6,982 members of this community were in receipt of family allowances in 2018 (2% of non-EU citizens as a whole; +4% on 2017).

As to transfers made by the Chinese in Italy to their country of origin, China does not rank among the top twenty nations of destination of **remittances** sent from Italy in 2018 (approx. 21 million euros, a mere 0.4% of the total outgoing remittances).

