

# Italy

## *Ethnicity in Italy*

### *Group selection*

The majority of the population (approx. 94%) are Italians. Ethnic minorities include Sardu speakers (1.3 million; 2%), Friulians (700,000; 1.2%), South Tyrolese German speakers (290,000), Roma/Gypsies (80,000-150,000), French and Franco-Provençal speaking Aostans (90,000), Slovenes (50,000-183,000), Occitans (50,000), Ladins (31,500-33,000), Catalans (28,500), Greek speakers (2,500-20,000), and Croatians (2,000-2,400; <sup>1655</sup>).

<sup>1655</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

### *Power relations*

The 1947 (December) Constitution of the newly formed Republic of Italy institutionalized regions as a means of decentralizing power and to prevent totalitarian rule. There are 20 regions, including five with special autonomy status (Sardinia, Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige (Südtirol), Sicily and Friuli-Venezia Giulia; <sup>1656</sup>). Four of the five autonomous regions – Sardinia, Valle d'Aosta, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Trentino-Alto Adige (Südtirol) – have distinct linguistic minorities. All four ethnic minorities living in these autonomous regions are coded as having regional autonomy.

<sup>1656</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

Sardu speakers (Sardinians) dominate the island of Sardinia. Autonomy was granted in order to prevent the secession of the region.

Friulians enjoyed government support during the rule of Mussolini. Their autonomous status however was established only in the 1947 Constitution.

The German speaking minority dominates South Tyrol in the north and north-east of Italy, previously under influence of the ancient Austro-Hungarian empire and awarded to Italy after WWI. The region enjoys vast cultural autonomy which includes education issues, recognition of German as an official language, etc. (<sup>1657</sup>). The interests of the German minority are represented by the South Tyrolean People's Party which is the most popular party in the region. Some level of autonomy was established before WWII, and then gradually expanded due to pressures from Austria and the UN. Major improvements took place in 1972 and 1992.

<sup>1657</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

Aostans (French speaking minority): Valle d'Aosta's regional autonomy status was established in 1948. From the end of WWII until autonomy was officially established, the region was controlled by the French army, and therefore coded with "separatist autonomy"

(<sup>1658</sup>).

“Although there is no official data, it is estimated that there are some 150,000 Roma and Sinti in Italy. (...) Groups of Roma and Sinti migrated to Italy during different periods, beginning in the 14th century” (<sup>1659</sup>, 13). However, while some Roma have a long-standing presence in the country, two relatively recent waves of migration have increased their share in the overall population. In the 1950s and 1960s, both job-seeking and family reunions have been the main motivations for Roma to come to Italy (cf. <sup>1660</sup>). Ever since, “Roma (...) face physical violence, segregation and other forms of discrimination. Where Italy departs from many countries in Europe is that while other governments in the region at least pay lip service to protecting human rights and promoting the inclusion of Roma, the Italian Government at the highest levels has encouraged racial animosity and exclusion” (<sup>1661</sup>, 1). Discriminatory treatment continued from 2010 to 2013, manifesting itself through forced evictions from unauthorized camps, restricted access to public services, discriminatory governmental discourses at the national and regional levels and social exclusion (<sup>1662</sup>). The population figure for the Roma given here refers to the part of the group which has a long standing presence in the country.

Other minorities are relatively small and, despite their concentration in specific geographical areas, politically irrelevant.

<sup>1658</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

<sup>1659</sup> [OSCE, 2008]

<sup>1660</sup> [Vivaldi, 2009]

<sup>1661</sup> [Kushen, 2008]

<sup>1662</sup> [US State Department, 2010-2013]

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Italy*

*From 1946 until 1947*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Italians	0.935	DOMINANT
Sardinians	0.02	POWERLESS
Friulians	0.012	POWERLESS
German speakers (Austrians)	0.005	POWERLESS
Aostans (French speakers)	0.001	SELF-EXCLUSION
Roma	0.001	DISCRIMINATED

*From 1948 until 2013*

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Figure 393: Political status of ethnic groups in Italy during 1946-1947.



Figure 394: Political status of ethnic groups in Italy during 1948-2013.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Italy*

*From 1946 until 2013*



Figure 395: Map of ethnic groups in Italy during 1948-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
Italians	299 573	Statewide
Sardinians	23 849	Regionally based
Friulians	7 835	Regionally based
German speakers (Austrians)	6 486	Regionally based
Aostans (French speakers)	3 227	Regionally based
Roma		Urban

Table 119: List of ethnic groups in Italy during 1946-2013.