

# Italy

## *Ethnicity in Italy*

### *Group selection*

The majority of the population (approx. 94%) are Italian. Ethnic minorities include Sardu speakers (1.3 million; 2%), Friulians (700,000; 1.2%), South Tyrolean German speakers (290,000), Roma/Gypsies (80,000-150,000), French and Franco-Provencal 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>2281</sup>).

<sup>2281</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

Of these groups, we identify the following as politically relevant:

**Italians, Aostans (French speakers), Friulians, German speakers (Austrians), Roma, and Sardinians.**

### *Power relations*

#### *1946-1947*

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

#### *1948-2017*

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>2282</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>2282</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.

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>2283</sup>).

<sup>2283</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

The interests of the German minority are represented by the South Tyrolean People's Party which is the most popular party in the re-

gion. 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.

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" (2284).

<sup>2284</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

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 (2285, 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. 2286). 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" (2287, 1). Discriminatory treatment continued in recent years, 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 (2288, 2289). The population figure for the Roma given here refers to the part of the group which has a long standing presence in the country.

<sup>2285</sup> [OSCE, 2008]

<sup>2286</sup> [Vivaldi, 2009]

<sup>2287</sup> [Kushen, 2008]

<sup>2288</sup> [US State Department, 2010-2013]

<sup>2289</sup> [U.S. Department of State, 2016]

Other minorities are relatively small and, despite their concentration in specific geographical areas, politically irrelevant. For all periods, Italians are coded as having a monopoly on power, Roma as "discriminated", and the other groups as "powerless".

## *Bibliography*

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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 2017*

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Figure 461: Political status of ethnic groups in Italy during 1946-1947.



Figure 462: Political status of ethnic groups in Italy during 1948-2017.

*Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Italy*

*From 1946 until 2017*



Figure 463: Map of ethnic groups in Italy during 1946-2017.

Group name		Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: red;">■</span>	Italians	300 105	Statewide
<span style="color: purple;">■</span>	Sardinians	23 875	Regionally based
<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	Friulians	7849	Regionally based
<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	German speakers (Austrians)	6500	Regionally based
<span style="color: pink;">■</span>	Aostans (French speakers)	3231	Regionally based
	Roma		Urban

Table 158: List of ethnic groups in Italy during 1946-2017.