



# CULTURAL ORIENTATION

# ITALIAN

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*View of Riomaggiore, Cinque Terre  
Flickr / Elvin*

Ti  
2018



**DLIFLC**  
DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER



## About Rapport

Predeployment language familiarization is target language training in a cultural context, with the goal of improving mission effectiveness. It introduces service members to the basic phrases and vocabulary needed for everyday military tasks such as meet & greet (establishing rapport), commands, and questioning. Content is tailored to support deploying units of military police, civil affairs, and engineers.

In 6-8 hours of self-paced training, Rapport familiarizes learners with conversational phrases and cultural traditions, as well as the geography and ethnic groups of the region. Learners hear the target language as it is spoken by a native speaker through 75-85 commonly encountered exchanges. Learners test their knowledge using assessment questions; Army personnel record their progress using ALMS and ATTRS.

- Rapport is available online at the DLIFLC Rapport website  
<http://rapport.dliflc.edu>
- Rapport is also available at AKO, DKO, NKO, and Joint Language University
- Standalone hard copies of Rapport training, in CD format, are available for order through the DLIFLC Language Materials Distribution System (LMDS)  
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View of Vernazza, Liguria  
Flickr / Trey Ratcliff

## Chapter 1 | Italian Cultural Orientation

# Profile

## Introduction

Shaped like a boot, modern Italy is a peninsula jutting into the Mediterranean Sea between France and Greece. The country of nearly 61.7 million people is slightly larger than the state of Arizona.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> It shares its land borders with France (478 km/297 mi) to the northwest, Switzerland (698 km/434 mi) to the north, Austria (404 km/251 mi) to the northeast, and Slovenia (218 km/136 mi) to the east. Within its land borders are two independent states: the Holy See (Vatican City) (3 km/2 mi) and the Republic of San Marino (37 km/23 mi).<sup>4, 5</sup> Italy has 7,600 km (4,722 mi) of coastline. To the northeast lies the Adriatic Sea and to the southeast is the Ionian Sea. Along the western border is the Tyrrhenian Sea. At the extreme south is the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>6, 7</sup>

The region's history spans more than 3,000 years. Following the end of the Roman Empire in 476 C.E., Germans, Muslim Arabs, Spanish, Austrians, and French ruled Italy over the next centuries. Modern Italy became a nation-state in 1861 when the mainland and the islands of Sardinia and Sicily were united under King Victor Emmanuel II. A fascist dictatorship under Benito Mussolini ruled from the early 1920s until Italy's defeat at the end of World War II. In 1946 a democratic republic replaced the monarchy.<sup>8, 9, 10, 11</sup>

Italy is a charter member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Economic Community (EEC), the precursor to the European Union (EU). The nation has been plagued with political scandal, slow economic growth, high rates of youth unemployment, and organized crime. Economic disparities persist between the more prosperous industrial north and the poorer, more agricultural south, leaving the impression among many that Italy is two countries.<sup>12, 13</sup>

## Geographic Divisions

Italy's geographic landscape is diverse. In the northernmost regions, high rugged peaks and glacier-carved valleys dominate the landscape. Although many of the glaciers have melted, more than 1,000 remain. Heading south, mountains give way to rolling plains that cover less than 25% of Italy's land area. The most significant of these plains is the Po Valley, which rises from sea level to 550 m (1,800 ft) in elevation. Italy has an extensive coastline including sandy beaches and rocky promontories.<sup>14</sup>

### *Northwest*

Northwestern Italy contains four of Italy's 20 political regions: Aosta Valley, Piedmont, Liguria, and Lombardy.<sup>15</sup> This region connects Italy with the rest of Europe. Aosta Valley is part of the Alps and home of the region's highest point, Monte Bianco (4,807 m/15,771 ft).<sup>16, 17</sup> Moving southwest, the landscape slopes downward into foothills and alluvial plains. The region's many rivers are all tributaries of the Po River.

Local agriculture is largely consists of wine production, olives, rice, wheat, and corn.

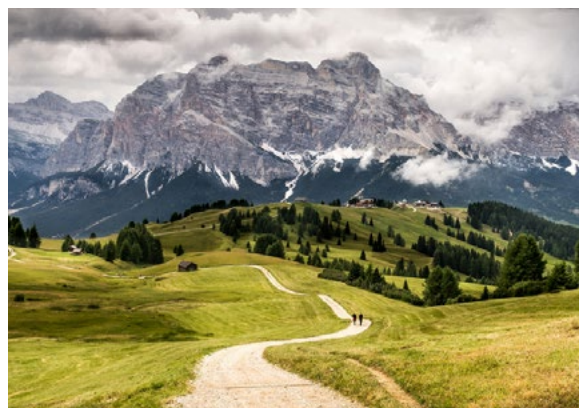
Industries such as shipbuilding, iron, chemicals, textiles, and food manufacturing, along with tourism play significant roles in the economy.<sup>18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25</sup>



Aosta Valley  
Flickr / mmphotography.it

## Northeast

The northeast, which shares borders with Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia, contains four political regions: Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Emilia-Romagna. It includes several important cities, including Venice and Bologna.<sup>26</sup> Much of this region is characterized by high mountains in the north and foothill and alluvial plains along the Po River in the south. The northern expanse of the Apennines mountain range forms the region's southern border.<sup>27, 28</sup>



*View of northeastern Italy, Badia, Trentino-Alto Adige  
Flickr / Giuseppe Milo*

Located within the area is the independent republic of San Marino, a small country of approximately 33,000 inhabitants whose economy is based on agriculture and tourism.<sup>29, 30, 31</sup> Agriculture plays a large role in the local economy. Hemp, corn, wheat, grapes, fruits, pigs, cattle, and poultry are the main agricultural products. Hydroelectricity is produced through dams positioned in the Adige River, which runs from the north to the Adriatic Sea. Chemicals, textile silk, furniture, and paper make up the major industries in the area.<sup>32, 33, 34, 35</sup>

## Central Italy

Central Italy contains political regions of Tuscany, Umbria, Marches, and Lazio (Latium). The region makes up the northern end of the long peninsula that borders the Adriatic Sea to the east and the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian Seas to the west.<sup>36</sup> The Apennine Mountains run north-south through the middle of the peninsula.<sup>37</sup> Numerous rivers flow throughout the region, supporting the area's rich agriculture. Wheat, corn, potatoes, sugar beets, grapes, and olives are common crops in Central Italy. Some hydroelectric complex operations within local waterways provide energy. Steel mills, chemical plants, textiles, shipbuilding, and tourism contribute significantly to the economy of the region.<sup>38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46</sup>



*Sansone beach, Elba Island  
Flickr / Attila Magyar*

## Southern Italy



Abruzzo region  
Flickr / Chris Ford

agriculture is not typical of the region. Wheat, corn, grapes, and fruit make up local crop production. Cash crops include hemp, sugar beets, and tobacco. Sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle represent livestock in the region. In general, the region is sparsely populated. With the exception of Apulia and Campania, the regional economy is poor. Population density in these regions is also higher. Campania has a thriving industrial sector that cans goods and deals in metallurgy, chemicals, tools, and textiles.<sup>48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58</sup>

Southern Italy includes the six political regions of Abruzzo, Molise, Apulia, Campania, Basilicata, and Calabria.<sup>47</sup> The region, which resembles the shape of a boot, is bordered on three sides by water: the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west, the Mediterranean and Ionian seas to the south, and the Adriatic Sea to the east. Mountains make up most of the landscape, and foothills and plains spread out briefly below them as they move toward the sea. Here, soil quality is poor, and large-scale

## Insular Italy



Sardinia  
Flickr / Maria Rosaria Sannino

vegetable cultivation are typical, and mining plays an important role in the economy. Zinc, lead, copper, and iron are mined in quantity.

The insular region of Italy includes two political regions: the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Sicily, Italy's largest island, sits near the southernmost tip of the peninsula, separated from the mainland by the Messina Strait. The island is rugged and mountainous, but a central plateau dominates the island's center. The coastal regions are the most densely populated. Sicily is a popular tourist destination. Agriculture also makes up a large portion of the economy. Fruit, wine, oil, and

Sardinia, Italy's second-largest island, is also rugged and mountainous. Its economy depends upon mining, especially zinc and lead, as well as the raising of sheep and goats.<sup>59, 60, 61, 62, 63</sup>

## Climate

Although Italy lies within the temperate zone, its climate varies widely from north to south because of the length of the peninsula. In all, Italy comprises seven climatic zones. Warm, wet summers and cold winters are the rule in the northern regions. In the winter months, snowfall occurs mostly in the mountains and foothills. Permanent snow cover begins as low as 2,545 m (8,350 ft). Fierce winds buffet the region in the autumn and winter, sometimes gusting up to 200 kmh (125 mph).<sup>64, 65, 66, 67</sup>



*Italian Alps  
Flickr / Bernd Thaller*

Winters in the Po valley can be harsh, while summers are usually hot. Temperatures in all seasons become warmer as one travels south. Coastal regions are more temperate in the winter and hot during the summer. Autumn and winter are the seasons for rain and snow. Autumn rains throughout Italy average from as low as 540 mm (21.2 in) to as high as 1,055 mm (41.5 in). In regions that experience heavy rainfall, the danger of destructive floods and landslides is high. Italy's southern regions generally have the highest temperatures. In some parts of Sicily, the daytime temperature averages 30°C (86°F) during the summer months.<sup>68, 69, 70, 71, 72</sup>

## Bodies of Water

### *Rivers*

Italy's rivers are generally short. The Po, Italy's longest river (645 km/400 mi), rises in the Cottian Alps in northwestern Italy, flowing eastward to the Adriatic Sea. Along its course, 141 tributaries feed into the river. Its delta on the Adriatic Sea has 14 mouths. The river is navigable from the Adriatic westward for more than half the distance across Italy to the town of Pavia. The floodplain is home to more than one-third of all Italians. The river is a source of electricity for the region, but it is polluted with chemical and agricultural runoff. During the annual rains, the river is prone to flooding.<sup>73, 74, 75, 76</sup>

The country's second-longest river, the Adige, rises near the Swiss and Austrian borders. It flows southward for 410 km (255 mi) before emptying into the Adriatic Sea just north of the Po. Its lower course provides irrigation and is navigable but prone to extensive, damaging flooding.<sup>77, 78, 79</sup>

The Tiber River flows southward for 405 km (252 mi) through central Italy. Silting has limited navigability along the river. The Tiber flows through the city of Rome to the Tyrrhenian Sea. Its banks are reinforced by containment walls to mitigate the river's tendency toward extensive flooding.<sup>80, 81, 82, 83</sup>



*Po River  
Flickr / dolanh*

## Lakes

Italy is home to a number of lakes. The largest is Lake Garda in the north, measuring 54 km (34 mi) in length and 3-18 km (2-11 mi) in width. The lake is a popular tourist destination owing to its location in the mountains and its moderate Mediterranean climate. Although violent storms occasionally create dangerous conditions on the lake, tour boats ply the waters. Fishing is part of the local economy with eel, trout, and carp being popular catches. The surrounding area has the proper conditions for agriculture. Locals cultivate citrus fruits, olives, and cypress trees.<sup>84, 85</sup>

Lake Maggiore is the second largest lake in Italy, measuring 54 km (34 mi) long and 11 km (7 mi) at its widest point. The northern portion of the lake lies across the border in Switzerland. The lake is fed by two rivers, the Ticino and Tresa. Its waters are home to trout, pike, perch, and shad. The four Borromean Islands lying off the shores feature chateaus with terraced gardens and fishing villages, making it a popular tourist destination.<sup>86, 87, 88, 89</sup>



*Lake Garda  
Wikimedia / Ezeew*

Lake Como, in northern Italy, consists of three long, thin branching sections resembling a wishbone. The lake is approximately 47 km (29 mi) wide and is subject to flooding.

Numerous species of fish exist in the lake, but their numbers are small because of pollution. Surrounding vegetation is dense and includes figs, pomegranates, and olives. Recently, the lake has become a popular tourist destination.<sup>90, 91, 92</sup>

## Major Cities

### *Rome (Roma)*



Rome  
Flickr / Mark Freeth

Italy's most famous city, Rome has been inhabited for nearly 3,000 years. It is home to some of the world's most famous art pieces and architecture. Rome is the capital of Italy and its most populous city. Strategically placed along the banks of the Tiber River, the city maintained its importance over the centuries because it was built far enough inland to avoid direct attack from the Tyrrhenian Sea. Light industry contributes to the city's economy, but its major source of revenue is tourism.

Rome is one of the most visited cities in the world. Traffic within the city is congested and difficult to navigate. Pollution creates health problems and is deteriorating the city's famous ancient monuments and landmarks.<sup>93, 94, 95, 96</sup>

### *Milan (Milano)*



Streets of Milan  
Flickr / Chris Yunker

Milan, the capital of Milano province, is an important city in the Lombardy region in Northern Italy. Milan is Italy's most important financial center and the most prosperous manufacturing and commercial city in the nation. The economy of Milan is varied, but it relies upon wholesale markets and exports. Manufacturing in the city focuses on automobiles, electrical appliances, and airplanes. Fashion design and clothing are also staples of the city economy. The city is laid out on a circular plan with boulevards emanating from four

gates at the city's original center. The city has been a major transportation hub for many years.<sup>97, 98, 99</sup>

### *Naples (Napoli)*

Naples is located south of Rome on the southwestern side of the Italian peninsula. Naples was founded in the 7th century B.C.E. by Greeks from a nearby colony. The economy of Naples, like much of southern Italy, has suffered since the beginning of the 20th century. The two world wars hit the city hard. Although manufacturing was developed in the post-war era, it never matched the capabilities of the rest of Italy. Still, oil refining, electronics, and automobile assembly make up a good portion of the city's economy. Tourism is slow in the city, mainly because the infrastructure of the south impedes tourism development.<sup>100, 101, 102</sup>



*Cityscape of Naples*  
Flickr / hkpuipui99

### *Turin (Torino)*

Located in northwestern Italy, Turin is a mid-sized city along the Po River in the Piedmont region. Famous as an educational center, the city is home to numerous universities. The city is also known as an industrial center. Metallurgy, chemicals, plastics, tanning, rubber, and paper are only a few of the industries that contribute to the city's economy. The city is also home to the Holy Shroud of Turin, which purports to be the sheet in which the body of Jesus was wrapped following the crucifixion. The shroud is said to bear the imprint of Christ.<sup>103, 104, 105, 106, 107</sup>



*View of Turin*  
Flickr / Luca Conti

## Palermo



View of Palermo  
Flickr / Jorge Brazil

Palermo is Sicily's capital city, located on the northwest shore of the island at the Bay of Palermo. The city is Sicily's principal port where the majority of imports and exports enter and leave the island. As an industrial center, Palermo manufactures chemicals, glass, cement, and processed foods. Palermo's numerous ancient sites make the city a popular tourist destination. The city's economy struggles, though. City and regional administrators have mismanaged funds for years, and in 2012, the city was

on the verge of default on its debts. Traffic problems persist within city limits, so the city has become a walking center for many.<sup>108, 109, 110, 111</sup>

## Genoa (Genova)



Port in Genoa  
Flickr / David Norman

Genoa is located along the coast of northwestern Italy in the province of Liguria, in what is known as the Italian Riviera. Once seen as a sordid city, Genoa has begun to gain a reputation as a solid tourist destination. City investment has cleaned up the area and helped to build an investment infrastructure that has revitalized the city. The city's port functions as a high-volume transport arena for goods and people. Large amounts of imports enter Italy through this port as well., Genoa is a well-known industrial center, producing chemicals, sugar, cement, fertilizers, steel, and many other goods.<sup>112, 113, 114</sup>

# History

## *Italy Prior to 1000 C.E.*



Pope Leo  
Wikimedia

Italian history dates from around the second millennium B.C.E. when the region around the Po River Valley was settled by Indo-Europeans who came from other areas of the Mediterranean. By the seventh century B.C.E., the Etruscans had established a loose confederation of city-states extending throughout central Italy, including Rome. The Romans overthrew the Etruscans in 509 B.C.E. The Romans imposed their culture and language throughout the region and beyond as they expanded their empire, eventually becoming the dominant superpower in the Western world. At the height of its power, the Roman Empire stretched from Great Britain to the Red Sea.<sup>115, 116, 117, 118</sup>

In 306 C.E., Constantine was named Emperor. This marked a significant turning point in the Roman Empire. In 312, he moved his capital to Constantinople, near Istanbul in present-day Turkey. He also converted to Christianity around the same time. By the fifth century, the old Roman Empire was split in two. While the eastern empire (Byzantium) would remain intact for another 1,000 years, Rome and the western regions were soon overrun by Germanic tribes. In 476, the German tribes, under King Odoacer, defeated the Romans, marking the end of the empire.<sup>119, 120, 121, 122</sup> The forces of the Byzantine emperor, Justinian, defeated the Goths in 536. The destruction wrought on Italy by Justinian's troops left the country vulnerable to attacks by the Lombards who conquered the peninsula in 568. They did not hold power long, however. In 773, the Frankish king, Charlemagne, defeated the Lombards and absorbed Italy into his Carolingian Kingdom.<sup>123, 124, 125</sup>

In 800, Rome's Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as Roman emperor, thus severing both religious and political ties with Byzantium. Carolingian kings would rule Italy until the Germany's King Otto I declared himself king of the region in 961. German kings maintained control of the region until the beginning of the 11th century.<sup>126, 127, 128</sup>

## 1000 C.E.-1860



Camillo Benso di Cavour  
Wikimedia

In the 10th century, city-states such as Florence, Milan, Genoa, and Venice began emerge as the monarchy's power declined. As the cities prospered, they challenged Rome's authority further fragmenting power. By the beginning of the 14th century, the central government controlled northern Italy but the papacy controlled the central region. The French controlled the southern mainland and the Spanish controlled Sicily. <sup>129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134</sup>

The rise of city states ushered in the Italian Renaissance. The 14th and 15th centuries were a time of scientific, artistic, and cultural development. <sup>135, 136</sup> By the late 1400s, however, wars continued to plague Italy's city states eventually ending Italy's Renaissance. <sup>137, 138, 139</sup>

Famine and plague struck northern Italy in 1630. Commercial activities and agricultural production contracted. Spain's Thirty Years War (1618-1648) drained Italy of revenues, weakened the economy, and caused social unrest. Spain put down the Italian insurrections in 1648, but Italy's economic crisis worsened. With the death of the Spanish king in 1700, wars over Spain's empire erupted. By 1748, much of Italy was aligned with the Habsburgs, rulers of the Austrian Empire. <sup>140, 141</sup>

In 1796, Napoleon invaded Italy, and France soon controlled large portions of the peninsula. <sup>142, 143</sup> Initially, the French championed an Italian republic, similar to what had been established in France. However, in 1805, Napoleon named himself emperor, and named his stepson as king of Italy. <sup>144, 145</sup> When Napoleon's rule ended in 1814, much of Italy fell once again under Austrian rule. <sup>146, 147</sup>

Around 1847, an Italian unity movement, led by Camillo Benso di Cavour, emerged. A series of revolts against the Austrian Empire sprang up in 1848. In 1849, revolutionaries temporarily ousted the pope and declared the establishment of the short-lived Roman Republic. <sup>148, 149</sup> Military skirmishes continued throughout Italy until the Franco-Austrian war in 1859. In 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi and 1,000 Sardinian united Sardinia, Sicily, and Naples under Sardinia rule. On 17 March 1861, Sardinian King Victor Emanuel II was declared king of the independent Kingdom of Italy. By 1870, the other Italian provinces had been annexed into the kingdom, completing Italy's unification. <sup>150, 151</sup>

## 1861-1945



Benito Mussolini  
Wikimedia / Jkelly

The Italy's newly formed government focused on improving the economy, but power remained divided among the central and local governments.<sup>152</sup> Unrest, including riots over jobs and taxes, continued into the 1920s.<sup>153</sup> The government faced opposition from all sides but the most serious came from the Roman Catholic Church, angered over the loss of its papal states.<sup>154</sup>

In 1914, World War I broke out. Initially, Italy remained neutral, but in 1915 entered the war on the side of the Allied Forces. Italy lost 600,000 troops and failed to gain any of the territory it had been promised. Economic and industrial power had concentrated in the hands of a few. Opposition leaders emerged, including Benito Mussolini and his Fascist Party. After winning the 1924 elections, Mussolini slowly assumed total control of the government.<sup>155, 156, 157</sup>

In 1929, Italy's economy faltered and worsened after the League of Nations imposed sanctions against Italy for invading Ethiopia in 1935-1936.<sup>158, 159</sup> Hoping to protect its territorial gains, Mussolini's government strengthened its ties with Nazi Germany, even passing anti-Semitic laws in 1938.<sup>160</sup> However, Italy's situation further deteriorated in 1939 when it invaded Albania. Under economic sanctions and diplomatically isolated, Mussolini formalized a military alliance with Hitler known as the "Pact of Steel." Mussolini remained neutral at the outbreak of World War II. In 1940, when a German victory appeared imminent, Mussolini joined the Axis powers.<sup>161, 162</sup>

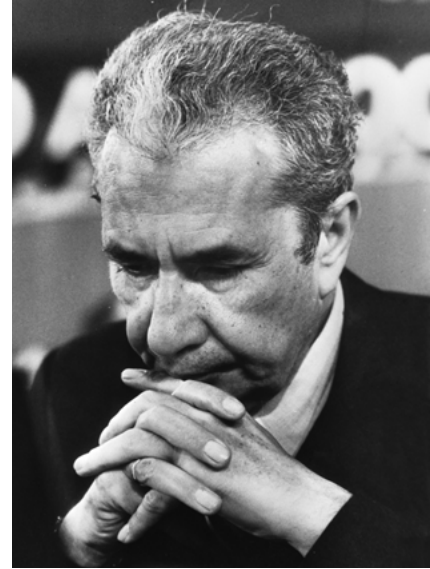
Government opposition grew within Italy, and by 1943, Catholics, other anti-Fascist groups, and the communists signed an agreement to overthrow the Fascist government.<sup>163, 164</sup>

In 1943, the king dismissed Mussolini, sparking violent anti-Fascist demonstrations. The army arrested Mussolini, and Italy's new government declared war on Germany. Almost immediately, the Germans took over Rome and within weeks controlled northern and central Italy. The Germans freed Mussolini and reinstalled him as the head of the Italian government.<sup>165</sup> As the war neared its close, Mussolini attempted to flee to Switzerland but was caught by partisans and executed near Lake Cuomo.<sup>166, 167, 168</sup>

## 1945-2000

Italy's king abdicated in May 1946, succeeded briefly by his son. The royal family was forced to flee a month later when Italy adopted a new constitution with a parliamentary form of government. The constitution, although anti-Fascist in tone, established a weak government structure.<sup>169, 170</sup>

The first parliamentary elections in 1948 brought the Christian Democrats and their liberal partners to power. The party and its pro-Western partners would share power for the next 40 years.<sup>171, 172</sup> Instability characterized Italian politics through 1994, when the average life of an elected government was just 11 months.<sup>173</sup> The country continued to recover from the devastation of World War II. Economy and industry flourished in the north, while in the south, economic recovery was much slower. Reforms redistributed agricultural lands stripping power from local landowners.<sup>174, 175</sup>



Aldo Moro  
Wikimedia

By 1969, Italy's economic progress had stalled. Political instability rose along with terrorism, especially from neo-fascist groups. Throughout the 1970s, political violence, kidnappings, bombings, and terrorism persisted. In 1978, the Red Brigade killed former Prime Minister Aldo Moro after holding him hostage for 55 days. The police were reorganized and given more power. By 1982, the terrorist threats had been broadly diminished.<sup>176, 177, 178, 179, 180</sup>

Italy's economy soared in the 1980s, but by the 1990s, unemployment and high inflation caused the government to implement austerity measures to kick-start the ailing economy.<sup>181, 182</sup> The fall of the Berlin wall weakened support for the Christian Democrats, who were embroiled in corruption scandals. The existing party system collapsed in 1993 amid scandals and electoral reforms.<sup>183</sup>

In 1994, media mogul Silvio Berlusconi rose to power on the promise of lower taxes, reduced spending, and job creation. In July, corruption allegations against him caused his government to fall.<sup>184, 185</sup> In the years that followed, government instability persisted, but the presidential powers increased. In 2000, Berlusconi forged an alliance with the center-right and was again elected prime minister.<sup>186, 187</sup>

## Italy since 2000



Mario Monti  
Wikimedia / U.S. Department of State

Berlusconi was defeated in 2006 by a center-left coalition that remained in power for 20 months. By April 2008, Berlusconi was back in the prime minister's seat.<sup>188, 189</sup> Berlusconi's popularity waned in 2009 amidst a sex scandal, allegations of corruption, and a weakening economy. By 2010, double-digit unemployment propelled the country into recession. Three no-confidence votes against the prime minister failed in 2010. Another sex scandal in 2011 further weakened the embattled Berlusconi.<sup>190, 191, 192</sup> Italy's public debt continued to soar, prompting more austerity measures. In November, Berlusconi announced he would resign. Mario Monti replaced Berlusconi. His financial reforms failed to energize the economy and confidence in the government plummeted.<sup>193, 194, 195</sup>

In spite of his conviction on tax fraud, Berlusconi again entered politics in December 2012.<sup>196, 197, 198</sup> Monti resigned, and in February 2013 elections deadlocked when no party could form a governing coalition. After two months, Italy still had no government. In April 2013, President Napolitano was reelected and selected Enrico Letta to form a new government. Berlusconi's attempt to thwart Letta backfired and in November 2013, the senate expelled Berlusconi. Letta's government was short-lived. In February 2014, he resigned and Matteo Renzi was sworn in as Italy's youngest prime minister.<sup>199, 200, 201, 202, 203</sup>

## Government

Italy is a republic divided into 20 regions (five of which are autonomous). The current voting system is based on a party list system in which each party ranks its candidates in order of priority. For instance, if a party wins 5 seats, the first five candidates on the list would be elected to serve in parliament. The winning party (or a coalition of parties making up a majority) forms a government (with a prime minister and cabinet) at the request of the president. The current electoral system is under review and could change if a new law is adopted.<sup>204, 205, 206, 207</sup>

The government must receive the support of the parliament before exercising authority. The chief of state is the president who is elected by an electoral college for a seven-year term. There are no limits on the number of terms the president



*Courthouse in Rome  
Flickr / Vidar Stensen*

may serve. The president, who commands the military, may call special sessions of the parliament, ratify treaties, issue declarations of war, and promote laws or other decrees having the force of law. The president also has the authority to dissolve parliament. The head of the government is the prime minister who is appointed by the president and confirmed by the parliament. The prime minister is the head of the Council of Ministers in which executive power rests.<sup>208, 209, 210</sup>

The nation's legislative branch consists of a bicameral parliament. The Senate (Senato della Repubblica) has 321 members elected by proportional votes in the administrative regions. Members serve five-year terms but the president may appoint a maximum of five senators to life-time terms. The lower house, the Chamber of Deputies (Camera dei Deputati), has 630 members elected by popular vote to five-year terms.<sup>211, 212</sup>

The highest court in the land is the Supreme Court of Cassation (Corte Supreme di Cassazione) which is divided into penal, civil, administrative, and military divisions. Each division has its own president and judges. The nation's Constitutional Court (Corte Costituzionale) has 15 judges and is headed by a president. In addition, there are a number of lower civil and criminal courts and courts of appeal.<sup>213, 214</sup>

## Media



*Film crew  
Flickr / Will Bakker*

Italy's constitution guarantees freedom of the press and freedom of expression. Although these rights are broadly respected, Italy's vibrant media faces a number of challenges. Freedom House rates the nation as only "partly free" in its 2014 report. Defamation is a criminal offense in Italy and the law has been used to curb criticism of the government and its officials.<sup>215</sup> Broadcast media are dominated by two giant companies: the publicly

owned Ratiotelevisione Italiana (RAI) and the privately owned Mediaset. There are a significant number of private stations, including a satellite TV network. More than 1,300 commercial radio stations also broadcast throughout the country.<sup>216, 217</sup> More than 140 daily newspapers are in circulation, most run by political parties or owned by large media groups. Much of the content supplied to the media comes from Italian news agencies.<sup>218</sup>

Italy scores higher on measures of internet freedom where it earned a rating of “free” by Freedom House. About 58% of Italians regularly access the internet, which remains largely unrestricted. Authorities do block file-sharing and live-streaming sites in an effort to protect intellectual property. They also block sites containing child pornography. Blogs and social media are an important source of news for many. In March 2014, a new provision went into effect allowing authorities to block websites deemed offensive. Financial penalties up to 250,000 euros (USD 270,645) can be levied against individuals uploading materials that violate copyright regulations. Similar financial penalties may be imposed on companies failing to heed orders to block sites in a timely fashion.<sup>219, 220</sup>

## Economy



*Factory at sunset  
Flickr / efilpera*

Italy has the world’s ninth-largest economy and the third-largest in the Euro-zone. The northern regions are largely industrialized, while the southern regions are generally less developed and more dependent on agriculture. The industrial sector is the main driver of the formal economy, which accounts for approximately 24 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Until 1992, when an intensive effort toward privatization began, most of the industrial sector was controlled by the government.<sup>221</sup> Its strongest industries include metallurgical, engineering, chemical, and textile subsectors. A lack of raw materials, however, hampers growth. Italy imports approximately 80% of its energy. Services, especially tourism, account for about 74% of the national GDP, while agriculture generates about 2%.<sup>222, 223, 224</sup> A significant informal economy also exists and is estimated to contribute as much as 17% of GDP.<sup>225</sup>

In 2009, the global financial crisis swept into Italy, halting the economy, lowering GDP, and producing high levels of unemployment. In 2011, the government implemented a

series of austerity measures to stave off crisis.<sup>226</sup> These efforts resulted in modest success, though Italy continues to be plagued by high public debt and structural impediments to further growth. In 2014, the economy declined to its lowest levels of growth in years. In the last quarter of 2014, the economy once again slowed. Unemployment reached its highest recorded level (12.4%), but unemployment among the young people was much higher (40%).<sup>227, 228, 229, 230</sup>

There were, however, hopeful signs in early 2015 that the economy was rebounding slowly, even though Italy's public debt continued to expand.<sup>231, 232</sup> The European Central Bank's quantitative easing has strengthened Italy's economy. The decreased value of the euro and a reduction in interest rates are likely to increase export potential. These factors will give Italy some room to move but there is unlikely to be any sustained improvement without a reduction in unemployment and government debt.<sup>233, 234</sup>

## Ethnic Groups

Italy is an ethnically homogenous nation. Approximately 96% of the population is ethnic Italian. Official figures suggest that approximately 670,000 illegal immigrants live in the country, most of whom come from Eastern Europe and North Africa. Approximately one million Romanian citizens are officially registered. There are also approximately half a million Moroccans and 500,000 Albanians.<sup>235</sup> Along the nation's northern borders there are also ethnic French, German, and Slovene groups. In the south, there are pockets of ethnic Greeks.<sup>236, 237, 238, 239</sup>



*Italian women*  
Flickr / Ed Yourdon

## Endnotes for Chapter 1: Profile

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# Italian Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 1 | Profile

### Assessment

1. Italy is slightly smaller than the state of Arizona.
2. Italy shares land borders with six independent entities.
3. The southern region of Italy is bordered by four seas.
4. The largest lake in the country is Lake Maggiore, part of which is in Switzerland.
5. Napoleon established the first Kingdom of Italy.

*Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. True*



*Catholic church, Assisi  
Flickr / SteveBest*

## Chapter 2 | Italian Cultural Orientation

# Religion

## Introduction

The Catholic Church has played an integral role in Italian history from its inception. In 380, Roman Catholicism became the official religion of the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> From 1929 to 1985, Catholicism was the state religion of Italy. A concordat, signed in 1984, ended Catholicism as the official religion. It also ended compulsory religious teachings in public schools and reduced the government's financial contributions to the Church.<sup>2, 3</sup> Nevertheless, Italy remains an overwhelmingly Catholic nation with approximately 80% of Italians identifying themselves as Catholic, even as the number of practicing Catholics is declining. Polls reveal that 30% of Italian Catholics say they attend mass regularly but a study by the Patriarch of Venice revealed that only about 23% were

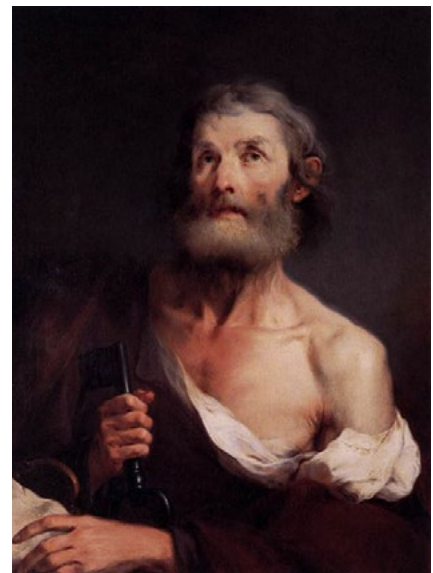
regular church-goers and only 15% attended mass every Sunday. Others suggest that the number may be as low as 10%.<sup>4, 5, 6, 7</sup> A lack of identification with the Catholic faith and church attendance are particularly acute among the young. This finding has led some to conclude that, in the near future, Catholics will not be a majority in Italy.<sup>8</sup>

There are about 450,000 Protestants including Lutherans, Methodists, and Baptists. All are members of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy. The small number of Albanians in Italy are members of the Eastern Orthodox Church. About one million Muslims now reside in the country, mostly members of the Sunni sect. The Jewish population was virtually eliminated during World War II, and today only about 30-47,000 remain. Roughly one in five Italians is agnostic or atheist.<sup>9, 10, 11</sup>

Religion's influence is evident in virtually every aspect of life in Italy.<sup>12</sup> Vatican City, located within the city of Rome, is the home of the pope and the heart of the Catholic Church. Although technically a sovereign state, Vatican City's presence in the capital of Rome has helped make Catholicism not only a religious presence, but a cultural influence as well. Expressions of Catholicism abound in the architecture and artwork of Rome, and throughout Italy.<sup>13</sup> One of the nation's most popular magazines is *La Famiglia Cristiana* (The Christian Family).<sup>14, 15</sup>

## Major Religions

The Roman Catholic Church is the oldest of all Western institutions and is led by the pope who resides in the Vatican in Rome. Catholic popes are part of a succession that Catholics believe traces back to Saint Peter. Catholics believe that Jesus gave the Apostle Peter the Keys to the Kingdom and sent him out to spread the Gospel. Peter traveled to Rome, where he was crucified. All of his successors, according to the Church, were in Rome. Such apostolic succession grants popes the right to speak infallibly about spiritual matters. After the pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests make up the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>16, 17, 18</sup> Catholic religious practice “revolves around the seven sacraments—baptism, reconciliation, Eucharist, confirmation, marriage, holy orders (joining the priesthood), and the sacrament of the sick.”<sup>19</sup> Devotion to the Virgin Mary (the mother of Jesus Christ),



*Peter the Apostle*  
Wikimedia

the use of the rosary, and going on pilgrimages are other important features of Catholicism.<sup>20, 21</sup>

► **What time does the church open?**

Visitor:	A che ora apre la chiesa?	What time does the church open?
Local:	Alle 10.	At 10.

*Exchange 1*

► **When do you Worship?**

Visitor:	Quando vai in chiesa?	When do you Worship?
Local:	La Domenica.	On Sunday.

*Exchange 2*

Early in the 4th century, Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, which at the time was synonymous with Catholicism. He moved his capital to Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul, Turkey).<sup>22, 23, 24</sup> The move increased Rome's spiritual authority as the pope became the premier authority in Rome.<sup>25</sup> Over time, the pope became the representative for the poor and oppressed who wished to remain Roman rather than become dominated by foreign invaders. Eventually, popes assumed many of the functions of governments, especially in those areas that were weak. Gradually, the popes controlled large territorial regions that would later become the Papal States, of which only Vatican City has survived. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the division between church and state blurred. Papal authority expanded further into the secular world of politics and society. The Church and the Pope held tremendous sway in virtually all aspects of life. During this time, tensions between the pope and Holy Roman Emperor were common.<sup>26, 27, 28</sup>



*St. Peter's Basilica, Rome  
Flirkr / Lorenzoclick*

## Religion and Government

The Italian government ended its official ties with the Catholic Church and became a secular nation in 1984.<sup>29</sup> Its constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and those guarantees are generally respected.<sup>30</sup> The state provides some funding to the Catholic Church and can support other religious groups provided the group signs an accord with the government. Religious groups who sign such an accord are granted special privileges, including that their clergy automatically have access to state hospitals, prisons, and the military. Religious marriages may be recorded in a civil registry. Members are allowed to conduct special religious practices regarding funeral rites, and students may be exempt from attending school on religious holidays.<sup>31</sup>



*People at a Catholic University in Rome  
Flirkr / Ed Yourdon*

One hour of daily religious instruction in public schools is optional. This instruction is regarded more cultural than religious. Although the Catholic Church selects these instructors, the materials must include non-Catholic materials.<sup>32</sup>

Italy's anti-terrorism laws prohibit individuals from hiding their identities and require them to show their faces in public. If enforced, this means that wearing the *niqab* (face veil) and burqa could be subject to criminal penalty. Currently, there are no restrictions on wearing the hijab, or Islamic headscarf, in public.<sup>33</sup>

## Religion and Daily Life

For many of Italy's Catholics, especially young urbanites, religious activities may be largely confined to the occasional Sunday mass or special holidays and religious events. Among older rural villagers, religion may play a much more prominent role, including daily mass.<sup>34</sup> The election of Pope Francis, however, may be changing that. Since Francis became pope, priests have reported a significant increase in church attendance.<sup>35</sup>



*Prayers at the church  
Flickr / Artur Warchavchik*

The impact of the Catholic Church is clearly visible in many ways, including the number of churches and other religious buildings scattered throughout Italian cities and towns.<sup>36</sup> Many homes are decorated with various religious symbols. Some have small shrines. Crosses, perhaps the most iconic Christian symbol, are hung on walls everywhere and often worn as jewelry.<sup>37</sup>

Although the Church has no official government role, it still influences politics and legislation within the country.<sup>38, 39, 40, 41</sup> For example, the Church battled hard against attempts to make divorce and abortion legal. Although they lost the fight in 1970, the influence of Church doctrine is still evident. Divorces are difficult to obtain and can take up to six years to complete.<sup>42, 43, 44</sup>



*Prayer candles  
Flickr / Lorenzoclick*

Religious rituals are a common part of life, and most children are baptized within the church, even if their parents are not actively religious.<sup>45, 46</sup> Italians love to celebrate, and the year is filled with festivals, many of which have some religious basis. Saint's days, feasts, and celebrations of the Virgin Mary are widely observed throughout the country.<sup>47, 48, 49</sup>

## Religious Holidays and Events

### *National Holidays*

The first holiday of the year is Epiphany (6 January), also known as *La Befana*, commemorating the visit of the Three Magi to the Baby Jesus. Children hang stockings to receive gifts from a witch known as *La Befana*. The day is filled with various festivities and parades.<sup>50, 51</sup> Easter, or *Pasqua*, commemorates the resurrection of Christ. Each spring, celebrations include parades and processions in which statues of Jesus or the Virgin Mary are carried through the streets. Each city and town has its own special way of celebrating Easter.<sup>52</sup> In some parts of the country (e.g., Calabria



*Stockings for La Befana  
Flickr / -= Treviño =-*

and Campania) penitents flagellate themselves to show their devotion.<sup>53</sup> In Sicily, 2,000 friars in ancient garb parade through the streets of Enna.<sup>54</sup> Near Palermo, women wear 15th century costumes and give out decorated eggs to the residents.<sup>55, 56</sup> On Easter Monday (*La Pasquetta*), people often visit friends and family and play traditional Easter games.<sup>57, 58, 59</sup>

▶ Happy Easter!		
Visitor:	Buona Pasqua!	Happy Easter!
Local:	Anche a Lei!	Same to you, too!

Exchange 3

The next religious holiday is the Assumption of Mary (*Ferragosto*) on 15 August. On this day, the statue of the Virgin is carried in street processions.<sup>60, 61</sup> All Saints' Day (*La Fest di Tutti I Santi*) is celebrated each 1 November. On this day, Italians visit friends and family to exchange gifts and offer goodwill wishes.<sup>62</sup> On 8 December, Italians celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (*L'Immacolata Concezione*). The faithful attend special masses to honor Mary. In Rome, the pope kneels in prayer and lays a wreath at the statue of the Madonna at Piazza Mignanelli. On a less solemn note, many cities have street fairs with clowns and jugglers to entertain the people.<sup>63, 64</sup>

Christmas Day (*Natale*) on 25 December celebrates the birth of Christ. On Christmas Eve, families feast on a traditional meal of fish, after which they attend midnight mass.<sup>65, 66</sup> Many Italians mark St. Stephen's Day, Il Giorno di Santo Stefano, (26 December) by visiting Nativity scenes at churches. Carnivals and festivals provide entertainment and relaxation.<sup>67</sup>

## Local Holidays

Several local holidays are also celebrated. The Feast of Saint Mark (*La Festa di San Marco*), celebrated in Venice on 25 April, is marked with gondola races on the canals. Venetian men also give roses to their lovers.<sup>68, 69</sup> On 24 June, people in Florence, Turin, and Genoa celebrate the Feast of St. John (*La Festa di San Giovanni*). In Florence, Italians gather near the city center to watch fireworks. In Turin and Genoa, the event is a two-day



"Oh Bej! Oh Bej!" Christmas market  
Flick / Davide Gigli

celebration (23-24 June), during which there are parades, sporting events, fireworks, and bonfires.<sup>70, 71</sup>

Romans celebrate the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (*La Festa di San Pietro e Paolo*) on 29 June. Both are the patron saints of the city. In addition to religious rituals officiated by the Pope, there are street fairs, music, and fireworks.<sup>72, 73</sup> The Feast of Saint Januarius (*La Festa di San Gennaro*) is celebrated each 19 September in Naples. On this day, the faithful visit the Cathedral in Naples where the dried blood of St. Januarius is believed to turn liquid.<sup>74</sup> People in Milan celebrate their patron saint with the Feast of St. Ambrose (*La Festa di San Ambrogio*) on 7 December. Italians attend special masses at the Basilica of Saint Ambrose, followed by visits to the “Oh Bej! Oh Bej!” Christmas Market.<sup>75</sup>

## Buildings of Worship

Catholic church architecture must reflect Catholic theology and ecclesiology and follow the natural laws of church architecture: permanence, iconography, and verticality.<sup>76, 77</sup> Verticality means that the buildings should be tall, prompting individuals to always look upward in contemplation and reflection on heavenly issues. Permanence means that the structure should be massive enough to last for ages. Church buildings should be a lasting representation of the enduring faith and symbolize God’s Church, which is everlasting. Iconography can be manifested by statues and art within the church, or by the shape of the building itself. For example, many Italian churches are laid out in the form of a cross. The purpose of such imagery is to keep the images of faith front and center within view of the faithful.<sup>78, 79</sup>



Small church, Romeno  
Flickr / Lorenzoclick

Italian church buildings vary in style, from simple churches in small villages, to the elaborate cathedrals and basilicas in the major cities. The earliest churches had a rectangular floor plan with a nave lined by columns on both sides. Around the 4th century, the Byzantine architectural style became popular. One impressive example of the Byzantine style is St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice which is laid out in the shape of a cross with five domes. The building houses the remains of Saint Mark, the city’s patron saint.<sup>80, 81</sup>

After the fall of the Roman Empire, church styles changed. Many builders used Romanesque and Gothic styles commonly found throughout the northern regions of the country. The cathedral in Pisa, with multiple arches on its façade, is a fine example of a Romanesque church.<sup>82, 83</sup> The seven-story cathedral at Orvieto, with its ornately decorated exterior, is an example of Gothic architecture.<sup>84, 85</sup> The Renaissance style dominated churches from the 14th to 16th centuries. The Baroque style became popular during the 16th and 17th centuries; many of the churches of central Rome were built in this style, including the famous Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence.<sup>86, 87, 88</sup> More ornate Rococo-style followed and typifies many churches in the southern regions.<sup>89</sup>

## Behavior in Buildings of Worship



*Priests at mass  
Flickr / Airman Magazine*

Certain basic rules of behavior apply when visiting a Catholic church in Italy: never speak loudly,<sup>90, 91</sup> avoid taking pictures during mass, and dress conservatively. Women should take care that no cleavage is exposed. Thighs and shoulders should also be covered. Men should always wear shirts or t-shirts inside a church building. Men should remove any hats or caps upon entering. Tattoos should be covered.<sup>92, 93, 94, 95</sup>

Do not take food or drink inside a church. Make sure that all cell phones are turned off or muted.<sup>96, 97, 98</sup>

### ▶ May I take photographs inside the church?

Visitor: Posso fare una foto all'interno della chiesa?

May I take photographs inside the church?

Local: Sì.

Yes.

*Exchange 4*

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## Cultural Orientation | Italian

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# Italian Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 2 | Religion

### Assessment

1. Roman Catholicism is the official state religion of Italy.
2. Approximately eight out of ten ethnic Italians are nominally Catholic.
3. The three natural laws of Church architecture are verticality, iconography, and permanence.
4. T-shirts are inappropriate attire when visiting a Catholic church in Italy.
5. All of the Italian Papal States have disappeared.

*Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False*



*Gondolas of Venice  
Flickr / gnuckx*

## Chapter 3 | Italian Cultural Orientation

# Traditions

## Introduction

Although Italy is ethnically homogenous, there are considerable regional variations in culture. In the north, German influences are evident. Attitudes about time, for instance, are much less relaxed than in the south where punctuality is valued less. Northern society is much more organized, reliable, and efficient. People in the north tend to prefer equality and decentralized power structures. They are unlikely to respond to attempts to control them or their behavior, whereas in the south the situation is much the opposite. Northerners are much less tolerant of crime and corruption. On the other hand, people in the south are regarded as warmer and friendlier. They take a more relaxed view of life. Southerners often value family over individual needs and

economic success. Although these differences have diminished in recent years, they are still evident.<sup>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</sup>

In general, Italians tend to be individualists, particularly in the northern cities. Having personal objectives motivates many Italians in the quest for personal fulfillment. Italians are generally success oriented. Most people regard competition as positive, and winning is an important part of life. Individualism is less important in the south, however, where relations with friends and family assume greater importance.<sup>6</sup>

Italians are uncomfortable in ambiguous situations and prefer to avoid uncertainty. This trait, combined with a strong orientation toward success, can make life stressful. Italians often deal with this stress by taking long coffee breaks or savoring a relaxing meal. This contributes to a passionate nature, and Italians frequently express powerful emotions openly, especially through various gestures and other body language.<sup>7, 8</sup>



*Men socializing  
Flickr / Hindrik Sijens*

Regardless of where they are from, Italians place a high value on social interaction. They rarely miss social events such as parties and family celebrations. They are eager to maintain a good reputation among their friends and family and frequently seek peer approval. Italians are more likely to value humor, accommodation, and reliability than individual assertiveness.<sup>9</sup> A sense of pragmatism helps Italians adapt their traditions with relative ease in order to meet current situational demands.<sup>10</sup>

## Formulaic Codes of Politeness

Italian greetings are often enthusiastic but also formal. Strangers and acquaintances greet each other with a firm handshake and a smile. The senior or higher status person should initiate a handshake, and in most instances women should initiate a handshake with men. It is important to make direct eye contact. Sometimes, men may also clap each other on the back while shaking hands.<sup>11, 12, 13, 14, 15</sup>

When greeting each other in a group, individuals avoid crossing another's handshake. Italians may offer their forearm, a finger, or an apology if their hands are dirty.<sup>16</sup> Close friends and family may greet each other with a kiss on the cheeks. They usually

kiss first on the left cheek and then on the right. In southern Italy, men will only kiss family members on both cheeks.<sup>17, 18, 19</sup>

### ▶ Good morning!

Visitor:	Buongiorno!	Good morning!
Local:	Buongiorno a Lei!	Good morning to you!

*Exchange 5*

### ▶ Good night!

Visitor:	Buona notte!	Good night!
Local:	Buona notte a Lei!	Good night to you!

*Exchange 6*

Italians generally use their last names along with any appropriate title until invited to use first names. It is polite to use Signore (Mr.) or Signora (Mrs.) with a last name. Signorina (Miss) is no longer in general use and is reserved for use with women who are unmarried and usually less than 20 years old. Females generally use their maiden names in business and on legal documents. Outside of those contexts, they often combine their maiden and married names.<sup>20, 21, 22</sup>



*Italian greeting  
Flickr / Palazzo Chigi*

### ▶ How are you?

Visitor:	Come sta?	How are you?
Local:	Bene, molto bene.	Fine, very well.

*Exchange 7*

► Hi, Mr. Bruno!

Visitor:	Salve, Signor Bruno!	Hi, Mr. Bruno!
Local:	Ciao.	Hello!
Visitor:	Va tutto bene?	Are you doing well?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

Exchange 8

## Status of Women in Italy

Italy ranks low on gender equality and has one of the lowest gender equality ratings in the European Union.<sup>23, 24</sup> Under the National Code of Equal Opportunities and other laws, discrimination on the basis of gender is illegal. Italy's family law states that men and women are equal.<sup>25</sup> Such laws are imperfectly implemented, however, and women face discrimination on a variety of fronts. For example, 55% of women claim to have been sexually harassed. But women rarely report workplace harassment to the police because of a lack of trust or a fear of being negatively evaluated.<sup>26</sup>



*An old lady working, Venice  
Flickr / Hernán Piñera*

Women's participation in the labor market is low, particularly in the south. Nationwide, roughly 47% of females are employed outside the home. They are concentrated in service fields such as healthcare and teaching. About one-third of women work part-time.<sup>27</sup>

Women are poorly represented in political decision-making roles. In 2013 they held roughly 31% of the seats in parliament, constitute only 11% of the nation's mayors, and held 22% of the seats on municipal councils.<sup>28, 29</sup> In business and industry, women fare somewhat better. Although women hold few top management positions, they represent 41% of middle managers in universities, 42% in research centers, 43% in central administration offices, and 31% in other agencies.<sup>30</sup>

Domestic violence in Italy is on the rise, increasing 53% between 2012 and 2014.<sup>31</sup> Until 1996, violence against women was regarded as a crime against public morality rather than a crime against an individual.<sup>32</sup> In spite of new legislation, the Italian Court of

Cassation recently maintained that brutal domestic violence against children or a wife cannot be considered family violence unless it is regular and frequent.<sup>33</sup> A third of men claim that domestic abuse is a private matter that should be handled in the family.<sup>34</sup>

## Hospitality and Gifts



*Dinner invitation, Tuscany  
Flickr / Dave & Margie Hill / Kleerup*

Although Italians like to socialize, they do not generally entertain acquaintances in their homes. An invitation to an Italian's home often signifies a strong relationship. Guests, as a sign of respect, should always arrive on time for any dinner invitation. It is common to be introduced to other family members and share small snacks, a drink, and conversation for about an hour before actually sitting down to a meal.<sup>35</sup>

Guests should bring a small gift. Good choices include a bottle of good wine, chocolates, or flowers (always in odd numbers). Guests should not bring chrysanthemums, however, because they signify death. Yellow flowers, which indicate jealousy, should also be avoided. Other inappropriate choices include knives, scissors, and letter openers, which can symbolize the severing of a relationship. In addition, broaches and handkerchiefs are not suitable because they are associated with funerals.<sup>36, 37, 38, 39, 40</sup> It is polite to wrap gifts, but gold or black materials should not be used since they are funeral colors. Purple is another inappropriate color because it symbolizes bad luck.<sup>41, 42</sup> Gifts are generally not opened immediately.<sup>43</sup>

▶ I really appreciate your hospitality.		
Visitor:	Apprezzo molto la Sua ospitalità.	I really appreciate your hospitality.
Local:	È un piacere.	It's my pleasure.

*Exchange 9*

The host normally sits at the end of the table with the senior or most important guest to the right. Couples are often separated and hostesses try to seat people together if they share common interests.<sup>44</sup> The hostess is generally seated first. Guests should wait to eat until the hostess starts. The hostess is always the first to leave the table.<sup>45</sup>

► The food tastes so good.

Visitor:	È tutto molto buono.	The food tastes so good.
Local:	Grazie del complimento.	Thanks for the compliment.

Exchange 10

► What type of meat is this?

Visitor:	Che tipo di carne è questa?	What type of meat is this?
Local:	Vitello.	Veal.

Exchange 11

Italian hosts rarely indicate that it is time to leave. Rather, guests should take the initiative to leave at an appropriate time. On a weeknight, guests should leave no later than midnight, but they may stay later on weekends. To show appreciation for the hospitality, a thank-you note with flowers should be sent the next day.<sup>46</sup>

## Eating Customs and Types of Food

### Eating Habits

Italians typically eat three meals a day. Breakfast (*prima colazione*) is usually eaten between 7 and 10 a.m. It consists mainly of light continental fare and a coffee, commonly a cappuccino.<sup>47, 48</sup> Lunch (*pranzo*) is often the main meal of the day, although in cities the traditional Italian lunch is giving way to sandwiches. Lunch is normally eaten between 12:30 and 2:30 p.m. Lunch traditionally usually involves four courses. First is the antipasto dish consisting of vegetables, cheese, or meats.



Italian dinner  
Flickr / Hellebardius

Next is the first course (*primo piatto*), which is frequently soup, risotto, or pasta. The second course (*secondo piatto*) is meat or fish served with vegetables. The final course (*formaggio o dolce*) is often some kind of cheese or sweets but may also be fruit or pudding.<sup>49, 50</sup> Dinner is often eaten between 8 and 10 p.m. It often follows the same four-course structure as lunch.<sup>51, 52, 53</sup>

When eating, Italians place the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left. They do not switch the fork to the right hand after cutting food. A napkin is placed on the lap. To signify that one has finished eating, the knife and fork are placed parallel to each other across the right side of the plate, with the tines of the fork facing down. Placing the utensils down on either side of the plate indicates that one is still eating.<sup>54, 55</sup>

► What is the name of this dish?

Visitor:	Come si chiama questo piatto?	What is the name of this dish?
Local:	Questo è Ossobuco.	This is Osso buco.

Exchange 12

► What ingredients are used to make Linguine alle Vongole?

Visitor:	Quali ingredienti vengono usati per preparare le Linguine alle Vongole?	What ingredients are used to make Linguine alle Vongole?
Local:	Linguine, Vongole, Olio d'Oliva, Aglio, Prezzemolo, Pomodori, Sale, Pepe e Vino Bianco.	Linguini, clams, olive oil, garlic, parsley, tomatoes, salt, pepper, and white wine.

Exchange 13

Diners should never put their elbows on the table. Food is always passed to the left. Salad is never cut with a knife, and pasta is always eaten with a fork. Twirl the pasta onto the fork and eat it in a single bite. Never slurp pasta strands.<sup>56</sup>

## Types of Food

Food varies by region in Italy. Northern dishes rely on butter and rice-based risotto dishes. Pasta dishes become more popular as you move southward. Many claim that the rich and heavy food of Bologna is Italy's best. Tuscan food includes a great deal of meat, beans, olive oil, and garlic. Osso buco, lamb, and polenta typify Lombardy's regional cuisine. The Veneto region is famous for its variety of vegetables and seafood. Roman food includes pizza, pasta, meat, and vegetable dishes.<sup>57, 58, 59, 60</sup>



Italian sweets  
Flickr / Zack Lee

There are approximately 350 different shapes and varieties of pasta used in cooking. Dried pasta is required by law to be made from 100% durum semolina flour, water, and eggs.<sup>61</sup> One popular pasta dish is *Rigatoni alla Carbonara* (made with fried pancetta, eggs, and pecorino Romano cheese served with spaghetti or rigatoni). *Trenette al pesto*, made with a basil-based pesto sauce, is a popular dish in northwest Italy. A southern Italian specialty is *spaghetti con le vongole*, a spaghetti and clam dish with an olive oil and garlic sauce.<sup>62</sup>



Seafood Risotto  
Flickr / Kent Wang

Rice is a staple of the north. The most popular rice dishes include risotto, in which rice is cooked to a creamy consistency and flavored in a variety of ways. Most risotto dishes, unless they are seafood based, use Parmesan cheese and butter. Popular choices include *risotto ai funghi* (made with mushrooms), *risotto ai frutti di mare* (a seafood dish), and *risotto alla Milanese* (made with saffron).<sup>63</sup>

The secondi course often includes a meat or fish dish. Common choices are *bistecca alla Fiorentina* (a thick grilled porterhouse or T-bone filet spiced with salt, pepper, and lemon juice), *costolette d'agnello scottadita* (marinated grilled lamb chops), *scaloppini alla Milanese* (breaded veal cutlets with garlic, mushrooms, and Parmesan cheese served with linguine), *ossobuco* (braised veal shanks in tomato sauce), and *saltimbocca alla Romana* (veal cutlets topped with prosciutto and sage).<sup>64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69</sup>

Tiramisu (coffee-soaked sponge cake) is arguably Italy's most well-known dessert. Other sweets include gelato, filled pastries (*pastarelle*) such as *sfogliatelle* and *maritozzi*, and fine Italian pastries (*pasticcine*).<sup>70, 71, 72</sup>

## Dress Code

Italians are very conscious of their appearance. The way one dresses is often viewed as an indicator of social status, family background, and level of education. Because first impressions are lasting, people take care to dress well. They often dress up for relatively informal occasions such as an evening



Stylish Italian women in Milan  
Flickr / Fabio Omero

stroll or a visit to a friend's house. Rarely will you find an Italian dressed in worn or sloppy clothing. Young people often wear jeans and T-shirts. Casual shoes are common, including sneakers.<sup>73, 74, 75</sup>

► Is this acceptable to wear?		
Visitor:	E' adeguato da indossare?	Is this acceptable to wear?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

Exchange 14

Although there is no formal dress code, there are some unspoken rules to which Italians adhere. Shorts are inappropriate for men in the evening. In tourist areas or at the beach, knee-length shorts are appropriate. White socks are not worn with slacks, and socks should not be worn with sandals. Sweat suits are not worn in cities. Shirts and T-shirts should not be baggy and should be plain, without pictures. Short-sleeved shirts are inappropriate attire for men in formal settings.<sup>76</sup>



Well dressed Italian couple  
Flickr / Ed Yourdon

In fine hotels and expensive restaurants, diners commonly dress formally. People who dress casually in such establishments are sending the unintentional message that they expect poor service, which they will generally receive. Even when visiting a friend's house for dinner, dressing well is a sign of respect.<sup>77</sup>

## Nonreligious Holidays

New Year's Day (1 January) is the first official holiday of the year. The day is celebrated with fireworks and a special dinner.<sup>78</sup> Liberation Day, *Festa della Liberazione*, (25 April) commemorates the fall of Mussolini at the end of World War II. Italians honor those who fought against Mussolini and the Nazis. Parades, concerts, food festivals, and political rallies take place across the nation.<sup>79</sup> On 1 May, Italians celebrate Labor Day (*La Festa dei Lavoratori*). Many people visit friends and family. Others attend demonstrations or protests to improve labor conditions in the country.<sup>80, 81</sup> Many small towns and villages erect the traditional Maypole. Sausages, cheeses, and money are suspended from the top as prizes for the first individual able to climb



*Festa della Liberazione*  
Flickr / Asdrubale

the greased pole.<sup>82</sup> The second of June is Republic Day (*Festa della Repubblica*). It commemorates the day Italians voted to abolish the monarchy in 1946 and establish their nation as a republic. Many official ceremonies, military parades, and the laying of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier fill the day.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to the official holidays, carnivals (*carnevali*) are widely celebrated throughout Italy. They represent the contemporary counterpart to the old Roman Saturnalia festivals. Arguably, Venice (31 January to 17 February 2015) has the most famous carnival, complete with masked balls in the main squares and a parade of decorated boats on the Grand Canal.<sup>84, 85, 86</sup> On the evening of 30 April, many towns have a *Calendimaggio* festival. One of the largest is in Assisi. A torchlight parade takes place along city streets festooned with silk banners.<sup>87</sup>

Spring through early summer is a time for important music festivals throughout the country. The two major festivals are the *Maggio Musicale* and the *Festival dei Due Mondi*. *Maggio Musicale*, often considered to be on a par with the Salzburg music festival, takes place in Florence and offers concerts and operatic performances.<sup>88, 89</sup> The *Festival dei Due Mondi* takes place in Umbria for two weeks each year. This event offers multiple cultural events including music from world-renowned artists.<sup>90, 91, 92</sup> Each June the Tuscan Sun Festival is held. It includes music, art, food, and lifestyle events.<sup>93</sup>

## Dos and Don'ts

### *Dos*

- **Do** make eye contact and smile when greeting others.
- **Do** introduce younger or lower status persons to older or senior people.
- **Do** let a senior or higher status person initiate a handshake.
- **Do** wait outside, rather than inside, a car when picking up someone.
- **Do** offer your seat to older people or pregnant women.
- **Do** keep both hands above the table when eating.
- **Do** place your knife and fork across the right side of your plate to indicate that you have finished eating.

### *Don'ts*

- **Don't** give red roses to a woman unless you are intimate.
- **Don't** wrap gifts in black or gold paper because these colors are reserved for funerals.
- **Don't** start eating until everyone has been seated and the hostess has started.
- **Don't** unwrap gifts immediately after receiving them.
- **Don't** offer effusive congratulations or condolences. Use formulaic expressions.
- **Don't** use bread to clean your plate or sop up leftover sauces.
- **Don't** use first names in business settings.
- **Don't** talk about religion, the Vatican, the Mafia, or politics.
- **Don't** ask questions about private family matters.

## Endnotes for Chapter 3: Traditions

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## Italian Cultural Orientation

# Chapter 3 | Traditions

### Assessment

1. Italians place a high value on social interaction.
2. The lower status person should initiate a handshake when two people meet.
3. Since the passage of stronger domestic abuse legislation, violence against women has declined sharply in Italy.
4. When bringing flowers as a gift to an Italian hostess, be sure to bring an odd number.
5. As a rule, men should avoid wearing shorts after dark.

*Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True*



*View of Verona  
Flickr / Stanislav Georgiev*

## Chapter 4 | Italian Cultural Orientation

# Urban Life

## Introduction

In its first 100 years as a unified nation (1861-1961), Italy's urban population more than doubled from 20% to 48%. Most of that growth took place in the industrial northern and western sections of the nation.<sup>1, 2</sup> After World War II more people were drawn to the cities, especially those from the upland regions of the Alps and the Apennine Mountains and from Sicily. As these areas decreased in size, urban centers such as Rome, Milan, Turin, and Genoa exploded.<sup>3, 4</sup> By 2014, about 68% of Italians lived in urban areas.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1970s, city growth had begun to slow. The inner core regions of many cities actually experienced negative growth as residents moved to the suburbs and fewer

people moved in to replace them. By the 1990s, however, the trend began to reverse itself, particularly in the north.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Italy has one of the lowest rates of urbanization in the world (0.39%).<sup>7, 8</sup>

The transition to a more urbanized nation did more than redistribute the population. The move created a new social class and expanded secularization while diminishing the power and authority of the Church in Italian life.<sup>9, 10</sup> A serious drop in fertility has accompanied urbanization and secularization. Italy now has one of the lowest birthrates in the world, and there is fear that Italy's population will actually decline as the birthrate falls below replacement level.<sup>11, 12</sup>

## Urban Issues

Italy is home to some of the most polluted cities in Europe, including Naples, Turin, and Brescia.<sup>13</sup> Traffic congestion affects most major cities, especially in the more heavily industrialized north. Higher levels of dangerous emissions from traffic congestion have increased death rates in some cities.<sup>14, 15</sup> To ease congestion and reduce toxic pollutants, many cities require cars to have special permits to enter various city zones or city centers.<sup>16, 17, 18</sup> Unless dramatic steps are taken to curb emissions, scientists predict that Italy will have many of the continent's most polluted cities by 2030. Among those most likely to be affected are Milan, Turin, and other northern cities.<sup>19</sup>



*Water pollution in Milan  
Flickr / ildiva*

Water pollution is a growing concern. Industrial waste, along with agricultural contaminants, make their way into the water supply. There are insufficient industrial waste treatment facilities to keep up with demand. In addition, Italian cities produce more than 19 million tons of solid waste each year.<sup>20</sup> In Naples, garbage strikes caused a rise in cancer-related deaths because of pollution from illegal waste. Much of the waste is dumped illegally by Mafia gangs. The region is so

polluted that it is locally referred to as the “Triangle of Death.” Because the situation has become desperate, the Italian Army has been dispatched to the area to help deal with the problem.<sup>21, 22, 23</sup>

Social exclusion, discrimination, poverty, and a lack of adequate housing are problems in many cities. The backlash against immigrants and discrimination against the Roma

population are growing concerns.<sup>24, 25, 26, 27</sup> At least eight government-run camps shelter and house about 5,<sup>000</sup> Roma residents in facilities labeled “slum households” by the UN.<sup>28</sup> In southern Italy, the increasing number of immigrants is raising tensions in towns and cities. Some fear that the migrants are putting more stress on the already weak economy, are causing security concerns, and are threatening to take jobs from Italian nationals.<sup>29</sup> Unemployment, especially among young people, is high.<sup>30, 31</sup> In 2015 slightly more than 41% of Italian youth were unemployed.<sup>32</sup> In southern Italy, the situation is even more discouraging. More than 60% of Italian youth are unemployed.<sup>33</sup>

## Urban Healthcare

The World Health Organization rated Italy’s national healthcare system as the second best in the world behind France.<sup>34</sup> The Italian federal government collects and distributes taxes to finance the *Servizio Sanitario Nazionale* (SSN), or public health service. The SSN provides automatic and universal healthcare coverage for all Italian citizens. Each province is responsible for providing healthcare delivery in its region through Local Health Units (LHUs).<sup>35, 36, 37</sup> Primary care and hospitalization costs are covered 100%. Dental care is covered for some specific groups, including children up to the age of 16.<sup>38</sup>



Doctors in operation, Università Campus Bio-Medico di Roma  
Flickr / Università Campus Bio-Medico di Roma

Individuals may opt to seek treatment from private physicians or at private hospitals and clinics. Costs for such services, however, are borne by the individual or private health insurance companies. The vast majority of Italians rely on the public system to meet their healthcare needs. Only about 15% of the population has some form of private health insurance.<sup>39</sup>

### ▶ Is there a hospital nearby?

Visitor: C'è un ospedale qui vicino?

Is there a hospital nearby?

Local: Sì, in centro.

Yes, in the center of town.

Exchange 15

### ► Is Dr. Fioretti in, Sir?

Visitor:	Signore, c'è il Dr. Fioretti?	Is Dr. Fioretti in, Sir?
Local:	No.	No.

Exchange 16

There are considerable regional disparities in healthcare systems. The south has fewer public beds, less developed community care systems, and less advanced equipment. On the other hand, the south has more private facilities.<sup>40, 41</sup>

Healthcare is widely available in urban areas, but it may be more limited in rural regions. Most hospitals are public. In 2011 only 20% of available hospital beds were in private hospitals.<sup>42</sup> Although adequate care is available in public hospitals, it may fall below Western standards.<sup>43, 44, 45</sup>



The Polyclinic of the Main Hospital of Milan  
Flickr / Bernt Rostad

Italy has one of the best doctor-patient ratios in the world, with about 41 doctors for every 10,000 residents.<sup>46, 47</sup> That number is lower in rural areas, which have only about 30 doctors per 10,000 residents.<sup>48</sup> Despite the ratios, many public hospitals can be overcrowded.<sup>49</sup> About 77% of doctors are specialists. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to find a general practitioner to deliver primary healthcare.<sup>50</sup>

## Urban Education

The Italian school year begins in September and ends in mid-June. Primary school students in grades 1 and 2 attend about 33 weeks of classes, averaging about 27 hours a week. In grade 3, students attend school for 30 hours a week. Schools may offer additional courses that students can elect to take.<sup>51, 52</sup>

Ten years of public education are mandatory and free in state-run schools.



Students in class, Pavia  
Flickr / Maria Grazia Montagnari

Preprimary school (*scuola materna* or *scuola dell'infanzia*) is free in state-run schools but not mandatory. Parents cover costs such as transportation and food.<sup>53, 54</sup> Primary school (*scuola primaria*) consists of 5 years and is followed by 3 years of lower secondary school (*scuola media*). Students then continue to upper secondary school or high school (*scuola superior*). Italy has two types of high schools—the more academically framed *Liceo* and the more vocationally oriented *Istituto*. All high schools have the same curriculum until the third year, when students begin to specialize. Students who pass oral and written exams at the end of their third year obtain the upper secondary diploma and are eligible to enter university or begin higher educational training.<sup>55, 56</sup>



School kids, Rome  
Flickr / Alan Kotok

Only 56% of Italian adults have a high school degree, far lower than the OECD average of 75%. Women are slightly more likely to have a high school degree than men (57% vs. 55%). Among the younger adult population, the results are better but still worrisome. About 71% of Italians aged 25-34 earned their high school degree, but that number is still well below the OECD average of 83%.<sup>57</sup> Those students who do complete high school tend to have lower skills than students in the rest of Europe, except for Spain.<sup>58, 59</sup> Urban residents are more likely to be educated than rural dwellers. Urban students are more likely to hold elementary certificates, high school diplomas, and university degrees.<sup>60</sup> These differences generally stem from socioeconomic factors rather than from variations in the quality of urban vs. rural education.<sup>61, 62</sup>

## Restaurants

### *Types of Eateries*

The major urban centers have restaurants offering a variety of cuisines and international flavors. There are several types of eateries. Bars in Italy have no age limit and are more than a place to order a drink. Like cafes, they often serve sandwiches, salad, coffee, and pastry. A *ristorante* is the most expensive choice and is usually a formal full service eatery. The *trattoria* is a casual eating establishment, although the distinction between a restaurant and a *trattoria* is often fuzzy. A *trattoria* is usually located off the main street or tucked onto a side street. The *osteria* is informal and a step

down from the trattoria. An osteria is usually a neighborhood hangout with most of the elements of a bar but with more food and service. Italian fast food is served at a *tavola calda*, a pizzeria serves pizza, and a *rosticceria* serves a variety of roast meats and other prepared meal items.<sup>63, 64, 65</sup>

▶ May I have a glass of water?		
Visitor:	Posso avere un bicchiere d'acqua, per favore?	May I have a glass of water?
Local:	Sì, signore!	Yes, sir!

Exchange 17

▶ Are you still serving breakfast?		
Visitor:	Servite ancora la colazione?	Are you still serving breakfast?
Local:	Sì.	Yes.

Exchange 18

## The Menu and Paying the Bill



Dinner plate, Milan  
Flickr / Anna

The traditional menu has five sections: appetizers (*antipasti*), first course (*primo*), main course (*secondo*), side dishes (*contorni*), and dessert (*dolce*). Antipasti dishes are usually a plate of local cold cuts, cheeses, or regional specialties. The primo course is often a pasta, soup, or risotto. The secondo is the main course of the meal and is usually some kind of meat, fish, or poultry. It is almost always served without vegetables. The *contorni* are the side dishes, including vegetables, that complement the main course. The final course, the *dolce*, often includes fruit or cheese or may be a type of cake or pastry. Following dessert, it is common to have an after-dinner drink (digestive) or coffee, which is never served with the meal. Italians commonly drink wine with their meals. They may also drink mineral water.<sup>66, 67, 68</sup>

► Do you have dessert?

Visitor: Avete il dolce?

Do you have dessert?

Local: Sì, abbiamo le Zeppole.

Yes, we have Zeppole.

Exchange 19

► I'd like some hot soup.

Visitor: Vorrei della zuppa calda.

I'd like some hot soup.

Local: Va bene.

Okay.

Exchange 20

Italians drink milky coffee like cappuccinos and lattes only at breakfast or with a morning snack. It is uncommon to order such drinks after the noon hour, and they are never ordered with a meal.<sup>69, 70</sup>

► I would like coffee or tea.

Visitor: Vorrei del caffè o del tè.

I would like coffee or tea.

Local: Certo.

Sure.

Exchange 21

It is customary for the person making the invitation to pay the bill. Guests are expected to make an effort to pay, but such gestures are normally refused. That said, it is not uncommon to split the bill, although it should never be itemized. It is considered polite to divide the bill by the number of diners.<sup>71, 72</sup> Waiters rarely bring the bill to the table until asked to do so. To get the bill, ask for *il conto* after catching the waiter's eye or raising your index finger.<sup>73, 74</sup> A 10% tip is common.<sup>75, 76</sup>



Cappuccino with pastry  
Flickr / Kevin Neville

► **Where is the restroom?**

Visitor: Dov'è la toilette?

Where is the restroom?

Local: La porta alla Sua sinistra, lí infondo.

That room to your left, over there.

*Exchange 22*

► **Please bring the bill to me.**

Visitor: Perfavore, mi può portare il conto.

Please bring the bill to me.

Local: Va bene.

Okay.

*Exchange 23*

## Marketplaces and Vendors

### Shopping



*Shops in Venice  
Flickr / Dimitar Denev*

Italy's cities are filled with a variety of shops carrying almost anything a buyer could imagine. The flagship stores of many of the biggest Italian fashion houses, including Bulgari and Fendi, are in Rome. Shops featuring clothing from Prada, Armani, Versace, Ferragamo, and others are located in the area around the Spanish Steps in central Rome.<sup>77</sup> Shops are typically open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. In the larger cities, shops may not close for the 2-hour lunch break.<sup>78</sup>

► **Is the market nearby?**

Visitor: È vicino il mercato?

Is the market nearby?

Local: Sì, là infondo sulla destra.

Yes, over there on the right.

*Exchange 24*

► May I examine this more closely?

Visitor: Posso osservarlo da piu' vicino?

May I examine this more closely?

Local: Certo.

Sure.

Exchange 25

Outdoor flea markets and antique shops offer an alternative to more traditional shopping. In Rome, for example, a popular outdoor market that sells clothes and designer knockoffs is located on Via Sannio near the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano. It is illegal to buy counterfeit goods, so it is advisable to walk away no matter how appealing the prices may be. Several streets are famous for their antique stores, including Via Giulia and Via del Governo Vecchio.<sup>79, 80, 81</sup> In Florence, the San Lorenzo Market is arguably the most important market in the city. Closed on Sundays and Mondays, it offers clothing, leather items, and souvenirs. It also contains an excellent food market.<sup>82</sup> Florence's famous flea market (*mercato delle pulci*) is open daily from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. On the last Sunday of each month, the market swells with an additional 100 or so vendor stalls.<sup>83</sup> Other well-known markets include the Rialto Fish Market in Venice; Porta Pila, Europe's largest open-air food market, in Turin; the *mercato degli ambulanti* at Forte dei Marmi in Tuscany, and Palermo's Ballarò Market.<sup>84</sup>



Vegetable market  
Flickr / Cary Bazalgette

## Bargaining

Bargaining is acceptable in many Italian street markets and shops. Bargaining tends to be more common the farther south one goes. In the northern city of Milan, shopkeepers do not haggle and trying to do so is regarded as rude and offensive.<sup>85</sup> There are several keys to bargaining successfully in Italy. Always let the shop owner make the first offer. Once the shopkeeper has stated a price, it is common to counter by cutting the offer in half. Continue haggling



Bargaining at the market  
Flickr / Toby Simkin

and, if you cannot agree on a price, try walking away slowly to see if the merchant will lower the amount. Once a price has been agreed upon, it is extremely rude not to purchase the item.<sup>86</sup>

► **Do you have any more of these?**

Visitor:	Ne avete di piú di questi?	Do you have any more of these?
Local:	No.	No.

Exchange 26

► **How much longer will you be here?**

Visitor:	Per quanto tempo stai qui?	How much longer will you be here?
Local:	Altre tre ore.	Three more hours.

Exchange 27

## Money, ATMs, and Credit Cards

The official unit of currency in Italy is the euro (EUR). In late March 2015, EUR 1 traded for USD 1.09.<sup>87, 88</sup> Money can be exchanged at banks, post offices, or in money exchange houses known as *cambio*. Banks and post offices usually give better rates. Banks are usually open Monday through Friday from 8:35 a.m. to 4 p.m. Most close between 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. for lunch. They are not open on Saturdays and Sundays. Post offices are open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.<sup>89, 90, 91</sup>



Euros  
Flickr / Tomas Hellberg

► **Can you give me change for this?**

Visitor:	Puoi cambiarmi queste?	Can you give me change for this?
Local:	No.	No.

Exchange 28



### Do you accept U.S. currency?

Visitor:	Prendete i dollari?	Do you accept U.S. currency?
Local:	No, accettiamo solo Euro.	No, we only accept Euros.

Exchange 29

Credit cards can be used at many locations including hotels, markets, shops, and even the toll booths on Italian motorways. Credit cards and debit cards can be used at ATMs (*bancomats*), which are pervasive throughout Italy. The most widely accepted cards are Visa and MasterCard, but Cirrus and Maestro network cards are also easy to use. ATMs are often the most efficient way to get local currency.<sup>92, 93, 94</sup>

Credit card fraud is becoming increasingly common in Italy. When using ATM machines, cover the number pad when entering your PIN. It is safest to use machines located inside banks and during daylight hours. ATM skimming devices, used to steal credit card information, are on the rise, especially in tourist areas.<sup>95, 96</sup>

## Traffic and Transportation

### Cars and Taxis

Driving in Italy can be a harrowing experience. Road-related fatalities are some of the highest in the European Union, although the rate is approximately 30% lower than in the United States.<sup>97, 98, 99</sup> Streets in historic city centers are often narrow and winding. Traffic congestion can be severe. Italian drivers routinely ignore traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, and walk signs. Motor scooters weave in and out of traffic, often moving against the flow of vehicles. They sometimes whiz on and off sidewalks.<sup>100, 101, 102, 103</sup> In some regions, driving in city centers is restricted or requires a special permit.<sup>104</sup> Many motorways require tolls, which may be paid with cash or credit cards.<sup>105, 106</sup>



Italian car  
Flickr / I k o

## ► Where can I rent a car?

Visitor:	Dove posso affittare una macchina?	Where can I rent a car?
Local:	Vicino alla piazza.	By the square.

Exchange 30

In general, taxis are a safe and reliable form of transportation in Italy. Authorized taxis are identifiable by their signage and color. Official taxis are white and have “taxi” signs on the roof. All authorized taxis have meters.<sup>107, 108, 109</sup> Fares are usually set by the city. If the meter is not working, make sure to agree on the fare before getting in. Rates may increase at night, on holidays, or for longer distances beyond the city limits.<sup>110</sup>



Taxi, Forio  
Flickr / rombear

Taxis cannot be flagged on the street, and it is illegal in some areas for taxi drivers to stop on the street to pick up fares. Taxis are widely available around train and bus stations and at airports. Taxi stands are also found throughout the cities. The stands are indicated by yellow lines or an orange sign. Travelers who use radio taxis should be aware that the fare begins from the time the taxi is called rather than when the passenger is picked up.<sup>111</sup> As a rule, taxis do not take more than four passengers at a time.<sup>112</sup>

## Public Transportation

Italy’s cities have well-developed public transportation systems.<sup>113, 114</sup> The system is subject to frequent strikes than can interrupt travel.<sup>115</sup> Travelers should also note that certain safety precautions are in order. Thieves and pickpockets operate on public vehicles and at major train and bus terminals. Thieves may use knives or razors to slit bags on crowded buses. The most notorious bus route in Rome is No. 64 from Termini to St. Peter’s Basilica.



Metro Station in Rome  
Flickr / Mark Turner

Thefts have also been reported on the train running from Naples to Pompeii and Sorrento.<sup>116, 117, 118</sup>

Several cities have metros. The most extensive are in Rome, Milan, Naples, and Turin. Smaller systems are found in Genoa, Catania, and Perugia.<sup>119</sup> All cities of any size have good bus transportation both within the city limits and traveling to suburban areas. Buses can be the most effective way to navigate the cities. Bus service may be limited on Sundays.<sup>120, 121, 122, 123</sup> Several Italian cities, including Rome, Milan, Messina, and Turin, also operate tramlines.<sup>124</sup> Trains are often a good option for traveling among various Italian cities, although some smaller towns may not have train stations.<sup>125, 126</sup>

▶ Is there a train station nearby?		
Visitor:	C'è una stazione ferroviaria qui vicino?	Is there a train station nearby?
Local:	No.	No.

Exchange 31



Vaporetti  
Flickr / Michael Day

In Venice, vaporetti provide easy transportation along the city's waterways. There are various vehicles that ply the waters of the lagoon around the city. The most expensive are the water taxis. A cheaper alternative are the simple boats known as *traghetti*, which provide ferry service across the Grand Canal at six different points. Water buses are another option.<sup>127, 128, 129</sup>

## Street Crimes and Solicitations

### Crime

Italy has moderate rates of crime. U.S. citizens are more likely to become crime victims at home than in Italy, particularly in the north.<sup>130, 131, 132</sup> Petty crimes, including pick-pocketing, are serious in Italy. They are most likely to occur in areas frequented by tourists such as train stations, nightclubs, and outdoor cafes.<sup>133, 134</sup> Articles should never be left unattended, and it is advisable to avoid putting bags or purses over chairs, on the floor, or in the overhead rack of a train or bus.<sup>135</sup>



Police  
Flickr / Chelsea Graham

#### ► Police officer, we need help.

Visitor:	Agente, abbiamo bisogno del suo aiuto.	Police officer, we need help.
Local:	Va bene.	Okay.

Exchange 32

Sometimes Italian thieves will befriend a foreigner, offering to take them for a meal or a drink. Food or drinks are then laced with drugs and the unsuspecting tourist is robbed.<sup>136</sup> Thieves are also known to pose as police officers in order to steal.<sup>137, 138</sup> In Sicily, carjackings have become increasingly frequent. It is advisable to keep car doors locked and windows rolled up and to use caution at night.<sup>139</sup> In Rome, ATM skimming devices are becoming more of a problem. Thieves attach the devices to bank ATMs, usually in tourist zones, and then electronically steal the card information including the PIN. To reduce the chances of this occurring, only ATMs in banks should be used. Users should look for gaps between the metal faceplate and the card reader and carefully monitor statements to look for unauthorized transactions.<sup>140, 141</sup>

Organized criminal groups operate throughout Italy, but are particularly active in southern Italy. Well-known groups include the Camorra, Ndrangheta, Cosa Nostra, and Sacra Corona Unita.<sup>142, 143, 144</sup> The organized criminal gangs wield political influence and often operate as shadow states, especially in the south. They also control much of the regional drug trade.<sup>145</sup>

## Beggars

Beggars are a common sight in many of Italy's major urban areas. Many of these apparent beggars are really thieves pretending to beg. A large number of beggars and thieves are Roma, sometimes referred to as Gypsies.<sup>146, 147, 148</sup> In 2008 Venice banned begging in an attempt to curtail children forced to beg by criminal networks.<sup>149</sup> Individuals should avoid giving money to beggars because it only encourages the exploitation of children. Most of the money finds its way into the hands of criminal gangs rather than to those who may truly need it.<sup>150</sup>



Beggar  
Flickr / Tom Driggers

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# Italian Cultural Orientation

## Chapter 4 | Urban Life

### Assessment

1. Approximately 8 in 10 Italians live in urban areas.
2. Italy has some of the most polluted cities in Europe.
3. Italians are required to complete 12 years of basic education.
4. Italians do not drink coffee with their meals.
5. Bargaining in markets is more common in the north than in the southern parts of Italy.

*Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. False*



*Agricultural land, Langhe valley  
Flickr / Dean Ayres*

## Chapter 5 | Italian Cultural Orientation

# Rural Life

## Introduction

Roughly 27% of Italy's land is classified as predominantly rural, and about 32% of the population lives in these rural areas.<sup>1,2</sup> Agriculture once drove much of Italy's economy, but as the country shifted to a greater reliance on manufacturing and services, the nation no longer produced enough food to meet its domestic needs. More farmers found it difficult to survive and to keep their farms productive enough to make a living.<sup>3,4,5</sup> Between 2000 and 2010, one-third of Italy's farms stopped production.<sup>6</sup>

Among the major crops, olives are the most common followed by cereals, oilseed, and protein crops. Vineyards are also a significant part of the farming industry,



Olive branch  
Flickr / artnbarb

accounting for about 13% of agricultural landholdings. In terms of revenue, the largest contributions come from vineyards followed by general field crops.<sup>7</sup>

Rural households have a higher incidence of poverty than Italian households in general. People who depend on agriculture for their living are even worse off than nonagricultural rural dwellers. Agriculture-dependent households are nearly twice as likely to live in poverty.<sup>8</sup>

The face of rural Italy is changing. As younger people move out to seek greater opportunities in urban settings, the rural population is aging. Approximately 22% of the rural population is over the age of 65, one of the highest rates in Europe.<sup>9, 10, 11</sup> A large part of traditional rural life is fading. Many young and middle-aged farmers see no future in agriculture or in the rural economy. Today, a significant portion of the rural economy is kept alive by older residents. Recent figures suggest, in fact, that 66% of farm owners are over the age of 55 and 31% are women. National views of farmers are becoming increasingly unfavorable. These changing attitudes have created a negative self-image for many young rural Italians, who are often ashamed of their origins.<sup>12, 13</sup>

## Land Tenure and Land Distribution



Cattle, Lombardy  
Flickr / Riccardo Palazzani

Most Italian farms are individually owned by farmers who work the land. The Puglia region has the highest proportion of such farms (83%). The Aosta Valley region, on the other hand, has only 19% of its agricultural holdings farmed by owners. In Italy's most important farming regions (Piedmont and Lombardy), about 47% of the land is farmed by its owners.<sup>14</sup>

A second type of land tenure involves the tenant farm that is owned by a landlord but farmed by a sharecropper. Approximately 30% of all Italy's farmland falls under this category. A small number of farms

are operated under formal contractual arrangements between a landlord owner and sharecropper (6%).<sup>15</sup>

▶ Do you own this land?		
Visitor:	Sei il proprietario di questa terra?	Do you own this land?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

*Exchange 33*

The average farm is approximately 8 hectares (20 acres) but nearly two-thirds of all farms in the country are less than 5 hectares (13 acres) in size.<sup>16, 17</sup> About 47% of all farms are less than 2 hectares (5 acres) and another 20% are 2-5 hectares (5-13 acres) in size.<sup>18</sup> Most agricultural lands are in the south. The greatest concentration (11%) is in Sicily followed by Puglia (10%).<sup>19</sup>

## Economy



*Farmers market, Santo Spirito, Florence  
Flickr / Paul Collins*

In the last 20 years, the Italian economy has moved quickly away from its reliance on agriculture and become more diversified. In addition to traditional agricultural pursuits, rural workers are increasingly likely to be employed in manufacturing, industry, and services.<sup>20</sup> Agriculture accounts for only 2% of GDP (gross domestic product) and, nationwide, employs 4% of the labor force.<sup>21, 22</sup> In rural areas, the percentage of people employed in agricultural is considerably higher. For example, in Puglia nearly 17% of the labor force works on farms. In Sicily that number is 13%, followed by Calabria and Campania (8%).<sup>23</sup> In addition to farming activities, roughly 55% of rural regional farm owners supplement their incomes with nonfarm activities.<sup>24</sup>

Agriculture plays a broader role in the rural economy. Agritourism is a major source of revenue for rural Italians. In addition to conventional activities such as renting rooms, running restaurants, and selling food, organic farming is gaining popularity. These practices have allowed and encouraged farmers to take part in a more expanded agricultural sector. Another way in which agriculture contributes indirectly is through the manufacture of agricultural products in the agro-food industry.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup>

Much of the Italian national economy is driven by manufacturing and export products, many of which are produced by small- and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>28</sup> The Predominantly Rural areas are home to about 12% of all Italian manufacturing firms, and another 40% are located in Intermediate Rural areas.<sup>29, 30</sup> In some rural areas, there are concentrations of small- to medium-sized enterprises known as Industrial Districts. In 2006, the government identified 22 such districts. For the most part, these enterprises manufacture housing goods, jewelry, musical instruments, and textiles. Regions with such industrial districts generally have higher rates of employment. These industrial districts generated about 18% of all rural jobs in 2001.<sup>31, 32</sup>

## Rural Transportation

Public transportation options in rural Italy are more limited than in cities. Intercity buses run to most of Italy's small cities and towns, although service is limited on Sundays and major holidays. In the smallest villages, there is likely to be a local bus that connects with major bus lines in larger towns.<sup>33, 34, 35</sup> Trains are another good option for travel between cities and towns, even though Sunday travel is somewhat limited. Frequent strikes can make travel unreliable.<sup>36, 37, 38</sup> Bicycles are a popular mode of transportation in the Italian countryside. Many towns have shops that rent bikes or offer free bikes to travelers for daily use.<sup>39</sup>



*Train, Piedmont  
Flickr / Goulard*

▶ Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?		
Visitor:	C'è un buon meccanico nelle vicinanze?	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

*Exchange 34*

Driving is a popular option for exploring rural areas.<sup>40</sup> Roads throughout rural Italy are generally well maintained, although they may be only narrow two-lane affairs. In the mountainous regions, roads may be full of twists and turns. Such roads are often narrow and may not have guardrails. In smaller towns and villages, road lighting may be poor or nonexistent. Carts, animal-drawn wagons, and wildlife present additional hazards for rural drivers.<sup>41</sup> Rural roads usually do not have signs listing the names of

towns.<sup>42</sup> Gas stations normally close between noon and 3:30 p.m. and on Sundays. Self-service pumps are open, however.<sup>43</sup> Drivers should also be aware that in rural areas, horns may be used only to indicate an emergency situation.<sup>44</sup>

Drivers traveling in earthquake or volcanic zones should exercise caution. Volcanic eruptions can spew mud, rocks, ash, and other debris more than 80 km (50 mi) from the eruption site. Earthquakes often occur with little warning in the countryside.<sup>45</sup>

► Is there a gas station nearby?		
Visitor:	C'è una pompa di benzina nelle vicinanze?	Is there a gas station nearby?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

*Exchange 35*

► Will the bus be here soon?		
Visitor:	L'autobus arriverà qui presto?	Will the bus be here soon?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

*Exchange 36*

## Rural Healthcare



*Mother and her newborn baby  
Flickr / Università Campus Bio-Medico di Roma*

Italy's universal healthcare system covers virtually all citizens and has been rated one of the best in the world.<sup>46</sup> The *Servizio Sanitario Nazionale* (SSN) is funded by the federal government but administered by local and regional governments. These administrative differences account for some variations in delivery and services, especially in rural areas.<sup>47, 48, 49, 50, 51</sup>

Access to healthcare services and providers in rural areas can be limited. Rural facilities have only about half as many available

hospital beds per 10,000 residents as urban hospitals. In rural areas, there is one hospital for every 320 sq km (124 sq mi). Similarly, rural areas have fewer than half the number of general practitioners found in large urban centers. This disparity is even greater in more remote and underdeveloped regions.<sup>52</sup>

► Is there a medical clinic nearby?		
Visitor:	C'è un dottore qui vicino?	Is there a medical clinic nearby?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

Exchange 37

To help improve healthcare access for people in remote and unpopulated areas, Italy has several projects that rely on technology. Physicians and other healthcare workers receive telemetric support to help deal with urgent situations and serious emergencies. Patients and doctors also use information technology services for consultations, home surveillance, and emergency cardiology. Specially equipped vans travel to remote areas to offer health screenings and X-rays.<sup>53, 54</sup>

► Do you know what is wrong?		
Visitor:	Sa qual è il problema?	Do you know what is wrong?
Local:	No.	No.

Exchange 38

► I have a pain, Doctor. Can you help me?		
Visitor:	Dottore, avverto un dolore. Mi può aiutare?	I have a pain, Doctor. Can you help me?
Local:	Si, Lai posso aiutare.	Yes, I can help you.

Exchange 39

## Rural Education

Ten years of education are mandatory and free in state-sponsored schools. Preprimary school (*scuola materna* or *scuola dell'infanzia*) is also provided free, but it is not compulsory.<sup>55, 56</sup> Primary school (*scuola primaria*) consists of grades 1-5. Lower secondary, or middle, school (*scuola media*) consists of grades 6-8. High school (*scuola superior*) consists of 3 additional years of education. Italian high schools are either academic or vocational. For



Sicilian school kids  
Flickr / Josh Clark

the first 2 years, grades 9-10, the curriculum is the same regardless of the type of school. In the third year, the curriculum changes depending on the type of school and student specialty.<sup>57, 58</sup>

Rural students are more likely to drop out of high school, especially in trade schools, where nearly half of the students fail to complete their first year. The worst dropout rates are in the southern islands and in the northwest. The lowest dropout rates occur in the northeast and central Italy.<sup>59</sup>

▶ Is there a school nearby?		
Visitor:	C'è una scuola qui vicino?	Is there a school nearby?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

*Exchange 40*

▶ Which school do your children go to?		
Visitor:	A quale scuola vanno i tuoi figli?	Which school do your children go to?
Local:	Vanno alla Ludovico Pavoni.	They go to Ludovico Pavoni.

*Exchange 41*



People in rural areas  
Flickr / josef.stuefer

People in rural areas are generally less educated than their urban counterparts. The difference is particularly apparent after lower secondary school. Because rural areas have fewer upper secondary schools, students are forced to commute long distances. This added hardship may account for some of the discrepancy in academic attainment.<sup>60, 61</sup> In addition, the quality of rural education is lower. Rural Italian students achieve at least half a proficiency level lower on the Programme

for International Student Assessment (PISA) than their urban counterparts. This means that when rural Italian students try to find work, they are not only disadvantaged with regard to their urban counterparts but also vis-à-vis EU job seekers. Italian student performance is among the lowest in the EU.<sup>62, 63</sup>

## Who's in Charge?

Italy is divided into 20 regions that are subdivided into provinces and municipalities. Of the approximately 8,100 municipalities, only 136 have populations over 50,000. About 92% have populations of fewer than 15,000.<sup>64, 65</sup> The smallest unit of local government is the commune. Each commune has an elected council (*consiglio communal*), a communal committee (*giunta*), and a mayor (*sindaco*).<sup>66</sup> Council members are directly elected to 5-year terms by residents. Councils may be dissolved under a number of conditions, including neglect of duties. The mayor is also directly elected.<sup>67, 68</sup>



Mayor of Vicenza Achille Variati  
Flickr / Europa Nostra

### ► Where is the city hall?

Visitor:	Dov'è il palazzo comunale?	Where is the city hall?
Local:	Vicino al mercato.	Near the market.

Exchange 42

### ► Do you know this area very well?

Visitor:	Conosci questa zona molto bene?	Do you know this area very well?
Local:	Sì, sono cresciuto qui.	Yes, I grew up here.

Exchange 43

Communes have considerable power. They can levy and collect certain local taxes, constitute their own police force, issue ordinances, operate health services, and oversee public services such as transportation and garbage collection.<sup>69</sup>

## Border Crossings and Checkpoints

Italy shares international land borders to the north with France, Switzerland, and Austria and to the east with Slovenia.<sup>70</sup> Because Italy and its neighbors are in the Schengen Zone, there are minimal border control formalities.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, there are no border formalities when crossing into Vatican City or San Marino.<sup>72</sup>

### ▶ May I see your ID card?

Visitor:	Posso avere la Sua carta d'Identità?	May I see your ID card?
Local:	Si.	Yes.

*Exchange 44*



*Italian Swiss border  
Flickr / J Donohoe*

Police can set up checkpoints at any time in Italy. Police may stop drivers and check their documents. If stopped, one should be polite. Officers are generally courteous and professional and most speak some English. Documents requested are likely to include those with personal identification, such as a passport, driver's license, insurance, or vehicle registration. These documents need to be originals, not photocopies. Drivers without the appropriate ownership and registration documents are likely to

have their cars seized. Many of these stops are routine. If stopped, it is best to show your documents through locked and closed windows.<sup>73, 74</sup> If police believe they smell alcohol on your breath, you may be asked to take a breathalyzer test.<sup>75</sup>

### ▶ Please get out of the car.

Visitor:	Esca dalla auto prego.	Please get out of the car.
Local:	Va bene.	Okay.

*Exchange 45*

### ▶ Show us the car registration.

Visitor:	Mi faccia vedere il libretto di circolazione.	Show us the car registration.
Local:	Va bene.	Okay.

*Exchange 46*

## Landmines

Italy signed the Mine Ban Treaty on 3 December 1997 and ratified it nearly 2 years later in 1999. The nation's destruction of its stockpile of more than 6.5 million antipersonnel mines was completed in 2002, although Italy retains about 811 mines for training purposes.<sup>76</sup> There are no known areas contaminated with mines, but some regions may have unexploded ordnance left from World War I and World War II. Accidental detonations and discoveries occur occasionally.<sup>77</sup> In addition, Italy has largely completed the destruction of its cluster munitions stockpile. All such weapons are required to be completely destroyed by 2020, but the government has promised to complete the process well before the deadline.<sup>78</sup>



*Italian resistant minimum metal anti-personnel TS-50 mine*  
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## Cultural Orientation | Italian

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## Italian Cultural Orientation

# Chapter 5 | Rural Life

### Assessment

1. About one in three Italians lives in rural areas.
2. Most Italian farms are worked by tenant farmers.
3. More than half of Italian farm owners rely on nonfarm work to supplement their incomes.
4. Some regions of Italy are highly contaminated with mines, mostly left over from World War II.
5. More than half of Italy's manufacturing firms are located in rural areas.

*Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. True*



*Happy family  
Flickr / Johanan Ottensooser*

## Chapter 6 | Italian Cultural Orientation

# Family Life

## Introduction

Family is central in Italy and the backbone of Italian life. Traditionally, Italian families were large extended family units headed by a patriarch—typically the grandfather. Relations were close. First sons remained in the family business while younger sons moved away to take up new professions. When daughters married they received a dowry, which they brought to their new family. In the last half century, however, much of that tradition has eroded. Today's Italian family only vaguely resembles those of the 1960s and before.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Many changes took place in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s that profoundly affected the Italian family. In 1969, it became legal for the first time to advertise contraceptives. Divorce was legalized in 1970 and abortion in 1978. New family rights legislation during that time promoted gender equality and shared familial responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> By the 1990s fertility rates had dropped precipitously, and today Italy has one of the lowest birthrates in the world (1.4). Fewer Italians are getting married and those that do are having fewer children. Because of these factors, Italy has one of the largest proportions of older people in the world.<sup>4, 5, 6, 7, 8</sup>

Although families have become smaller and more nuclear, the traditional family model remains the ideal among many Italians. Historical and religious traditions are evident in views of family and motherhood in contemporary Italy. Men have been the traditional breadwinners and women have stayed home to care for the household. Even today, the majority of men devote 5 hours or fewer to work around the house. Although about half of Italian mothers now work outside the home, women continue to have the primary responsibility for most household chores and raising the children. Even as some argue that the role of mother is the most respected in the culture, Italy receives a relatively low ranking compared to other Western European nations on a “best place to be a mother” survey.<sup>9, 10</sup>

## Typical Household and Family Structure



*Small family*  
Flickr / nathaniel stern

The stereotypical Italian household—filled with many children and multiple generations—is largely a thing of the past. Today the average Italian household has about 2.6 people.<sup>11</sup> Nearly 25% of Italian households are single-person households. Only 54% of all households in Italy include children.<sup>12</sup> About 25% have 1 child and 19% have 2 children. Only 4% of Italian households have 3 or more children.<sup>13</sup>

▶ How many people live in this house?		
Visitor:	Quante persone vivono in questa casa?	How many people live in this house?
Local:	Cinque.	Five.

*Exchange 47*

► Are these your children?

Visitor: Sono i Suoi figli?

Are these your children?

Local: Sì.

Yes.

Exchange 48

In the 1960s the extended family gave way to the nuclear family, which is today the most common family form. Although the structure of the family has changed, relationships with the larger extended family remain strong. Grandparents may no longer live with their children and grandchildren, but they continue to be actively involved in their lives. Italian families find any excuse they can to spend time together.<sup>14, 15</sup>

Italian children often live at home longer than their U.S. counterparts. Approximately 33% of Italian adults live with their parents. For people aged 18-29, that number rises to 61%. The phenomenon has even sparked the creation of a new word, *bamboccioni* (big babies), to refer to older children still living at home. Italian parents are expected to support their children throughout their lives. In exchange, children are expected to care for their parents in their old age.<sup>16, 17</sup>

## The Status of Women

Although Italy's family law declares that men and women are equal, gender equality has yet to be fully implemented in practice.<sup>18</sup> Italy has one of the lowest gender equality ratings in the European Union.<sup>19, 20</sup> Nationwide, slightly less than half (47%) of women work outside the home. That number is even lower in the southern and more traditional parts of the country.<sup>21</sup> Women are concentrated in traditionally "female" employment, and even in those sectors they are underrepresented in decision-making posts.<sup>22, 23</sup>



Italian women with their daughters  
Flickr / Barney Moss

Traditional gender stereotypes persist in Italy. Men are regarded as leaders and the family breadwinners. Men rarely help out with housework. Women, on the other hand, are seen as less competent and often regarded as sexual objects. Women face sexism

and harassment in virtually all aspects of their lives. Women who fail to conform to these views are often stigmatized and feel guilty about not fulfilling their proper role of wife and homemaker. Working women are doubly stressed as they strive to meet expectations regarding their appearance, jobs, and family. Italian women have the lowest levels of self-esteem among females in Western nations.<sup>24, 25, 26</sup>

## The Status of the Elderly and Children

### *The Elderly*

Italy is one of the fastest-aging countries in the world. About 1 in 5 Italians is 65 or older, and 20% of those are over the age of 80.<sup>27, 28</sup> By 2030, that number is expected to rise to 25% of the population and by 2050 it is likely to rise above 30%.<sup>29</sup>



*Elderly women  
Flickr / Tom*

Italy's strong family values create high levels of respect for the elderly. The low birthrate, however, has changed the face of families in many ways. Not only are families smaller, but there are fewer children on which the elderly can rely for support in their later years. Families are still expected to care for aging relatives. Keeping elderly relatives at home is still the most popular option among Italians, although by 2050 there is likely to be less than one adult child per elderly person. With the growing number of older persons in the country, more families are trying to find alternative ways to provide for them.<sup>30, 31, 32</sup> Some older people report that they are terrified that they will be left alone in their old age. Others worry about having enough money to hire someone to help look after their needs.<sup>33</sup>

This demographic shift has other important implications for Italian society. Not only will resources have to be reallocated to meet the needs of the elderly, but the shift also threatens sustainable economic growth. Consumer spending is lower among the elderly. The decline in younger people means there are fewer workers to drive the economy. The trend also threatens the stability of Italian families, many of whom are emigrating to avoid the high cost of living brought on partially by the demographic change.<sup>34, 35, 36</sup> Another consideration is the status and role of the elderly in Italian society. As people age, they typically control less wealth and fewer resources, thereby

increasing their cost to society. Traditionally, this has resulted in a decline in respect for older people. How this will play out in Italy remains to be seen, but whatever the specific outcomes, these changes are likely to cause adjustments over time in family roles and relations.<sup>37, 38</sup>

## Children

Italians regard children as the building blocks of the future. Italian parents often create strong bonds with their children, nurturing and protecting them throughout their lives. With so few children being born to Italians, children have become an increasingly important part of the survival of the Italian family and the growth of its society.<sup>39</sup> Children are often viewed as a gift from God. They are the central part of any Italian family, and much of Italian society revolves around children. Children are included in many family activities without being subject to a separation of the generations. Traditionally, raising children was regarded as a cultural obligation.<sup>40, 41, 42</sup> Nevertheless, many women are choosing not to have children. Low salaries, an uncertain job market, and marriages at older ages have created one of the lowest birthrates in the world. Nearly 25% of Italian women will never have children.<sup>43</sup>



*Children playing  
Flickr / Ed Yourdon*

Some children are victimized by abuse. Recent estimates suggest that about 1% of Italian children, especially girls, suffer abuse or poor treatment. Because Italians tend to think that family matters are private rather than public affairs, much of the abuse or maltreatment goes unreported.<sup>44</sup>

About 25% of Italian children face the threat of poverty. For many children this means that they have to work to help their families survive. Approximately 18% of children take outside jobs by the time they reach age 15. Children from the southern regions of Italy, where poverty levels are higher, are more likely to work. Many work after school or on weekends. Some work in cottage industries or as restaurant or agricultural workers, while others work in the trades and on construction sites. The difficulties of such a life attract some children to a life in Italy's mafia.<sup>45, 46</sup>

## Married Life and Divorce

### *Married Life*

Marriage is still an integral part of life in Italy. In spite of the changes that have taken place in the family in the last 50 years, most Italians still view the family as an important part of their identity and lives. Nevertheless, the rate of marriage has been on the decline since 1972, particularly in Sardinia, Campania, and Le Marche. In addition, people who choose to marry often wait longer to marry. The average age for a first marriage for women is 31 and 34 for men.<sup>47</sup>



*Married couple  
Flickr / Andrea Marutti*

As women began entering the workforce in larger numbers, the nation's birthrate fell. Many women decided to delay starting a family, while others decided not to have any children. Approximately 26% of Italians are single. For women born in 1965, nearly one-quarter have never had a child. Another quarter of Italian women have only one child.<sup>48, 49</sup> Greater economic opportunities and smaller families have made women less reliant on men. This has given women a broader range of choices, one of which is to remain single.

Although Italy has one of the lowest divorce rates, a recent 11-nation survey suggested that Italians are the least satisfied with marriage. Women are the most dissatisfied. Only 48% of Italian respondents reported that they were "very satisfied" with their marriages.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the rate of marriage is dropping in the nation. In 2014 there were 33 marriages per 10,000 people. In 2014, fewer than 200,000 marriages took place in the entire country.<sup>51</sup>

### *Divorce*

Divorce became legal in Italy in 1970 in spite of a hard-fought battle by the Catholic Church against attempts to make divorce and abortion legal. Although the Church lost the fight, the influence of its doctrine is still evident. Divorces are difficult to obtain. Before obtaining a divorce, couples must complete a 3-year separation, after which one or both spouses may file for divorce. If both parties agree on the divorce, a judge

can finalize it within a month. Judicial divorces, those in which the couple disagrees, can take 6 or more years to complete.<sup>52, 53, 54, 55</sup> The extensive waiting time and traditional views on marriage have helped keep the divorce rate relatively low. The average marriage lasts 15-18 years. In 2011 there were 311 separations and 182 divorces in Italy for every 1,000 marriages. That represents an increase of 68% in the number of separations and a 50% increase in divorces.<sup>56, 57, 58, 59</sup> Rates continued to climb and in 2013, Italy's divorce rate rose to 25%.<sup>60</sup> Divorce, although not without financial and emotional adjustments, no longer carries the social stigma it did a few decades ago.<sup>61</sup>



*Young couple  
Flickr / Ed Yourdon*

## Family Social Events

### *Weddings*

Italian weddings are based on tradition and ritual. Sunday is the preferred wedding day because it is thought to be the luckiest. Friday and Tuesday are traditionally regarded as bad luck days. Saturday is traditionally regarded as the luckiest day for widows to remarry.<sup>62</sup>

It is considered good luck for a bride to spend the night before the wedding at her parents' home. On the day of the wedding, the groom cannot see the bride before the ceremony. Most brides wear a white wedding dress, but the custom varies by region. The traditional Tuscan wedding dress, for example, is black with a white hat. Across Italy, black dresses are becoming very popular, especially for afternoon weddings. In the south, brides traditionally wear a long veil. The veil is approximately 1 m (3 ft) in length for each year of the couple's engagement.<sup>63, 64, 65</sup>



*Wedding couple  
Flickr / Ricardo SB*

## ► Congratulations on your wedding!

Visitor: Congratulazioni per il Suo matrimonio! Congratulations on your wedding!

Local: È un onore averLa qui. We are honored to have you here.

Exchange 49

After the wedding, the couple and their guests attend a reception at a restaurant. Before the guests depart, the newlyweds give them thank you gifts. Each gift consists of a small present, sugar-coated almonds (always in an odd number), and ribbons. The package is called a *bomboniere* and is a symbol of family life.<sup>66</sup>

Weddings may be religious or civil. Catholic weddings can only be performed in a church building and only if both the bride and groom (neither of whom can be divorced) are Catholic. Such weddings are legally binding and recognized by the government because the service contains a civil component. All other religious ceremonies must have a civil ceremony before the church wedding in order to be considered legal.<sup>67</sup> By law, such civil ceremonies are required to take place in a town hall (or property belonging to the town hall) and presided over by the mayor or a legally designated substitute.<sup>68, 69, 70</sup>

## Funerals



Funeral flowers  
Flickr / Robert Smith

Most funerals follow the rituals and traditions of the Catholic Church and frequently include last rites, vigil and prayer ceremonies, a funeral liturgy, and a Requiem Mass. Burial is still preferred over cremation, especially for older people. In some cases, burial space has become a problem. If a town needs space, then a body can be exhumed 20 years after death. The remains are placed in a container and placed in a recess in the family crypt or ossuary.<sup>71, 72</sup>

Attendees commonly wear black or dark, subdued colors as a sign of mourning. In Italian funerals, friends and families often rise and speak about the deceased.<sup>73</sup> Following the service, pallbearers carry the casket to the hearse, which transports the body to the cemetery. A line of cars follows the hearse.<sup>74, 75, 76</sup>

► I offer my condolences to you and your family.

Visitor:	Le mie piú sentite condoglianze a te/Lei e famiglia.	I offer my condolences to you and your family.
Local:	Grazie per essere qui con noi.	Thank you for being with us.

Exchange 50

Family members and friends, many bringing flowers, visit the home of the deceased to offer condolences to the survivors. Guests at the funeral also return to the family home following the funeral to share a meal. Thirty days after the funeral, a special Mass is offered for the deceased. One year after the death, the family celebrates a Memorial Mass.<sup>77</sup>

## Births

Within the first year after the birth of a child, Italian families schedule a baptism. Next to a wedding, a baptism is arguably the largest family social event. The family attends a special Mass at a Catholic Church, where the child is baptized. Following the service, family and friends gather for a big party. Guests bring gifts, enjoy a large meal, and dance the day away. Cake is not usually served at these festivities because baptismal cakes are thought to bring bad luck.<sup>78, 79</sup>



Christening ceremony  
Flickr / John Keogh

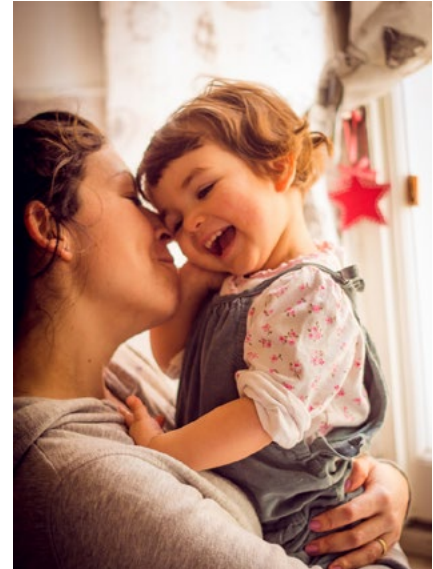
## Naming Conventions

All Italians have a given name and a surname. Many children also have a middle name. Some children may have more than one middle name. Others may have no middle name but a double first name, such as Giovanni Antonio.<sup>80</sup>

Italian children are often named after their grandparents. Traditionally, Italians name their first male child after the paternal grandfather and the second son after the maternal grandfather. The first daughter is named after her paternal grandmother and the second daughter after the maternal grandmother. If the family has more children, parents are free to choose whatever name they like. In some cases, if the first child is a

daughter, she is given a female version of the paternal grandfather's name, such as Antonia for Antonio. If a child dies, a later child might be given the deceased child's name. Although many contemporary Italians deviate from this practice, the tradition is still very much alive, particularly in smaller towns and across southern Italy. The most common names are generally derivatives of Catholic saints.<sup>81, 82, 83, 84</sup>

Children normally take the surname of their father. If a child is born out of wedlock and no father is identified, the child assumes the mother's surname. The child may also take the mother's surname if both parents agree and the child is registered without delay with the maternal last name. When a woman marries, she keeps her family name rather than taking the husband's surname.<sup>85, 86</sup>



*Mom and her baby*  
Flickr / Maria Grazia Montagnari

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## Italian Cultural Orientation

# Chapter 6 | Family Life

## Assessment

1. The typical Italian family today has three or four children.
2. Italian children tend to live at home longer than their U.S. counterparts.
3. Italy has one of the largest proportions of elderly in the world.
4. The average age of a first marriage for Italian women is 25 and for men it is 27.
5. Divorce just recently became legal in Italy.

*Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False*

# Italian Cultural Orientation

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# Italian Cultural Orientation

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## Final Assessment

1. In World War I, Italy allied with Germany.
2. After the establishment of the Italian kingdom in 1861, the greatest government opposition came from the Catholic Church.
3. The head of government is the Italian president.
4. Italy's main economic driver is the industrial sector.
5. More than nine in ten people in Italy are ethnic Italian.
6. Divorce is illegal in Italy.
7. The Roman Catholic Church is the oldest of all Western institutions.
8. The practice of Catholicism revolves around the seven sacraments.
9. Throughout its history, the popes were relatively uninvolved in secular affairs.
10. The law of iconography refers only to the statues and images on the inside of church buildings.

11. Italians generally have a low regard for individualism, especially in the north.
12. Italians tend to be relatively formal in their greetings and prefer the use of titles.
13. Among the countries in the European Union, Italy ranks high in gender equality.
14. When giving gifts, avoid using black, gold, or purple paper and ribbons to wrap them.
15. Pasta dishes are especially popular in the northern regions of Italy.
16. Taxis cannot be flagged on the street in an Italian city.
17. Italy has one of the highest crime rates in the world.
18. The Italian mafia no longer wields much influence in Italy.
19. Italy's public healthcare system is among the best in the world.
20. About 30% of Italians between 25 and 34 fail to earn a high school diploma.
21. The most commonly grown crop in Italy is olives.
22. About half of the farms in Italy are 8 hectares (20 acres) in size.

23. Agritourism is an important sector of the rural economy.
24. Drivers are unable to get gas in rural Italy on weekends because gas stations are closed.
25. Communes are the second-smallest unit of local government and have little power.
26. The Italian government recognizes all religious weddings.
27. All couples seeking a divorce in Italy must go through a 3-year separation.
28. About 25% of Italian women will remain childless throughout their lives.
29. Italian naming conventions dictate that a child be given a middle name.
30. Italy has been ranked as one of the “best places to be a mother” relative to other Western European nations.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. False; 5. True; 6. False; 7. True; 8. True; 9. False; 10. False; 11. False; 12. True; 13. False; 14. True; 15. False; 16. True; 17. False; 18. False; 19. True; 20. True; 21. True; 22. False; 23. True; 24. False; 25. False; 26. False; 27. True; 28. True; 29. False; 30. False