



# THE NIGERIAN COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Annual report on the presence of migrants  
*Executive summary*



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Curated by the General Directorate for Immigration and Integration Policies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Annual Reports on the main foreign communities in Italy investigate and analyse the presence in Italy of the largest populations of non-EU migrants: Moroccan, Albanian, Ukrainian, Chinese, Indian, Bangladeshi, Egyptian, Filipino, Pakistani, Moldovan, Sri Lankan, Senegalese, Nigerian, Tunisian, Peruvian and Ecuadorian.

A key factor also in the 2023 edition is the contribution of the Institutions and Bodies that provided the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies with the necessary information, subsequently processed by the Integration Services Area of Sviluppo Lavoro Italia. Sincere thanks are due to ISTAT – National Institute of Statistics, INPS – General Statistical Actuarial Coordination, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University and Research, the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture; CeSPI, the CGIL, CISL, UIL, UGL trade union confederations and the Data Science Applications B.U. - Studies and Research Division of Sviluppo Lavoro Italia. The financial inclusion section was curated by Daniele Frigeri, Director of the National Observatory on Financial Inclusion of Migrants.

The unabridged volumes of the 2012 – 2023 editions of the Reports on the Main Foreign Communities in Italy are available, in Italian and in the main foreign languages, in the “Documents and Research – Reports by the Immigration and Integration Policies DG” area of the website [www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it](http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it) and in the “Studies and Statistics” area of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies website - [www.lavoro.gov.it](http://www.lavoro.gov.it). A statistical annex is also available at the same addresses, containing additional information with respect to the reports, or with insights on the existing analysis and a comparison between the main nationalities.

The 2023 edition of the National Reports on the Main Foreign Communities, the translation of the overviews into the main vehicular languages and the Monitoring Report were produced by the “Services for Integration Policies” Area of Sviluppo Lavoro Italia, in the framework of the project “START-Support to Integrated Multiannual Programming on Employment, Integration and Inclusion”.

## The Nigerian community in Italy

As at 1 January 2023, there were **99,630** Nigerians legally residing<sup>1</sup> in Italy, accounting for 2.7% of all third-country nationals. This figure places the community in **thirteenth** position among the main non-EU citizens in numerical terms. In line with the general trend of non-EU settlements (+4.7%), the Nigerian community recorded an - albeit lower - increase (1%) over the previous year<sup>2</sup>.

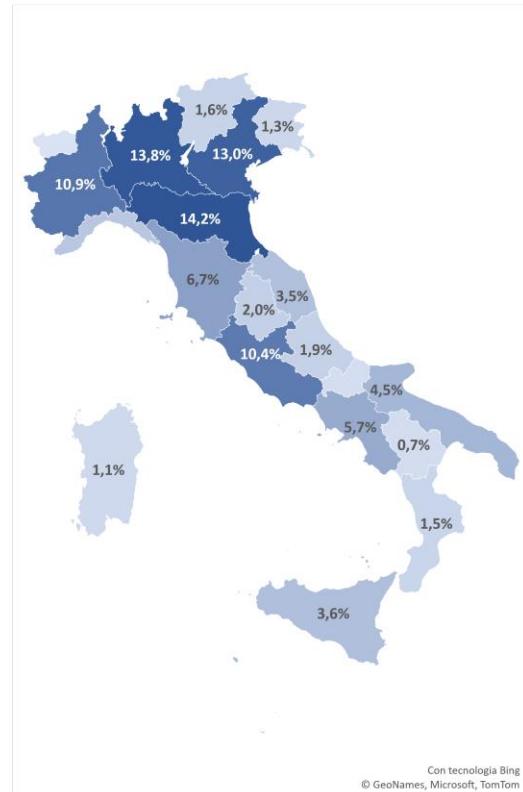
**57.8% of Nigerian citizens in Italy are located in the north of the country**, particularly in Emilia-Romagna, which hosts 14.2% of the African community's citizens (vs. approx. 11% of the non-EU community as a whole), in Lombardy, where 13.8% of the community is located, and in Veneto, where the African community registers a presence of 13%. The Nigerian population in Italy is characterised by a higher-than-average presence in the southern regions, where 19.6% of the community has applied for or renewed a residence permit (vs. 15.3% of the total non-EU population). The highest concentrations are in Campania (5.7%) and Apulia (4.5%).

Compared to the non-EU population in Italy, the Nigerian community is **less balanced by gender**: women make up 45.3% and men the remaining 54.7%. This indicator highlights a change in the demographic structure of the community, which initially saw a predominance of women migrating to Italy. However, at a later stage, a significant increase in the presence of male individuals was observed, leading to a reversal of the gender composition.

The Nigerian community is significantly younger than the overall non-EU population in the country, with an average age of 29 (vs. 35.8) and a share of **under 30s** equal to 48.3% (vs. 37.1% for the non-EU population as a whole and 26.7% for the Italian population). There is a high presence of minors (27%), who represent the predominant age group in the community under review (for non-EU nationals as a whole, the share drops to 20.6%). The Nigerian community comes second - among the main non-EU communities - in terms of the highest share of minors. Lower than average is the share of over-50s, who account for about 8% of the community's settlements (vs. a non-EU average of 23.5%).

The community is also characterised by a high incidence of **single-person households**, which is higher than that found among the non-EU population as a whole: 28% vs. 16.2%, respectively. However, the share of large families of more than eight people is also higher (2.6% vs. 1%). Conversely, the shares of couples (8.6%) and medium-sized families (households with 3-4 members, 39.7%, and households with 5-7 people, 21.1%) are lower than those recorded for the third-country population as a whole<sup>3</sup>.

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



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

<sup>1</sup> Statistics on legally residing non-EU citizens include all foreigners from non-EU countries who are in possession of a valid residence document (national residence permit or long-term EU residence permit). Not all legally resident foreign citizens are included in the total count of residents in Italy: the statistical source employed therefore also includes foreign nationals who for whatever reason have yet to qualify for official residence in Italy.

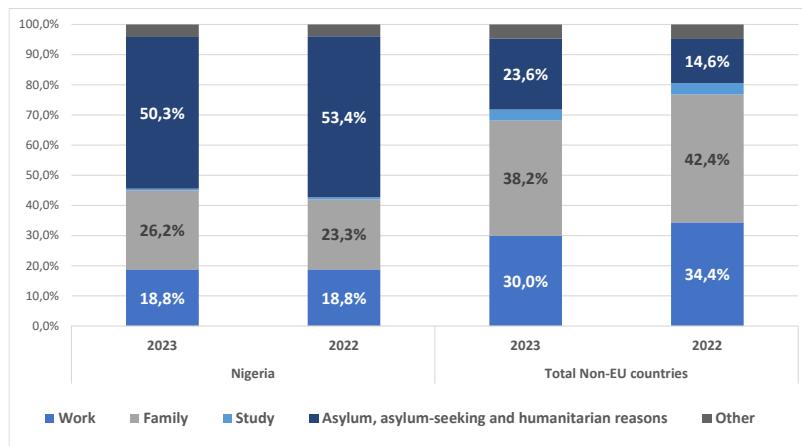
<sup>2</sup> This figure is most likely linked to acquisitions of Italian citizenship, which - as is well known - leads to a reduction in the statistics, since those who become Italian are no longer counted as foreigners.

<sup>3</sup> Source: RCFL ISTAT - Year 2022.

In 2022, **9,062 Nigerian citizens entered Italy**, up 16.2% over the previous year<sup>4</sup>. Family reunification was the prevalent reason for entry (40.5%), up roughly 6% compared to the previous year. The community's second reason for entry was to seek asylum or a form of protection (39.5%, up 17.2%).

The analysis of the types of residence permit held by Nigerian nationals shows a low level of stabilisation: **the share of long-term residents<sup>5</sup> within the community on 1 January 2023 is 36.1%, more than 24 percentage points lower than that recorded for non-EU nationals as a whole**. This figure places the Nigerian community in last position among the main non-EU citizens in terms of the number of long-term residents.

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



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

Among the reasons for permit renewals, asylum-seeking and forms of protection prevail, with an incidence of 50.3%, compared to 23.6% for the non-EU population as a whole. These are followed by family reasons, with an incidence that is 12 percentage points lower than that recorded for non-EU nationals as a whole (for whom they are the predominant reason). According to an analysis of demographic data and residence permits, stabilisation is still rather low but evolving: the clear majority of young Nigerian citizens holds short-term residence permits, but there is a growing trend towards

family reunifications.

The **predominant** - though not exclusive - **profile** among Nigerian employed persons is that of **unskilled manual labourer** in the **Transport and business services, Industry and Trade** sectors.

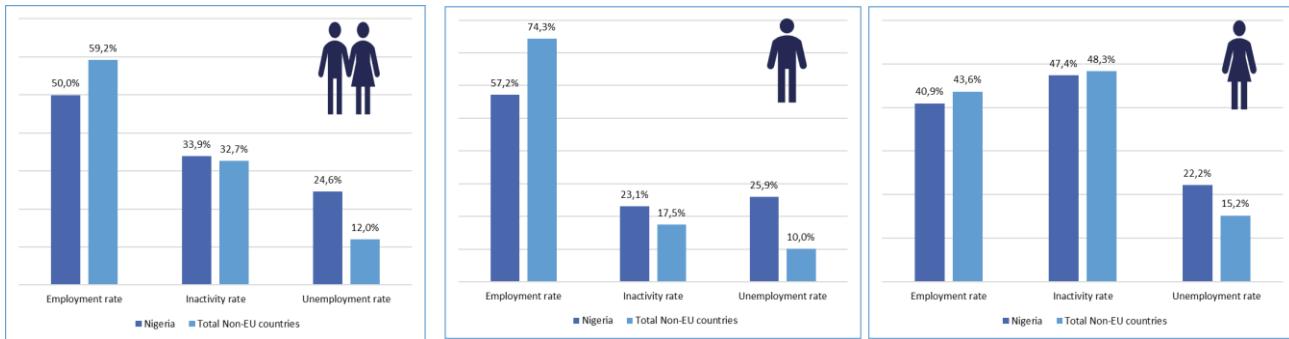
The Nigerian community in Italy is still not very integrated in the labour market, registering worse employment performance than the third-country population as a whole: the employment rate was 50% (vs. 59.2% for non-EU nationals), the unemployment rate was 24.6% (vs. 12%), while the share of inactive people aged 15-64 was 33.9% (vs. 32.7%).

The data shows that the best employment changes within the community concern the female component, with an increase in the number of employed women of about 9% in 2022 and a decrease in unemployment of 15%. However, the community shows a lower employment rate for women than non-EU women as a whole (40.9% vs. 43.6% overall), confirming the low presence of Nigerian females on the Italian labour market.

<sup>4</sup> The increase recorded for the non-EU population as a whole was 85.9%, a figure that can be linked both to the war in Ukraine, which led to the entry of about 148,000 citizens fleeing the Eastern European country (mainly with special protection permits), and to the regularisation of citizens already present in the territory based on Italian Leg. Decree 34 of 2020, whose applications were largely examined in 2022.

<sup>5</sup> A long-term EU residence permit may be issued to foreign nationals who have held a valid residence permit for at least five years, provided they can prove that they have a minimum income of no less than the social allowance calculated annually.

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



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

The distribution of employed people of Nigerian origin across different **economic sectors** is concentrated primarily in *Transport and business services*: almost a quarter (24.5%) of the community's employees work in this sector, compared to 13.8% of non-EU citizens as a whole; this represents 3.7% of non-EU workers in the sector. The next largest sectors are *Industry in the strict sense*, with an incidence of 21.8%, and *Trade*, whose incidence is higher than that recorded for non-EU nationals as a whole (14.5% vs. 11.2%).

As at 31 December 2022, the number of **sole proprietors** of Nigerian origin was **17,976**, or 4.6% of the non-EU entrepreneurs in Italy. Compared to the previous year, the number of Nigerian sole proprietorships dropped by 1.5%, while the number of non-EU entrepreneurs as a whole fell by 0.8%. In the Nigerian community, the majority of sole proprietors are men, accounting for about 63% of the total. Women, who number 6,633, make up the remaining 36.9%. They are the fourth largest group among non-EU female entrepreneurs, after Chinese, Moroccan and Albanian women. There is a strong sectoral specialisation of Nigerian-led companies: 65.5% operate in the *Trade and transport* sector.

As far as the use of **welfare measures** is concerned, the data on certain measures and, in particular, on wage supplements shows that the Nigerian community is not particularly integrated in the Italian socio-economic fabric. Indeed, only 2.2% of non-EU wage supplement recipients are Nigerian. Given the community's young age but also its recent migration history, the data on *IVS (invalidity, old age, survivors) pensions* is not relevant as the number of recipients is extremely small. More relevant, instead, is the data on *welfare pensions*, whose recipients are Nigerian in 1.8% of cases, with a higher incidence of Constant attendance supplements (3.1%). The figure relating to the use of family assistance measures is higher. The incidence of Nigerian female recipients of *maternity allowance*<sup>6</sup> is 3.1%. Moreover, within the community there were just under 6,000 recipients of family allowances in 2022, accounting for 2.1% of the total number of non-EU nationals. Underlining the widespread economic precariousness of Nigerian citizens, more than 10,636 members of the community receive a basic pension (*Pensione di cittadinanza*) or basic income (*Reddito di cittadinanza*), with an incidence of almost 6% on the non-EU total.

<sup>6</sup> Otherwise known as "compulsory abstention allowance", this is a form of income support in lieu of salary and is paid to female workers for maternity leave and childbirth for a total of 5 months.

