

THE SRI LANKAN COMMUNITY IN ITALY

Annual report on the presence of migrants
Executive summary



20
23

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 and in the “Studies and Statistics” area of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies website - 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 Sri Lankan community in Italy

The **102,492** Sri Lankans legally residing¹ in Italy represent the 11th largest community of non-European citizenship as of 1 January 2023, or 2.7% of non-EU nationals in Italy. Contrary to the general trend of non-EU settlements (+4.7%), the Sri Lankan community recorded a 0.4% decrease compared to the previous year².

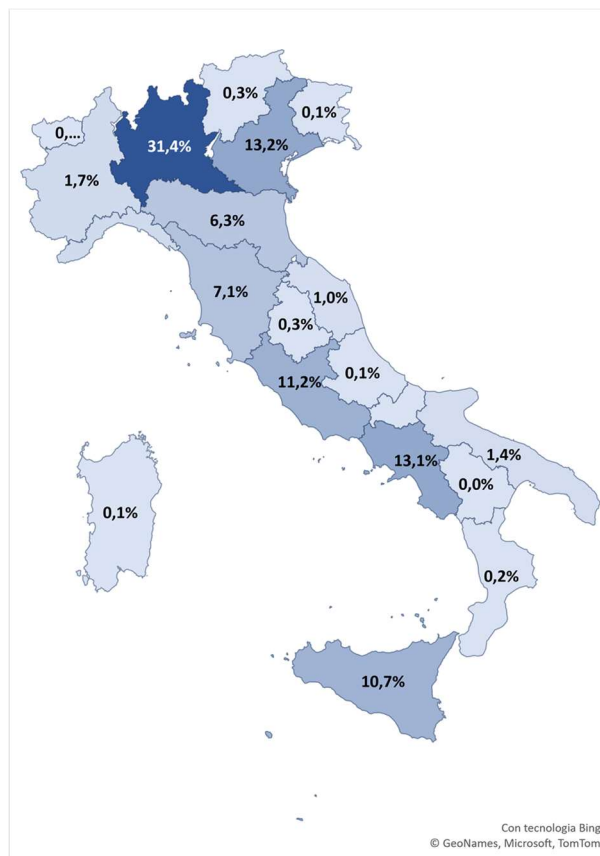
54.8% of Sri Lankan citizens in Italy are located in the north of the country, particularly in Lombardy (the first region of Sri Lankan settlement), which hosts almost a third of Sri Lankan citizens (31.4%), compared to just over a quarter of non-EU citizens as a whole. Veneto ranks as the second region of Sri Lankan settlement, with 13.2% of the population, closely followed by Campania, which hosts 13.1% of the community's members. The Sri Lankan community also registers a significant presence in Lazio (11.2%) and Sicily (10.7%), indicating a rather extensive geographical distribution throughout Italy, also as a result of the weight of the migratory chain on members of the Asian community.

In comparison with the non-European population in Italy, the Sri Lankan community shows a good gender balance: the presence of females - although almost 2 percentage points lower than the non-EU average (49.8%) - is 47.4%. Sri Lankans in Italy rank third last in terms of the lowest degree of gender imbalance³: (5.2%).

The Sri Lankan community is decidedly more mature than the overall non-EU population in Italy: the average age is about 37 (compared to 35.8) and the share of over-50s is about 27.6% (compared to 23.5% among the non-EU average). The share of under-30s in the Sri Lankan community amounts to about a third (32.2%), compared to 37.1% for the non-EU population as a whole and 26.7% for the Italian population. There is a high presence of minors (at 21.8%), 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 above data shows the Sri Lankan community is essentially stable in the territory, not only due to the ongoing presence of the first migratory flows to Italy (generally women over 45), but also to the presence of numerous family units.

Indeed, the community is characterised by a high incidence of 3- or 4-people households, which is higher than that found among the non-EU population as a whole: 57.8% vs. 47.5%, respectively. The incidence of single-person households is also higher than that found among the non-EU population as a whole: 17.9% vs. 16.2%. In contrast, the share of couples and households of 5-7 people measure respectively: 11.2% and 13.1% vs. 12.6% and 22.7%. The percentage of very large families with more than eight members is almost zero.

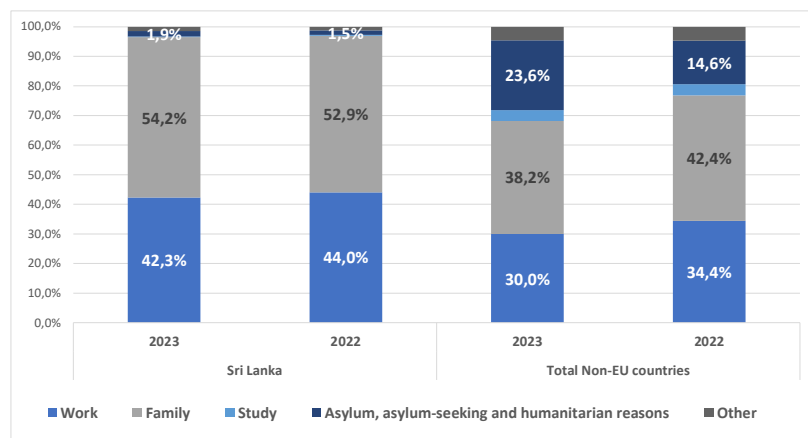
Distribution of the Sri Lankan population legally residing in Italy. Data as at 1 January 2023



In 2022, **3,059 Sri Lankan citizens entered Italy**, up 10.6% over the previous year⁴. Family reunification was the prevalent reason for entry (58%), down roughly 16.6% compared to the previous year. The community's second reason for entering Italy was work (although the figure rose significantly over the previous year: +95.6%).

The analysis of the types of residence permit held by Sri Lankan nationals shows a high level of stabilisation: **the share of long-term residents⁵ within the community on 1 January 2023 is 69.1%**, around 9 percentage point higher than that recorded for non-EU nationals as a whole. This figure places the Sri Lankan community in sixth 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, family reasons prevail, with an incidence of 54.2% compared to 38.2% for the non-EU population as a whole (for which they are the predominant reason). These are followed by work-related reasons, with an incidence that is more than 12 percentage points higher than that recorded for non-EU nationals as a whole.

An analysis of demographic data and residence permits reveals a specific pattern to Sri Lankan migration to Italy. There are signs of stability, with the clear majority of Sri Lankan citizens holding long-term residence permits.

This stability results in a high number of family reunifications.

On the other hand, an analysis of the employment data shows a highly characterised - though not exclusive - **predominant profile** among Sri Lankan workers: males employed in unskilled manual jobs in the *Public, social and personal services* sector.

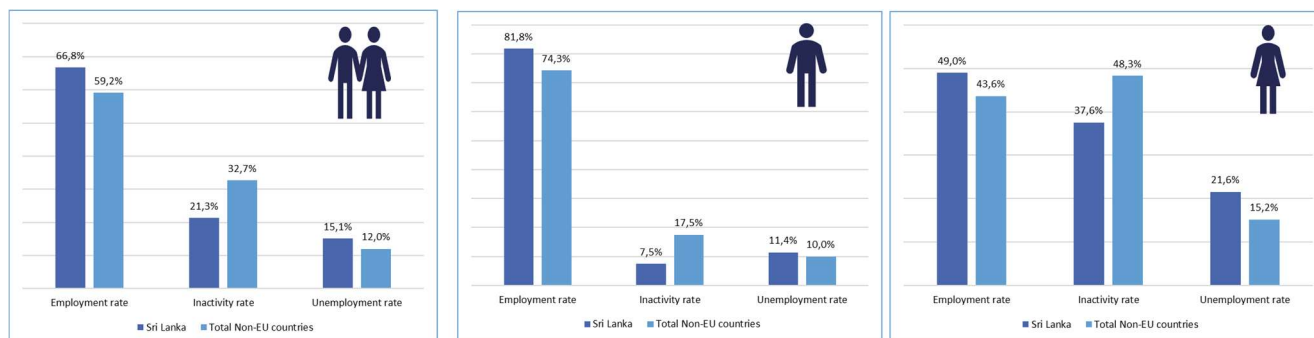
The Sri Lankan population in Italy is well integrated in the labour market, performing better in employment terms than third-country nationals as a whole. In 2022, **the employment rate** was 66.8% (vs. 59.2% for non-EU nationals as a whole), the **unemployment rate** was 15.1% (vs. 12%), while the percentage of **inactive** people aged 15-64 was 21.3% (vs. 32.7%).

As for the non-EU population as a whole, the Asian community also experienced an increase in employment, while the inactivity and unemployment rates decreased. Compared to 2021, the employment rate increased by 2.8%, inactivity decreased by 2.9%, and the share of jobseekers dropped by 0.3%. Although there are still significant gender disparities within the community (the male employment rate is higher than the female rate by more than 30 percentage points), the indicators for the female element of the community are better than those for non-EU women as a whole (with an employment rate of 49% compared to 43.6% overall).

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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 Sri Lankan origin across different **economic sectors** is concentrated in *Other public, social and personal services*: more than half (55.6%) of the community's employees work in this sector, compared to 23.3% of non-EU citizens as a whole; this represents 9.4% of non-EU workers in the sector. This is followed by the hospitality sector, which has a higher incidence than that recorded for non-EU nationals as a whole (14.2% vs. 11.4%), and *Industry in the strict sense*, with an incidence of 13.4%.

As at 31 December 2022, the number of **sole proprietors** of Sri Lankan origin was 3,996, or 1% of the non-EU entrepreneurs in Italy. Compared to the previous year, the number of Sri Lankan sole proprietorships grew by 4.8%, while the number of non-EU entrepreneurs as a whole fell (-0.8%). The vast majority of sole proprietors belonging to the Sri Lankan community are men (72% of the total). There is also a strong sectoral specialisation of Sri Lankan-led companies: more than a third (35.6%) operate in *Trade and transport*.

The high proportion of people from the Sri Lankan community employed in *Services* is also reflected in the levels of use of certain **welfare measures**. Indeed, the community scarcely (0.3%) makes use of wage supplementing measures, such as the ordinary and extraordinary redundancy funds (CIGO and CIGS). The presence of Sri Lankan citizens is higher among the recipients of the *Naspi* monthly unemployment benefit, with an incidence of 2.6%.

The incidence decreases for the various pension forms: Sri Lankan *IVS (invalidity, old age, survivors) pension* recipients account for 1.9% of the total number of non-EU recipients, rising to 2.1% in the case of *old age and invalidity pensions*. The figures remain low in terms of the use of family assistance measures. The incidence of Sri Lankan female recipients of *maternity allowance*⁶ is 1.5% (389 women), a small percentage when one considers that the community accounts for 2.7% of the non-EU settlement and that the female component is more integrated in the world of work than other nationalities (therefore the proportion of women entitled to this measure should be higher). Within the community, there were just under 6,000 recipients of *family allowances* in 2022, accounting for 2.5% of the total number of non-EU nationals.

Underlining the economic precariousness of Sri Lankan citizens, more than 10,000 members of the community receive a basic pension (*Pensione di cittadinanza*) or basic income (*Reddito di cittadinanza*), with an incidence of almost 5.9% on the non-EU total.

⁶ 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.

