

## **Acquisition of Citizenship: Desire and Reality among Foreigners in Italy**

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### **Introduction**

As early as the 1990s, Istat (Italian National Institute of Statistics) had developed strategies to direct attention to the presence of foreigners and migration, introducing a variable on citizenship in most of the current data collections. Since the beginning of the 2000s also the most relevant social sample surveys take into account a sample of foreign population. Istat has also carried out, cooperating with Ministry of Interior, research projects on integration (Istat-Ministry of Interior, 2013) financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. In recent years, Istat is working to expand the information available on migrants and their social integration. On one hand the attention has been focused on the full exploitation of administrative data, going towards a system of integrated registers; on the other hand Istat has carried out surveys on the issue of integration starting from the indications suggested in the 2010 Zaragoza Declaration (Conti *et al.*, 2017).

The Zaragoza Declaration (2010) indicated the share of immigrants that acquire citizenship in a country as one of the Active citizenship core indicators, together with the share of immigrants holding permanent or long-term residence permit and share of immigrants among elected representatives. The Active citizenship is one of the main dimensions of EU's migrant integration indicators. Data on citizenship acquisitions are annually collected by Eurostat as part of annual data collection on migration flows and relates to the number of persons who acquire citizenship of the country of residence in a year having previously been citizen of another country or stateless person. In Italy, according to the 2011 Population Census, the amount of foreign residents was over 4 million, about 7% of the resident population. The share of those who had already acquired Italian citizenship before 2011 Population Census amounted to around 670 thousand individuals. From 2011 to 2017, the citizenship acquisitions have been around 800 thousand. The trend during this period was growing until 2016, when the acquisitions of citizenship were over 200 thousand in the year; in 2017 there was a decrease with less than 150 thousand new Italian citizens.

The demographic changes caused by international migration process require to enlarge the perspective of analysis in order to provide an adequate information framework about social integration process of migrant and their descendants.

The objective of this paper is to understand the correspondence between the desire to acquire Italian citizenship and the actual acquisition and to outline the main individual and family characteristics of the foreigners that acquire or not the Italian citizenship.

## **Data and methods**

The only source that collects foreigners acquisition desire is the sample survey on Social Condition and Integration of Foreign Citizens (SCIF) carried out by Istat in 2011-2012.

The SCIF survey aims to provide a collection of information about many features of socio-economic integration of migrants in Italy in order to explore living condition of resident foreigners. The survey data provides a framework on characteristics, behaviors, attitudes and opinions of the foreign citizens in Italy. There is a focus on several aspects: family composition, education, migratory path, employment status, discrimination, health conditions and accessibility of health services, migrant integration, citizen's security and victimization, housing conditions.

SCIF survey's target population is foreign population resident in Italy. The sampling unit is the households resident in Italy with at least one component with foreign citizenship. In the SCIF survey, foreign citizens are identified by citizenship, not by the place of birth. At the same time the possibility of analyzing for individual citizenship satisfies the cognitive needs of the most important nationalities in Italy.

All the members of 9,553 families were interviewed using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) techniques. In terms of individuals with foreign citizenship, the survey involved around 20 thousand people.

Administrative data on citizenship acquisitions in 2011-2017 period provide information referred to the amount of foreigners who become Italian citizens. In early 2011 Istat carried out a procedure to achieve individual dataset on acquisition of citizenship, integrating data from different sources (individual Ministry of the Interior data sets, Municipal Registry Lists, data from surveys and calculations regarding the foreign resident population and its movements). The dataset of acquisition of citizenship provide information on sex, age, province of acquisition, previous citizenship and acquisition reason (residence, marriage, transmission by parents for minors, *ius sanguinis*).

Through the linkage between the survey data (SCIF) and the administrative data on Italians by acquisition it is possible to analyze both the desire and the actual achievements. Furthermore, it is possible a focus on the socio-demographic and migratory background of foreign citizens who acquire Italian citizenship.

## **Results**

On an amount of about 20,000 foreign citizens interviewed, the share of those who intend to acquire Italian citizenship is 70%.

From the first results, among foreigners interviewed who wanted to become Italian citizens, in the following 6 years, just over 20% saw their expectations realized. There is a 7% of people who become Italian even if at the interview didn't express the desire to be naturalized.

Those who have lived in Italy for longer time, acquire Italian citizenship more frequently: about 26% of those in Italy for more than 11 years become Italian in the 6 years following the interview. Also age at arrival in Italy plays an important role with a greater share of acquisitions among those who have arrived at younger ages.

## **References**

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