

## 9. Landscape and cultural heritage<sup>1</sup>

The way a society dwells its territory and takes care of its cultural heritage reflects that society's well-being. In Italy, for historical reasons, these aspects have such a special relevance, that our Constitution mentions the protection of the landscape and the historical and artistic heritage among its fundamental principles<sup>2</sup>. Landscape and cultural heritage are therefore to be considered, as well as common goods, as indicators of civil life quality: because, where their protection proves insufficient or ineffective, the Republic itself is failing one of its defining tasks.

The trends of the last decade draw a complex scenario, where old contradictions and new opportunities combine. Among the former, there is a public expenditure on cultural heritage among the lower in Europe (and too reliant on the unequal capabilities of local finance). Among the latter, we can name a growing attention, in agricultural policies and by the public, for the rural landscape (a sign of which can be seen in the growth of rural tourism), and some reduction in the pressures on the landscape from the economic system, namely from the construction and mining sectors. To a large extent, such reduction is a side effect of the slowdown in productive activities that followed the 2009 crisis: nevertheless, it provides an opportunity for innovative policies, more oriented to sustainability.

The presentation starts from an analysis of public spending on cultural heritage and landscape, providing a comparison of EU countries on state expenditure, and a comparison of Italian regions on municipal expenditure. Then, the dimension of cultural heritage is examined through the trends of the museum system and the updates of landscape indicators are commented by domains of reference: rural (spread of rural tourism), natural (impact of forest fires, pressure from mining activities), urban (illegal building). The chapter closes with a commentary on subjective indicators, referred to the perception of landscape degradation and the social attention for landscape in the experience of daily life.

### Public spending on culture and landscape among the lowest in Europe compared to GDP

In 2018, Italy's public spending on Cultural services (which include heritage protection and promotion) amounted to € 5.1 billion<sup>3</sup>. Among the other major EU economies, France and Germany spent much more (14.8 and 13.5 billion, respectively), and also Spain committed more resources (5.3 billion). Despite the increase recorded in the last two years (+17.3% since 2016), Italy remains one of the European countries that spend less on cultural services, compared to its GDP: 2.9 per thousand against an EU average of 4 per thousand, a figure that ranks our Country 23<sup>rd</sup> among the 28 member States. On the other hand, Italy is the EU country that spends the most on the Protection of biodiversity and landscape: € 2.1 billion in 2018, vs. 1.9 of France and 1.7 of Germany<sup>4</sup>. The resources committed by Italy,

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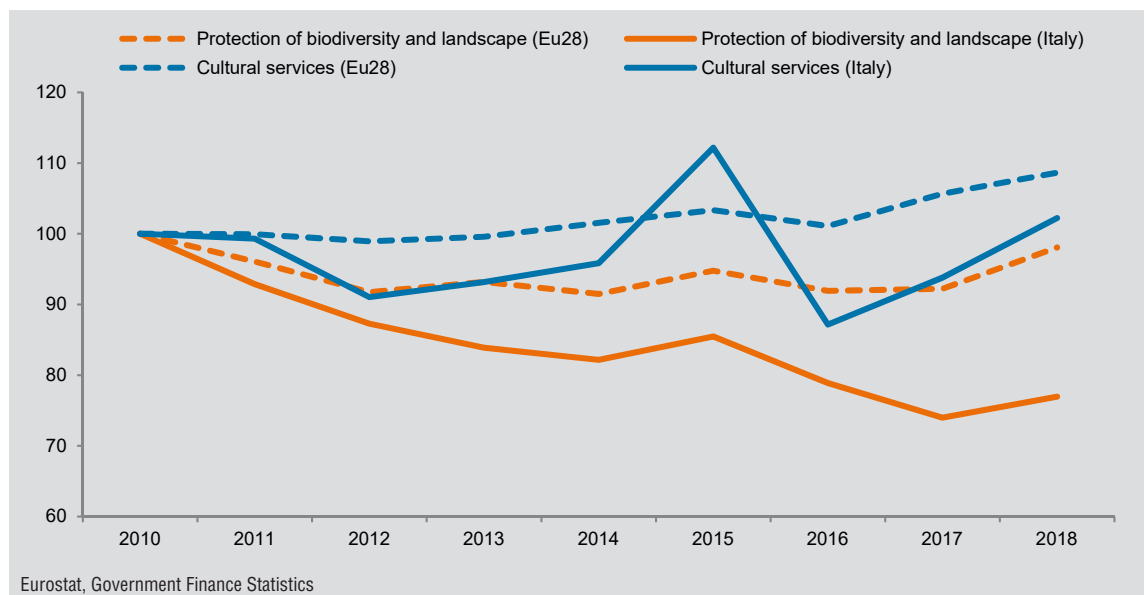
<sup>2</sup> Constitution of the Italian Republic, art. 9. The protection is entrusted to the Republic, i.e. to the State as a whole, from the central government to the local administrations.

<sup>3</sup> General government expenditure on class 08.2.1 of the Cofog classification.

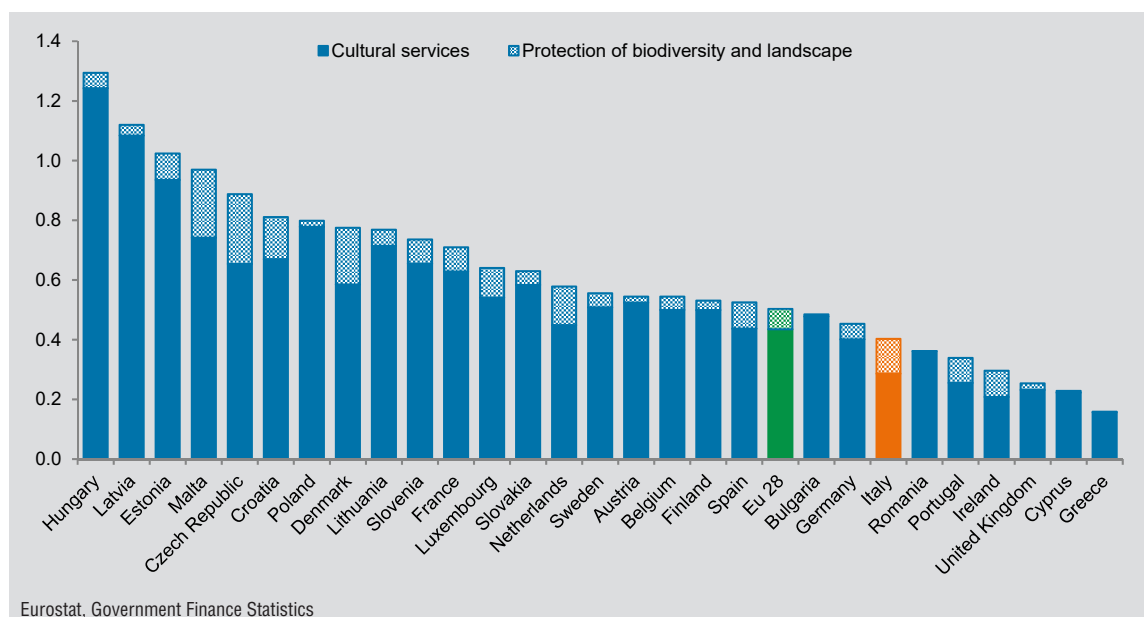
<sup>4</sup> General government expenditure on class 05.4.1 of the Cofog classification.

however, have been decreasing in recent years (by 23%, since 2010), and the expenditure on biodiversity and landscape is only 1.2 per thousand of the GDP (Figure 1). Therefore, even considering the sum of the two items, Italy remains well below the EU average in the ranking of public spending on landscape and cultural heritage as a proportion of the GDP (Figure 2).

**Figure 1. Public expenditure on Cultural services and Protection of biodiversity and landscape in Italy and the EU. Years 2010-2018. Index, 2010=100**



**Figure 2. Public expenditure on Cultural services and Protection of biodiversity and landscape in the EU countries. Year 2018. Percentage of GDP**

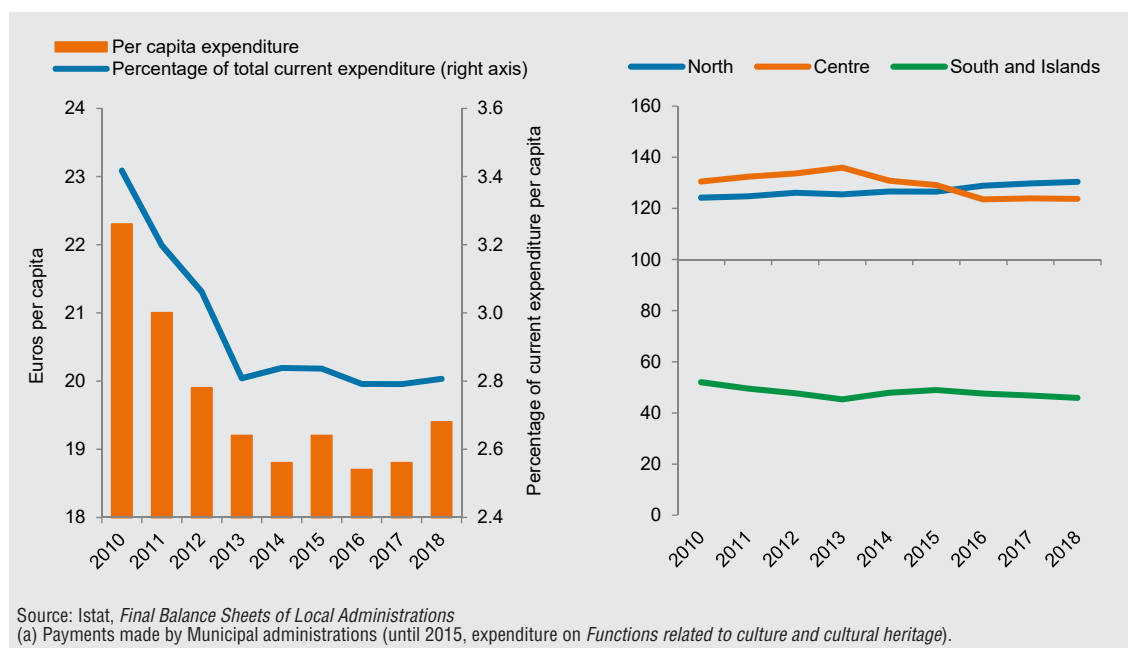


### Municipal spending on culture grows, but the North-South divide keeps widening

The current expenditure of Municipalities for cultural heritage and activities is equal, in 2018, to € 19.4 per capita: 0.6 more than the previous year, but 2.9 less than 2010<sup>5</sup>. In absolute value, this expenditure item has fallen by more than 10% since 2010, while the overall current expenditure grew by 8.5%. In the Municipalities' balance sheets, the budget for culture fell from 3.4% to 2.8% of current spending between 2010 and 2013 and remained stable since then (Figure 3a). Moreover, the gap between the Centre-North regions and the Southern ones keeps widening. In 2018, the average spending is € 8.9 per capita in South and Islands (45.9% of the Italian average, and just over a third of the Centre-North average), while in 2010 it was € 11.6 per capita (52% of the Italian average and about 40% of Centre-North average, Figure 3b). We observe even greater inequalities in the regional comparison, as per capita value range from € 4.5 of Campania to nearly 60 of the province of Bolzano (Figure 4).

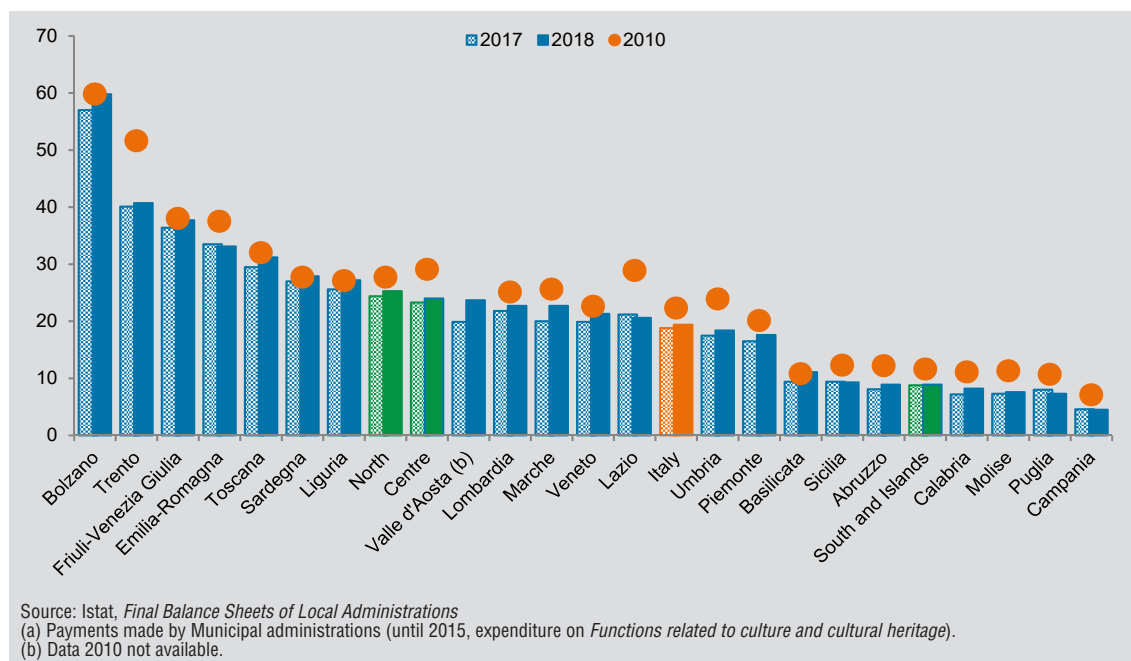
**Figure 3a. Current expenditure of Municipalities on Protection and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural and landscape activities (a). Years 2010-2018. Euros per capita and percentage values**

**Figure 3b. Current expenditure per capita of Municipalities on Protection and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural and landscape activities (a) by geographic area. Years 2010-2018. Index, Italy=100**



<sup>5</sup> Current expenditure (payments) for “Protection and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural and landscape activities”.

Figure 4. Current expenditure per capita of Municipalities on Protection and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural and landscape activities (a) by region and geographic area. Years 2010 and 2017-2018. Euros per capita



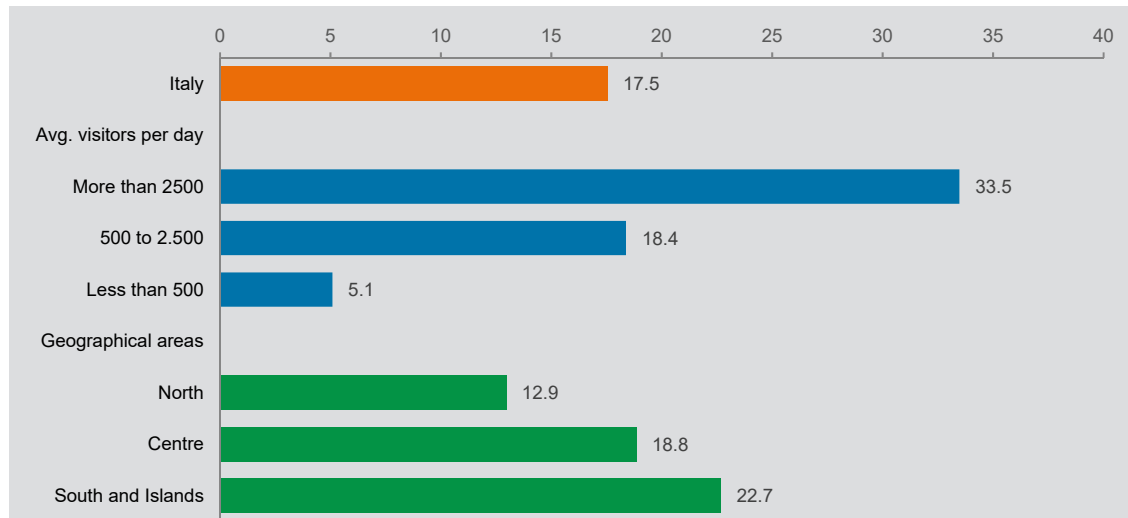
## Visitors to museums increase, especially in South and Islands, but the concentration of flows as well

According to the last update before the COVID-19 pandemic, there are 4,880 permanent exhibition facilities open to the public all over Italy<sup>6</sup> (1.6 every 100 km<sup>2</sup>), which welcomed almost 130 million visitors during 2019. Since 2015, the number of facilities has decreased by 1.9%, while we observe a continuous increase in the visitors' flow (by 17.5%, and by 22.7% in South and Islands, Figure 5), although in 2019 the growth slowed down compared to the previous year (+1% vs. +8%). Half of the visitor flow, however, concentrates in 1% of the facilities, and attendance increases especially in the most important structures (by 33.5% in those with an average of over 2,500 visitors per day). Accordingly, the indicator of density and relevance of the museums' heritage shows a highly concentrated territorial distribution (Figure 6). Only four regions, home to renowned destinations for international tourism, exceed the Italian average (1.62 facilities per 100 km<sup>2</sup>): Lazio, Toscana, Campania, and Veneto. While the visitors' increase is a positive fact in itself (and particularly encouraging for the Southern regions), the tendency to the concentration of flows is less so, as it may become unsustainable for the major attractors of cultural tourism, and calls for a rebalancing strategy.

<sup>6</sup> Museums and galleries, archaeological sites and parks, monuments, and monumental complexes (run either by public and private institutions).

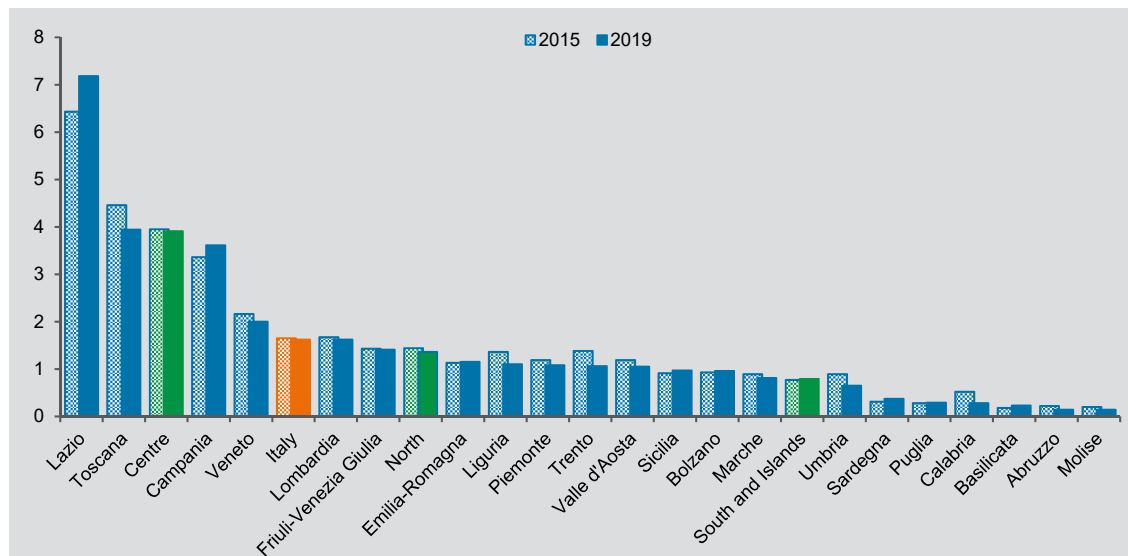
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**Figure 5. Visitors of museum facilities (a) by average number of daily visitors and by geographic area. Years 2015-2019. Percentage changes**



Source: Istat, Survey on museums, monuments and similar institutions  
 (a) Museums and galleries, Archaeological sites and parks, Monuments and monumental complexes.

**Figure 6. Density and importance of museum heritage (a) by region and geographic area. Years 2015 and 2019. Museum facilities weighed by the number of visitors per 100 km<sup>2</sup>**



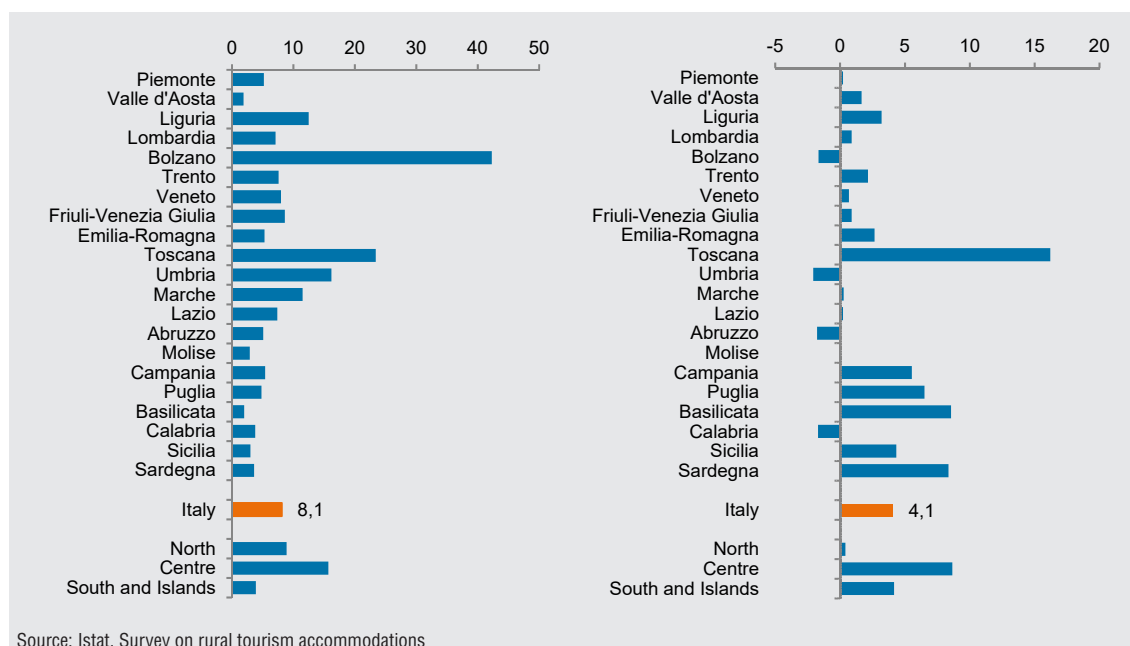
Source: Istat, Survey on museums, monuments and similar institutions

## Signs of stabilisation for rural tourism, but growth continues in South and Islands

Thanks to a national regulation oriented to multi-functionality and the diversification of farm income, rural tourism has proved to be – over time – a valid means for tackling the abandonment of rural areas, and is undoubtedly the most widespread practice for the promotion of rural landscape in Italy<sup>7</sup>. In 2019, there are 8.1 rural tourism facilities every 100 km<sup>2</sup> (in over 60% of Italian municipalities). More than thirty years after the first Law on rural tourism, the development of this phenomenon tends to stabilise. Despite the highest growth rate recorded in the last five years (+4.1%), the number of farms practising rural tourism is stable or decreasing in most of the Central and Northern regions (with the notable exception of Toscana), while it keeps growing fast in Southern Italy (where the sector is less mature and likely to have more margins for expansion). Rural tourism is practised mostly in Central Italy (15.7 farms per 100 km<sup>2</sup>, almost double the Italian average and more than four times that of South and Islands), but the highest concentration is in the northern province of Bolzano (42.3 farms per 100 km<sup>2</sup>) (Figure 7).

**Figure 7a. Spread of rural tourism facilities by region and geographic area. Year 2019. Average number of farmhouses per 100 km<sup>2</sup>**

**Figure 7b. Rural tourism facilities by region and geographic area. Years 2018-2019. Percentage changes**



<sup>7</sup> The Italian law on rural tourism (no. 96/2006) only allows this activity to be carried out by actual farms, and only “in connection with the cultivation of crops, forestry and animal husbandry”. It is to the Regions to define criteria for assessing this connection, provided that agricultural activities remain the prevalent ones.

### New entries in the National Register of Historic Rural Landscapes

The National Register of Historic Rural Landscapes and Traditional Farming Practices is run by the National Observatory of Rural Landscape, intending to promote the knowledge and protection of the landscape within the framework of rural development planning<sup>8</sup>. By the end of 2020, the entries were 25: 22 historic landscapes (of which six in the North, ten in the Centre, and six in South and Islands) and three traditional agricultural practices.

### Pressure from mining and quarrying activities decreasing over the last five years

In Italy, the extraction intensity of non-energy minerals is among the highest within the EU<sup>9</sup>. The pressure on the landscape from quarrying and mining activities is increased by the structure of the production system, made of a large number of extraction sites (mainly open pit), widespread across the territory. In 2018, the authorised sites were just over 4,500 (about one every 67 km<sup>2</sup>), of which over 80% active<sup>10</sup>. The pressure indicator marks a slight decrease, standing at 259 m<sup>3</sup> per km<sup>2</sup> (0.9% less than the previous year), in continuity with the trend of the last five years (-16.1% since 2013, Figure 8a)<sup>11</sup>. The pressure is on average higher (and slightly increasing) in the North and the Centre (321 and 294 m<sup>3</sup> per km<sup>2</sup>, respectively), while it is quite lower in South and Islands (183). At the regional level, the highest value is found in Lombardia (541 m<sup>3</sup> per km<sup>2</sup>), followed by Umbria and Molise (473 and 419). Compared to 2013, however, Lombardia is one of the regions where the pressure of extraction activities has decreased the most (along with Valle d'Aosta, Sicilia, Lazio, and Puglia), while the most significant increases are observed in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Abruzzo (Figure 8b).

8 The Observatory was established in 2012 by the Ministry of Agricultural Policies. New entries are made after an assessment of applications proposed by local stakeholders and can be withdrawn if the sites lose their original characters. Currently, the historic rural landscapes registered are located across 11 regions: Lombardia, Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto, Toscana, Umbria, Lazio, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Sicilia, and Sardegna.

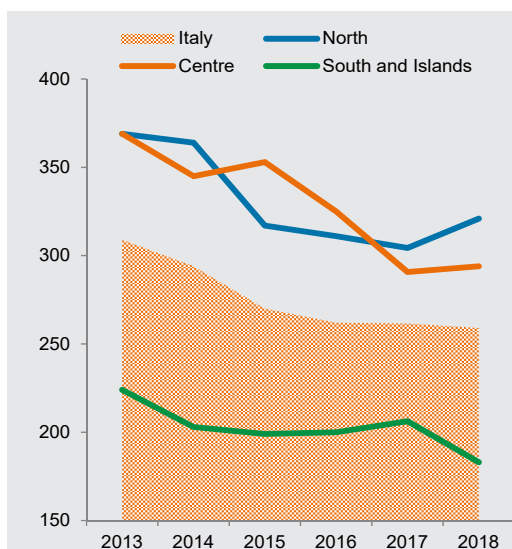
9 In 2019, the extraction intensity of non-energy minerals in Italy is 719 tonnes per km<sup>2</sup> (2019), surpassed in the EU only by Germany, Poland, and Romania (Source: Eurostat, *Environmental Statistics: Material Flow Accounts*).

10 Source: Istat, *Anthropogenic pressure and natural hazards*. Extraction sites are considered active if having authorisation or concession into force; inactive if the authorisation expired or was suspended in the reference year. The sites that are actually in production are a subset of the active ones (2,169 out of 3,674 in 2018).

11 Like the indicator used for the international comparison (based on material flows accounts), the Bes indicator is a measure of extraction intensity but is expressed in units of volume rather than mass. Besides, the Bes indicator is based on a different source (the Istat Survey on withdrawal of non-renewable natural resources).

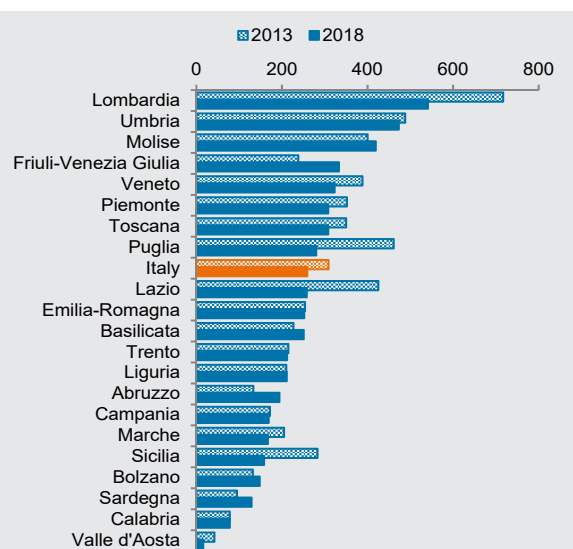


**Figure 8a.** Pressure from mining and quarrying activities by geographic area. Years 2013-2018. m<sup>3</sup> of mineral resources extracted per km<sup>2</sup>



Source: Istat, Anthropogenic pressure and Natural Hazards

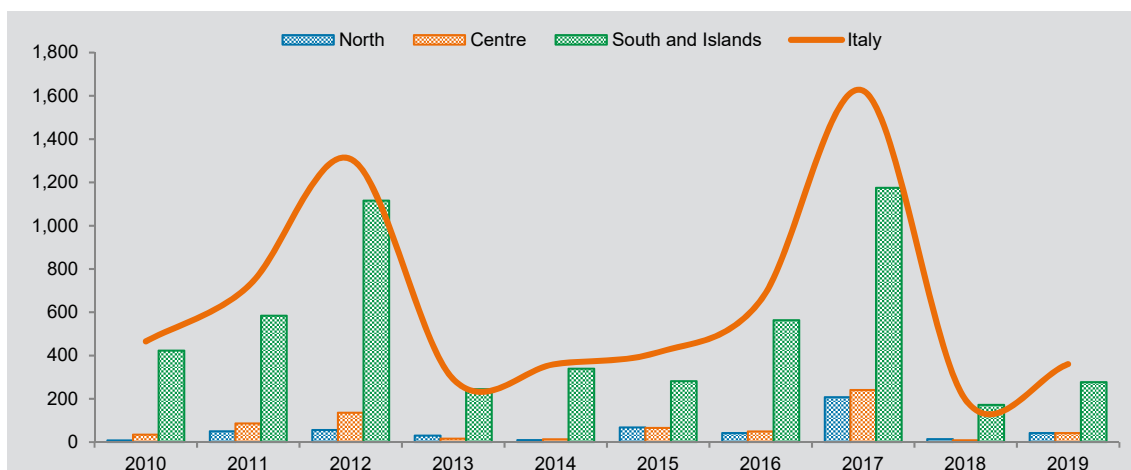
**Figure 8b.** Pressure from mining and quarrying activities by region. Years 2013 and 2018. m<sup>3</sup> of mineral resources extracted per km<sup>2</sup>



### Limited impact of forest fires for the second year in a row

In the last decade, the phenomenon of forest fires followed a cyclical pattern in Italy, as it is naturally affected by the variability of weather and climate conditions (Figure 9). However, the containment of forest fires also depends on the correct management of agricultural and forest areas, especially in the regions most exposed to risk. In 2019, forest fires affected about 36 thousand hectares of land, equal to 1.2 per thousand of the national territory. Although the burnt area almost doubled compared to the previous year, the figure of 2019 is among the lowest of the last decade – marked by the peaks of 2012 and 2017 (4.3 and 5.4 per thousand). The impact concentrates in South and Islands, where the proportion of burnt areas reaches 2.2 per thousand, with a maximum of 4.2 per thousand in Sicilia.

**Figure 9.** Area covered by forest fires by geographic area. Years 2010-2019. Absolute values (km<sup>2</sup>)



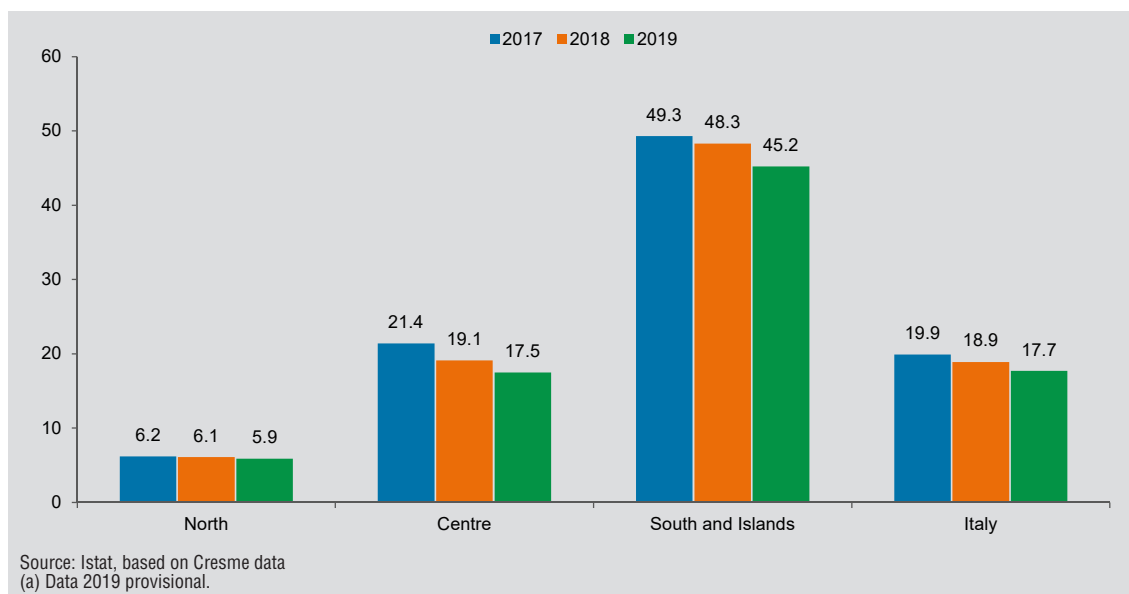
Source: Istat, based on data provided by State Forestry Corps and Civil Protection (2005-2015), Carabinieri Corps (2016-2019)



### Illegal building rate dropping down, but still at worrying levels in Central and Southern Italy

In 2019, the illegal building rate decreases for the second year in a row. According to estimates, the ratio is 17.7 unauthorised housing constructions every 100 authorised, compared to 19.9 in 2017 (Figure 10). Despite the positive trend, the proportion is still high, witnessing the persistence of serious shortcomings in the governance of urban development – even if the overall flow of housing production (of which illegal building is, fortunately, a minor component) continues to be much lower than it was before the economic crisis of 2009<sup>12</sup>. The phenomenon of illegal building is slowing down but is far from extinguishing, and every year continues to take a significant share of the building production away from the rule of law – with all that this entails in terms of landscape degradation, exposure to hydrogeological risk and black-market labour in the construction sector. The situation is most severe in South and Islands, where the ratio of unauthorised buildings rises to 45.2 every 100 authorised, but it is also worrying in Central Italy, where the figure is close to the Italian average.

Figure 10. Illegal building rate by geographic area. Years 2017-2019. New unauthorised housing units every 100 authorised (a)

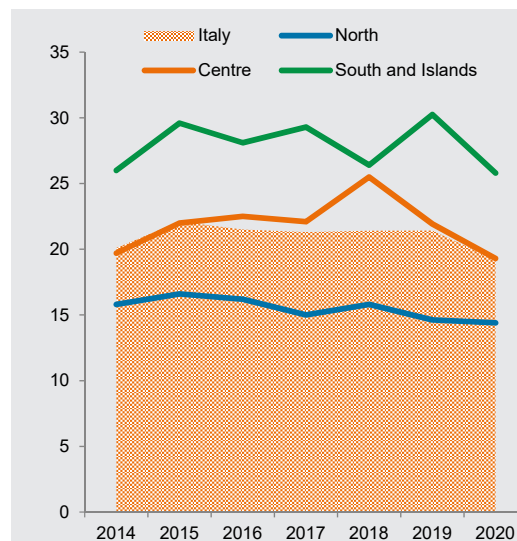


<sup>12</sup> In 2019, the municipalities authorised just over 55,000 new dwellings (+28.4% compared to 2015, but -71.3% compared to 2008). The recovery that began after 2015 was then interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic: in the first half of 2020, the trend change for new dwellings was -13.6%, after +2.9% in the second half of 2019 (Source: Istat, *Survey of building permits*). For the trends over the last ten years, see the introductory chapter.

## Perception of degradation decreases in 2020 but concern for the landscape remains stable

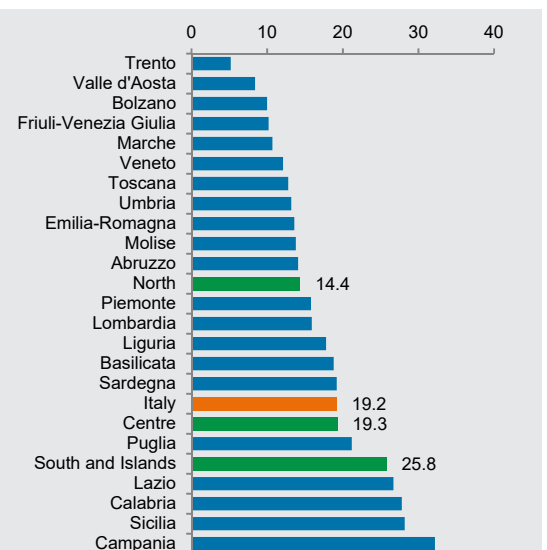
The proportion of people that are not satisfied with the quality of landscape of the place where they live (associated with the perception of degradation) shows a clear improvement in 2020, recording the lowest value since 2014 (19.2%, almost 2 points less than the previous year). The territorial differences follow the usual pattern: those who believe to live in places “affected by evident degradation” are fewer in the North (14.4%, almost unchanged from the previous year), close to the Italian average in the Centre (19.3%, down 2.6 points) and more numerous in South and Islands (25.8%). South and Islands record the most significant progress from the previous year (-4.5 points), but the indicator remains substantially stable in the medium term (Figure 11a). The regional variability is very wide, with a distance of 27 percentage points between the two extremes (5.2% of the province of Trento vs. 32.2% of Campania). Besides Campania, the highest percentages are found in Calabria, Sicilia, and Lazio – all above the average for South and Islands (Figure 11b). Differences associated with age or educational attainment are much smaller: the percentages are slightly lower among women (18.8%), the people with lower education (18.7%), and the elderly (17.8% for the age of 55 and over).

**Figure 11a. Dissatisfaction for the landscape of the place of living, by geographic area. Years 2014-2020 (a). Per 100 people of 14 years and over**



Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of Daily Life  
(a) Data 2020 provisional.

**Figure 11b. Dissatisfaction for the landscape of the place of living, by region and geographic area. Year 2020 (a). Per 100 people of 14 years and over**

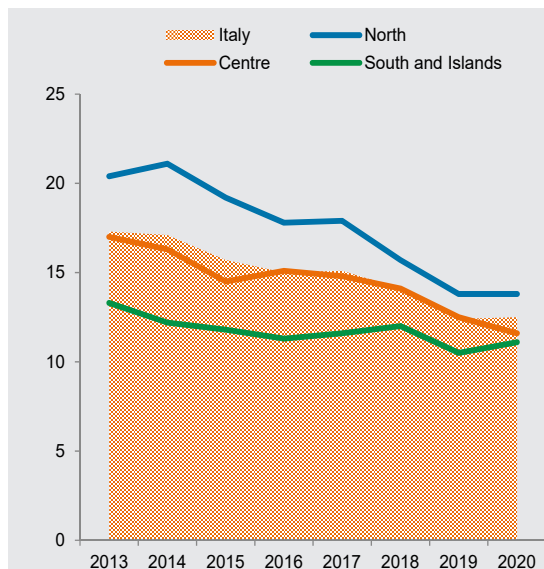


Finally, in 2020, we observe a stabilisation in the indicator of concern for landscape deterioration, standing at 12.5% after being steadily declining since 2013. This measure is associated with the social consideration for the value of landscape and the attention to its protection. In contrast to the dissatisfaction indicator, values are on average higher in the North (13.8%) and lower in South and Islands (11.1%), even showing a lesser and less polarized territorial variability (Figure 12b). The proportion of people expressing concern about the landscape does not vary significantly in any of the three geographic areas, among which the differences in level have considerably narrowed in recent years (Figure 12a).

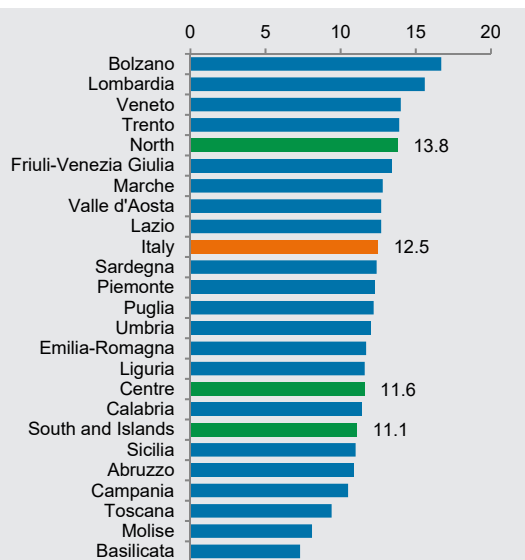
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Concern about the landscape is more prevalent among people with higher education, but also this gap has been gradually narrowing, while no significant differences are observed in relation to gender and age.

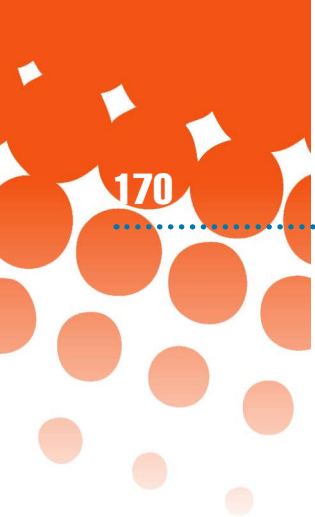
**Figure 12a. Concern for the deterioration of landscape, by geographic area. Years 2013-2020 (a). Per 100 people of 14 years and over**



**Figure 12b. Concern for the deterioration of landscape, by region and geographic area. Year 2020 (a). Per 100 people of 14 years and over**



Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of Daily Life  
 (a) Data 2020 provisional



### Indicators

- 1. Current expenditure of Municipalities for culture:** Current expenditure on protection and promotion of cultural properties and activities, in euro per capita.  
Source: Istat, Processing of data from Final balance sheets of municipal governments.
- 2. Density and importance of museums' heritage:** Number of permanent exhibition facilities per 100 sq.km (museums, archaeological sites and monuments open to public), weighted by the number of visitors. The weight for each facility is set at  $(V_i / V \times M)$ , where  $V_i$  is the number of visitors,  $M$  the total number of facilities and  $V$  the total of visitors.  
Source: Istat, Survey on museums and other similar institutions.
- 3. Illegal building rate:** Ratio of the number of unauthorised buildings to the number of building permits issued by the Municipalities.  
Source: Center for economic, social and market research for building and the territory (Cresme).
- 4. Erosion of farmland from urban sprawl:** Percentage ratio of rural areas affected by urban sprawl to the total of rural areas ("Rural areas affected by urban sprawl": rural areas with increasing population and decreasing agricultural land).  
Source: Istat, Processing on data from General census on agriculture, General census on population and housing, Census mapping.
- 5. Erosion of farmland from abandonment:** Percentage ratio of rural areas affected by abandonment to the total of rural areas ("Rural areas affected by abandonment": rural areas with decreasing population and decreasing agricultural land).  
Source: Istat, Processing of data from General census on agriculture, General census on population and housing, Census mapping.
- 6. Pressures of mining and quarrying activities:** Volume of non-energy mineral resources extracted, in cubic metres per km<sup>2</sup>.  
Source: Istat, Anthropic pressure and natural hazards (Mining and quarrying extraction activities).
- 7. Impact of forest fires:** Burnt forest area (wooded and non-wooded) per 1,000 sq.km.  
Source: Istat, Processing of data from the State forestry corps.
- 8. Spread of rural tourism facilities:** Number of farmhouses per 100 sq.km.  
Source: Istat, Survey on farmhouses.
- 9. Presence of historic parks/gardens and other urban parks recognised of significant public interest:** Percentage ratio of the area of parks and gardens classified as "historic" and/or "of a significant public interest" by the Legislative Decree no. 42/2004 to the built-up area of the provincial capital municipalities.  
Source: Istat, Processing on data from Survey on urban environment and Census mapping.
- 10. People that are not satisfied with the quality of landscape of the place where they live:** Proportion of regional population reporting that the landscape of the place where they live is affected by evident deterioration.  
Source: Istat, Survey on aspects of daily life.
- 11. Concern about landscape deterioration:** Proportion of regional population reporting, among the environmental problems for which they express more concern, the decay of landscape due to overbuilding.  
Source: Istat, Survey on aspects of daily life.

## Indicators by region and geographic area

REGIONS AND GEOGRAPHIC AREAS	Current expenditure of Municipalities for culture (a)	Density and importance of museums' heritage (b)	Illegal building rate (c)	Erosion of farmland from urban sprawl (d)	Erosion of farmland from abandonment (d)	Pressures of mining and quarrying activities (e)
	2018	2019	2019	2011	2011	2018
Piemonte	17.6	1.08	5.2	18.5	41.4	308
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	23.7	1.05	5.2	0.0	66.5	16
Liguria	27.2	1.10	9.6	31.8	57.4	211
Lombardia	22.7	1.62	5.9	24.0	31.0	541
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	50.2	1.01	3.6	0.0	28.4	177
<i>Bolzano/Bozen</i>	<i>59.8</i>	<i>0.96</i>	<i>....</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>31.3</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>Trento</i>	<i>40.7</i>	<i>1.06</i>	<i>....</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>24.9</i>	<i>212</i>
Veneto	21.3	2.00	6.8	56.9	23.1	323
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	37.7	1.41	3.6	7.0	54.2	333
Emilia-Romagna	33.1	1.15	5.8	27.0	42.6	252
Toscana	31.2	3.94	10.1	14.2	47.7	308
Umbria	18.4	0.65	16.1	8.3	50.0	473
Marche	22.7	0.81	16.1	14.7	38.8	167
Lazio	20.6	7.18	22.2	53.6	15.4	258
Abruzzo	8.9	0.14	31.2	16.3	43.1	194
Molise	7.6	0.14	31.2	6.9	74.4	419
Campania	4.5	3.61	57.4	29.6	34.2	169
Puglia	7.3	0.29	39.9	33.1	17.1	280
Basilicata	11.1	0.23	61.0	14.5	38.2	251
Calabria	8.2	0.28	61.0	22.0	54.3	78
Sicilia	9.3	0.97	58.2	16.9	29.5	158
Sardegna	27.9	0.37	27.2	6.5	27.1	129
North	25.3	1.36	5.9	24.3	37.5	321
Centre	24.0	3.91	17.5	25.1	37.0	294
South and Islands	8.9	0.79	45.2	18.8	34.2	183
<b>Italy</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>1.62</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>259</b>

(a) Euro per capita.

(b) Number of museums and similar structures per 100 sq.km, weighed by the number of visitors.

(c) Illegal buildings per 100 authorized buildings. Values of Piemonte and Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Umbria and Marche, Abruzzo and Molise, Basilicata and Calabria refer to the two regions as a whole.

(d) Percentage of regional territory.

(e) Cubic metres extracted per sq.km of regional territory. Data is provisional for Lazio, Calabria and Sicilia.

(f) Area covered by fires, values per 1,000 sq.km.

(g) Number of farms per 100 sq.km.

(h) Sq.m per 100 sq.m of built-up area.

(i) Per 100 persons aged 14 and over. Provisional data.

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Impact of forest fires (f)	Spread of rural tourism facilities (g)	Presence of historic parks/gardens and other urban parks recognised of significant public interest (h)	People that are not satisfied with the quality of landscape of the place where they live (i)	Concern about landscape deterioration (i)
2019	2019	2018	2020	2020
0.8	5.2	3.8	15.8	12.3
..	1.9	0.9	8.4	12.7
1.3	12.5	0.9	17.8	11.6
0.5	7.1	2.7	15.9	15.6
..	26.5	0.9	7.5	15.3
..	42.3	0.1	10.0	16.7
..	7.6	1.2	5.2	13.9
..	8.0	3.0	12.1	14.0
0.1	8.6	5.4	10.2	13.4
..	5.3	0.7	13.6	11.7
0.8	23.4	1.8	12.8	9.4
0.2	16.2	2.5	13.2	12.0
0.1	11.5	1.4	10.7	12.8
1.2	7.4	1.4	26.7	12.7
0.4	5.1	0.7	14.1	10.9
0.4	2.9	0.1	13.8	8.1
2.2	5.4	1.8	32.2	10.5
1.4	4.8	0.6	21.2	12.2
1.6	2.0	4.2	18.8	7.3
3.5	3.8	0.5	27.8	11.4
4.2	3.0	1.3	28.2	11.0
1.5	3.6	0.3	19.2	12.4
0.3	8.9	2.4	14.4	13.8
0.7	15.7	1.6	19.3	11.6
2.2	3.9	1.1	25.8	11.1
1.2	8.1	1.8	19.2	12.5