

Educational attainment and labour market outcomes: main indicators

In 2017, in Italy, it is estimated that 60.9% of 25-64 year olds have attained at least upper secondary education; a value distant from the European average (77.5%). In particular, the low share of tertiary graduates weighs on the difference: 18.7% in Italy and 31.4% in the EU.

From 2008 to 2017 the share of the population with at least the upper secondary diploma had a strong rise. More limited, compared to the European average, the growing share of the population with a tertiary degree.

The level of education for women is higher than for men: 63.0% attained at least upper secondary education (against 58.8% of men) and 21.5% tertiary education (against 15.8% of men). Furthermore, female education levels were increasing faster than male levels.

Unlike other European countries, in the last nine years in Italy, the percentage of foreigners with at least an upper secondary qualification reduced and at the same time the share of those with a tertiary qualification did not increase.

In 2017, the share of early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) is estimated at 14.0%; for the first time since 2008, the figure did not improve compared to the previous year. In Italy early school leaving is much more significant among foreigners than Italians (33.1% against 12.1%). Territorial differences in early school leavers were very strong - 18.5% in the South, 10.7% in the Centre, 11.3% in the North - and they did not show signs of shrinking.

In 2017, the share of 30-34 year olds with a tertiary education was 26.9% (39.9% the EU average). Despite an increase by 7.7 points from 2008 to 2017, Italy was the second last among the countries of the Union and did not succeed in reducing the gap with Europe.

Although the share of 30-34 year olds with a tertiary education was low among Italian citizens (30.1%), among foreigners it fell to 11.8 (the citizenship gap in the EU average was less than 5 points).

The share of 30-34 year olds with a tertiary education, already low in the North and in the Centre (30.0% and 29.9%), in the South reduced to 21.6%, with an increasing geographical gap. The gender gap was in favor of young women - over one graduated in three young girls compared to one in five young men.

In Italy, the employment rate increased of 19.1 points in the passage from the lower secondary educational attainment to the upper secondary one and of 9.7 points in the comparison between the latter and a tertiary educational attainment. The advantages in employment were greater precisely where the most critical issues were found, namely for women and in the South.

The share of young people with a medium and high level of education neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) declined sharply in the last three years (from 28.3% to 25.5% and from 26.4% to 21.4%, respectively); a minimum decrease in NEETs share among young people with at least the lower secondary school (from 23.9% to 23.4%).

In 2017 fewer than one out of three early leavers from education and training was in employment (31.5%), a stable share in the last three years after the drastic decline resulting from the crisis.

In 2017 the employment rate of young people who have completed education and training for not more than three years was estimated at 48.4% for upper secondary graduates (74.1% the European average) and at 62.7% for tertiary graduates (84.9% the EU average).

During the crisis, the employment prospects of young Italians at the end of the education and training pathways have worsened much more than for the European peers. However, in the last three years a more decisive recovery compared to the European average was registered.

For more details please refer to the Italian version

Contact person:

Raffaella Cascioli (racascio@istat.it)
phone +39 06 4673.2885
Istat – National Institute of Statistics
Via Cesare Balbo 16 – Rome 00184 Italy