

6. Politics and institutions¹

The domain assesses the main components of social capital relating to the political and institutional spheres.

The indicators updated to 2021 documented the slow and at times uncertain improvement in all the areas considered, which nevertheless remained characterised by major criticalities, on which the pandemic crisis had different effects.

A low level of trust in politics and democratic institutions emerged: throughout the last decade, the average rating for political parties, Parliament and the judicial system remained well below sufficiency. Slight progress was observed in 2018-2019, which also continued in the two years of the COVID-19 emergency but did not substantially change the picture described. Italy continued to make very slow progress in the direction of gender balance, but there are still too few women in decision-making bodies and at the top of institutions, both in absolute terms and in comparison with other European countries. This disparity is added to the severe penalisation women have suffered from the impact of the economic and social crisis triggered by the COVID-19 emergency. The positive trend toward greater gender balance in politics and institutions in Italy has also come to a halt in the last two years.

The low level of trust of Italian citizens concerns the institutions of political representation as well as one of the main guarantee institutions, namely the judicial system; this last fact should be read together with the excessive length of civil proceedings which in Italy is still much longer than in most European countries.

The situation in the country's penal institutions is also a structural problem, so serious that it has repeatedly attracted the attention and warnings of the European institutions since adequate detention conditions are essential for the protection of the health and well-being of prison population and prison staff, as well as for social reintegration and prevention of the radicalisation of crime. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, has impacted on a prison system that was already under great pressure, and the measures taken in the first phase of the emergency to reduce prisons crowding have mitigated this situation to a partial extent and with short-lived effects.

In the second year of the pandemic, trust in institutions continued to be very low

The degree of trust expressed by citizens aged 14 and over towards institutions of constitutional prominence remained insufficient in 2021, although it has improved slightly over the last three years.

The average rating was the lowest ever for political parties, which scored 3.3 on a scale of 0 to 10, and received an insufficient rating from four out of five citizens; the result was relatively better for the Italian Parliament - with an average of 4.6 and about two out of five citizens giving at least a sufficient rating - and for the judicial system, with an average rating of 4.8 and 44.3% of votes between 6 and 10.

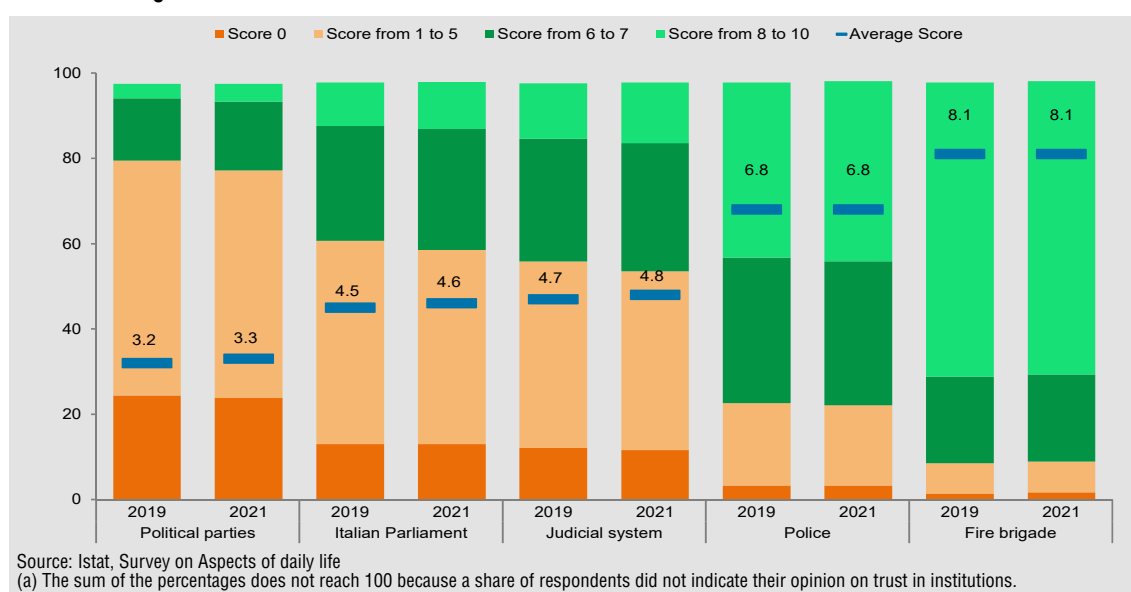
After the appreciable increase in 2019, in 2020 and 2021 the three indicators show further, but rather limited, improvements: both the shares of citizens assigning at least a sufficient

¹ This chapter was edited by Stefania Taralli, with contributions from: Miria Savioli, Lorena Di Donatantonio and Franco Turetta.

rating to political parties (it was 18.0% in 2019, it is 20.3% in 2021) and to the Italian Parliament (from 37.1% to 39.4%) grew by more than 2 percentage points; the share of votes equal or greater than 6 assigned to the judicial system increased by 2.5 percentage points (Figure 1).

The police and fire brigade - the two services that safeguard social order and citizens' safety - remained substantially stable in 2021, confirming traditionally higher levels, with an average mark of 6.8 for the former and 8.1 for the latter, and a score of 6 or higher assigned by the broad majority of citizens (76.0% in the case of the police and 89.2% for the fire brigade).

Figure 1. People aged 14 and over by score on trust in different institutions. Years 2019 and 2021 (a). Percentages and average score in tenths



The percentage of citizens assigning at least a score of 6 to political parties, the Italian Parliament and the judicial system is higher in the South and Islands, where, moreover, between 2019 and 2021 it grew more than in average for Italy. The difference between the South and the North in 2021 was 3 percentage points for the share of votes equal or greater than 6 assigned to Parliament (40.8% and 37.9% respectively) and 5 points for trust in the judicial system (47.5%; 42.3%).

In general, at the national level, the share of sufficient ratings for the latter two institutions has grown especially among women (+3.2 and +2.9 percentage points) and remains higher among the better educated. In 2021, 44.8% of citizens with a high educational qualification expressed this rating with regard to the Parliament (6 percentage points higher than in 2019) compared to 38.5% of those with at most a lower-secondary school qualification and 38.0% of those with at most an upper secondary school qualification; with regard to the judicial system, the share was 48.9% among the most educated and fell to just over 43.0% in the other cases.

On the other hand, trust in political parties has increased more and is higher among people with a low educational qualification and among younger people. In 2021, 21.9% of people with a low educational qualification expressed this orientation compared to around 19.0% of those with a medium or high educational qualification, and 23.2% of people in the 14-34 age group (19.3% among people aged over 54).

Slow progress towards gender equality in politics and top positions

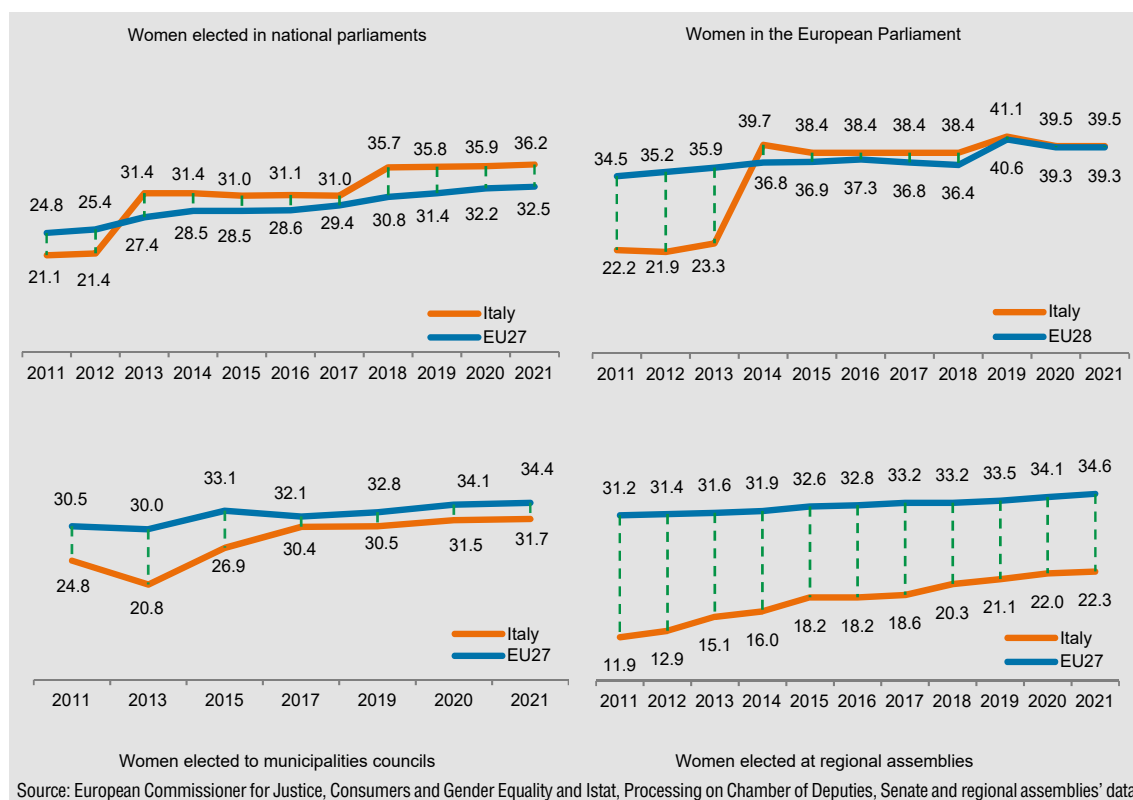
Gender equality is a key principle of the European pillar of social rights, reaffirmed by the European Commission's strategy for the five-year period 2020-2025². In the pre-pandemic years, Italy moved towards this goal at an increasingly slow pace, while since 2020 the impact of the economic and social crisis triggered by the health emergency has resulted in serious setbacks for women in many important areas, from work to health.

The presence of women in positions of political representation is still vastly insufficient. The gender gap is still very wide, but Italy's profile is no worse than the average of the EU countries (Figure 2).

In 2021, Italy's representation of women in the European Parliament (39.5%) remained in line with the average of the 27 countries, and that in the national Parliament (36.2%) remained higher (+3.7 percentage points); the share of women elected to municipal councils (31.7%) was slightly lower (-2.7 percentage points).

In this latter regard, however, it should be noted that less than one Italian municipality in six has a female mayor, and that among the 133 largest municipal administrations (with at least 50,000 inhabitants) there are currently only five women in the same position³.

Figure 2. Women elected in National Parliaments, European Parliament, Municipalities councils and Regional Assemblies in Italy and the Eu27. Years 2011-2021. Percentages



² See: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

³ Source: opendata of the Ministry of the Interior, Department for Internal and Territorial Affairs. Data updated to 9 February 2022.

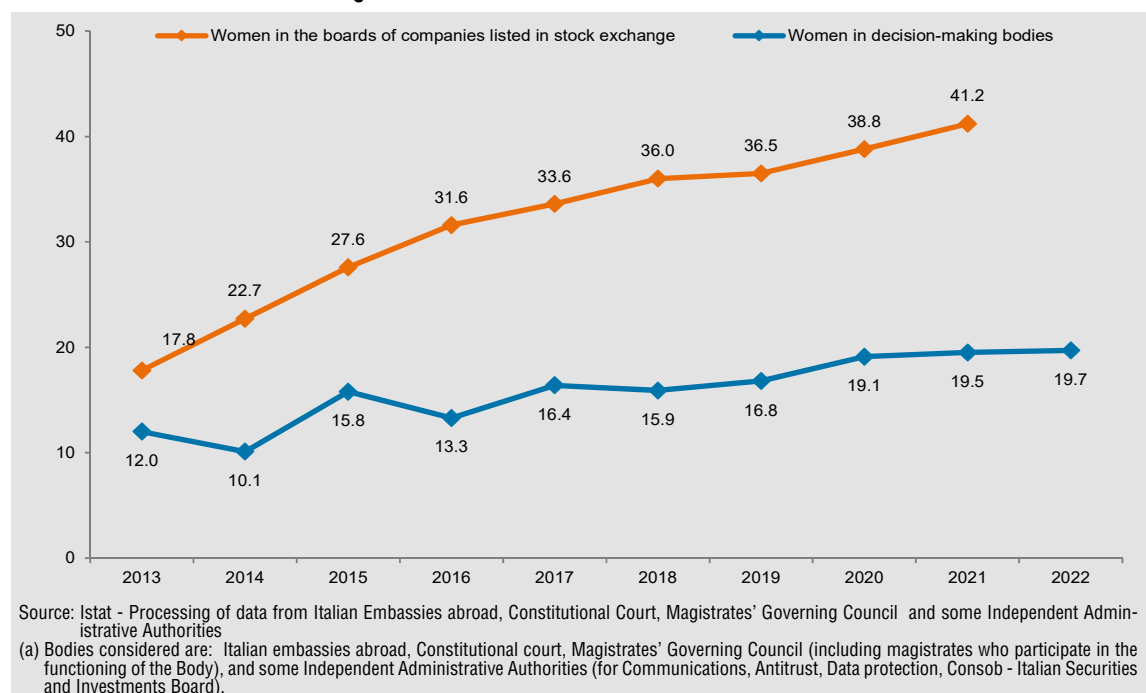
The trends described by the data, as is well known, are also due to the measures taken over the years to mitigate the gender gap in political representation and top management⁴. It is especially in regional politics that the presence of women still struggles to establish itself.

The elections for the renewal of the Calabria Regional Council - the first to be held in that region with the double-gender preference voting mechanism and with "gender quotas" in the electoral lists⁵ - saw a doubling of the percentage of elected women councillors, from 9.7% to 19.4%, a value that is still very low.

These were the only regional elections held in Italy in 2021; the progress made in Calabria, therefore, did not substantially change the national picture and even in the last year Italy, with 22.3% of women elected out of the total, remained more than 12 percentage points behind the European average (34.6%).

Moreover, there is only one woman among the 20 Presidents of Region currently in office⁶. On the other hand, the positive effects of the gender gap laws are particularly evident with regard to the presence of women in the boards of companies listed in stock exchange,

Figure 3. Women in the boards of companies listed in stock exchange and in decision-making bodies (a). Years 2013-2022. Percentages



4 The following have contributed: Law 215/2012 for the rebalancing of gender representation in the councils and boards of local authorities and in regional councils and on equal opportunities in the composition of competition commissions in public administrations; Presidential Decree No. 251 of 2012 on equal access to administrative and control bodies in companies controlled by public administrations; Law 65/2014 on elections to the European Parliament and Law 56/2014 for local governments and subsequent additions such as Law 20/2016 and Decree-Law 86/2020.

5 Regional Law No. 4/2010 of the Region of Calabria amended the previous Regional Electoral Law (No. 1/2005 and subsequent amendments and additions) by introducing the obligation, under penalty of inadmissibility of electoral lists, to have at least 40% of candidates of different gender and the possibility for the voter to express two preferences for councillor candidates within the chosen list as long as they correspond to candidates of different gender, under penalty of the annulment of only the second preference.

6 Source: opendata of the Ministry of the Interior, Department for Internal and Territorial Affairs. Data updated to 9 February 2022.

which, as a result of the most recent measures, exceeded 40.0% in 2021⁷, almost 10 percentage points higher than the average of the 27 EU countries (30.6%).

The picture is more critical, however, looking at the positions of top institutional representation, an area in which no equalisation mechanisms operate. Considering all the top positions held by women at the Constitutional Court, the Magistrates' Governing Council, Independent Administrative Authorities (for Communications, Antitrust, Data protection, Consob - Italian Securities and Investments Board), and the Italian Embassies abroad, women failed to reach 20.0% even in 2022. Again, the moderately increasing trend observed since 2012 seems to have come to a halt in the last year (Figure 3).

Civil trial times still too long

With regard to the administration of civil justice, the pandemic crisis impacted a context that had long been affected by severe criticalities, a repeatedly underlined by the European Commission itself, which also in its specific recommendations for Italy for 2020⁸ has invited Italy to take action to significantly increase the efficiency of the system. Improving the efficiency of the national judicial systems continues to be a priority of the European Semester; the target set in the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan, and pursued with the recent Italian law to reform the civil process⁹, is to reduce by more than 40% by 2026 the average disposition time¹⁰.

Between 2012 and 2021, the average effective length of civil proceedings was reduced, but insufficiently: for the proceedings that were clarified during the last year, an average of 14 months elapsed from the start of the trial to the sentencing, 2 months less than in 2012. During the Covid-19 emergency, the organisational and technological innovations that had already been introduced a few years ago, and which see Italy leading the European ranking of ICT use in judiciary¹¹, made it possible to keep the courts in operation and not fall back on the path of efficiency, thanks mainly to the strengthening of remote court activities and the telematic process¹².

The initial impact, with the general postponement of hearings in the first half of 2020, slowed down the disposition of pending cases and produced an increase in backlogs. The growth recorded by the monitoring of civil justice in the area of litigation, labour, family and voluntary jurisdiction (SICID) at the end of the third quarter of 2020 was +1.3%; however,

7 The 2020 Budget Law (No. 160/2019) amended the Golfo-Mosca Law (No. 120/2011) by increasing the female quota in the boards of companies listed in stock exchange to at least 40% and by increasing the maximum number of consecutive mandates from three to six.

8 Note 8.6.2020 [Council Recommendation on Italy's 2020 National Reform Programme and delivering a Council opinion on Italy's 2020 Stability Programme](#).

9 Law No. 206 of 26 November 2021, "Delegation to the Government for the efficiency of the civil process and for the revision of the discipline of alternative dispute resolution instruments and urgent measures for the rationalisation of proceedings in the area of personal and family rights as well as in the area of forced execution" is one of the binding reforms for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).

10 The "disposition time" indicator is the standard measure used for international comparisons by CEPEJ - European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice. It represents an approximation of the actual duration, as it estimates the minimum number of days needed to settle a case, calculating it as the ratio between the number of cases still pending at the end of the year and the number of cases settled during the year, multiplied by 365 (days) (see <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/>).

11 See: "The use of the information technologies in European courts". *CEPEJ Studies*, No. 24.

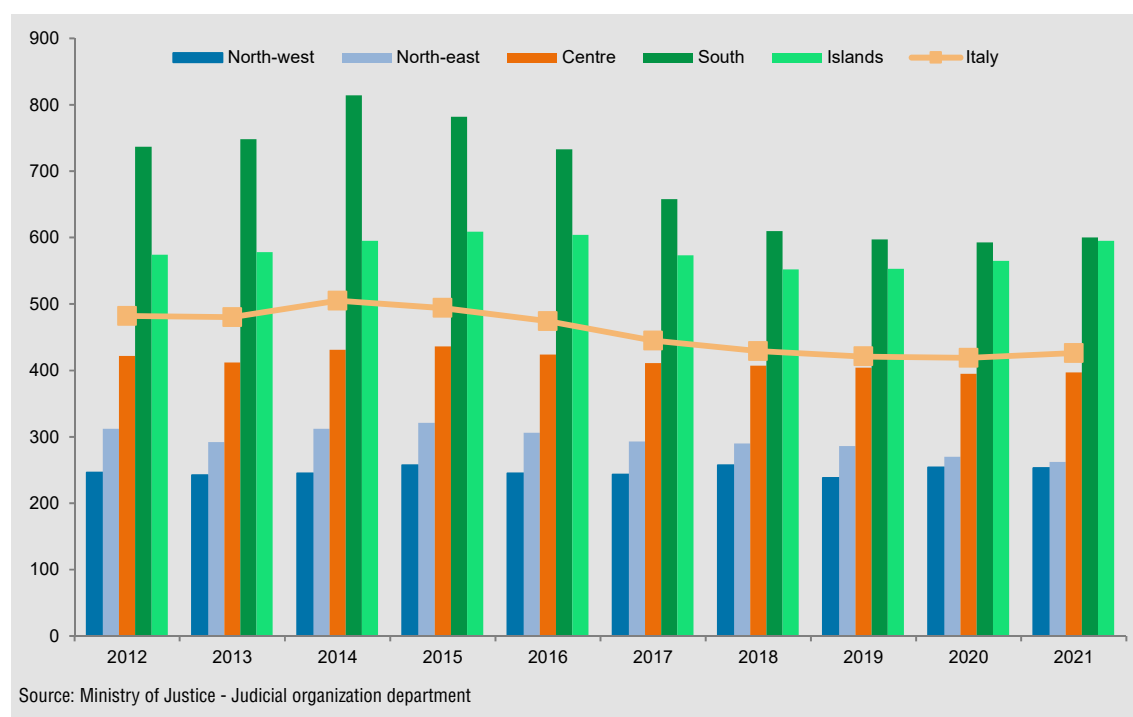
12 See the various rules and measures on the website of the Ministry of Justice https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_8.page?facetNode_1=0_62&selectedNode=4_10.

the figure had already largely recovered by the end of that year. Despite the initial difficulties, therefore, the constant downward trend over the last ten years in the number of pending cases has not been interrupted: 2020 closed with -0.7% compared to 2019, and for the third quarter of 2021, a further significant disposal of the backlogs (-4.9%) existing at the end of the previous year was estimated.

The average effective duration of proceedings, i.e. the time that it is usually necessary to wait from the date of start to the date of clearance, did not decrease to the same extent: for the proceedings finalised in 2019 it was 421 days; it decreased to 419 in 2020 (-0.5%) and rose again to 426 in 2021 (+1.7%). The levels of the indicator also reflect the clearance rates of the over three years pending cases. In 2020, the so-called “pathological civil backlog” increased, but in the first three quarters of 2021, the trend of disposing resumed. The national average figure continued to reflect important territorial differences, despite the clear and significant progress made by the South over the years (Figure 4). In 2021, the actual average length of civil proceedings in the South was 600 days, more than twice as long as in the North-West (253).

The differences among regions also remained considerable: they ranged from 157 days on average in Valle d'Aosta to 845 in Basilicata, where, however, there was a significant increase between 2019 and 2021 (+85 days). Among the most significant reductions over the same period are those of Emilia-Romagna, which falls to 266 days on average in 2021 (-34 days) and Toscana (341; 34 days).

Figure 4. Length of civil proceedings set up in ordinary courts by geographic area. Years 2012-2021. Effective average duration in days



Prison crowding worsened again in 2021

As of 31 December 2021, there were 54,134 adults detained in Italian penal institutions, 106.5 per 100 regulatory places. During 2021, the prison crowding index rose again, 1

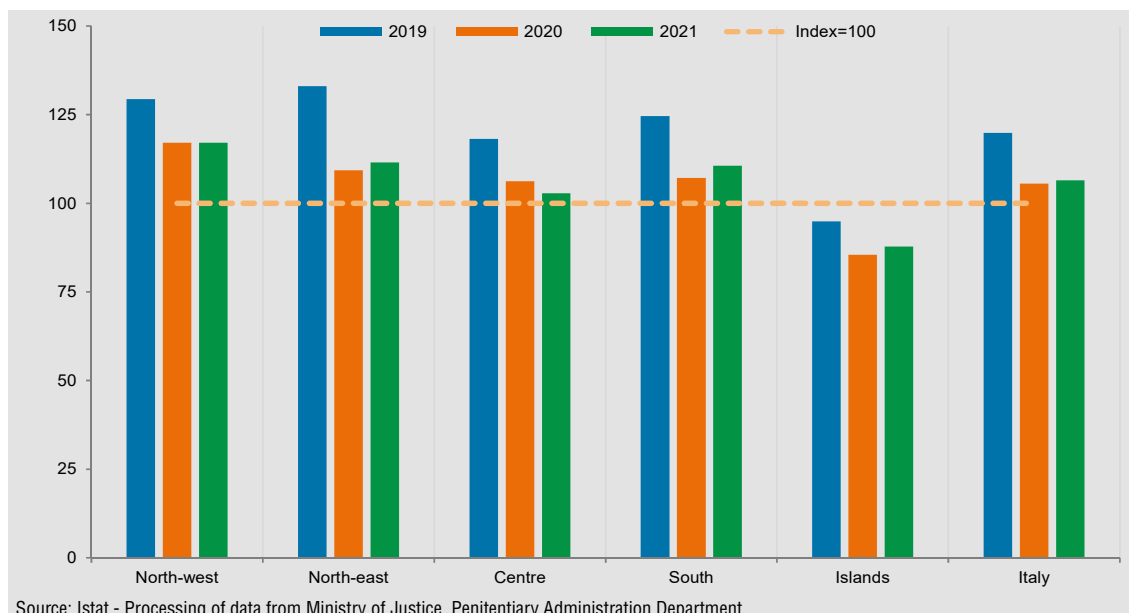
percentage point higher than in 2020. In that year the deflationary measures adopted by the Government¹³ in the first phase of the COVID-19 emergency and the drop in crimes and arrests during the lockdown had led to a significant reduction in the prison population (from 60,769 men and women at the end of 2019 to 53,364 at the end of 2020).

The resumption of the upward trend confirms the structural nature of the problem in Italy, although the value of the crowding index in 2021 remained well below the critical level reached in 2019 (119.9%). Before the COVID-19 emergency, according to the Council of Europe data, Italy ranked second-worst among the 27 EU countries after Cyprus (134.6%); at the end of 2020 its ranking had relatively improved, but still remained low¹⁴.

The situation continued to be most critical in prisons in the North-west (117.1%), the North-east (111.5%) and the South (110.6%), where, moreover, crowding increased by 3.5 percentage points in the last year (Figure 5).

The highest crowding rate was observed in Bolzano (133.0%), where, in the sole detention institution in the territory the ratio between admissions and regulatory capacity worsened by more than 20 percentage points in the last year. The critical points already observed for Puglia were confirmed, with a regional average of 129.3 and almost all the institutes in a condition of overcrowding; for Lombardia, with an average of 127.9 inmates per 100 places and all the prisons exceeding the threshold of 100%; for Friuli-Venezia Giulia (125.3) where only one institute was not overcrowded. In seven cases, the indicator remained below the critical threshold. These include: Trento (72.9), Sardegna (76.4) and Valle d'Aosta (78), the latter with an important improvement of the situation in the last year (-19 percentage points - Figure 6).

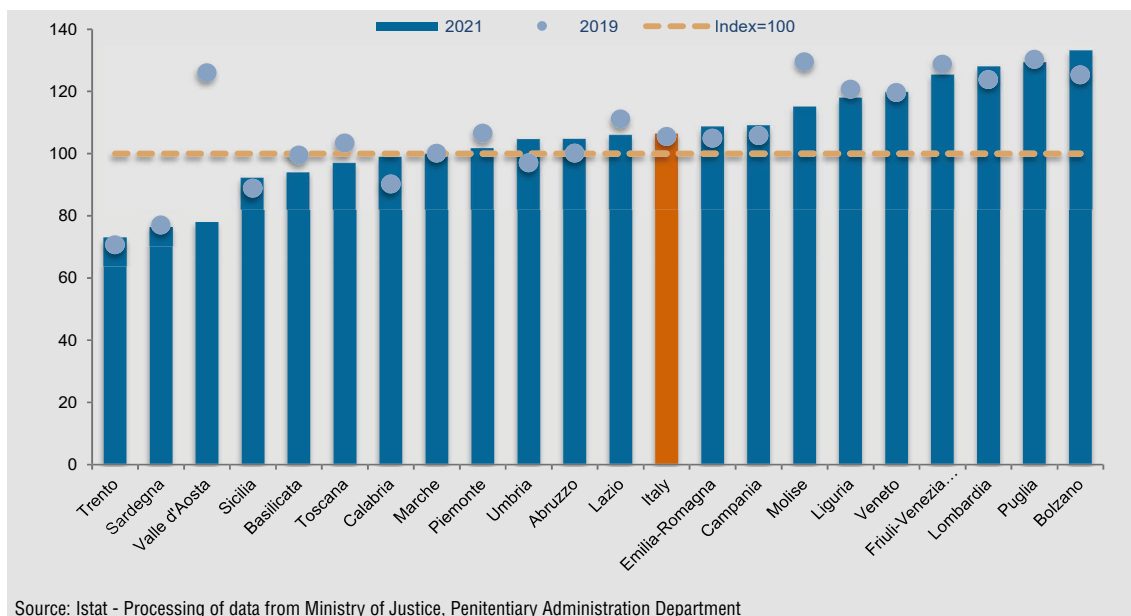
Figure 5. Prison density by geographic area. Years 2019-2021. Percentage on the total capacity of penal institutions



¹³ Decree-Law No. 18 of 17 March 2020, so-called. "Cura Italia", provided for the transfer to care and treatment facilities or directly to the home of prisoners with total or residual sentences of less than 18 months.

¹⁴ According to the provisional data available for the year 2020, Italy was sixth to last out of the 24 monitored countries. See: Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics <https://wp.unil.ch/space/space-i/prison-stock-on-1-january/prison-stock-on-1st-january-2020/>.

Figure 6. Prison density by region. Years 2019 and 2021. Percentage on the total capacity of penal institutions



Indicators

- 1. Voter turnout:** Percentage of eligible voter who cast a ballot in the last election for the European Parliament (excluding voting abroad).
Source: Ministry of the Interior.
- 2. Trust in the parliament:** Average score of trust in the Italian Parliament (on a scale from 0 to 10) expressed by people aged 14 and over.
Source: Istat - Survey on Aspects of daily life.
- 3. Trust in judicial system:** Average score of trust in the judicial system (on a scale from 0 to 10) expressed by people aged 14 and over.
Source: Istat - Survey on Aspects of daily life.
- 4. Trust in political parties:** Average score of trust in political parties (on a scale from 0 to 10) expressed by people aged 14 and over.
Source: Istat - Survey on Aspects of daily life.
- 5. Trust in police and fire brigade:** Average score of trust in the police and the fire brigade (on a scale from 0 to 10) expressed by people aged 14 and over.
Source: Istat - Survey on Aspects of daily life.
- 6. Women and political representation in national Parliament:** Percentage of women on total members of Parliament (excluding senators and deputies elected in foreign constituencies and senators for life).
Source: Istat - Processing of data from the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.
- 7. Women and political representation at regional level:** Percentage of women elected in regional councils on total number of elected people.
Source: Istat - Processing of data from Regional councils.
- 8. Women in decision-making bodies:** Percentage of women in position of high responsibility within the following bodies: Italian embassies abroad, Constitutional court, Magistrates' Governing Council (including magistrates who participate in the functioning of the Body), and some Independent Administrative Authorities (for Communications, Antitrust, Data protection, Consob - Italian Securities and Investments Board).
Source: Istat - Processing of data from Italian Embassies abroad, Constitutional Court, Magistrates' Governing Council and some Independent Administrative Authorities.
- 9. Women in the boards of companies listed in stock exchange:** Percentage of women in the board of companies listed in stock exchange.
Source: Consob.
- 10. Mean age of members of national Parliament:** Average age of members of national Parliament. Senators and deputies elected in foreign constituencies and senators for life are excluded.
Fonte: Istat, Elaborazione su dati della Camera dei Deputati e del Senato della Repubblica.
- 11. Length of civil proceedings:** Effective average duration in days of proceedings set up in ordinary courts.
Source: Istat - Processing of data from the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.
- 12. Prison density:** Percentage of prisoners in penal institutions on the total capacity of penal institutions.
Source: Istat - Processing of data from Ministry of Justice, Penitentiary Administration Department.

Indicators by region and geographic area

REGIONS GEOGRAPHIC AREAS	Voter turnout (a)	Trust in the Italian parliament (b)	Trust in judi- cial system (b)	Trust in polit- ical parties (b)	Trust in police and fire brigade (b)	Women and political rep- resentation in Parliament (c)
	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2018
Piemonte	64.7	4.6	4.8	3.4	7.6	35.3
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	51.9	4.1	4.6	2.9	7.5	50.0
Liguria	58.5	4.6	4.8	3.3	7.6	25.0
Lombardia	64.1	4.4	4.5	3.3	7.4	29.8
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	59.9	4.4	4.8	3.4	7.6	44.4
<i>Bolzano/Bozen</i>	<i>62.8</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>5.1</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>7.7</i>	<i>....</i>
<i>Trento</i>	<i>57.3</i>	<i>4.4</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>7.6</i>	<i>....</i>
Veneto	63.7	4.2	4.5	3.1	7.6	33.8
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	57.0	4.3	4.5	3.0	7.6	35.0
Emilia-Romagna	67.3	4.7	4.9	3.4	7.7	35.8
Toscana	65.8	4.7	4.7	3.4	7.5	33.3
Umbria	67.7	4.7	4.7	3.3	7.8	37.5
Marche	62.1	4.4	4.6	3.2	7.3	37.5
Lazio	53.3	4.6	4.8	3.2	7.4	40.2
Abruzzo	52.6	4.6	4.8	3.2	7.5	23.8
Molise	53.3	4.7	4.7	3.3	7.2	40.0
Campania	47.6	4.9	5.2	3.6	7.2	36.8
Puglia	49.8	4.7	5.0	3.6	7.2	41.3
Basilicata	47.3	4.6	4.9	3.2	7.1	15.4
Calabria	44.0	4.6	5.2	3.3	7.4	41.9
Sicilia	37.5	4.6	5.0	3.1	7.3	43.8
Sardegna	36.3	4.2	4.9	3.0	7.5	28.0
North	63.7	4.5	4.6	3.3	7.6	33.0
North-west	63.6	4.5	4.6	3.3	7.5	31.0
North-east	63.9	4.4	4.7	3.2	7.6	35.8
Centre	59.3	4.6	4.7	3.3	7.5	37.5
South and islands	44.7	4.7	5.1	3.4	7.3	37.4
South	48.3	4.8	5.1	3.5	7.3	36.4
Islands	37.2	4.5	5.0	3.1	7.4	39.8
Italy	56.1	4.6	4.8	3.3	7.5	35.4

(a) Per 100 eligible persons;

(b) Average trust on a 0-10 scale expressed by persons 14 and over;

(c) Per 100 elected persons;

(d) Percentage of women in the total membership;

(e) Excluding senators and deputies elected in foreign constituencies and senators for life;

(f) Duration in days;

(g) Number of prisoners per 100 available places as defined by the regulatory capacity.

6. Politics and institutions

Women and political representation at regional level (c)	Women in decision-making bodies (d)	Women in the boards of companies listed in stock exchange (d)	Mean age of members of Parliament (e)	Length of civil proceedings (f)	Prison density (g)
2020	2020	2020	2018	2021	2021
15.7	47.8	213	101.9
11.4	42.0	157	78.0
19.4	47.3	258	117.9
24.7	48.6	271	127.9
25.7	48.2	192	83.5
25.7	189	133.0
25.7	194	72.9
35.3	47.9	297	119.7
14.3	51.0	191	125.3
32.0	49.0	266	108.8
35.0	47.7	341	97.1
38.1	46.3	461	104.7
29.0	45.6	339	100.0
31.4	49.5	424	106.1
16.1	46.5	350	104.8
28.6	46.6	501	115.1
15.7	47.7	590	109.2
13.7	44.5	596	129.3
4.8	47.9	845	94.2
19.4	45.3	734	99.1
21.4	44.8	611	92.4
13.3	49.9	530	76.4
23.2	48.4	256	115.2
19.4	48.2	253	117.1
26.8	48.7	262	111.5
32.9	48.2	397	102.8
16.7	46.2	598	101.7
16.0	46.3	600	110.6
17.7	46.1	595	87.8
22.3	19.7	41.2	47.6	426	106.5

