

Use of Italian language, dialects and foreign languages

Years 2015

In 2015, 45.9% of people aged six years and over (about 26 million and 300 thousand individuals) used to speak more frequently in Italian at home, 32.2% used to speak both Italian and dialect. Only 14% (8 million 69 thousand people) used, instead, predominantly dialect. 6.9% is used to speak another language (approximately 4 million individuals, in 2006 there were around 2 million 800 thousand individuals).

The spread of languages different from Italian and dialect in the family context recorded a significant increase, especially among people of 25-34 year-olds (from 3.7% in 2000, to 8.4% in 2006, to 12.1% % of 2015).

At every age the exclusive use of dialect decreases, even among the oldest, among whom it continues to be a usual practice: in 2015, 32% of people aged 75 and over spoke exclusively or prevalently the dialect in the family (the same percentage was 37.1% in 2006).

The prevalent use of dialect in their family and with friends was more common among people with low educational levels, even at the same age. 24.8% of those who carried out at most the middle school (or lower) do speak almost exclusively the dialect in the family and 33.7% with the friends (against respectively 3.1% and 2.7% of those who hold the degree or a higher degree).

In 2015, 90.4% of people aged 6 years and over was Italian mother tongue. Compared to 2006, the estimate of those who declared a foreign mother tongue increased (from 4.1% to 9.6% in 2015).

The areas of the country where the incidence of foreign residents was highest were more featured by the presence of foreign mother tongue people: the North-East (15.2%) and the North-West (11.5%) areas and the municipalities of metropolitan areas (11.6%).

In 2015 the knowledge of one or more foreign languages concerned 60.1% of the population aged 6 years and over (34 million 370 thousand people), an increase compared to 56.9% of 2006.

92.3% of foreign mother tongue people knew one or more foreign languages, compared to 56.6% of Italian mother tongue people. Italian was the most spoken foreign language among foreign mother tongue people, English among Italian mother tongue people.

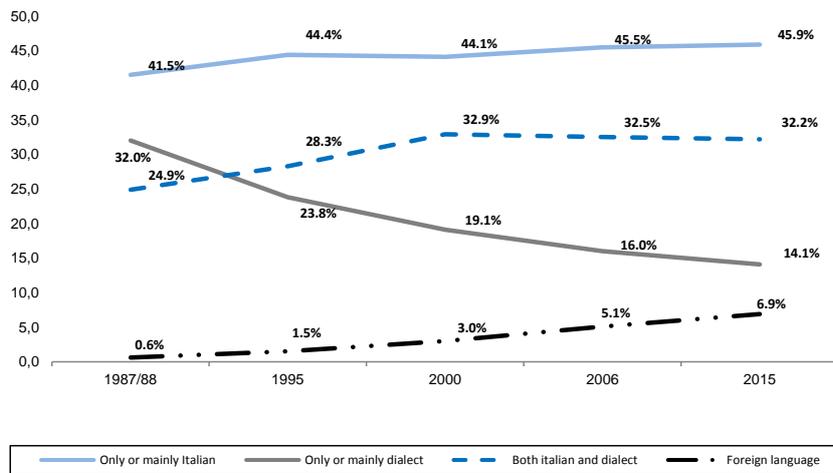
Especially young people and the adults up to 34 years old knew foreign languages (with estimates equal to about 80%). The knowledge of foreign languages was more widespread in the North-West (66.2%) and in the North-East (65.7%) than in the South (50.6%) and the Islands areas (51.5%).

Among the graduates aged 25-44, it is estimated that 96.1% knew one or more foreign languages, compared to 55.7% of the people who hold at most the middle school degree (or lower). The share remained very high even among graduates aged 65 and over (87.6%).

Among people who knew one or more foreign languages, 48.1% knew English, 29.5% French and 11.1% Spanish.

The level of foreign languages knowledge was still quite modest, even if a slight improvement was recorded compared to 2006. Among people who knew English, 7.2% declared an excellent level and 27% a good level of knowledge (compared to 23.6% of 2006). However, there was still a significant share of people who reported low level of knowledge (28%, compared to 30% of 2006).

FIGURE 1. PEOPLE AGED 6 YEARS AND OVER BY LANGUAGE HABITUALLY USED IN FAMILY. Years 1987/88, 1995, 2000, 2006 and 2015 (for 100 people aged 6 and over)



For more details please refer to the Italian version

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