

6. Politics and institutions¹

The latest data records either an improvement or a stable situation for the domain indicators; the only substantial exceptions are represented by prison density and average length of civil proceedings.

In 2023, we observe a slight growth in the average level of trust in the Parliament and in political parties, and (more moderate) in trust in the judicial system (Table 1). Average scores are still well below satisfactory, especially for parties, which remain at 3.5 points on a scale from 0 to 10. Trust score in police and fire brigade is more than twice higher than that in parties (7.4); it remains consistent in the last year, although it records a negligible drop compared to 2019.

Despite the increase made in the last year and over the past five-years, the gender composition in local politics, as well as in decision-making bodies, continues to be largely unbalanced in favour of men, whereas the presence of women in the Italian Parliament (33.7%) had a significant shrinkage with the renewal of the 2022 legislature; this change marked a considerable rise in the mean age of Parliament members (51.4 years). Instead, the gender balance in the boards of companies listed in stock exchange, finds a consolidation, also due to the rules and regulations introduced from 2011 onwards².

Table 1. Politics and institutions indicators: value for the latest available year and percentage changes compared to the previous year and 2019

INDICATORS	Year	Value	Unit of measurement	Polarity	Percentage changes	
					compared with previous year	compared with 2019
Voter turnout	2019	56.1	%	+		
Trust in the parliament	2023	4.8	Mean score	+		
Trust in judicial system	2023	4.9	Mean score	+		
Trust in political parties	2023	3.5	Mean score	+		
Trust in police and fire brigade	2023	7.4	Mean score	+		
Women and political representation in national Parliament (a)	2022	33.7	%	+		
Women and political representation at regional level	2023	23.1	%	+		
Women in decision-making bodies	2024	21.3	%	+		
Women in the boards of companies listed in stock exchange	2023	43.1	%	+		
Mean age of members of national Parliament (a)	2022	51.4	Mean age	-		
Length of civil proceedings	2023	460	Number of days	-		
Prison density	2023	117.6	%	-		

Source: Istat, Bes Indicators
 Note: The green colour indicates improvement, red worsening and grey stability, taking into account the polarity of the indicator. The indicators have positive polarity if the increase in their value shows an improvement in well-being, negative polarity if the increase in their value shows a deterioration in well-being. For variations within $\pm 1\%$ the indicators are considered stable in the reference period. Voter turnout indicator is not represented in the table, as no comparisons are available for the reference period.
 (a) Data referring to the years 2018 and 2022.

In 2023, the effective average duration of proceedings set up in ordinary courts keeps growing. The indicator, which also reflects the different backlog disposal strategies and the seniority of the proceedings finalised during the year, reaches 460 days compared to the 433 days of the previous year (+5.9%) and the 421 days of 2019 (+9.3%).

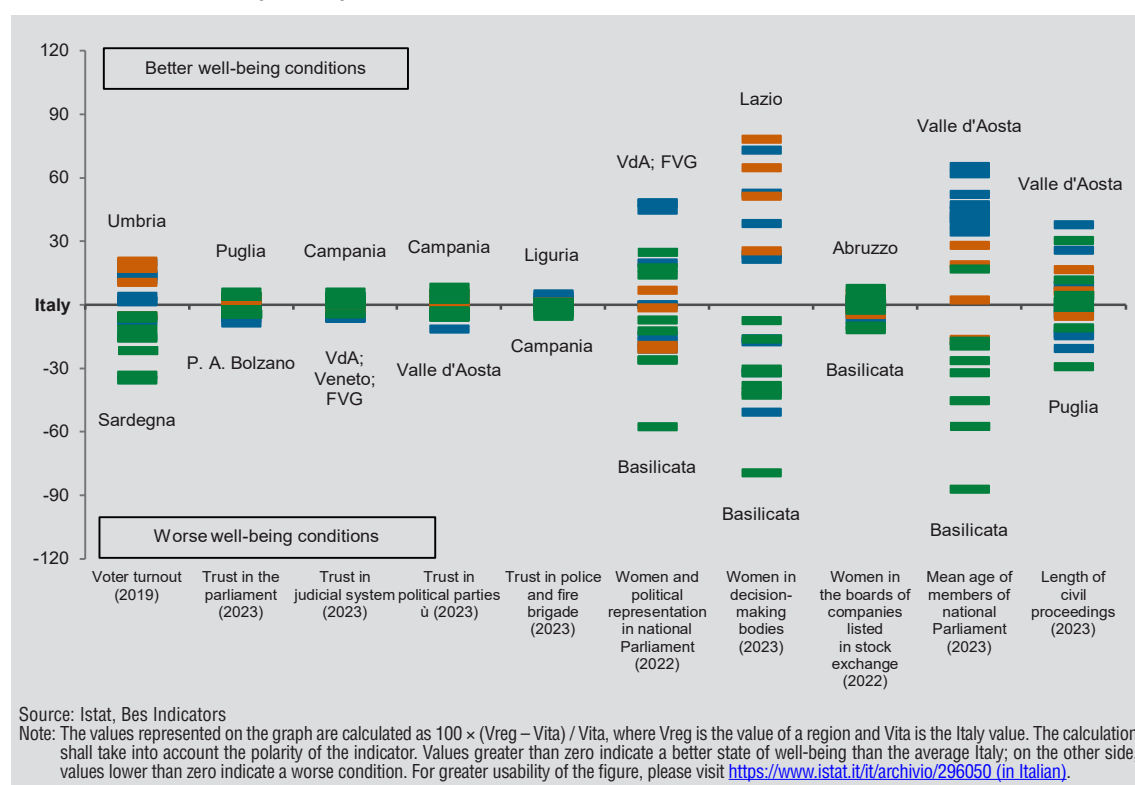
¹ This Chapter was edited by Stefania Taralli, with contributions from Francesca Dota and Franco Turetta. Rita De Carli, Francesca Dota, Stefania Taralli and Alessandra Tinto collaborated in the implementation of the box “The sentiment of democracy”.

² Law No. 120/2011 (Golfo-Mosca); Law No. 160/2019 (2020 Budget Law).

The prison density index is also rising: as at 31 December 2023, it reaches 117.6 prisoners every 100 regulatory places (8 percentage points more in the last year), merely 2.3 percentage points below the critical level of 2019 (119.9%).

At the regional level, moderate differences arise for some indicators (Figure 1). Trust-related indicators vary within narrow ranges around the value for Italy, without ever reaching a score of 6: trust in Parliament varies between the minimum of Bolzano, where the average score is 4.4 on a scale from 0 to 10, and the maximum of Puglia (5.1). Trust in political parties fluctuates between the 3.1 of Valle d'Aosta and the 3.8 of Campania. Trust in the judicial system is at the top in Campania (5.2) and at the bottom in Valle d'Aosta, Veneto and Friuli Venezia-Giulia (4.6 in all three regions). Campania, instead, records the lowest level of trust in police and fire brigade (7.0), an indicator which in 2023 reaches the maximum peak in Liguria (7.8) and which, overall, shows the narrowest regional differences, with only three regions lower than the national average (Basilicata and Calabria in addition to Campania).

Figure 1. Politics and institutions indicators: percentage differences between regional values and the Italian value.
Latest available year. Italy=0



All indicators of institutional trust generally place Northern regions on lower levels than the national average, whereas Central regions levels are either similar or higher. The picture in the South and Islands is instead more complex, with regions in better positions than the Italy value for some indicators and other in worse positions. A certain variability is depicted by voter turnout in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections: the result of Umbria, with over two voters out of three eligible voters (67.7%), exceeds by more than 20% the Italian average (56.1%), and that of Sardinia, with just one voter out of three eligible voters (36.3%), is more than a third lower.

The widest range of percentage variations around the national figure is recorded by the indicator on women's political representation at regional level. In Lazio, this measure is at the highest level, with 41.2 women every 100 people elected in the regional Council (+78% over the Italy-average) and falls to 4.8% in Basilicata (-79%). A clear contrast (albeit with a few exceptions) emerges in this case between the regions of the Centre-North, which are in better conditions, and those of South and Islands, positioned at the bottom, even though they are not always in worse conditions than the average.

Wide differences among regions arise regarding the average length of civil proceedings, ranging from 860 days in Basilicata, almost double the Italy-average (+87%), to 159 days in Valle d'Aosta, about a third of the national average (-65%). This indicator reveals a very pronounced territorial gradient: all the regions of the Centre-North fall below the national average, with the exception of Umbria, which is approaching to it (449 days), and Lazio, which exceeds it by far (535). In all the Southern regions, instead, the length of civil proceedings is higher than the value for Italy, except for Abruzzo (381 days).

The regional measures of prison density summarise very different situations that vary even to a large extent between one penitentiary institution and the other. In this case, regions fluctuate – regardless of the macro-area where the prison is located – within a range of about a third above or below the national average, with the mildest situation recorded in Valle d'Aosta, where in 2023 we have 72.9 prisoners every 100 regulatory places, and the worst in Puglia, where the indicator climbs to 151.8.

Voter participation in Italy drops slightly, but is still in line with the European average

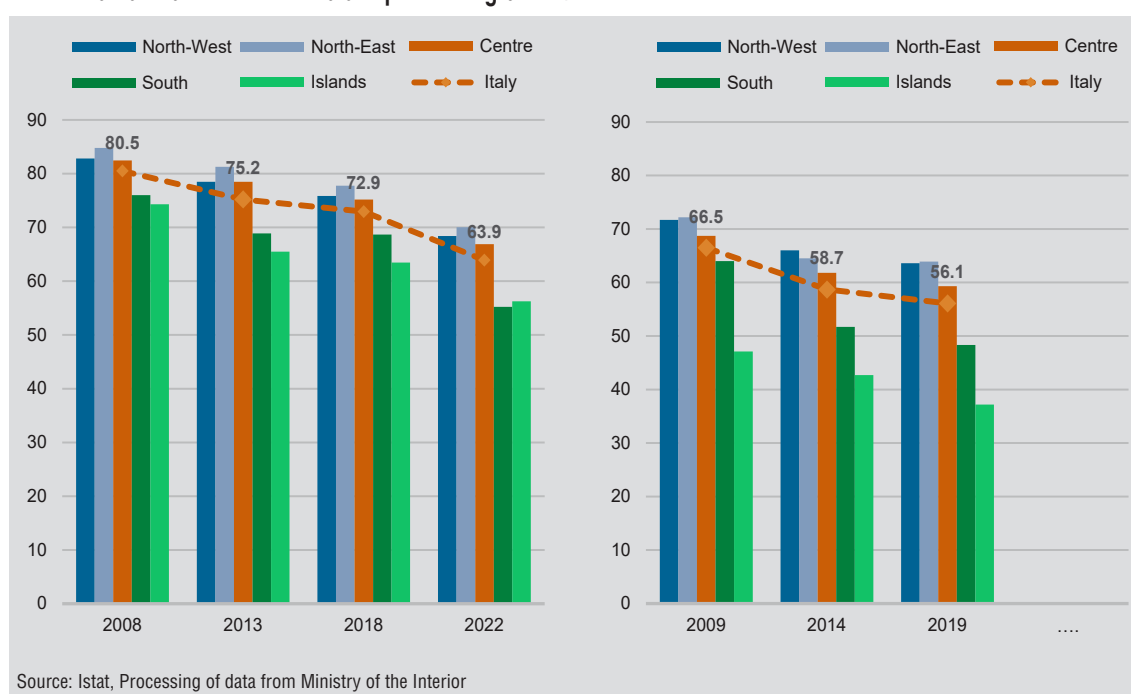
In 2022 political elections³ the voter turnout (i.e. the percentage of voters out of total eligible voters) in Italy dropped to 63.9%, 9 percentage points less than the March 2018 elections for the Chamber of Deputies⁴. The level is even lower in the South (55.2%), which recorded over 13 percentage points less. The collapse between the last two parliamentary elections follows a long downward trend that started in the 1980s and intensified from 2008 onwards. Between this last election and the 2022 vote, the overall decline amounted to 16.6 percentage points, with a more significant regression in the South (-21 percentage points) and in the Islands (-18 percentage points) and a considerable widening of the gap with the Centre-North. Between 2008 and 2022, the gap between South and Islands and the North-East, which is the area with the highest levels of voter participation (70.0% in 2022), went from 10 to 15 percentage points (Figure 2).

³ In the Bes framework, voter participation is monitored in relation to elections for the European Parliament, which will be renewed in June this year. To provide an update, we accordingly propose a broader analysis.

⁴ Data related to the number of electors and voters in the political elections for the Chamber of Deputies, years 2018 and 2022. Source: 2018 Italian Statistical Yearbook and open data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (<https://elections.interno.gov.it/>). Until 2018, the pool of eligible voters differed between Chamber of Deputies and Senate. The Constitutional Law No. 1 of 18 October 2021, "Amendment to Article 58 of the Constitution, regarding the electorate for the Senate of the Republic", has reduced the age limit for Senate voters from 25 to 18, aligning to each other the active electorates of the two branches of Parliament.

The drop is even sharper in the voter turnout for the European Parliament, which was already at its lowest levels to begin with. In the last three elections, between 2009 and 2019, the share of voters who casted a ballot (out of total eligible voters) declined from 66.5% to 56.1%, down more than 10 percentage points compared to the -7.6 points recorded for national elections between 2008 and 2018 (Chamber of Deputies). The territorial gap, already more pronounced than that for voter turnout in the national parliamentary elections, widens considerably. In particular, the gap between North-East and South doubles (from 8.2 to 15.6 percentage points), whereas that with the Islands was and remains very wide (it was 25.1 percentage points in 2009, and is 26.7 in 2019), with no important differences between Sicily and Sardinia.

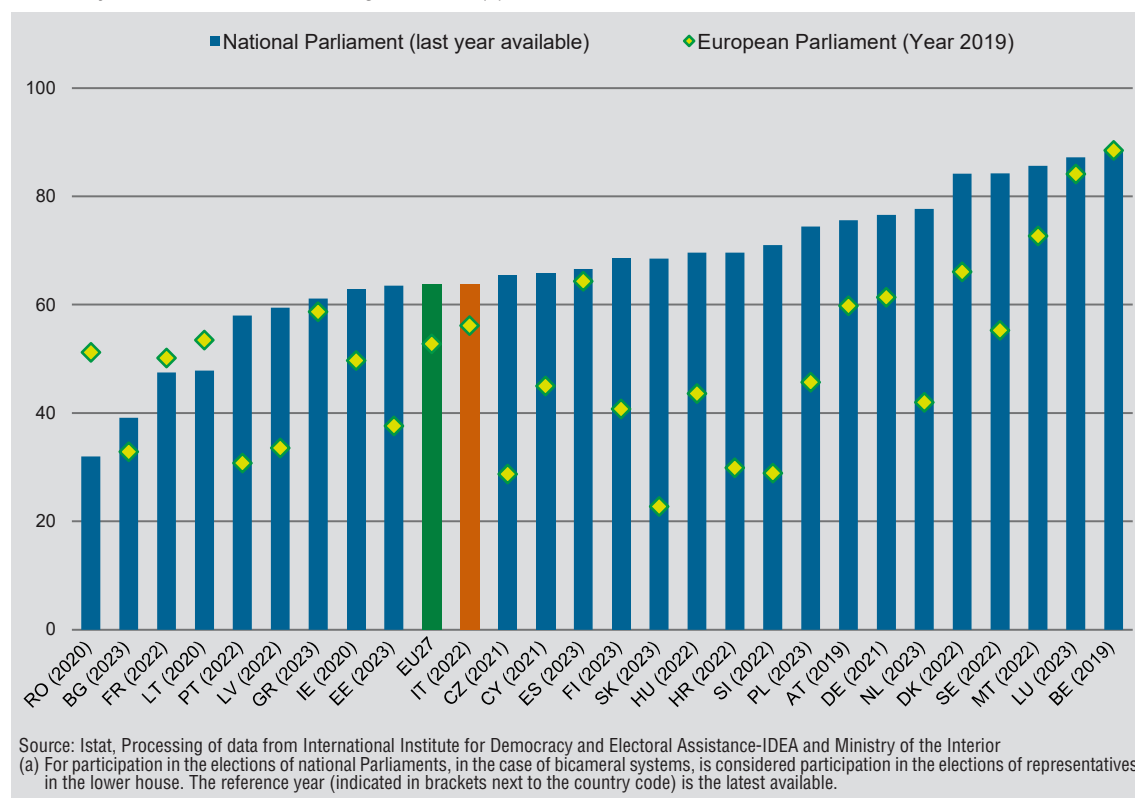
Figure 2. Voters in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies (left) and to the European Parliament (right) by geographic area. Years 2008-2022. Values per 100 eligible voters



Voter turnout in Italy are similar to those recorded on average for the 27 European countries with regard both to the last elections for the renewal of national parliaments (63.7%) and to the elections for the European parliament (52.8%) (Figure 3). Out of the 27 countries, Italy ranks eighteenth in the former case and ninth in the latter. From this viewpoint, considering the countries that, together with Italy, joined the European Union from the outset⁵, in 2019 only France and the Netherlands recorded a lower voter participation than Italy (50.1% and 41.9% respectively). For France, voter turnout in European elections is very similar to that recorded for the national parliament elections, which had failed to reach 50% both in 2017 and in 2023. Belgium and Luxembourg historically show much higher levels, ranging between 84.0% and 88.5% for both national and European parliaments.

⁵ Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, countries adhering to the Treaty of Rome, have been part of the European Union since 1 January 1958.

Figure 3. Voters in national parliamentary and European parliamentary elections by country. Latest available year and year 2019. Values per 100 eligible voters (a)



Low presence of women in local politics

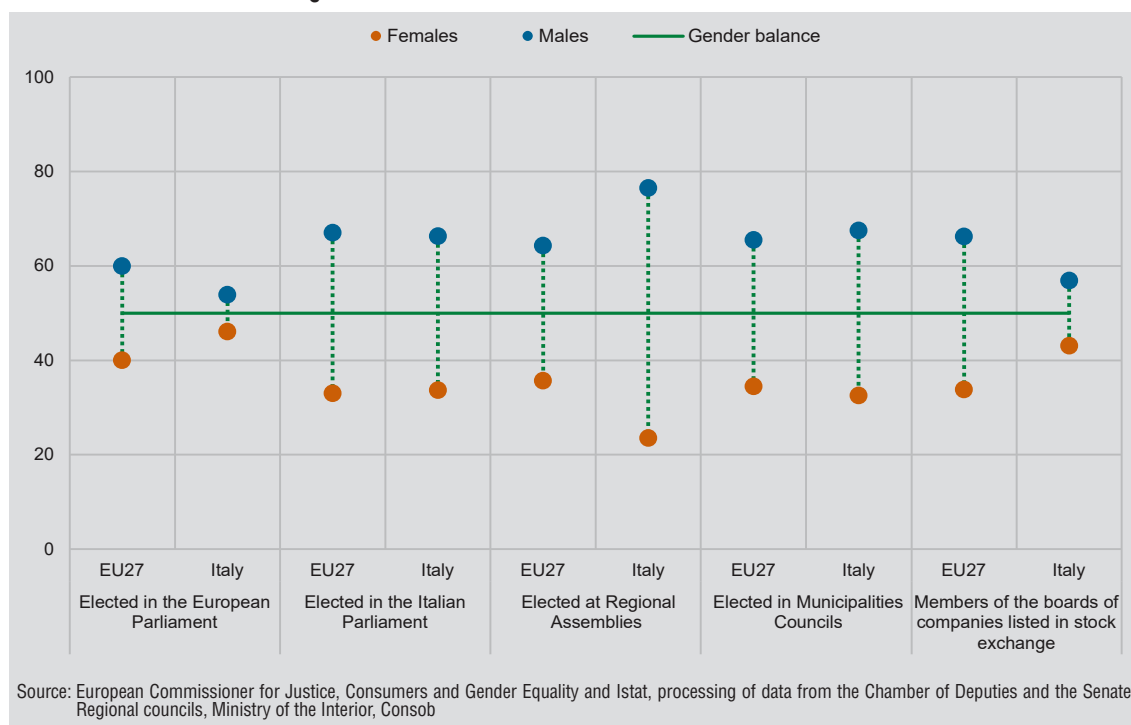
All the indicators relating to the presence of women in positions of political representation and in the top positions of institutions report a reduced gap with men in the long-term⁶, albeit with results that are still quite far from the gender balance zone (i.e. shares equal to at least 40% of women or men) (Figure 4).

In this sense, we can observe more balanced gender compositions in the Italian representation within the European Parliament, where, in 2023, following the changes in the position of European deputy⁷, women account for 46.1% (they were 41.8% in 2022), and in the boards of large-size companies listed in the Stock Exchange, where, for Italy, equal access is enforced by legislation, and where, in 2023, women are 43.1%. Compared to the average of 27 European countries, both the aforementioned indicators denote markedly a better situation for Italy. In particular, in the European Union, in 2023 the presence of women in the boards of large-size companies listed in the Stock Exchange halts at 33.8%, recording a gender gap of 32.4 percentage points, more than double that of Italy (13.8 percentage points).

⁶ In the Bes framework, indicators are available in historical series of varying lengths. In particular, “Women in the boards of directors of companies listed in the stock exchange” is available since 2004, “Women in decision-making bodies” since 2013, “Women and political representation in national parliament” since 2008, and “Women and political representation at regional level” since 2012.

⁷ According to Article 7 of the 1976 Electoral Law as subsequently amended and supplemented, the mandate of Member of the European Parliament is incompatible, among other offices, with that of Member of the National Parliament.

Figure 4. Gender balance indicators in politics and decision-making bodies in Italy and in the European Union. Year 2023. Percentage values



On the other hand, women are still poorly represented in National Parliaments. Compared to the European average (33.0%), the composition of the Italian Parliament appears to be slightly more balanced, despite the decline recorded in the 19th Legislature, when the share of elected women dropped to 33.7% (from 35.4% in 2018). In 2023, Italy ranks eleventh among European countries. The top positions are occupied by Sweden and Finland (46.6% and 46.0% respectively), followed by Denmark, Spain, Belgium and Austria, all boasting a share above 40%. Even in Holland, France, Portugal and Germany the indicator is at higher levels than in our country (respectively: 39.0%, 37.3%, 36.1% and 35.4%)⁸.

Above all, Italy lies far behind Europe concerning the presence of women in local politics, particularly for the share of women elected in Regional Councils that is standing still at a critical level, both due to the magnitude of the gap with men and to the significant distance from the EU27 average. In 2023, despite the vote for the renewal of Regional Councils in Lombardia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Molise and the Councils of the Autonomous Provinces of Bolzano and Trento, the Italian indicator stands at 23.5%, gaining slightly more than one percentage point over 2022 (it was 22.3%) and still 2.0 percentage points below the average of the European Union countries (35.7%). Italy ranks therefore thirteenth out of the 19 European countries for which data are available, preceded, among others, by Germany (34.6%), Spain (47.0%) and France (48.5%). Furthermore, in Italy the number of women among the 20 acting Presidents of Regions and Autonomous Provinces as at 31 December 2023 is still fix at one⁹.

⁸ Source: Eige-European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Statistics Database, consulted on 4 March 2023.

⁹ Source: Register of Local and Regional Administrators of the Ministry of the Interior, Department for Internal Regional Affairs.

The presence of women in Italian Municipal Councils (32.5% in 2023) is closer to the European average (34.5 showing a gender gap that was and is still wide (35 percentage points in 2023). Italy is in tenth position out of 27 countries; the first three countries by share of women elected in Municipal Councils (or corresponding institutions) are Sweden (43.1), France (42.1) and Spain (40.9). In this last-mentioned country, one in four Mayors, in 2023, is a woman, and in France one in five. In Italy, as at 31 December 2023, woman Mayors are one in six (15.3%)¹⁰.

The most extensive female disadvantage continues to be recorded by the indicator relating to the share of women in high-positions in the Constitutional Court, Italian embassies abroad, Magistrates' Governing Council, and some Independent Administrative Authorities: in all of these contexts the selection of top positions is not regulated by gender-balance rules and men are still the majority. The indicator settles at 21.3% in 2024¹¹ (it was 21.0% in 2023).

Trust in political institutions is still far below sufficiency

In 2023, the rate of trust expressed by citizens aged 14 and over in political and judicial institutions continues to be low, with at least one every two citizens allocating an insufficient score (maximum 5 on a scale from 0 to 10).

In particular, there is a more widespread attitude of distrust towards political parties, which attract the lowest average score of them all, 3.5 (albeit slightly on the rise from the 3.3 recorded in 2022), and insufficient scores allocated by at least 7 out of 10 citizens. The attitude towards the Italian Parliament and the judicial system is characterised by relatively higher levels of trust, though they still lie below sufficiency. The average score is 4.8 for Parliament (it was 4.5 in 2022) and 4.9 for the judicial system (from 4.8 in 2022), with less than half of people aged 14 and over allocating sufficient scores (amounting to 43.1% in the former case and 46.0% in the latter).

In 2023 the share of people who allocate at least a sufficient score of trust in political parties rises by approximately 2 percentage points (from 20.9% in 2022 to 23.2% in 2023) and by over 4 points for the Italian Parliament (from 38.7% in 2022 to 43.1% in 2023). For the latter institution, the most significant increase concerns scores between 8 and 10 (+2.4 percentage points).

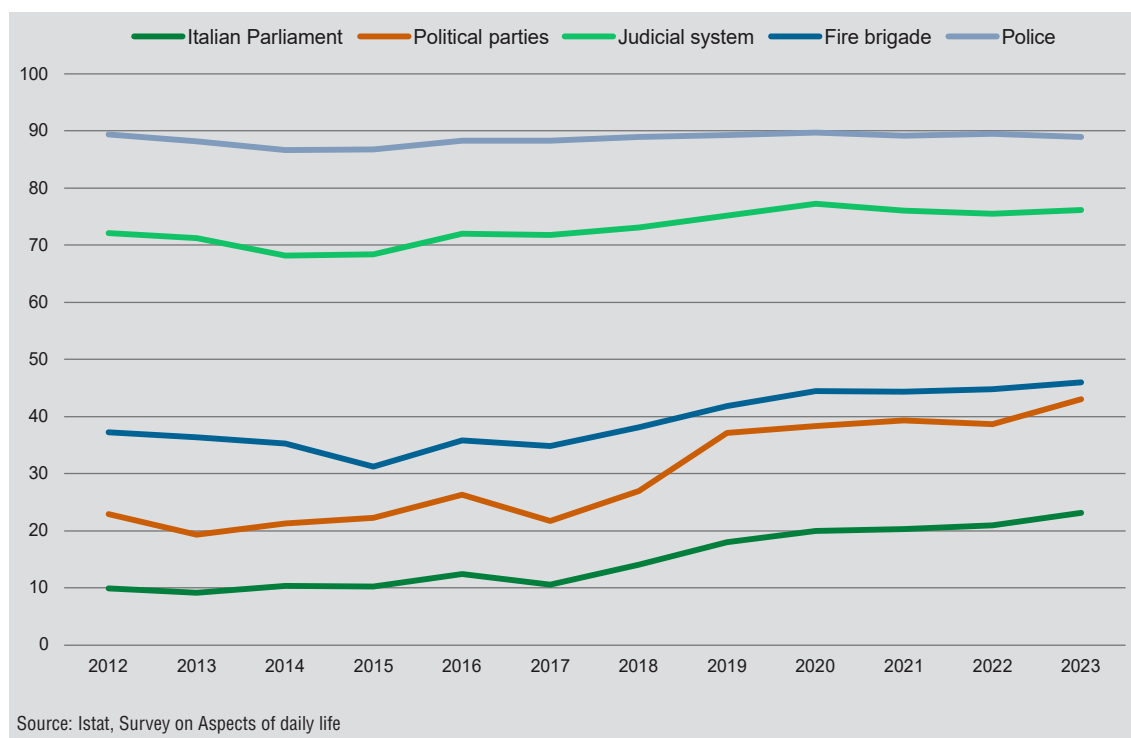
The last year also sees a rise in the levels of trust in the judicial system, with the share of those who allocate a score equal to or higher than 6 up from 44.8% to 46.0% (Figure 5).

Even in 2023, trust in institutions deputed to public order and citizen safety is consistently higher than for other institutions, with a score of trust above sufficiency both for police (average score of 6.8 and 76.2% of scores equal to or greater than 6) and for the fire brigade, which are boasting the highest levels of trust in absolute (with an average score of 8.1 and 89.5% of people giving at least a sufficient score).

¹⁰ Idem.

¹¹ Data updated to 1 March 2024.

Figure 5. Population aged 14 and over who assign a score of trust between 6 and 10 to different institutions. Year 2012-2023. Percentage values



Trust in parties, at equal ages, is generally higher among less educated people: 25.0% of citizens with at most a lower secondary school diploma assign score from 6 to 10, as opposed to 21.0% of those with a university degree. This gap is wider among young people (14-34 years-old), with a difference of 8 percentage points in favour of the less educated within the share of 6-10 scores.

In 2023, we notice a shrinking gap by educational qualification in the percentage of trust scores equal to or higher than 6 as regards the Italian Parliament (43.4% of less educated people and 44.0% of those with at least a degree), unlike recent years, when the gap was more pronounced (about 6 percentage points more in 2021 and 2022). In 2023, the widest gap by educational qualification can be noticed among people aged 55 and over: 52.6% of those with a university degree and beyond assign at least a sufficient trust score to the Italian Parliament compared to 44.3% of those who holds at the most a lower secondary school diploma. Throughout age groups, differences by educational level have reduced between 2022 and 2023, thanks to the increasing share of people aged 14 and over with a low study qualification who assign a score of trust equal to or above sufficiency (+5.6 percentage points).

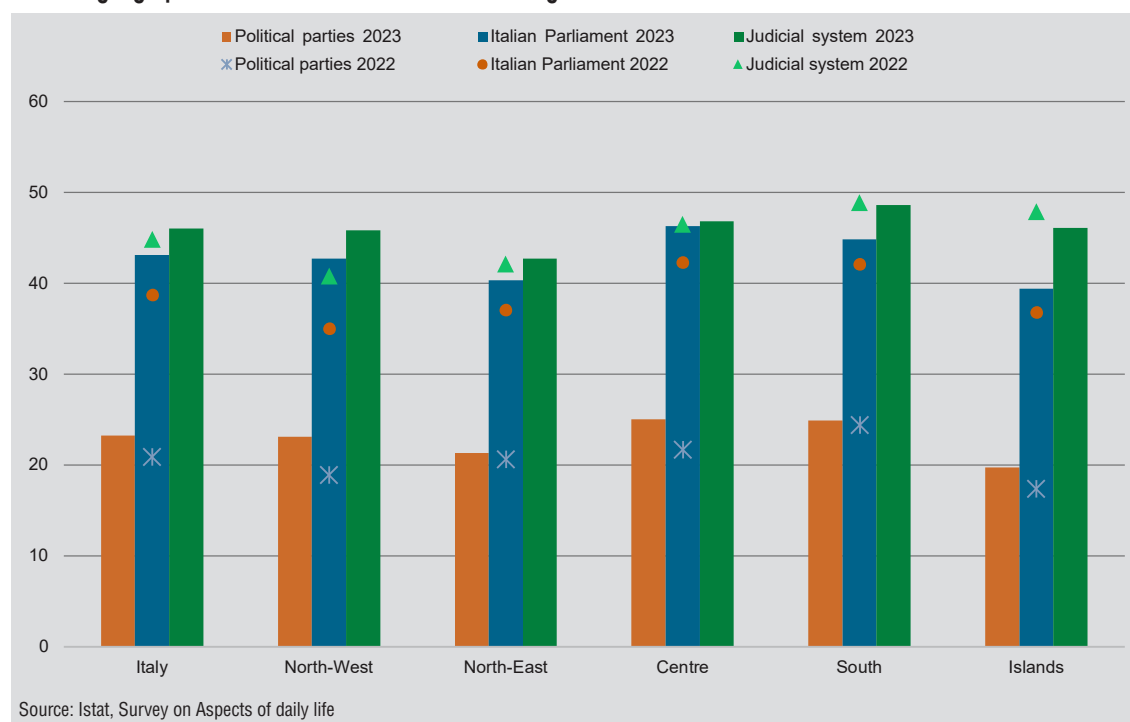
Trust in the judicial system is also above sufficiency among people with a high educational qualification (50.0% compared to 45.2% of those with a low qualification), with gaps widening as age increases, an attitude proving to be consistent over time.

Trends vary across geographic areas (Figure 6). In the Centre, at least sufficient trust scores are relatively more frequent with regard to all institutions, particularly political ones, whereas wider gaps are noticeable elsewhere. Trust in political and judicial institutions is relatively higher in the Centre and in the South and lower in the North-East and in the Islands. In the Centre 46.3% of residents aged 14 and over and 44.8% in the South express at

least a sufficient score of trust in the Italian Parliament, compared to 39.4% in the Islands and 40.3% in the North-East.

The same trend is observed as regards political parties: in the Centre and in the South, at least one citizen in four gives a trust score equal to or higher than 6; in the North-East and in the Islands, the score drops to approximately one citizen in five. Regional gaps in the levels of trust in the judicial system, which are at least sufficient, are smaller. The widest distance is that between the North-East (42.7%) and the South (48.6%). In the last year, the North-West had a significant increase in the percentage of those who give at least a sufficient score to the Italian Parliament, political parties and the judicial system (respectively by +7; +4; and +5 percentage points), with a shrinkage of the divide from Italy as well as in the overall gap between North and South and Islands in institutional trust trends.

Figure 6 Population aged 14 and over who assign a score of trust between 6 and 10 to different institutions by geographic area. Year 2022 and 2023. Percentage values



Huge differences persist among regions in the length of civil proceedings

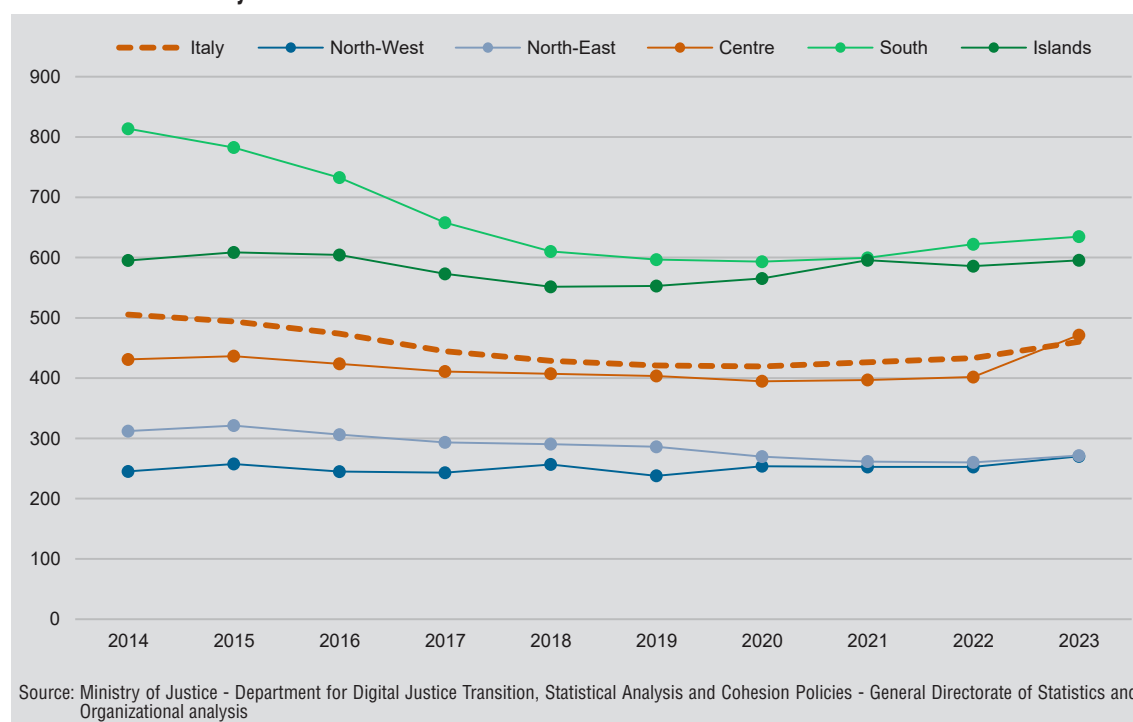
In 2023, about 1.3 million civil proceedings enrolled in ordinary courts were finalised, over 40% in the South and Islands, slightly more than a third (36.2%) in the North, and less than one in four in the Centre (23.0%).

The effective average duration reaches 460 days in Italy, 27 more days than the previous year. Over a 10-year period, the indicator follows a declining trend that at the national level reverses since 2021. The overall reduction between 2014 (the peak year, with 505 days of average duration) and 2023 is 45 days (Figure 7).

Substantial regional differences persist. The South and Islands, respectively with 635 and 595 days of average length, remain at levels more than twice as high as those of the North-West and the North-East (270 and 271), whereas the Centre, with 471 days, is close to the Italy value.

Over the years, the South has made clear progress, shortening the average length of civil proceedings by almost six months, from the 814 days of 2014, but the regional gap is still wide. The reduction is smaller for the North-West and the North-East, which were starting however from far lower levels (245 and 312 days respectively), and which converged over the decade.

Figure 7. Average duration of civil proceedings set up in ordinary courts by geographic area. Years 2014-2023. Average duration in days



The trend of the indicator also reflects the share of older enrolment proceedings finalised during the year, which could in turn reflect different starting condition or different backlog disposal strategies

From this viewpoint, in 2023 the share of proceedings finalised in the same year as that of enrolment is reduced, since they amount to 51.4% compared to the 55.1% of 2022, with a slight shift towards proceedings up to a two-year seniority. The weight of the latter has remained essentially unchanged in the two years under comparison: 75% of finalised proceedings consist of cases enrolled at the most in the year preceding that of finalisation; if we consider the two previous years, the percentage climbs to approximately 83%.

Conversely, the share of older proceedings finalised is growing, especially those older than three years, which are 11.1% in 2023 and were 9.7% in 2022.

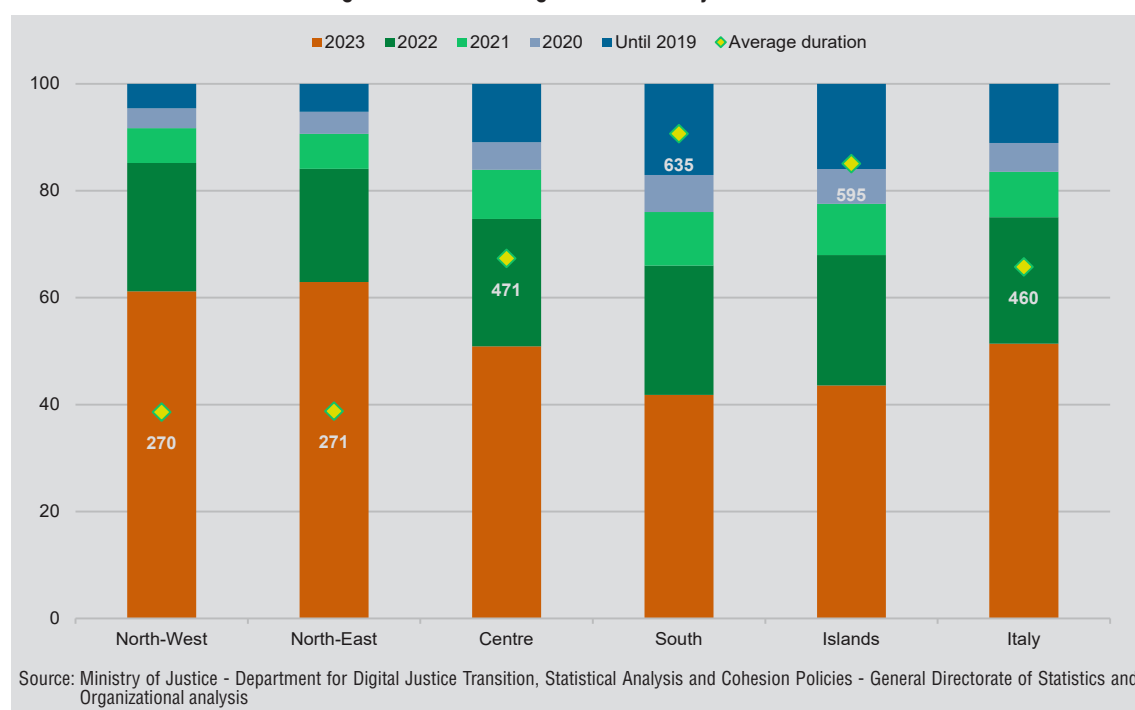
Similarly to the average duration, even the composition of finalised proceedings by year of enrolment varies considerably among geographic areas (Figure 8).

In 2023, in the South and Islands the share of finalised proceedings with a greater seniority of enrolment is higher than in the two northern macro-regions. In the latter, over 60% of proceedings finalised in 2023 have been enrolled in the same year, and more than 90% date to two years back at the most. In the South and Islands, the share of proceedings enrolled in the same year as the disposal does not go beyond 42% and 44% respectively, whereas

the percentage of those lasting longer than three years is greater (equal to 17% in the former instance and to 16% in the latter).

Among Southern regions, the highest share of disposal of proceedings that are more than three years in backlog are found in Basilicata (25%), Calabria (20%) and Campania (18%), with percentages substantially unchanged between 2022 and 2023. On the contrary, in Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Piemonte and Friuli Venezia-Giulia, far more than 90% of proceedings finalised in 2023 had started at the latest in 2021 (reaching 97% in Valle d'Aosta and 94% in Trentino-Alto Adige).

Figure 8. Civil proceedings set up in ordinary courts by year of enrolment and effective average duration by geographic area. Year 2023. Percentage values and average duration in days



The number of prisoners rises and prison density index worsen

The year 2023 sees a further acceleration of the worsening trend in prisons conditions already discerned in 2022. A confirmation of the structural nature of the problem in our country lies in the fact that the decline observed in the first year of the pandemic (-14 percentage points) seems by now to have completely cancelled (Figure 9).

The increase of the indicator in the last year is almost exclusively driven by the rising numbers of the prison population (+7.1%; 3.970 prisoners more), which was complemented by a small reduction in regulatory places (179 less), while the number of operating penal institutions remained unchanged. The balance of the last five years is slightly up as regards regulatory places (491; +1.0%); but the number of operating institutions does not change.

Figure 9. Prison density, regulatory places and prisoners held on 31 December. Years 2019-2023. Values per 100 regulatory places (left) and absolute values in thousands (right)



The deterioration is widespread across regions: in 2023, the indicator exceeds 150% in 40 of 189 operating penitentiary institutions (in 2022 institutions in a critical condition were 17). Female inmates have always been a tiny portion of the total prison population (4.2% in 2023), but they do not experience better detention conditions than men. In 2023, there is essentially no difference between the male and the female prison density rates (117.6% and 117.5% respectively). In the last year, the deterioration for women is slightly more pronounced: the number of female inmates increase (+7.4%), while the regulatory capacity of prisons and female sections dropped by 1.0% compared to 2022 and by 4.2% compared to 2019. Furthermore, only a quarter of female inmates (25.4% as at 31 December 2023) are in one of the four penal institutions for women¹², where the density problem is strong and chronic, with indexes that in 2023 vary between 165.3% in the Pozzuoli prison, 137.5% in the Trani prison and 133.8% in Roma Rebibbia¹³. All the others women inmates are found in women's sections within men's prisons, a condition that is an objective limitation for having access to activities directed to social reintegration and employability.

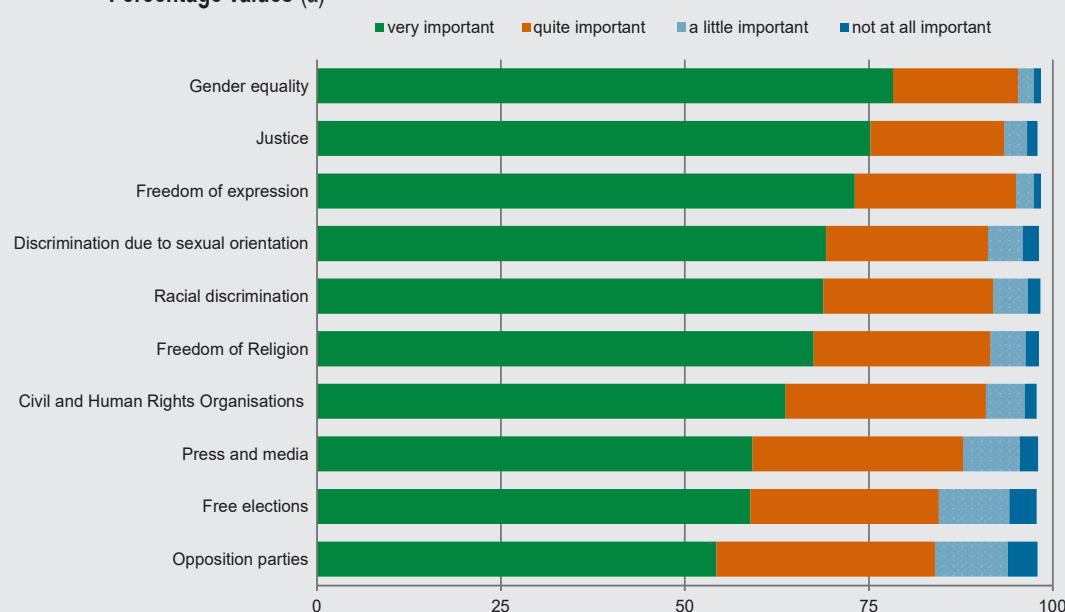
¹² District Prisons of Rome Rebibbia and Pozzuoli, Prisons of Venice and Trani.

¹³ In the Female Detention Institute of Venice Giudecca, the prison density index in 2023 is 67.9%.

SENTIMENT OF DEMOCRACY

In 2023, indicators on the sense of democracy record a general downward shift to lower ratings¹. The ranking of items is unchanged, ranging from the 78.3% of people aged 14 and over who rate it very important that in Italy “women and men should have equal rights and equal access to all jobs with the same pay for the same work”, to the 54.3% who give great importance on the fact “that opposition parties can operate freely” (Figure A).

Figure A. People aged 14 and over by vote of importance given to the items of the scale. Year 2023.
Percentage values (a)



Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life

(a) The sum of percentages does not reach 100, since a portion of respondents failed to indicate their opinion.

Gender equality is the only aspect for which the evaluation remains unchanged on high levels, whereas the other items record growing percentages of “a little important” or “not at all important” ratings. In particular, items associated with political participation, already lying at the bottom of the 2022 ranking, disclose a further decline, with a rise in the percentage of those who consider it a little or not at all important that “opposition parties can operate freely” and that “free elections are held regularly” (respectively 13.9% and 13.3% of people aged 14 and over, + 1.8 percentage points over 2022).

¹ Beginning with the 2022 Aspects of Daily Life Survey, Istat surveys the importance that people aged 14 and over assign (on a scale of 4 positions, from “very important” to “not at all important”) to the fact that in Italy: 1. Men and women have equal rights and equal access to all jobs with the same salary if they perform the same tasks; 2. The judicial system is fair; 3. That everyone may freely say what they think; 4. That all people have the same rights regardless of sexual orientation; 5. That all people have the same rights regardless of their country of origin, skin colour and ethnicity; 6. That everyone may freely profess their religion; 7. Civil, social and human rights organisations operate freely; 8. Newspapers and mass media can express different viewpoints without being censored; 9. Free elections are held periodically; 10. Opposition parties can operate freely.

The North-South divide and association with educational level remain visible. Residents in the North are still showing the greatest propensity to assess all aspects as very important, particularly as regards justice (78.3% in the North; 68.8% in the South and Islands) and equality between men and women (81.5%; 72.5%). The relationship between the North and the South and Islands is reversed when we consider the percentage of a little important or not at all important given to freedom of religion (7.9% in the North; 5.4% in the South and Islands) and to racial discrimination (7.1% in the North and 5.6% in the South and Islands). The gap shrinks to 3.5 points concerning free elections, which are devalued in the North (12.4%) just as much as in the South and Islands (15.9%).

From the combination of individual assessments on 10 items, we can isolate four groups, which are ideally placed in a continuum between a maximum and a minimum sentiment of democracy. The percentage of those who mainly or exclusively reply using the two more negative options (Group 4) climbs to 4.5% (it was 3.7% in 2022), while the share of people showing a more complex profile that includes lower ratings, albeit not prevalent, rises by 2.1 percentage points (from 20.7% to 22.8%) (Group 3). The share of those who consider all aspects to be very important (Group 1) records a slight drop (-1.7 percentage points) and stands at 39.2%, although it rises among people aged 14-19 (45.7%). The clearest declines in Group 1 are encountered among Southern residents (-3.2 percentage points) and people aged 45-54 (over 3 points less). Within this last age group, the weight of Group 1 records the minimum (36.5%), while Group 4 increases, reaching its peak (5.2%, +1.2 percentage points). The percentage of those who express a positive orientation (although less pronounced) stays at 31.5% (Group 2).

It is worth noting that, from 2022 to 2023, the share of those who assess all items as very important (Group 1) records a significant decrease among people looking for their first job (-9 percentage points) and those with lower professional qualifications (-2.6 percentage points among workmen and apprentices).

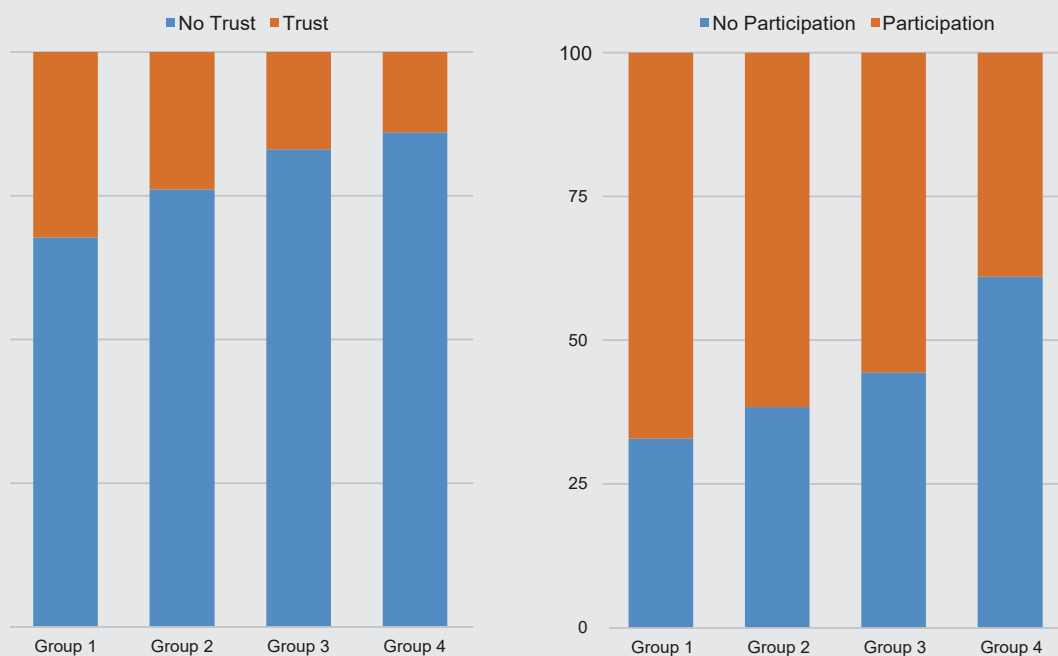
The association between educational levels and evaluation of the elements of the scale is confirmed. In fact people with at least a university degree place themselves in Group 1 more frequently (53.0%) than those with a low educational level (33.5%); by contrast, the latter place themselves in Group 4 with a frequency (6.0%) that is nearly three times higher than that of people with a higher qualification (2.3%). Moreover, the sentiment for democracy seems to be linked both to the generalised trust and to civic and political participation. The share of people aged 14 and over who state that they carried out at least one activity of civic or political support among those considered² is still prevailing among Group 1 (67.1%), and within Group 2 (61.6%). Turning to Group 3, the share shrinks down further (55.6%), and becomes the minority in Group 4 (39.0%), where low ratings dominate (Figure B). As the importance given to the set of democracy items decreases, the percentage of those who believe that most people are trustworthy declines: it is approximately one in three, in Group 1 (32.3%) and drops below one in six (14.0%) in Group 4.

2 Discussing politics at least once a week; inquiring about developments in Italian politics at least once a week; taking part in online consultations or votes on social (civic) or political issues (e.g. urban planning, signing a petition) at least once in the 3 months before the interview; expressing opinions on social or political issues through websites or social media at least once in the 3 months before the interview.

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Figure B. Groups by the combination of ratings on importance of some aspects related to the sense of democracy, by generalised trust (left) and political participation (right). Year 2023. Percentage values



Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life

The 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 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 Investment 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 boards 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.
Source: Istat, Processing of data from the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.
11. **Length of civil proceedings:** Effective average duration in days of proceedings set up in ordinary courts.
Source: Ministry of Justice - Department for Digital Justice Transition, Statistical Analysis and Cohesion Politics.
12. **Prison density:** Percentage of prisoners in penal institutions on the total capacity of penal institutions.
Source: Istat, Processing of data from the Ministry of Justice, Penitentiary Administration Department.

Indicators by region and geographic area

REGIONS GEOGRAPHIC AREAS	Voter participation (a)	Trust in parliament (b)	Trust in the judicial system (b)	Trust in parties (b)	Trust in police and fire brigade (b)	Women and political representation in national parliament (c)
	2019	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022
Piemonte	64.7	4.7	4.8	3.4	7.4	27.9
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	51.9	4.5	4.6	3.1	7.3	50.0
Liguria	58.5	4.8	4.9	3.5	7.8	26.7
Lombardia	64.1	4.8	4.8	3.5	7.5	28.9
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	59.9	4.6	4.9	3.5	7.6	53.8
<i>Bolzano/Bozen</i>	<i>62.8</i>	<i>4.4</i>	<i>5.1</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>....</i>
<i>Trento</i>	<i>57.3</i>	<i>4.8</i>	<i>4.8</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>7.7</i>	<i>....</i>
Veneto	63.7	4.6	4.6	3.3	7.5	40.4
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	57.0	4.7	4.6	3.4	7.5	50.0
Emilia-Romagna	67.3	4.8	4.9	3.5	7.6	48.8
Toscana	65.8	4.9	4.8	3.5	7.5	36.1
Umbria	67.7	4.9	5.0	3.5	7.4	33.3
Marche	62.1	5.0	5.0	3.7	7.5	26.7
Lazio	53.3	5.0	5.0	3.6	7.5	27.3
Abruzzo	52.6	4.7	4.7	3.3	7.3	38.5
Molise	53.3	5.0	5.0	3.6	7.5	25.0
Campania	47.6	5.0	5.2	3.8	7.0	29.6
Puglia	49.8	5.1	5.1	3.7	7.3	25.0
Basilicata	47.3	4.7	4.9	3.4	7.1	14.3
Calabria	44.0	4.6	5.0	3.4	7.2	42.1
Sicilia	37.5	4.6	4.9	3.3	7.4	39.6
Sardegna	36.3	4.6	5.1	3.3	7.5	31.3
North	63.7	4.7	4.8	3.5	7.5	36.0
North-West	63.6	4.7	4.8	3.5	7.5	28.7
North-East	63.9	4.7	4.7	3.4	7.5	46.1
Centre	59.3	5.0	4.9	3.6	7.5	30.4
South and Islands	44.7	4.8	5.0	3.5	7.3	32.3
South	48.3	4.9	5.1	3.7	7.2	29.9
Islands	37.2	4.6	4.9	3.3	7.4	37.5
Italy	56.1	4.8	4.9	3.5	7.4	33.7

(a) Per 100 eligible voters;

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

(c) Per 100 elected members;

(d) Percentage of women out of total numbers;

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

(f) Number of days;

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

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Women and political representation at regional level (c)	Women in decision-making bodies (d)	Women in boards of companies listed in stock exchange (d)	Mean age of members of national parliament (e)	Length of civil proceedings (f)	Prison density (g)
2023	2024	2023	2022	2023	2023
15.7	50.6	240	106.3
11.4	55.0	159	72.9
19.4	53.4	267	122.5
28.1	52.4	285	141.8
34.3	52.8	221	94.7
28.6	175	130.7
40.0	254	87.2
35.3	52.4	301	133.5
19.1	50.3	220	134.5
32.0	51.9	272	119.9
35.0	48.5	373	97.8
38.1	53.7	449	110.4
29.0	50.5	330	109.8
41.2	52.6	535	123.7
16.1	47.4	381	115.9
14.3	56.5	538	115.3
15.7	49.9	667	118.8
13.7	51.2	582	151.8
4.8	57.3	860	130.2
19.4	51.1	724	112.1
21.4	49.6	607	103.6
13.3	52.6	549	81.8
24.5	52.0	271	125.4
20.9	52.0	270	126.5
28.0	52.0	271	123.4
36.4	51.1	471	113.2
15.8	50.6	622	113.7
14.6	50.8	635	124.2
17.7	50.3	595	97.3
23.1	21.3	43.1	51.4	460	117.6

