statistiche report

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VOLUNTEERING IN ITALY| YEAR 2023

Fewer organized volunteers, more active on multiple fronts

In 2023, 9.1% of the population aged 15 and over—around 4.7 million people—engaged in voluntary activities, either through organizations or by providing direct help. This is 3.6 percentage points lower than in 2013, with significant territorial and generational differences. The number of volunteers active on both forms doubled since 2013: about one million people combine organized and direct volunteering (+13.6 p.p.).

Organized volunteering increased in recreational and cultural sectors (+6.4 p.p.), social assistance and civil protection (+7.7 p.p.), and environmental protection (+1.7 p.p.), while it declined in religious (-5.8 p.p.), sports (-1.9 p.p.), and health (-1.3 p.p.) sectors. There has also been a drop in those offering direct help to people they know (-10.1 p.p.), while more people are now helping communities, the environment, and local territories through direct volunteering (+14.7 p.p.).

The main motivations for organized volunteering include shared ideals (31.1%) and contributing to the common good (21.5%). For direct help, the most cited reasons are emergency situations (27.5%) and supporting those in need (24.6%). Despite the downward trend—also reflected in the average time spent on volunteering, which decreased from 19 to 18 hours over four weeks—voluntary work remains a pillar of social cohesion.

6,2%

Share of people aged 15 and over who engaged in organized volunteering

-1.7 percentage points compared to 2013

21,7%

Percentage of volunteers active both in organized forms and through direct help (+13.6 percentage points compared to 2013)

4,9%

Share of people aged 15 and over who provided direct help to the community, the environment, or people outside their family

-0,9 percentage points compared to 2013

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The 2023 Time Use Survey includes the second edition of the module dedicated to voluntary work. The first edition was carried out 10 years earlier, as part of the Aspects of Daily Life survey. Since its inception, the module has been developed in line with international standards recommended by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Manual for the economic valuation of voluntary work, while also expanding on the social value of this activity. The 2023 edition provides more detailed information on informal volunteering and on the changes that voluntary work has undergone as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis.

Fewer volunteers, but more active on multiple fronts

In 2023, approximately 4.7 million people (9.1% of the population aged 15 and over) engaged in voluntary activities during the four weeks prior to the interview, either through organized activities or by providing direct help. This represents a decrease of 3.6 percentage points compared to 2013. Organized volunteering—i.e., carried out through groups, associations, or organizations—involves 6.2% of the population (3.2 million people). Non-organized volunteering, consisting of direct help provided to people outside the family, to the community, or to the environment, involves 4.9% (2.5 million people). Among volunteers, 46.1% participate exclusively in organized settings, 32.2% only provide direct help, while a significant share (21.7%, about one million people) combines both forms.

Participation shows clear territorial divide: in the North, 8.2% engage in organization-based activities and 6.0% provide direct help; the North-East is the most active area (9.1% and 6.2%). The Centre follows (5.8% and 4.9%), and the South and Islands lag behind (3.6% and 3.4%).

Compared to 2013, there has been a general decline in participation: organized volunteering fell from 7.9% to 6.2%, while non-organized volunteering decreased from 5.8% to 4.9%. The decline was more contained in the North (−1.5 p.p. for organized, direct volunteering remained stable), but more pronounced in the Centre (−2.1 and −1.9 p.p.) and in the South and Islands (−1.9 and −1.3 p.p.).

In 2023, men and women volunteered at similar rates: 6.6% of men and 5.8% of women were involved in organized activities. In direct help, the percentages were reversed: 4.8% of men and 5.1% of women. In terms of composition, this means that 51.9% of organized volunteers are men and 48.1% women; for direct help, men make up 46.9% and women 53.1%. Compared to 2013, the decline was more pronounced among men than among women: in organized volunteering, men dropped from 8.9% to 6.6%, and women from 7.0% to 5.8%. In direct help, the drop was also greater among men (from 5.7% to 4.8%) than among women (from 5.9% to 5.1%). Thus, women remain slightly more active in direct help and men in organized volunteering, but the participation gap has narrowed due to the sharper decline among men.

Over the past 10 years, participation patterns have changed significantly. Among volunteers, those active only in organized settings decreased from 54.3% to 46.1%, and those active only in direct help from 37.6% to 32.2%. Conversely, hybrid participation has grown sharply: from 8.1% to 21.7% (+13.6 percentage points).

PEOPLE AGED 15 AND OVER WHO CARRIED OUT VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES IN THE FOUR WEEKS PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW, BY TYPE OF VOLUNTEERING AND GEOGRAPHICAL AREA. Years 2013 and 2023, percentage values

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	Total volunteering rate		Organized volunteering rate		Direct volunteering rate	
	2013	2023	2013	2023	2013	2023
North	14.9	11.9	9.7	8.2	6.2	6.0
- North-west	14.0	10.9	9.4	7.6	5.6	5.9
- North-east	16.1	13.1	10.2	9.1	7.1	6.2
Centre	13.5	8.8	7.9	5.8	6.8	4.9
South & Islands	9.3	5.5	5.5	3.6	4.7	3.4
- South	8.7	4.7	5.3	3.3	4.2	2.8
- Islands	10.5	7.3	5.9	4.3	5.7	4.6
ITALY	12.7	9.1	7.9	6.2	5.8	4.9

Volunteering still higher among graduates, but falling overall

The link between volunteering and educational level remains strong in 2023: people with higher education are more frequently involved in both organized volunteering and direct help. Among graduates, 10.3% participate in organized volunteering and 7.9% in direct help. For those with a high school diploma, the rates are 6.6% and 5.1%, respectively. Participation is lower among people with lower levels of education (Figure 1).

Compared to 2013, the decline in volunteering is more pronounced among those with higher education. Among university graduates, organized volunteering fell from 13.6% to 10.3%, and direct help from 10.9% to 7.9%. High school graduates experienced the sharpest drop in organized volunteering, from 10.0% to 6.6%, and also declined in direct help (from 6.4% to 5.1%). Changes were smaller among people with lower qualifications—a heterogeneous group including both young people still in education and older individuals with a low level of education.

Volunteering participation: older age groups maintain strong engagement

In 2023, volunteering is especially common among adults: the highest participation rates are observed among people aged 45–64 (7.2% for organized volunteering and 5.9% for direct help) and among those aged 65 and over (6.2% and 5.5%, respectively). Young people (aged 15–24) show a preference for organized forms (5.3%) over direct help (2.9%), while for those aged 25–44 the two forms are nearly equal (4.8% and 4.9%).

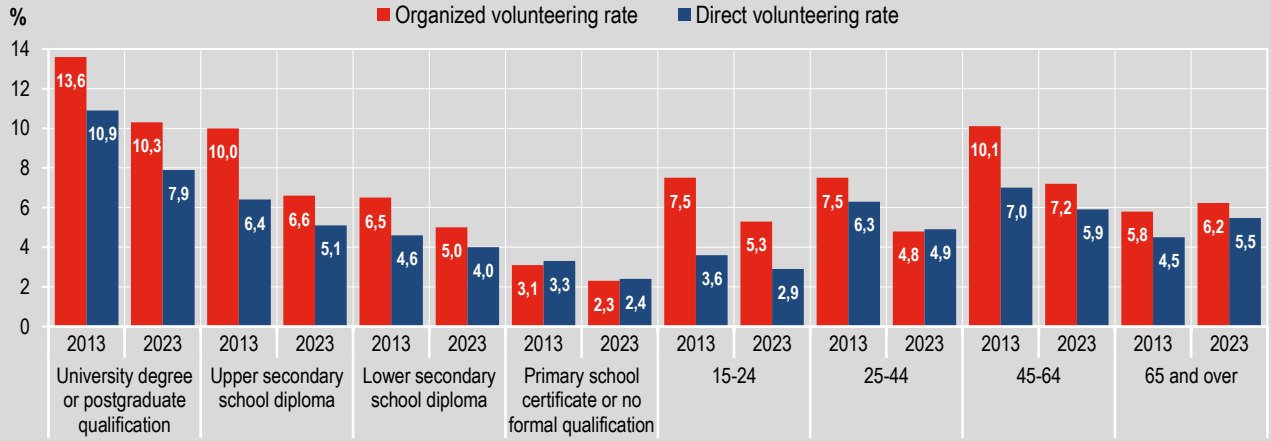
Between 2013 and 2023, the decline in participation mainly affected younger generations. The 25–44 age group recorded the sharpest drop in both forms: −2.7 percentage points in organized volunteering and −1.4 points in direct help. Participation among 15–24-year-olds also declined: −2.2 p.p. in organized volunteering and −0.7 p.p. in direct hep.

By contrast, volunteering among those aged 65 and over remained stable or slightly increased: organized volunteering rose from 5.8% to 6.2%, and direct help from 4.5% to 5.5%, highlighting the sustained civic commitment of older generations.

These trends are reflected by employment status. In 2023, retirees were the most active in organized volunteering (7.8%) and direct help (5.2%), followed by employed individuals (6.3% and 5.3%) and the unemployed (5.9% and 6.0%). Students (5.5% and 3.4%) and housewives (4.6% and 4.4%) showed more limited involvement.

Compared to 2013, the largest decline occurred among students: −4.0 percentage points in organized volunteering (from 9.5% to 5.5%) and −0.9 p.p. in direct help (from 4.3% to 3.4%). Employed people also saw a significant drop (−2.8 p.p. in organized and −1.6 p.p. in direct volunteering). Conversely, retirees and housewives showed relative stability over time, confirming the central role of older generations in sustaining volunteer engagement.

FIGURE 1. PEOPLE AGED 15 AND OVER WHO CARRIED OUT VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES IN THE FOUR WEEKS PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW, BY TYPE OF VOLUNTEERING, EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, AND AGE GROUP. Years 2013 and 2023, percentage values



The pandemic's strong impact on volunteering

More than 7 out of 10 people who had volunteered in the four weeks prior to the interview (71.1%, or 3.3 million individuals) were already active before the pandemic, confirming a strong continuity in engagement. Only 2.6% started during the emergency itself, while 26.4% began after 2020 for other reasons (Figure 2a). Among those already engaged in volunteering, about half did not change the way they volunteered; however, 37.7% changed the amount of time they dedicated, 8.1% became more intermittently involved, 7.0% began volunteering remotely. Additionally, 5.4% changed the form of volunteering, 2.6% switched to a different type of activity and less than 1% changed the target group they supported (Figure 2b).

Data on volunteering duration also confirms the stability of commitment, both in organized volunteering and direct help. In 2023, 84.6% of organized volunteers had been active for at least one year, and nearly 4 in 10 (38%) for more than 10 years—a figure stable compared to 2013. There was a slight increase in newcomers (less than one year of activity), rising from 11.2% to 15.4%, including those volunteering only occasionally (2.8%). In the case of direct help, which typically sees higher turnover, the share of long-term volunteers also increased: those active for over 10 years rose from 22.4% in 2013 to 29.8% in 2023. Among new entrants (34.5%), there is a significant share of occasional volunteers: 19.3% declare they engage only sporadically[i].

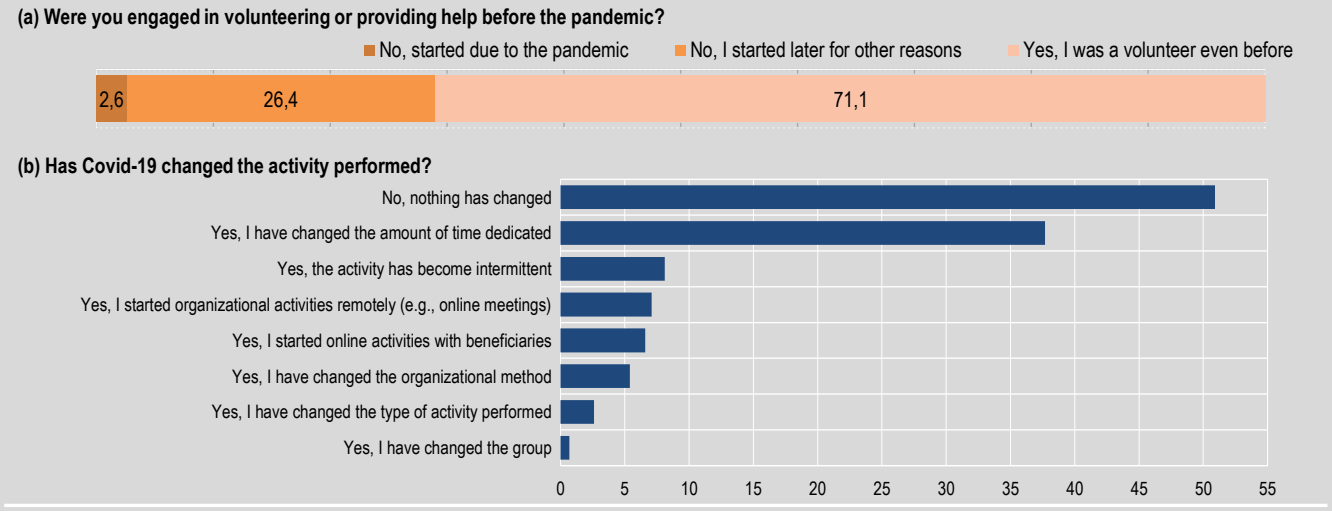
In 2023, 1.3% of people who had not volunteered in the previous four weeks—approximately 770,000 individuals—reported that they had been active during the Covid-19 emergency: 0.8% in an organized form, 0.9% by providing direct help. By contrast, 0.7% (about 346,000 individuals) reported that they stopped volunteering because of the pandemic, while the remaining 97.6% had never engaged in any form of volunteering. Occasional engagement during the emergency was especially common among students, residents of small municipalities, and those living in the North-West, the area most affected by the first wave—particularly through organized volunteering. Employed individuals and, once again, university graduates were more likely to offer direct help. The group most likely to have stopped volunteering due to the health crisis were people aged 75 and over (1.1%).

Perceived post-pandemic change: more time dedicated, especially to direct help

Among volunteers who were already active before the pandemic and reported a change in their time commitment, 2023 shows a general tendency toward increased participation. In all types of volunteering—organized, direct, and combined—the share of those who increased their involvement is higher than that of those who reduced it. The most marked trend is seen in direct help: 58.6% increased the time they dedicated, while 41.4% reduced it.

Among those who alternate between organized and direct volunteering, about 60% increased their involvement in 2023. In organized volunteering, the increase also prevails—53.1% among those engaged only in organized activities, and 61.6% among those involved in both forms—but with a narrower margin: 46.9% of those who volunteer only through organizations reduced their engagement, which is the highest share among all groups. This suggests that direct volunteering, which tends to be more flexible and personally motivated, has become stronger, while organized volunteering may have been more affected by the transformations brought about by the pandemic.

FIGURE 2. PEOPLE AGED 15 AND OVER WHO CARRIED OUT VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES IN THE FOUR WEEKS PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW, BY PRE-PANDEMIC PARTICIPATION (a) AND CHANGES IN ACTIVITIES (b). Year 2023, percentage values



Actual time spent down for direct help, commitment to organized activities stable

In 2023, the activities carried out during the four reference weeks by 4.7 million volunteers – whether organized or not – amounted into a total of 84.3 million hours of volunteer work: 79.2 million hours dedicated to the main activity and 5 million to other activities. Considering a 40-hour working week, this volume of volunteer work over four weeks was equivalent to about 527,000 full-time jobs.

On average, each volunteer contributed 18 hours over four-week period. The average duration of activities varies considerably by type: organized activities average 17 hours and 48 minutes, while direct help averages 11 hours (Figure 3).

By mode of participation, the average commitment is 17 hours and 24 minutes for those involved only with groups or associations, 11 hours and 24 minutes for those offering only direct help, and

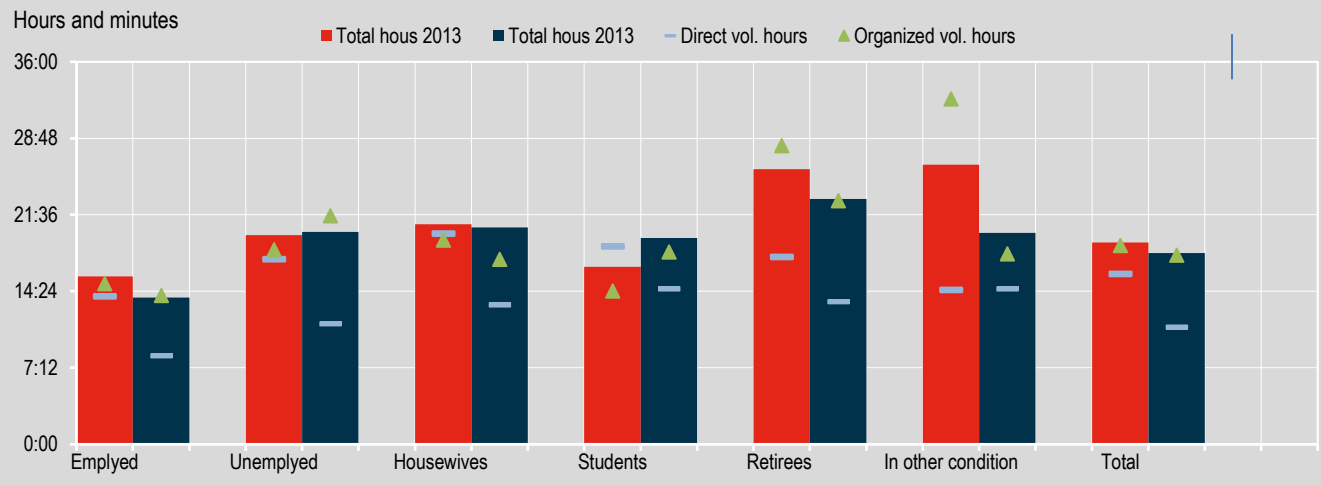
More than 28 hours and 50 minutes for those combining both. This last group – growing over the last decade – shows more intense and structured participation, characterized by greater dedication and a wider variety of tasks.

Greater availability of free time increases the hours contributed by retirees, who report over 23 hours of activity in the four-week period. Unemployed people and housewives also record around 20 hours, while employed people, with 13 hours and 48 minutes, are the group dedicating the least time.

Compared to 2013, the overall average time for all volunteers has decreased slightly, from 19 to 18 hours over four weeks. The decline is more pronounced in direct help (from 16 to 11 hours), while organized volunteering remains relatively stable (from 18 hours and 42 minutes to 17 hours and 48 minutes). This difference between organized and unorganized volunteering reflects then more structured nature of the former, which requires a constant involvement, while the latter shows a clear social change over the past decade, suggesting that direct help has become more occasional and less demanding practice in everyday life.

A notable finding concerns students: although their absolute number has declined, those who do volunteer dedicate more time on average than in the past.

FIGURE 3. VOLUNTEERS AGED 15 AND OVER BY AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED IN THE FOUR WEEKS PRIOR THE INTERVIEW, BY TYPE OF VOLUNTEERING AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS. Years 2013 and 2023, in hours and minutes.



More skilled roles and a new balance between organized activities and direct help

The picture of volunteer activities in 2023, classified according to paid occupational categories[ii], shows a sector in transition. There is a partial rebalancing between specialized activities and simpler forms of help, with clearer signs of change in unorganized volunteering. This increasingly diverse engagement reflects citizens' ability to adapt and respond to the new community needs, particularly in light of the transformations that have taken place since the pandemic.

5.1% of organized volunteers hold managerial positions, such as heads of organizations or members of governing bodies (Figure 4). Gender differences are significant: 6.6% of men hold managerial positions, compared to 3.5% of women. Out of 100 volunteer managers, 67 are men, down from 73 in 2013.

Approximately 8% of volunteers, both organized (8.1%) and unorganized (8.5%), perform unpaid activities comparable to intellectual and highly specialized professions – such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, musicians, and other professionals in the fields of culture and information.

Technical roles, which include a variety of function in social services (assistants, mediators, catechists), tourism and sports (entertainers, guides, instructors), as well as health and administrative tasks, involve more than a quarter of volunteers: 26.9% of organized volunteers and 27.3% of non-organized volunteers.

Skilled roles in personal services – such as caring for children, the elderly, or the sick, or working in catering – account for 26.6% of organized volunteers and 23.3% of unorganized volunteers. Clerical or administrative roles involve 6.7% of organized volunteers and 4.5% of unorganized volunteers, covering tasks such as secretarial work, administrative management, switchboard operators, or support in bureaucratic procedures.

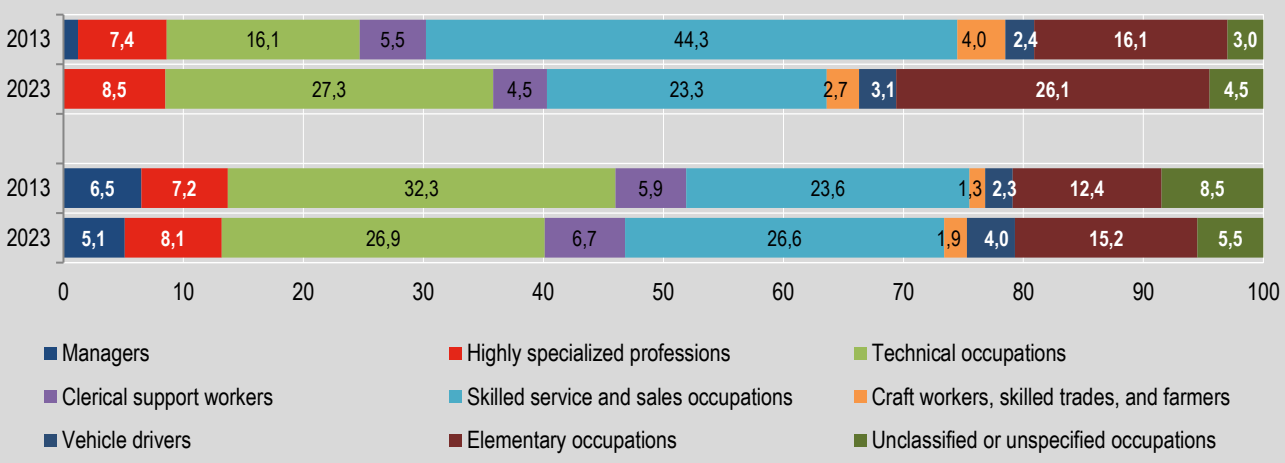
Vehicle drivers— for example, ambulance drivers or those providing transportation for people—account for 4.0% of organized volunteers and 3.1% of unorganized volunteers. Specialized manual activities (such as crafts and agriculture) are less common: 1.9% among organized volunteers and 2.7% among unorganized volunteers.

Unskilled volunteering, which involves simple general support activities, is much more common among unorganized volunteers (26.1%) than among organized volunteers (15.2%). Finally, 5.5% of organized volunteers and 4.5% of unorganized volunteers perform activities that cannot be classified according to the occupational classification system, most of whom are blood donors.

Compared to 2013, significant changes can be observed, especially among non-organized volunteers: the share of those engaged in skilled service activities has almost halved (from 44.3% to 23.3%), while those performing technical activities (from 16.1% to 27.3%) and unskilled activities (from 16.1% to 26.1%) have increased.

In organized volunteering, the changes are less pronounced, but there has been a decline in the share of volunteers involved in technical activities (from 32.3% to 26.9%) and in managerial roles (from 6.5% to 5.1%), partially offset by a more balanced increase in other types of activities.

FIGURE 4. VOLUNTEERS AGED 15 AND OVER BY YPE OF VOLUNTEERING AND UNPAID OCCUPATION. Years 2013 and 2023, percentage values.



More recreational, cultural, and social assistance activities, less sport and religion

In 2023, most volunteers involved in organized activities will do so within a single association: almost nine out of ten (87.4%). Only a minority (12.6%) participate in more than one group, down from 16.2% in 2013. The propensity to take on multiple commitments increases with age, peaking between 64 and 75 years (16.5%).

The world of organized volunteering has undergone significant changes over the last decade, accelerated by the experience of the pandemic. Recreational and cultural activities are now the most popular sector, involving almost one in four volunteers (23.9%). This is followed by social assistance and civil protection (22%), religious activities (17.2%), healthcare (15.1%) and sport (7%). Presence in the environment (5.1%) and education and research (3.2%) sectors is more limited. The remaining 6.7% of volunteers are distributed across other areas, each with shares below 2% (Figure 5a).

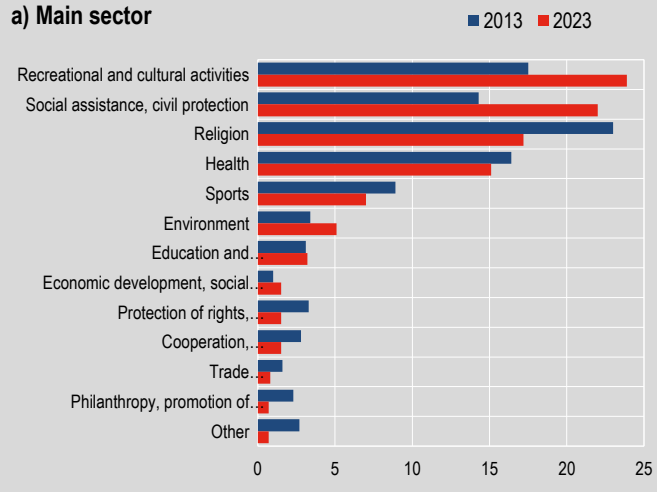
Compared to 2013, volunteering is undergoing a transformation, with participation increasingly oriented towards direct interaction with people, social well-being, and care for the local area, in line with the needs that have emerged in recent years. The number of volunteers is growing above all in sectors related to leisure and direct support for people: +6.4 percentage points in cultural and recreational activities, +7.7 p.p. in social assistance and civil protection, and +1.7 p.p. in the environment. On the other hand, there has been a decline in volunteering in religious activities (-5.8 percentage points) and sport (-1.9 p.p.). Even healthcare, despite having been central during the pandemic, has seen a decline (-1.3 p.p.). One possible explanation for these changes is the increasing professionalization of certain services: many organizations now entrust sensitive tasks to paid staff to ensure more stable and continuous support.

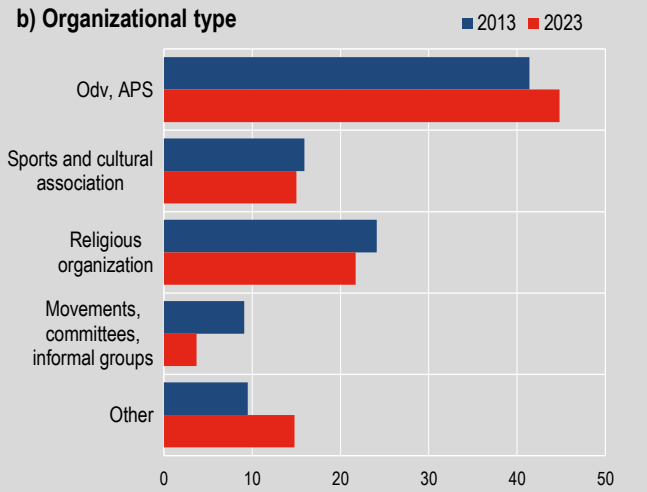
Among the least represented sectors, there has been growth in volunteering in economic development and social cohesion, a sign of greater attention to the challenges of inclusion and community life.

The form of organizations in which volunteer activities take place is also evolving. Today, almost half of organized volunteers (44.8%) work in voluntary organizations (Odv) or social promotion associations (Aps), an increase of 3.4 percentage points over 2013 (41.4%). These are followed by religious organizations, which account for 21.7% of volunteers (down from 24.1% in 2013). However, this decrease is less marked than that recorded among activities with a religious content, a sign that many parishes have broadened their scope to include more social and recreational initiatives (Figure 5b).

Sports and cultural organizations involve 15.0% of volunteers, a slight decrease compared to 15.9% in 2013. Volunteers active in movements, committees, and informal groups have decreased dramatically, from 9.1% to 3.7%. Finally, the group classified as 'Other' has grown, now accounting for 14.8% of volunteers compared to 9.5% in 2013 (+5.3 percentage points), an increase that reflects either less awareness or identification by volunteers of the type of organization they belong to, or a growing presence of less structured or hard-to-classify organizations.

FIGURE 5. ORGANIZED VOLUNTEERS AGED 15 AND OVER BY MAIN SECTOR (a) AND TYPE OF ORGANIZATION (b). Years 2013 and 2023, percentage values.





Unorganized volunteering: from helping neighbors to supporting the community

Between 2013 and 2023, significant changes can be observed in the recipients of direct help. The share of aid going to friends, neighbours, and acquaintances decreased significantly, remaining the largest category but falling from 66.8% to 56.7%. Support for people who were unknown at the start of the relationship also fell (from 14.6% to 9.7%), indicating a different way of interpreting personal assistance (Figure 6a).

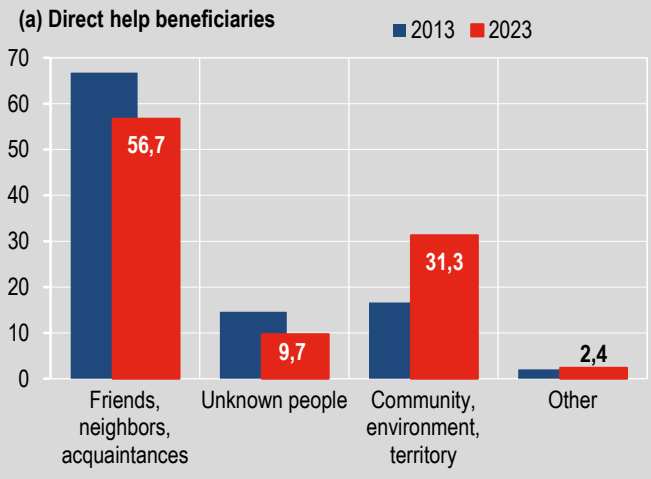
By contrast, the proportion of aid directed towards the community, the environment and the local area has grown significantly, from 16.6% to 31.3%, almost double the 2013 figure. This suggests a change in patterns of participation and solidarity: more and more people seem to be directing their efforts towards collective, environmental or civic causes rather than direct interpersonal relationships.

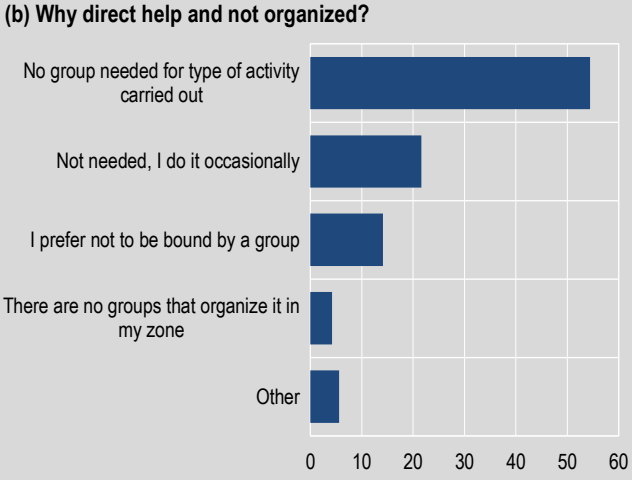
The reasons that motivate people to provide direct help without the mediation of an organized group confirm this trend toward flexible, self-directed volunteering often linked to specific contexts. In 2023, more than half (54.4%) say that an organized group is not necessary for the type of activity they carry out, while an additional 21.6% do so only occasionally. 14.1% prefer not to be bound by an organization, highlighting their need for autonomy. Only a small proportion report the absence of groups promoting this type of activity in their area (4.2%), while the remaining 5.6% give other reasons (Figure 6b).

An analysis of socio-demographic characteristics shows that the preference for autonomy ("I prefer not to be bound by a group") is particularly pronounced among people aged 65-74 (20.0%), among university graduates (15.0%) and among those living in small municipalities with up to 2,000 inhabitants (20.0%) – contexts characterized by stronger ties to informal networks and a greater desire for organizational independence. Conversely, among young people under the age of 25, the occasional approach prevails (27.0%), while only 9.3% reject being bound by an organization, a sign of less structured but also less ideologically oriented participation.

From a geographical perspective, the Northwest has the highest percentages of both those who do not consider a group necessary for the activity they carry out (57.4%) and those who only help occasionally (25.6%). The Islands, on the other hand, show a higher incidence of people who report the absence of organized groups (7.6%, almost double the national average) and the highest percentage of those who prefer not to be bound by any organization (17.0%). Finally, the Center has the lowest percentage of people who choose not to join a group for reasons of independence (5.0%), confirming a diverse picture across the country in terms of the ways and reasons that motivate people to provide direct help.

FIGURE 6. PEOPLE AGED 15 AND OVER WHO PROVIDED DIRECT HELP BY BENEFICIARIES (a) AND REASONS FOR CHOOSING TO ACT IN AN UNORGANIZED WAY (b). Years 2013 and 2023, percentage values.





Why people volunteer: values, relationships, and concrete needs

In 2023, participation in organized volunteer activities were mainly motivated by sharing the ideals promoted by the group (31.1% of responses), the desire to contribute to the common good (21.5%), and following personal beliefs or convictions (10.7%). This was followed by personal reasons such as spending time with others (7.2%), being involved by friends (5.7%) or family members (4.7%) (Figure 7).

These percentages, referring to the total number of responses provided and not to the respondents, reflect the relative weight of each motivation among those actually expressed, allowing for a more consistent comparison with the past.

The perceived benefits of volunteering primarily concern the personal sphere: 26.1% of responses indicate an improvement in individual well-being, while 20.4% refer to the expansion of social relationships. Other effects reported include a change in perspective (11.5%) and the development of civic awareness (10.0%).

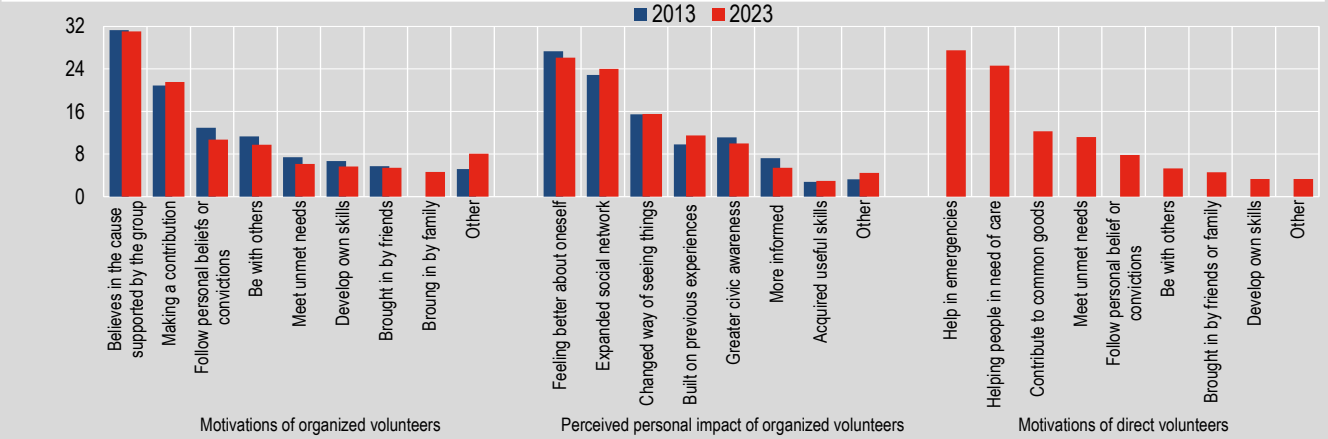
As regards direct help, pragmatic motivations prevail: helping in emergencies (27.5%) or assisting people in need of care – e.g., the elderly, the disabled, the seriously ill – (24.6%) are the main two drivers. These are followed by the desire to contribute to the common good (12.3%) or to address unmet needs (10.3%).

In 2013, the structure of motivations among organized volunteers was similar: the top two in order of importance ("believing in the cause supported by the group" and "making a contribution") remain unchanged even 10 years later. Responses relating to religion (from 13% to 10.7%) and the need to address unmet needs (from 7.4% to 6.2%) declined.

Compared to 2013, in 2023 the impact of organized volunteering seems to be more oriented towards relational and practical benefits, rather than deeper transformations at the individual and civic level. There is an increase in responses indicating the enhancement of previous experiences (from 9.8% to 11.5%) and the expansion of social networks (from 22.9% to 24.0%), while those related to personal well-being (from 27.3% to 26.1%), the development of civic awareness (from 11.2% to 10.0%), and feeling more informed (from 7.3% to 5.4%) all declined.

Overall, organized volunteering remains a space for participation based on shared ideals, with benefits at both the relational and personal levels. Direct help, on the other hand, responds primarily to immediate needs, with a more practical and direct dimension. Both forms express different but complementary modes of commitment and solidarity.

FIGURE 7. PEOPLE AGED 15 AND OVER WHO VOLUNTEERED IN THE FOUR WEEKS PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW BY TYPE OF VOLUNTEERING, MOTIVATION AND PERCEIVED PERSONAL IMPACT. Years 2013 and 2023, percentages of total responses (a)



(a) Each person could indicate up to three motivations and three impacts. The percentages were normalized to the total number of responses in order to compare the two years. The values therefore represent the relative weight of each option among all the choices made and not the proportion of people who selected each response.

Glossary

Direct volunteering rate (direct help): percentage of individuals aged 15 and over who, in the four weeks prior to the interview, devoted time without any obligation to unpaid activities for the benefit of other people (not family members), the community, or the environment on their own behalf, out of the total population.
Organized volunteering rate: percentage of individuals aged 15 and over who, in the four weeks prior to the interview, devoted time without any obligation to voluntary activities for the benefit of other people, the community, or the environment through groups or organizations, out of the total population.
Total volunteering rate: percentage of individuals aged 15 and over who, in the four weeks prior to the interview, devoted time without any obligation to unpaid activities for the benefit of other people (not family members), the community or the environment through groups or organizations or individually, out of the total population.
Volunteer (ILO, 2011): an individual aged 15 and over who, in the four weeks prior to the interview, devoted time without any obligation to voluntary activities for the benefit of other people, the community or the environment through groups or organizations, or individually.

Methodological note

Module on voluntary work according to ILO standards in the Time Use Survey

Regulatory framework and phenomena observed

The Multipurpose Survey on Time Use, conducted between December 2022 and November 2023 on a sample of approximately 19,000 households, includes an in-depth module dedicated to voluntary work starting from this edition.

The module was developed in accordance with the guidelines of the Manual published by the ILO (International Labor Organization) for the economic valuation of volunteer work[iii]. The main objective of the survey is to analyse the time devoted to unpaid work, distinguishing between family work—recorded through daily time use diaries—and volunteer work, investigated through the in-depth module presented here.

This module allows for the collection of internationally comparable information on the number of people who give their time, free of charge and voluntarily, for the benefit of others or the community. Volunteering activities can be carried out either in an organized form — through groups, associations, or organizations — or individually, without the involvement of structures (unorganized volunteering). The main structural characteristics of this active part of the population are also recorded, as well as the main ways in which voluntary activities are carried out.

The Time Use Survey is a strategic tool for understanding how people organize their daily lives, with a particular focus on gender differences. It is regulated by Law 53 of 2000, Article 16, and is one of the surveys recommended by EU Regulation No. 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council, which establishes a common framework for European statistics on persons and households. Finally, it is one of the statistical surveys of public interest included in the National Statistical Program.

Frequency and survey period

The survey, which is sample-based, is conducted every five years over an entire calendar year.

Target population

The population of interest consists of households residing in Italy and the individuals who comprise them (excluding persons residing in residential care facilities). The household is defined as a de facto family, i.e., a group of persons living together and linked by marriage, kinship, affinity, adoption, guardianship, or emotional ties.

The survey is conducted on a theoretical sample of approximately 25,000 households.

Survey strategies and tools

The survey uses two collection models. The first is the basic survey questionnaire, conducted through direct interviews, consisting of: a 'General Form', which collects information on family relationships and other sociodemographic and socio-economic information on family members; 'Individual Forms', one for each family member, which include the Module on voluntary work, and a 'Family Questionnaire' containing questions about the family, which is answered by one adult member only. The other is a daily time use diary to be completed by the respondents themselves. The diary is given by the interviewer to each member of the family and contains questions that can be easily completed independently by the respondent without the direct intervention of the interviewer.

The information is provided directly by all individuals aged 15 and over, while children and young people under the age of 15 are interviewed by proxy, meaning that a parent or adult family member provides the information on their behalf. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, some questions in the survey allow respondents to decline to answer.

Further information on the Time Use Survey and the questionnaires used to collect data is available at the following link: https://siqual.istat.it/SIQual/visualizza.do?id=0071301

Sampling strategy and level of accuracy of estimates

Sampling design

The domains of study, i.e., the areas to which the population parameters being estimated refer, are of two different types: territorial domains and temporal domains.

The territorial domains are as follows:

- the entire national territory;
- the five geographical divisions (North-Western Italy, North-Eastern Italy, Central Italy, Southern Italy, Insular Italy);
- the geographical regions (with the exception of Trentino Alto Adige, for which estimates are produced separately for the provinces of Bolzano and Trento);
- the municipal typology obtained by dividing Italian municipalities into six classes based on socio-economic and demographic characteristics:

A) *municipalities belonging to the metropolitan area* divided into:

A1, *municipalities at the center of the metropolitan area*: Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Bari, Palermo, Catania, Cagliari;
A2, municipalities that gravitate around the central municipalities of the metropolitan area;

B) *municipalities not belonging to the metropolitan area* divided into:

B1 municipalities with up to 2,000 inhabitants;
B2 municipalities with 2,001-10,000 inhabitants;
B3 municipalities with 10,001-50,000 inhabitants;
B4 municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants.

As regards time domains, the estimates produced by the survey are published with reference to four types of day: weekday, day before a public holiday (Saturday), public holiday (Sunday), and average weekday.

The sampling design has a general structure that mirrors that of most household surveys, i.e., a multi-stage municipality-household design with stratification of municipalities.

Within each area obtained by crossing the regions with the six types of municipalities mentioned above, the municipalities in the universe were divided into two subsets: the municipalities with the largest population constitute a separate stratum and are defined as Self-Representative (SR); the remaining municipalities are defined as Non Self-Representative (NAR) and are divided, on the basis of population size, into strata of equal size; from these strata, the sample municipalities (three for each stratum) were selected with probabilities proportional to their size.

For each of the municipalities involved in the survey (AR and NAR), cluster sampling is carried out: the clusters – the households - are selected at random from the registry list and all members belonging to the household are surveyed. The minimum number of sample households for each municipality was set at 32 (20 for municipalities in area B1).

Households are selected for each sample municipality from the list of households registered in the registry; for each household included in the sample, the characteristics surveyed are recorded for all members of the household.

The temporal stratification of the sample requires AR municipalities to carry out the survey every twelve months, while NAR municipalities carry out the survey once every quarter, four times a year, at three-month intervals. Each of the three sample municipalities in each NAR stratum was randomly assigned to one of the three months of the quarter. For example, the municipality that carried out the survey in January in the first quarter will carry out the survey in April, July, and October in the following quarters.

Procedure for calculating estimates

The estimates produced by the survey and reported in this report are absolute and relative frequencies for households and individuals. They are obtained using a constrained weighting estimator. The principle underlying any sample estimation method is that the units belonging to the sample also represent the units of the population that are not included in the sample. This principle is achieved by assigning each sample unit a weight indicating

the number of units in the population represented by that unit. For example, if a sample unit is assigned a weight of 30, this indicates that this unit represents itself and 29 other units of the population not included in the sample.

The procedure for constructing the final weights to be assigned to the responding sample units is generally divided into the following stages:
1) direct weights are calculated as the reciprocal of the probability of inclusion of the units;
2) the correction factors for total non-response are calculated as the inverse of the response rate in appropriate subsets of units; and the basic weights, or weights corrected for total non-response, are obtained by multiplying the direct weights by the corresponding correction factors for total non-response;
3) construct the correction factors that allow the condition of equality between the known totals of certain auxiliary variables and the corresponding sample estimates to be satisfied at the regional level;
4) finally, the final weights are calculated by multiplying the basic weights by the correction factors obtained in step 3.

The corrective factors in step 3 are obtained by solving a constrained minimization problem, in which the function to be minimized is a distance function (appropriately chosen) between the base weights and the final weights, and the constraints are defined by the condition of equality between sample estimates of known population totals and known values of the same. The chosen distance function is the truncated logarithmic function; the adoption of this function ensures that the final weights are positive and contained within a predetermined range of possible values, thus eliminating extreme positive weights (too large or too small).

In particular, in the survey in question, 39 known totals are defined for each geographical region, referring to: (i) the distribution of the regional population by gender and age group, (ii) the regional population in the six areas A1, A2, B1, B2, B3, and B4 (6 totals), (iii) the regional population by quarter (4 totals), (iv) the number of foreign citizens in the region by gender (2 in total), (v) the regional population by employment status, estimated through the Labor Force Survey (3 in total), (vi) the estimate of the number of employed persons in the region by quarter (4 in total). The age groups considered are: 0-2, 3-5, 6-10, 11-14, 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+. The employment status categories are: employed, unemployed, inactive.

Assessment of the accuracy of estimates

To assess the accuracy of estimates produced by a sample survey, it is necessary to consider the sampling error that arises from observing the variable of interest only on a part (sample) of the population. This error can be expressed in terms of absolute error (*standard error)* or relative error (i.e., the absolute error divided by the estimate, which is called the coefficient of variation, CV).

Table A illustrates, by way of example, the methods used to calculate the confidence interval for the point estimates referring to the number of people who carried out organized voluntary activities, males and then females, in the Central region. Starting from the relative sampling errors (CV), it is possible to construct the confidence interval which, with a predetermined level of confidence, contains the true but unknown value of the parameter being estimated. The confidence interval is calculated by adding and subtracting the absolute sampling error (standard error) from the point estimate, multiplied by a coefficient that depends on the confidence level, considering the traditional confidence level of 95%, the corresponding coefficient is 1.96.

To allow for the correct use of the estimates provided by the survey, it would be necessary to present the corresponding relative sampling error for each published estimate. However, this is not possible due to time and processing cost constraints and because the tables in the publication would be excessively long and difficult for the end user to consult. Furthermore, the errors of unpublished estimates would not be available in any case, as they can be obtained independently by the user.

For these reasons, a summary presentation of sampling errors is generally used, based on the regression model method. This method is based on determining a mathematical function that relates each estimate to its sampling error. The approach used to construct these models differs depending on whether the variables are qualitative or quantitative. In fact, in the case of absolute (or relative) frequency estimates referring to the modes of qualitative variables, it is possible to use models that have a theoretical basis. On the other hand, given their limited number in the context of this survey, estimates of totals of quantitative variables are provided directly with the explicit values of the sampling errors.

The model used for absolute frequency estimates $\hat{Y}d$, with reference to the generic domain d, is as follows:

$$\log(\hat{\varepsilon}^2[\hat{Y}_d]) = a + b \cdot \log(\hat{Y}_d)$$

where the symbol log indicates the natural logarithm, and the parameters a and b are estimated using the least squares method.
Table B shows the values of coefficients a and b and the R^2 index of the model used to interpolate sampling errors in absolute frequency estimates for geographical areas.
Based on the information contained in Table B, it is possible to calculate the relative sampling error $\hat{\varepsilon}[\hat{Y}]$ of a given absolute frequency estimate $\hat{Y}d$, referring to the different domains d , using the formula:

$$\hat{\varepsilon}[\hat{Y}_d] = \sqrt{\exp(a + b \cdot \log(\hat{Y}_d))}$$

To facilitate the calculation of sampling errors, Table C shows the relative sampling errors (expressed as a percentage) associated with certain levels of point estimate and broken down by the various domains of study. In practice, given a point estimate, Table C shows the level of estimation closest to the one under consideration (rows) in the territorial domain of interest (columns) to identify the associated relative sampling error, expressed as a percentage.

TABLE A. EXAMPLE CALCULATION OF THE 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL

	Males in Central Italy who participated in organized volunteering	Females in Central Italy who participated in organized volunteering
Point estimate	319.703	272.188
Standard Error (SE)	27.565	20.476
Relative Sampling Error (CV)	27.565/319.703=0,086	20.476/272.188=0,075
Interval estimate		
lower confidence limit:	319.703-27.565*1.96=265.676	272.188-20.476*1.96=232.055
upper confidence limit:	319.703+27.565*1.96=373.730	272.188+20.476*1.96=312.321

TABLE B. VALUES OF COEFFICIENTS A AND B AND OF THE DETERMINATION INDEX R2 (%) OF THE FUNCTIONS USED FOR INTERPOLATING SAMPLE ERRORS IN ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY ESTIMATES

a b	a	b	R^2
ITALY	9,932	-1,180	0,926
RIPARTIZIONI			
North	9,844	-1,182	0,923
North-west	9,546	-1,156	0,908
North-east	9,545	-1,192	0,922
Center	9,376	-1,175	0,910
South & Islands	8,636	-1,104	0,894
South	8,878	-1,124	0,883
Islands	8,352	-1,101	0,878
REGIONI			
Piedmont	9,503	-1,229	0,916
Valle d'Aosta	6,487	-1,282	0,891
Lombardy	9,999	-1,176	0,905
Trentino-Alto Adige	8,143	-1,234	0,900
Bolzano	7,500	-1,186	0,853
Trento	8,296	-1,277	0,904
Veneto	9,611	-1,194	0,915
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	8,787	-1,231	0,907
Liguria	8,447	-1,206	0,904
Emilia- Romagna	10,008	-1,247	0,911
Toscana	10,391	-1,296	0,930
Umbria	8,964	-1,298	0,918
Marche	9,157	-1,265	0,901
Lazio	10,635	-1,262	0,894
Abruzzo	8,645	-1,192	0,853
Molise	7,533	-1,242	0,882
Campania	10,311	-1,220	0,848
Puglia	9,516	-1,208	0,866
Basilicata	7,397	-1,147	0,852
Calabria	8,617	-1,180	0,853
Sicilia	8,853	-1,138	0,868
Sardinia	8,721	-1,183	0,870

TABLE C. INTERPOLATED VALUES OF RELATIVE SAMPLING ERRORS EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF ESTIMATES FOR ITALY AS A WHOLE, BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA AND REGION. Year 2023

ESTIMATES	Italy	North	Northwest	Northeast	Center	South and Islands	South	Islands
20.000	41,68	39,5	38,6	32,2	32,4	31,7	32,5	27,9
30.000	32,82	31,1	30,6	25,3	25,5	25,4	25,9	22,3
40.000	27,70	26,2	25,9	21,3	21,5	21,6	22,0	19,0
50.000	24,28	23,0	22,8	18,7	18,9	19,1	19,4	16,8
60.000	21,81	20,6	20,5	16,7	17,0	17,3	17,5	15,2
70.000	19,91	18,9	18,7	15,3	15,5	15,9	16,1	14,0
80.000	18,40	17,4	17,3	14,1	14,3	14,8	14,9	13,0
90.000	17,17	16,3	16,2	13,1	13,4	13,8	14,0	12,2
100.000	16,13	15,3	15,2	12,3	12,6	13,0	13,1	11,5
200.000	10,72	10,1	10,2	8,2	8,4	8,9	8,9	7,8
300.000	8,44	8,0	8,1	6,4	6,6	7,1	7,1	6,3
400.000	7,12	6,7	6,8	5,4	5,6	6,1	6,0	5,4
500.000	6,24	5,9	6,0	4,7	4,9	5,4	5,3	4,7
750.000	4,92	4,6	4,8	3,7	3,9	4,3	4,2	3,8
1.000.000	4,15	3,9	4,0	3,1	3,3	3,7	3,6	3,2
2.000.000	2,76	2,6	2,7	2,1	2,2	2,5	2,4	2,2
3.000.000	2,17	2,0	2,1	1,6	1,7	2,0	1,9	1,8
4.000.000	1,83	1,7	1,8	1,4	1,4	1,7	1,7	1,5
5.000.000	1,61	1,5	1,6	1,2	1,3	1,5	1,5	1,3
7.500.000	1,26	1,2	1,3	0,9	1,0	1,2	1,2	1,1
10.000.000	1,07	1,0	1,1	0,8	0,8	1,0	1,0	0,9
15.000.000	0,84	0,8	0,8	0,6	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,7
20.000.000	0,71	0,7	0,7	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,6
25.000.000	0,62	0,6	0,6	0,5	0,5	0,6	0,6	0,5

ESTIMATES	Piedmont	Valle d'Aosta	Lombardy	Trentino-Alto Adige	Bolzano	Trento	Veneto	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	Liguria	Emilia-Romagna	Toscana	Umbria
10.000	40,3	7,0	65,9	19,9	18,1	17,6	50,1	27,9	26,5	47,7	46,2	22,4
20.000	26,3	4,5	43,9	13,0	12,0	11,3	33,1	18,2	17,4	31,0	29,5	14,3
30.000	20,5	3,5	34,6	10,1	9,4	8,7	26,0	14,2	13,7	24,0	22,7	11,0
40.000	17,2	2,9	29,2	8,5	8,0	7,3	21,9	11,9	11,5	20,1	18,8	9,1
50.000	15,0	2,5	25,6	7,4	7,0	6,3	19,2	10,3	10,0	17,5	16,3	7,9
60.000	13,4	2,2	23,0	6,6	6,3	5,6	17,2	9,2	9,0	15,6	14,5	7,0
70.000	12,2	2,0	21,0	6,0	5,7	5,1	15,7	8,4	8,2	14,2	13,1	6,3
80.000	11,2	1,8	19,4	5,5	5,3	4,7	14,5	7,7	7,6	13,0	12,0	5,8
90.000	10,4	1,7	18,1	5,1	4,9	4,3	13,5	7,2	7,0	12,1	11,1	5,4
100.000	9,8	1,6	17,0	4,8	4,6	4,1	12,7	6,8	6,6	11,3	10,4	5,0
200.000	6,4	1,0	11,3	3,1	3,1	2,6	8,4	4,4	4,4	7,4	6,6	3,2
300.000	5,0	0,8	8,9	2,4	2,4	2,0	6,6	3,4	3,4	5,7	5,1	2,5
400.000	4,2	0,7	7,5	2,0	2,0	1,7	5,5	2,9	2,9	4,8	4,2	2,0
500.000	3,6	0,6	6,6	1,8	1,8	1,5	4,8	2,5	2,5	4,2	3,7	1,8
750.000	2,8	0,4	5,2	1,4	1,4	1,1	3,8	2,0	2,0	3,2	2,8	1,4
1.000.000	2,4	0,4	4,4	1,2	1,2	0,9	3,2	1,6	1,7	2,7	2,3	1,1
2.000.000	1,6	0,2	2,9	0,8	0,8	0,6	2,1	1,1	1,1	1,8	1,5	0,7
4.000.000	1,0	0,2	1,9	0,5	0,5	0,4	1,4	0,7	0,7	1,1	1,0	0,5

STIME	Marche	Lazio	Abruzzo	Molise	Campania	Apulia	Basilicata	Calabria	Sicilia	Sardinia
10.000	28,7	61,0	31,1	14,2	63,0	44,8	20,5	32,4	44,2	33,8
20.000	18,5	39,4	20,5	9,2	41,3	29,5	13,8	21,5	29,8	22,4
30.000	14,3	30,5	16,1	7,2	32,2	23,1	10,9	16,9	23,7	17,6
40.000	12,0	25,4	13,6	6,0	27,0	19,4	9,3	14,3	20,1	14,9
50.000	10,4	22,1	11,9	5,2	23,6	16,9	8,1	12,5	17,7	13,0
60.000	9,2	19,7	10,7	4,7	21,1	15,2	7,3	11,3	15,9	11,7
70.000	8,4	17,9	9,7	4,2	19,2	13,8	6,7	10,3	14,6	10,7
80.000	7,7	16,4	9,0	3,9	17,7	12,8	6,2	9,5	13,5	9,9
90.000	7,2	15,2	8,4	3,6	16,5	11,9	5,8	8,9	12,7	9,2
100.000	6,7	14,3	7,9	3,4	15,5	11,1	5,5	8,3	11,9	8,7
200.000	4,3	9,2	5,2	2,2	10,1	7,3	3,7	5,5	8,0	5,7
300.000	3,3	7,1	4,1	1,7	7,9	5,7	2,9	4,4	6,4	4,5
400.000	2,8	5,9	3,4	1,4	6,6	4,8	2,5	3,7	5,4	3,8
500.000	2,4	5,2	3,0	1,2	5,8	4,2	2,2	3,2	4,8	3,3
750.000	1,9	4,0	2,4	1,0	4,5	3,3	1,7	2,5	3,8	2,6
1.000.000	1,6	3,3	2,0	0,8	3,8	2,8	1,5	2,1	3,2	2,2
2.000.000	1,0	2,2	1,3	0,5	2,5	1,8	1,0	1,4	2,2	1,5
4.000.000	0,6	1,4	0,9	0,3	1,6	1,2	0,7	0,9	1,5	1,0

Territorial breakdown
Statistics are available at national, geographical, and regional levels.

Dissemination
Statistics on volunteering are available in *the* IstatData *data warehouse* under the category Daily life and citizens' opinions: https://esploradati.istat.it/databrowser/#/it/dw/categories/IT1,Z0850DAI,1.0/VOLUNTEERING
The basic data collected during the survey are made available to users upon request. In any case, the data are released in anonymous form.

Notes

[i] For comparison with 2013, occasional volunteering is included in the category "less than one year," as it was not reported separately at that time.
[ii] Unpaid activities have been equated to occupations in the labor market, classified according to the CP2021 classification adopted by Istat in 2023
as an update of the previous version (CP2011) and further aligned with the International Standard Classification of Occupations - Isco08.
[iii] See Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work, International Labor Organization 2011.

For technical and methodological clarifications

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