

# **N E X T G E N E R A T I O N**

Italy, February 2020



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## About the authors

This research was carried out by Learn More, a consultancy specialised in education and skills strategy, and Quorum, a pollster and research institute. Matter, an industry leader in facilitated problem solving, contributed to the recommendations development stage.

### Learn More

Lorenzo Newman  
Giorgio Presidente  
Giovanni Zino

### Quorum

Salvatore Borghese  
Matteo Cavallaro  
Davide Policastro  
Lorenzo Pregliasco  
Andrea Viscardi

### Matter

Lucia Fabiani  
Erica Melloni

## Next Generation Italy Task Force

Marta Dassù  
Stefania Giannini  
Irene Tinagli (special adviser)  
Salvatore Vassallo (special adviser)

### British Council

Filomena Casamassa  
Jane Costello  
Emanuela de Dominicis  
Linda Gaarder  
Emanuela Sias  
Christine Wilson

## Acknowledgements

Learn More and Quorum are grateful to our partners at the British Council for entrusting us with this vital research. A special thanks to Christine Wilson for her careful stewardship throughout the project and to Jane Costello for her strategic support and attention to the Italian context.

We would also like to express our gratitude to our Next Generation Italy Task Force, who steered the project and provided invaluable feedback throughout its duration. A special thanks to Irene Tinagli and Salvatore Vassallo for their dual roles as special advisers.

We have sought to make Next Generation Italy as open and participative a research project as possible. Many experts, researchers and civic society leaders were interviewed to help interpret the data. We wish to thank Enrico Giovannini, Francesco Cancellato, Davide Dattoli, Ilaria Giama, Isabella Borrelli, Giovanni Lo Storto, Alessandro Manfredi, Mara Carfagna, Maria Cristina Pisani, Fabio Pellegatta, Paolo Petrocelli, Luca Pancalli and Michele Schiavi for their time and ideas. Furthermore, the recommendations section of this report was developed thanks to an all-day youth engagement workshop with a diverse group of 40 young people and civic society stakeholders. We wish to thank Nesta Italia, Forum Nazionale dei Giovani, Sapienza University, ASviS, RENA and Gay Center for their support in securing participants.

Finally, we are grateful to the many young people who shared their aspirations, frustrations, fears, and dreams with us.

## Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the British Council.



# CONTENTS

<b>Forewords</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Youth attitudes</b>	<b>8</b>
Italy and the future	8
Employment	12
<b>Chapter 2: Youth influences</b>	<b>18</b>
Education	18
Family life	20
Media	23
<b>Chapter 3: Youth engagement</b>	<b>26</b>
Civic life	26
Emigration	31
<b>Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>34</b>
Conclusions	34
Recommendations	36
<b>References</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Methodology and sample</b>	<b>46</b>
Quantitative survey	46
Focus groups	47
In-depth qualitative interviews	48
The youth engagement workshop	49

# > FOREWORDS

The 2019 Next Generation Italy report draws an alarming picture of Italian youth. It highlights their feelings of general frustration, unsatisfactory working conditions, injustice, mistrust in institutions and politics, and inadequacy of education in preparing them for the job market, society or the world.

With an ageing population, Italy is in strong need of young people, and fresh resources and ideas to ensure a sustainable future. However, those who are able and asked to ensure a brighter future for our societies are being left behind.

The risks are high. Resignation cannot prevail. The recent report *Italiani nel Mondo* by Fondazione Migrantes shows that from 2006 to 2019, the number of Italians abroad increased by 70.2 per cent. Most of these people are youth or young adults. This means that Italy is confronted not only with an ageing population, but also with a youth drain depriving the country of the needed resources to build its future.

This picture calls for immediate action. Investing in human capital needs to be a priority and has to be coupled with building an enabling environment to make the country attractive for skilled youth once more.

Enhancing human capital and building attractiveness require a collective effort, and concrete and immediate responses targeting three priority groups: the education community, the business sector and institutions.

Firstly, the country needs skilled youth who are able to actively contribute to positive social change and to build a solid knowledge-based economy. Investment in education must therefore be increased. However, this is not only about financial resources. It also means better adapting schools to the needs of our century. Students are calling for better skills adapted to the job market – we have to provide new skills. They are calling for new ways of teaching and learning in an interconnected world – we have to train teachers on new teaching techniques and provide them with innovative tools. All this needs to take shape within the historical Italian culture- and human-based approach that is the pride of the country and learners themselves.

Secondly, the business sector needs to be ready to welcome this human capital. As the report highlights, the young people interviewed ‘rarely discussed their experience with employment in a positive light’. For this reason, urgent interventions are needed at both policy and business level. At policy level, to make sure that youth are treated fairly and that they are given the means to thrive in life, to be independent and to build families. At business level, because being managers and adapting businesses to our world are dependent on learning and connections outside young people’s local and national environment.

Finally, a major cultural and generational change is needed at institutional level, for increased responsibility. Without strong, fair, accountable, transparent and open institutions, the country will not be able to address the challenges it is facing today. ‘Responsibility’ means giving the floor to those who will be the citizens of tomorrow. It means adopting a language that unites, that fosters inclusion, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. It means efficiently addressing the call for action by those who have been left behind.

It is not too late. Young Italians are engaged; they believe they can be actors of their destiny; they have trust in the international community. By building on their proactive approach and on strong ties with the international community, Italy can succeed in giving a brighter future to young generations.

**Stefania Giannini**  
**Assistant Director-General**  
**for Education, UNESCO**  
**Former Italian Minister of**  
**Education, University and Research**

The British Council was founded in 1934 in response to a period of global instability. The UK had been hit hard by global financial depression, and fascism was taking hold of Germany, Italy and Spain. The aim of this new organisation was to create 'friendly knowledge and understanding' and to better understand the changing global landscape. This would be enabled by sharing culture, developing educational opportunities and opening up the space for dialogue.

The organisation has evolved, but the mission remains the same, and it is as relevant now as it was back in the 1930s. Now, as then, young people are central to that mission. We believe that young people have the power to transform the world and we are committed to supporting them, developing their skills and amplifying their voices. That is one of the reasons we developed the Next Generation research series, to listen to and engage with young people in countries undergoing transition, and to share their experience with others. Next Generation Italy is the latest addition to that series, joining countries including Germany, South Africa, Myanmar, the UK and Colombia.

We have been present in Italy since 1945 and this is the first time that we have carried out such an extensive piece of research on youth attitudes here. The Next Generation Italy report informs us about the aspirations and concerns of 2,015 young Italians aged 18 to 30 from across the country. The research was undertaken in 2019,

shortly after the Five Star Movement formed a coalition with Lega in the Italian government, and with the nature of the UK's departure from the European Union still uncertain.

The hopes and concerns we see expressed in the Italy research are echoed across much of Europe. We can see from other Next Generation research that young people in countries including Ireland and the UK are concerned, like their Italian peers, about the labour market and the education system. On the positive side, we see that young Italians express a strong sense of pride in their personal accomplishments – we noted similar sentiments in Germany.

At the British Council in Italy we are interested in exploring how socially engaged young Italians are and how they feel about their lives. This research shows us that the levels of social engagement among young Italians are above average when compared to their European counterparts. This is perhaps unsurprising, considering that the research was conducted shortly after the Five Star–Lega coalition had been so successful in engaging younger voters. All the same, if we consider this fact alongside high emigration rates of Italian youth – despite the tight family bonds – we can develop a powerful narrative of a courageous pursuit of betterment and willingness to engage in change, although underpinned by multiple challenges.

As we navigate a new era, UK–Italy relations remain a key priority for the British Council. The importance of understanding each other in all our complexities, while celebrating diversity and championing inclusion, is more important than ever. I trust that this research, taken with its sister country reports, will enable us and our partners to co-create evidence-based solutions to shared aspirations and challenges, now and into the future.

**Jane Costello**  
**Acting Director Italy, British Council**

# > EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from mixed-method research exploring the attitudes and aspirations of Italians aged 18 to 30 as part of the British Council's Next Generation research series. This series explores young people's needs, daily lives and outlooks in countries undergoing significant change, with the aim of ensuring their voices in relation to these changes are heard and put at the forefront of youth policy.

Our findings are drawn from a nationally representative quantitative survey of 2,015 young people, five focus groups each involving ten young people, and in-depth interviews with nine young people representing minority groups and 13 civic society stakeholders. A thorough literature review produced the secondary data cited throughout the report to interpret young people's attitudes. A one-day youth engagement workshop yielded policy recommendations and provided original interpretations of our quantitative data. This survey data was gathered from a nationally representative sample of respondents in terms of age, gender and region, employment status and educational background (see Appendix 1 for a full breakdown of demographics).

Research was conducted by Learn More, a consultancy, and Quorum, a polling agency, under the stewardship of the British Council's Christine Wilson and the Next Generation Italy Task Force composed of Irene Tinagli, Salvatore Vassallo, Stefania Giannini and Marta Dassù. Matter, a workshop facilitation firm, designed and facilitated the youth engagement workshop.

This report attempts to answer three questions.

1. What are young Italians' attitudes in the face of change?
2. What are young Italians' relationships with the institutions that shape their worldview?
3. How are young Italians reacting to and effecting change themselves?

Italian youth are overwhelmingly aware of the disadvantages faced by their generation, many of which stem from Italy's chronic, EU-high youth unemployment rate. Attitudes around employment are largely negative, with many young people lamenting a lack of jobs, discriminatory hiring, exploitative contractual practices and other issues. This appears to be the root cause of negative perceptions of the education system – which many feel does not prepare young people for work and family life – and many described a lack of job security as preventing them from moving out and marrying. Young Italians' disillusionment with party politics appears to reflect their sense that Italy's future has been compromised by the political class they rejected in the 2018 general election. These findings vary, with negative attitudes towards the topics explored in this research generally more common in the country's south, among older youth, the underemployed and unemployed.

Yet young Italians' social engagement levels are higher than the EU average. Most survey respondents described being satisfied with their own lives and the education they themselves received.

In our focus groups, young people expressed pride in their personal accomplishments in the face of adversity. Overall, our analysis of youth attitudes has found that young people are more resilient than indicators on economic stagnation and employment suggest they might otherwise be. This may be partly due to the strong financial and emotional ties they described having with their families. However, perhaps because family bonds are so strong, young people did not appear to be aware of the strong intergenerational wealth and income inequality that characterises Italian society.

Young Italians declare willingness to take action to improve their lives, through self-betterment and the pursuit of specific political goals. During our youth engagement workshop, young people were most interested in promoting a more meritocratic and job-oriented education system. For many of the young people we spoke to, this drive for self-improvement means leaving Italy. Italian youth are largely grateful for the opportunities granted to them by EU mobility and told us they are likely to leave Italy at some point in the future. Indeed, Italian youth are currently emigrating in numbers unmatched by any other European country except Romania.

Overwhelmingly, young people told us that they do not feel listened to politically. If we consider the rising youth emigration rate, along with Italy's population ranking fifth oldest by median age in the world, the risk is that youth voice will decrease in politics and contribute to a vicious circle.



# > INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, the British Council's Next Generation research series has explored how youth attitudes evolve in the face of change. From February to November 2019, Learn More and Quorum were commissioned by the British Council to undertake independent research for the Next Generation Italy project.

Politically, Italy is at a turning point. The 2018 general election saw young people<sup>1</sup> abandoning traditional political parties in favour of so-called 'anti-establishment' parties (ITANES, 2013), contributing to the victory of these parties at the polls. Previous polls cite frustration with the status quo as one of the main reasons for the abandonment of mainstream party politics (Marx & Schumacher, 2018). This is not unique to Italy. Throughout Europe, researchers have identified a correlation between poor socio-economic conditions and increased support for anti-establishment parties, particularly on the right (Arzheimer, 2013) (Bickerton, 2018) (Aassve et al., 2018). But Italy is the first European country where this support has produced a working political majority.

Italian gross domestic product (GDP) and income have stagnated for the past 20 years.<sup>2</sup> In the past ten years, the percentage of Italians living in absolute poverty has increased by 60 per cent (ISTAT, 2018). The macroeconomic research cited throughout this report indicates that young people are among those that suffer from these conditions the most. Youth unemployment is the second highest in the EU (OECD, 2019a). Economic hardship is likely effecting rapid increases in emigration rates.

In 2018, 160,000 Italians, disproportionately young, moved abroad, the most in a single year since 1981 (ISTAT, 2019a).<sup>3</sup>

In short, Italy is experiencing a dramatic political inflection as a reaction to a lack of change across the areas that affect and concern ordinary people the most. Against this backdrop, this Next Generation research seeks to answer three questions in the first three chapters of this report.

1. What are young Italians' attitudes in the face of change?
  - What are their hopes for the future?
  - Do they feel empowered to thrive?
  - Are they satisfied with their lives?
2. What are young Italians' relationships with the institutions that shape their worldview?
  - Do young people feel that the education system is preparing them?
  - What are their hopes of forming a family and how do they relate to their elders?
  - What media do they consume and trust the most?
3. How are young Italians reacting to and effecting change themselves?
  - Are they seeking to solve Italy's problems as active citizens?
  - Why are so many young people emigrating?

To answer these questions, the research team collaborated extensively with the British Council to adapt methodology and content at each stage of our work.

First, we conducted an in-depth review of the existing literature to identify the main issues affecting youth in Italy. We also surveyed existing research methods, including those employed in previous Next Generation reports. Then, based on this desk research, we designed and ran a nationally representative quantitative survey with 2,015 young people covering all Italian regions.<sup>4</sup> In this report we break down survey data by education level, gender, age and region. Where possible, this data is also compared to older Italians and young people in other EU countries.<sup>5</sup>

Next, in order to clarify our understanding of patterns identified in the survey results, we compared the quantitative evidence with results from five focus groups involving 50 young people. To reach some of the less-heard youth voices, we also carried out detailed interviews with foreign-born and LGBT+ young people and 13 interviews with civic society stakeholders. These included two organisations speaking on behalf of disabled youth, as well as various journalists, academics and politicians. Quotes from focus groups and interviews are interspersed throughout the report where relevant to add nuance. A full description of the methodology is provided in Appendix 1.

1 > Young people are defined here as those who are 18 to 30 years old to facilitate comparisons with Next Generation research in other countries. It is important to note, however, that Italian polls typically employ a broader 18 to 35 or 18 to 40 cohort, partly because major lifecycle milestones such as university graduations and marriage occur later in Italy than in most EU countries.

2 > Globally, between 1999 and 2018, only Japan's, Libya's, Dominica's, Greece's and Micronesia's economies have grown less than Italy's (World Bank, 2019a).

3 > Official statistics likely under-report emigration figures because Italians who register as emigrants lose healthcare and other welfare benefits.

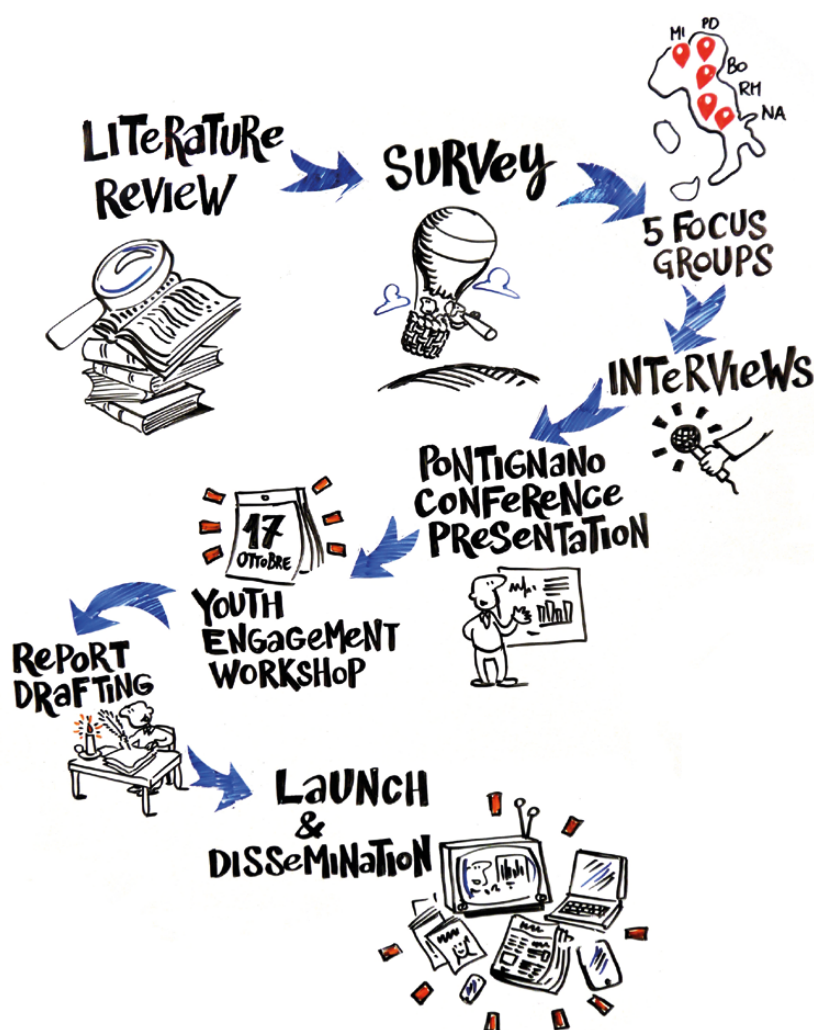
4 > It should be noted that our survey was conducted in the aftermath of the European elections.

5 > For simplicity, we compare young Italians where possible to their EU peers. This is possible because the Next Generation survey questionnaire was designed to feature items similar to those featured in EUTANES surveys, European Social Surveys and European Values Surveys.

The preliminary results of this research were presented and warmly received at the 27th Pontignano Conference, an annual gathering bringing together current and future leaders from the UK and Italy to address common challenges and develop networks and close relationships. Organised by the British Embassy in Italy, the British Council and Siena University, the conference has developed a network that includes ministers, prime ministers, presidents and leaders from the worlds of business and academia.

The data in this report reflects youth voices as accurately as is possible with modern research methods, as does the recommendations section, thanks to a one-day youth engagement workshop carried out by Matter Group with 40 young people and civic society stakeholders.

**Diagram 1:** The research journey



# > CHAPTER 1: YOUTH ATTITUDES

Next Generation research typically looks at how young people react to rapid change, but while the problems that affect young people the most in Italy are long-standing – a stagnant economy, an ageing population and unemployment – there has been a sudden reversal of fortunes of the mainstream parties that have presided over Italy as these issues have escalated. Young people were a major part of the 2018 electoral outcome, so this topic examines what prompted this political tipping point.

It is hard to trace any discontinuity in youth attitudes in previous research. Reports by Osservatorio Giovani, a think tank focusing on youth issues, are cited later in this report, but they do not show significant variations in youth attitudes over time. Certainly, while youth unemployment has been an issue in Italy since the 1970s, it has never been so divorced from the overall unemployment

rate as it is now. This is largely due to the persistence of Italy's dual labour market, which favours tenured employees and disincentivises young hires, as explained later in this chapter.

This chapter explores the state of young people in Italy today, and their views of the future. Italy's dysfunctional labour market is young people's chief concern about the future and is included in this chapter.

## Italy and the future

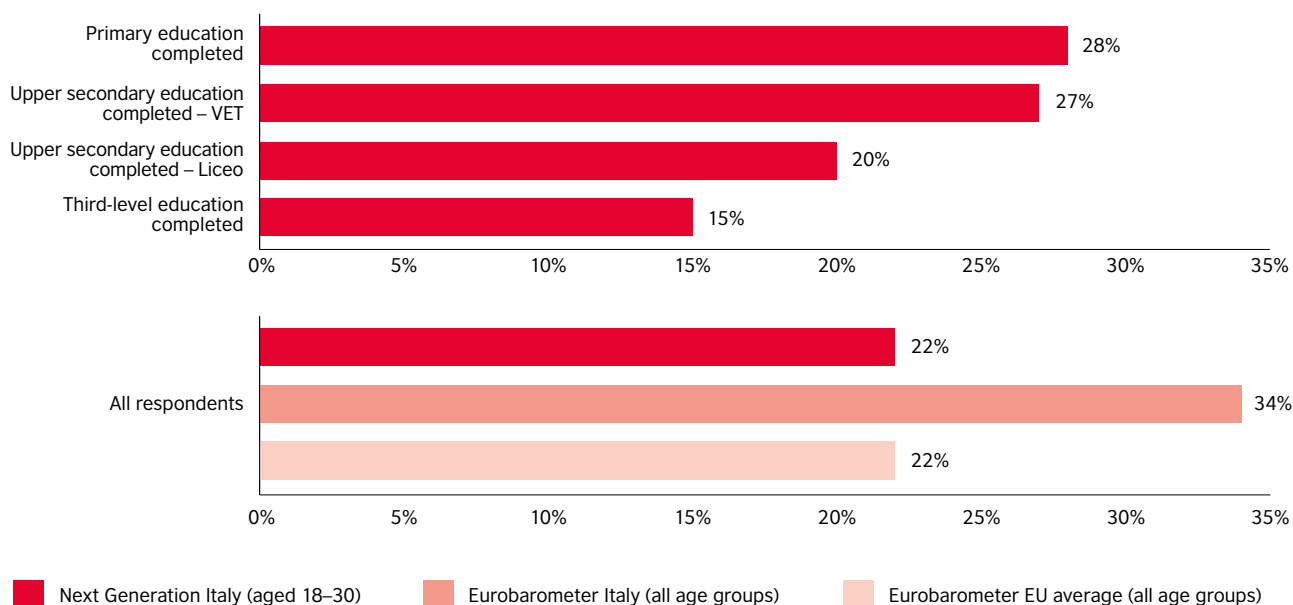
Overwhelmingly, the young people we spoke to described anxiety about the future. The focus group participants were split between acknowledging that living conditions are better than they were for their parents' generation and stating that young people's living conditions are poorer than they once were as a result of previous generations' largesse. We explore attitudes towards

this topic in terms of economic outlook, personal satisfaction and sense of agency.

## Economic outlook

Italian youth are substantially less confident in their country's future, at least in economic terms, than the country average. Only 22 per cent expect the economy to improve in the next 12 months versus 34 per cent of Italians in general, as measured by Eurobarometer. Italian youth's expectations for the economy are in line with the EU average. However, this greater pessimism sets in with those with higher education levels. Only 15 per cent of young people with a university degree expect the economy to improve, possibly because greater applied numeracy increases their awareness of macroeconomic forecasts.

**Figure 1:** Looking ahead, over the next 12 months, will the Italian economy improve? (Respondents answering 'improve a lot' or 'somewhat', by education level; comparisons with older Italians and EU peers)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019. External source: Eurobarometer, 2019a.

Indeed, young people's perceptions generally reflect present and future macroeconomic trends. Italy's GDP has not yet recovered to pre-crisis levels (World Bank, 2019a). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts that the annual percentage growth of real GDP in Italy between 2019 and 2020 will be only 0.5 per cent (IMF, 2019).

*Italy is an old country, once there were people who retired at 40, and today we are paying the price. Things were too easy before and are too difficult now.*

Lorenzo, 30, M, Milan

Long-term growth prospects are limited by Italy's demographic profile. Both by median age and population under the age of 14, Italy is the second-oldest country in Europe (after Germany) and the fifth oldest in the world (CIA, 2019). As of 2018, only 13.3 per cent of the

population is aged 14 or younger. Only four countries globally have a lower percentage of children (World Bank, 2019b). 21.4 per cent of the population is over 65 and 6.4 per cent is over 80 years old (World Health Organization, 2015). Young people aged 20 to 29 accounted for only ten per cent of the population in 2018 (OECD, 2019b). This data generally does not account for surging youth emigration rates discussed later in this report and regional disparities due to internal migration from southern to northern regions.

### Personal satisfaction

*The advantage of being young? Hope. Maybe things will change for the better sooner or later, in general, starting from the fact that I personally believe in myself.*

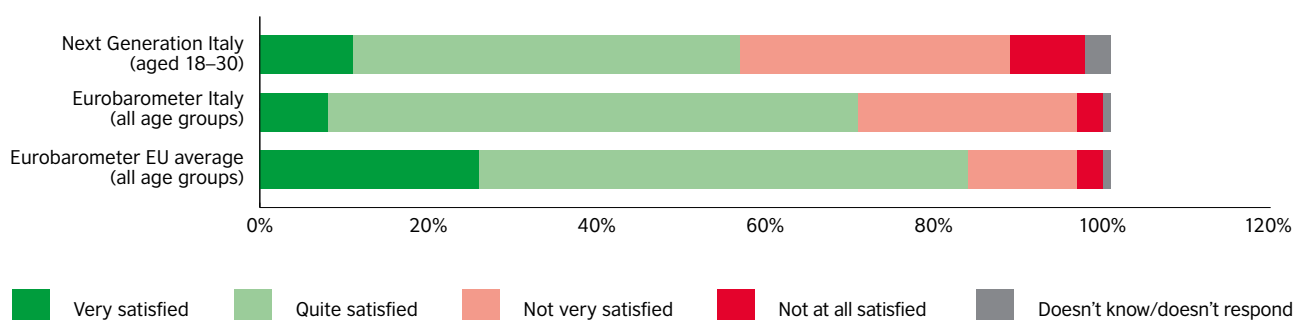
Elisabetta, 30, F, Milan

Despite this context, 57 per cent of Italian youth are very or fairly satisfied with their lives, although this figure is lower than the average for all age groups (71 per cent) and the EU average (84 per cent). The percentage of young respondents that are very satisfied is similar to the Italian average of all age groups, respectively 11 per cent and eight per cent. However, the percentage is much lower than the EU average (26 per cent). Young Italians seem far more aware of a generalised discontent among their peers.

*Young people have time on their side, but all the laws around us do nothing for new generations.*

Tani, 26, F, Bari

**Figure 2:** On the whole, are you satisfied with the life you lead? (Comparisons with older Italians and EU peers)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019. External source: Eurobarometer, 2019b.

Seventy per cent of young people believe the quality of life for 20-something-year-olds is bad or very bad. This discrepancy between their perceptions of themselves and of their peers is common in polling research. One interpretation is that societal perceptions may be overblown due to media narratives that overemphasise the challenges faced by young people. Macroeconomic indicators such as youth unemployment do not typically capture the informal sector (ILO, 2017), which was estimated in 2017 to account for up to 12.1 per cent of Italy's GDP (ISTAT, 2019b). On the other hand, self-perceptions might be overly optimistic. When presented with this data at our youth engagement workshop, young people suggested that many respondents may not wish to admit to their own discouragement in a questionnaire.

Self-perceived satisfaction is highly correlated with regional differences. Only 43 per cent of young Italians in the South report being satisfied versus 73 per cent of young Italians in the North-West. This is probably driven at least in part by local economic conditions. 35 per cent of young southern Italians describe living in a town or city with a strong economy, versus 68 per cent in the North-West.

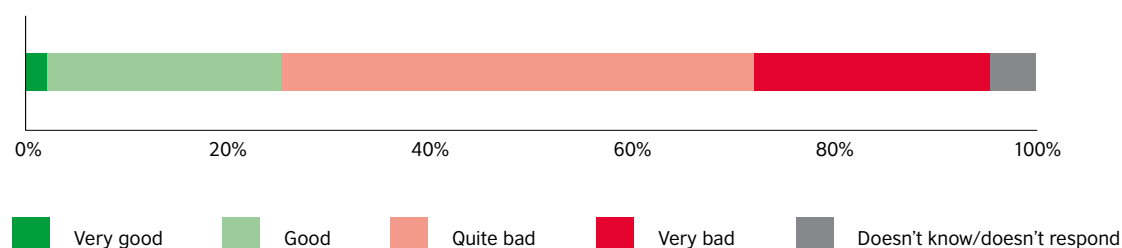
These perceptions mirror reality. Italy has historically been characterised by large socio-economic and cultural regional differences dating back to the pre-unification period (Malanima & Daniele, 2007). Generally, economic conditions are significantly worse in the South. Across most survey questions, in the south of Italy youth perceptions around topics such as employment and social engagement tend to be more negative. Even more so than in the past, northern Italy drives economic growth and features a less conservative set of values. Young people here were generally more likely to display positive attitudes for many of our survey questions.

Life satisfaction is strongly correlated with occupational status. 73 per cent of young Italians with a job are either very or quite satisfied with their life, while only 41 per cent of unemployed people are. Unsurprisingly, according to Eurostat, youth unemployment rates are far higher in southern Italy than in the North (Eurostat, 2019a). Four regions in southern Italy have among the highest youth unemployment record across EU countries (Eurostat, 2014). There is substantial evidence that this is the main driver of recent increases in Italy's internal migration patterns. Since the 2008 recession, an estimated 1.3 million people have left southern Italy for the North (Bonifazi & Heins, 2017).

*Young people are better educated and have solid values but have few opportunities in a society which is struggling in many ways. Italy ranks poorly among industrialised countries for social mobility: from one generation to another, children inherit not only the (possible) family assets, but also education, the type of employment and income. [...] The 'social elevator' is broken or, at least, very defective, as happens in many other countries, but in Italy this is more evident, as emerges from an OECD study. There are 'sticky floors' that prevent people from climbing, but also 'sticky ceilings', where opportunities accumulate and are passed down from father to son (less frequently to daughters). In the middle, the middle classes are those that risk the most.*

Maria Cristina Pisani, President,  
Forum Nazionale dei Giovani

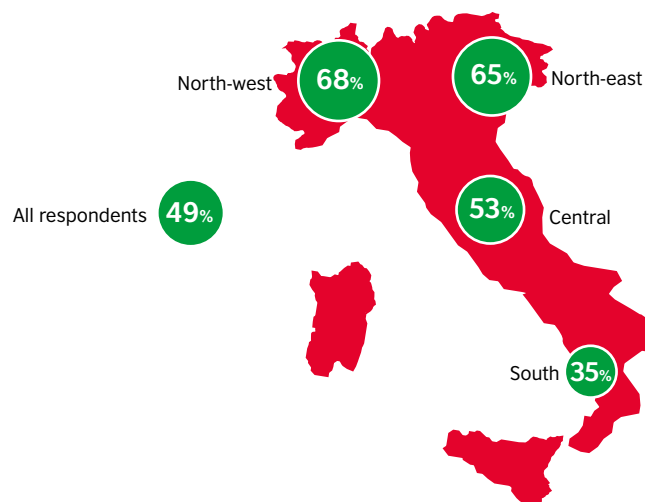
**Figure 3:** Can you tell me how you generally judge the standard of living of a 20-something-year-old Italian?



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

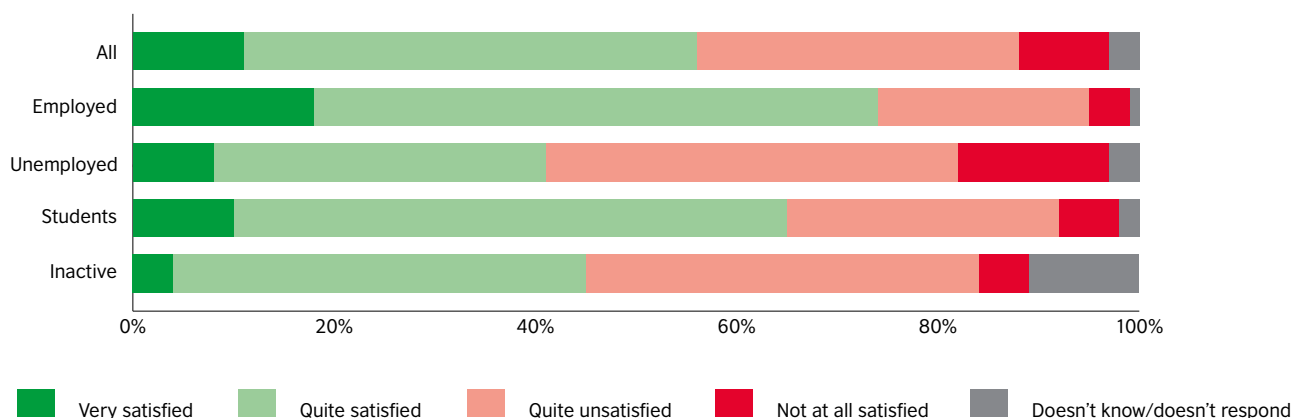
**Figure 4:** Are you satisfied with the economic situation in your city of residence?  
(Respondents answering 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied', by region)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**Figure 5:** How satisfied are you with your current life?

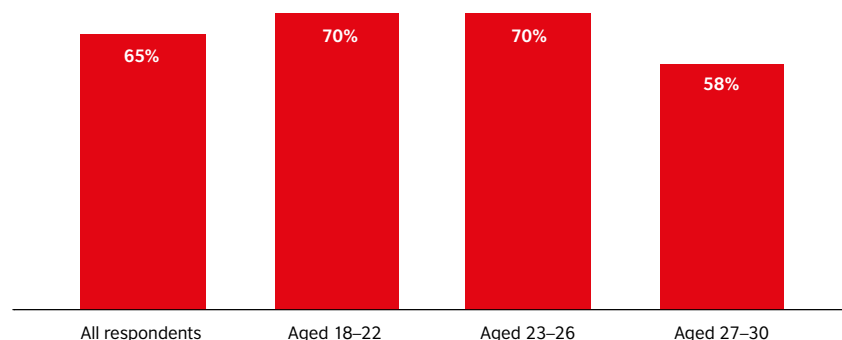


Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**Figure 6:** Some people think they can decide and freely choose how things should go in their lives. Others, on the other hand, believe that what they do does not actually have a great effect on how things will go in the future for them. Do you believe you have freedom of decision and choice about your future?

(Respondents answering 'a lot of freedom' or 'enough freedom', by age group)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

### Sense of agency

Sixty-five per cent of young Italians believe they have a say in determining their future.

This belief declines sharply with age, both in our survey and in conversations with focus group participants. Young Italians aged 27 to 30 years old are 12 percentage points less likely to believe they have control over their own lives than people aged 18 to 26. A similar discrepancy is evident in other survey questions, including the one on personal satisfaction. This indicates that significant personal changes occur as young Italians approach their 30s.

The young people we spoke to were candid about their sense of discouragement but also expressed pride in their personal resilience.

*We are young, and we can clearly decide our lives for ourselves. It is not like 20 years ago, when you were looking for a permanent job and you knew you would do that for life. Today you can change and choose to do what you like – maybe not in Italy, but you can do it elsewhere.*

Maddalena, 22, F, Rome

*When you are young you can have more experiences; you have a chance to see more of the world and travel around more. My experiences, even when negative, have strengthened me.*

Jessica, 25, F, Milan

### Employment

Across all the focus groups, participants highlighting a low sense of agency tended to be older and frustrated with their first experiences with the job market. Italians enter the labour market later than in most other OECD countries, on average at age 25 (OECD, 2015), potentially explaining why sense of agency might decrease over time.

Attitudes towards labour and employment are particularly significant in this report because experience in the job market appears to be one of the main drivers of young people's attitudes towards a variety of topics. During the focus groups and interviews, employment conditions were consistently the most hotly discussed topic.

*I think it depends on how people are valued compared to the past. They think that because I am young, I can work for free. While if a person is older than me, they worry that he has a family to support, so he has an advantage over me from this point of view.*

Adriano, 23, M, Rome

With some notable exceptions, the young people we spoke to rarely discussed their experience with employment in a positive light. Recurring themes included scarcity of work, unrealistic job requirements, lack of meritocracy, illegal contracting practices and low pay.

This is unsurprising. The rate of youth unemployment peaked at 34 per cent in 2014 and stabilised at around 23 per cent in 2018. In the same year, 28.9 per cent of young people were not in education, employment or training (NEET), the highest rate in Europe, followed by Greece (26.8 per cent) and Bulgaria (20.9 per cent). The EU average stood at 16.5 per cent (Eurostat, 2019b).

*It is not a positive experience; it is designed to make young people hate work. We are seen as slaves.*

Alex, 19, M, Padua

*Impossible hours of work and they also want experience; they rely on the fact that if you go away there are a thousand others waiting for your place, ready to work at conditions that weren't good for you. Unacceptable hours of work are required, and they also require experience from young people.*

Ivano, 26, M, Milan

For those currently employed, the main complaint voiced by young people was contractual arrangements. Italy essentially has a dual labour market with a majority of young people alternating between freelance contracts (many of them illegal) and fixed-term contracts with no benefits, while older people are more likely to have been hired on well-paid, unionised, open-ended contracts and are unlikely to leave their posts until retirement.<sup>6</sup> The share of employed youth with temporary contracts is 16 percentage points higher in Italy than the EU average (Eurostat, 2018).

*It used to be easier to get an open-ended contract. Now you get offered apprenticeships, internships and so on.*

Maria, 26, Milan

*It is necessary to facilitate access to the job market. I cannot do dozens of internships hoping to get a job. In this way young people are being exploited.*

Giuseppe, 25, M, Padua

Discriminatory hiring practices are a major cause of concern. Many of the young women we spoke to described being asked during job interviews whether they planned on getting pregnant.

*If I say I'm getting married, they won't even give me a job interview.*

Elisabetta, 30, F, Milan

*I'm talking about personal experiences. Female colleagues in their 30s who are being asked if they have a boyfriend, what they are going to do and so on. I [am] the same age, but I don't get asked these questions.*

Andrea, 30, M, Milan

Building a family and working was perceived as a trade-off by many, in part due to the absence or cost of childcare services. Indeed, Italy's female labour participation rate stands at 40 per cent, the lowest in the EU (World Bank, 2019c). The young people we spoke to described workforce discrimination as a much broader issue affecting various groups. Foreign-born Italian youth were outspoken about employer biases during hiring processes, describing Italian employers not acknowledging degrees obtained outside the EU. The civic society leaders we spoke to who work on disability advocacy observed that recent legislation has been impactful in terms of getting more disabled youth into jobs, partly through quotas, but Italian firms remain culturally wary of diverse hires.

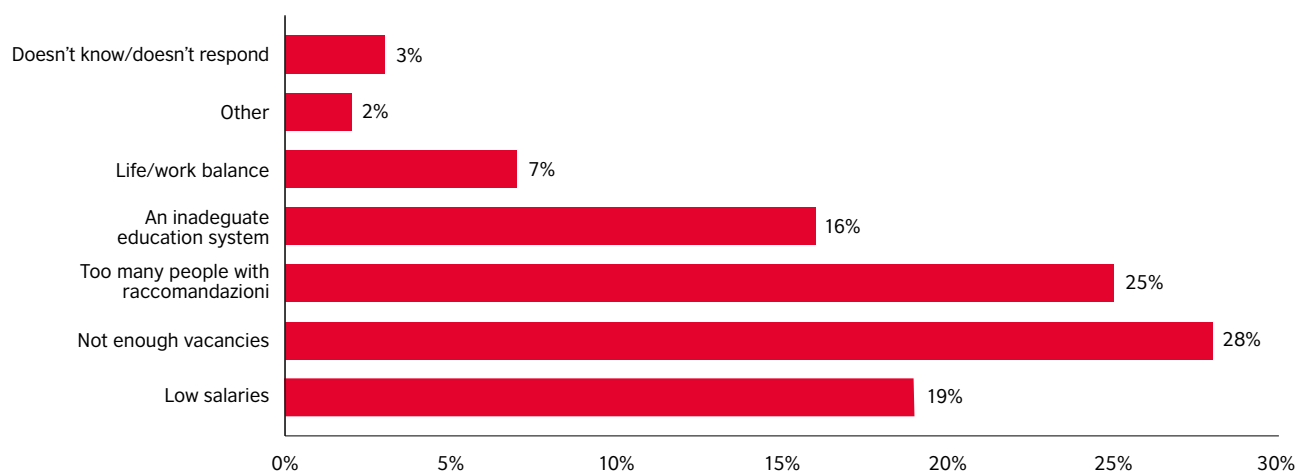
*In recent decades, our country has made important progress on the issue of the rights of people with disabilities. But social and legal achievements do not always go hand in hand with improving practical living conditions. There are still many cultural and physical barriers that prevent disabled people from living a fully dignified life.*

Luca Pancalli, President, the Italian Paralympic Committee

Our survey questions on employment focused on the most frequently voiced concern by young people: the obstacles and success factors in obtaining and retaining an adequate job.

6 > Italy's dual labour market is an extensively documented phenomenon. See Garibaldi and Taddei (2013), Piore (1980), Dell'Aringa and Lucifora (2000), Barbieri et al. (2014), and Barbieri and Stefani (2008).

**Figure 7:** Can you indicate what the greatest obstacles are for a person to obtain a job that matches his or her expectations? (Top two obstacles, percentages are normalised)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

## Obstacles

A plurality of young Italians, 28 per cent, see a lack of jobs as one of their top two concerns, followed by 25 per cent identifying the excessive use of raccomandazioni, i.e. the practice of abusing one's hiring powers based on favouritism.<sup>7</sup> Low wages and an inadequate school system were cited by 19 per cent and 16 per cent of young Italians respectively.

## Success factors

Qualitative work confirmed this perception of the main obstacles, though many of the young people consulted expressed a great degree of self-belief and confidence in their ability to accomplish their goals through perseverance and entrepreneurship.

*There are so many young people who pursue their dream tenaciously and resolutely through adequate education and are willing to study and work at the same time. At the end of the day, I choose to hope and believe the courage and determination of our young men and women will prove stronger*

*than all the difficulties they face. [...] I like to think that the keys to success are always and in any case merit and valour.*

Mara Carfagna, Former Minister for Equal Opportunities

Interestingly, only 16 per cent of young Italians listed raccomandazioni as a success factor, significantly fewer than the 25 per cent who view the practice as an obstacle. Raccomandazioni are often thought of as a central southern Italian custom. Yet our data reveals that southern Italians are as likely as their peers in other parts of the country to attribute significant importance to raccomandazioni. This could be due to inaccurate self-reporting or may reflect the steep decline in the abundance of public sector jobs, especially in the South, for which raccomandazioni were most frequently used.

Perhaps young people simply believe that, despite their many concerns, Italian workplaces are ultimately meritocratic. 28 per cent of young Italians believe that having a good education is the most important requisite for finding a

job that fits their expectations. The second leading factor for finding a good job is knowing a foreign language (26 per cent of respondents). A vocal minority of focus group participants expressed faith that they could succeed through talent and hard work.

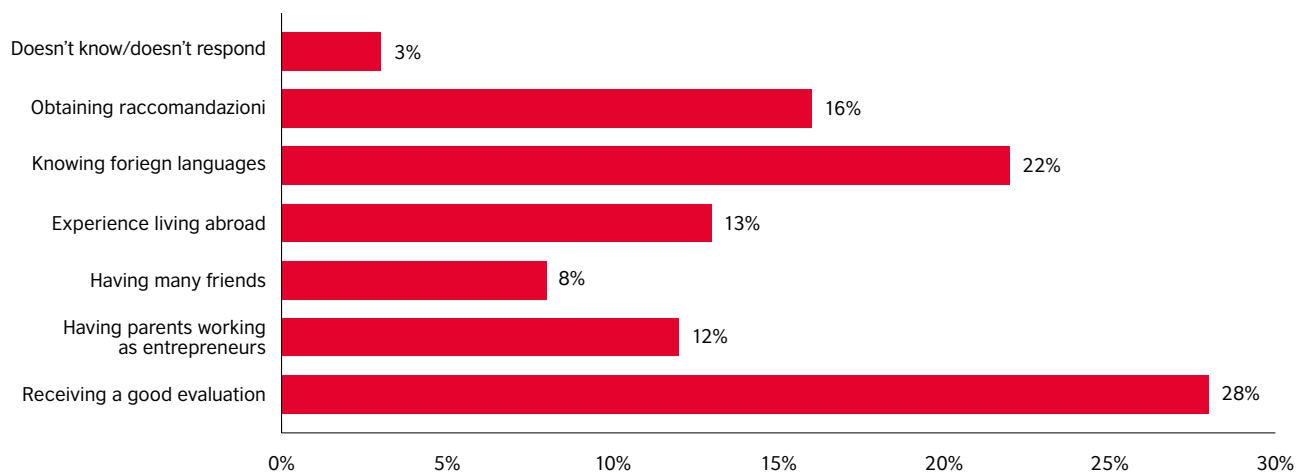
These beliefs vary significantly by age, although not by region and gender. 27- to 30-year-olds are five percentage points more likely to answer raccomandazioni or having many friends, five percentage points less likely to answer having a good education, and six percentage points less likely to answer knowing a foreign language when asked what the most important requisite for finding a job is. The focus group conversations echoed this, with older participants and those with job experience expressing the most frustration.

*Employers today must try to find people who can best be exploited and paid less.*

Emanuele, 27, M, Bari

<sup>7</sup> > Raccomandazioni is a commonly used word in Italy, with negative connotations. However, definitions can range from the English equivalent of a normal recommendation letter to the manipulation of a civil service exam to secure jobs for political acolytes.

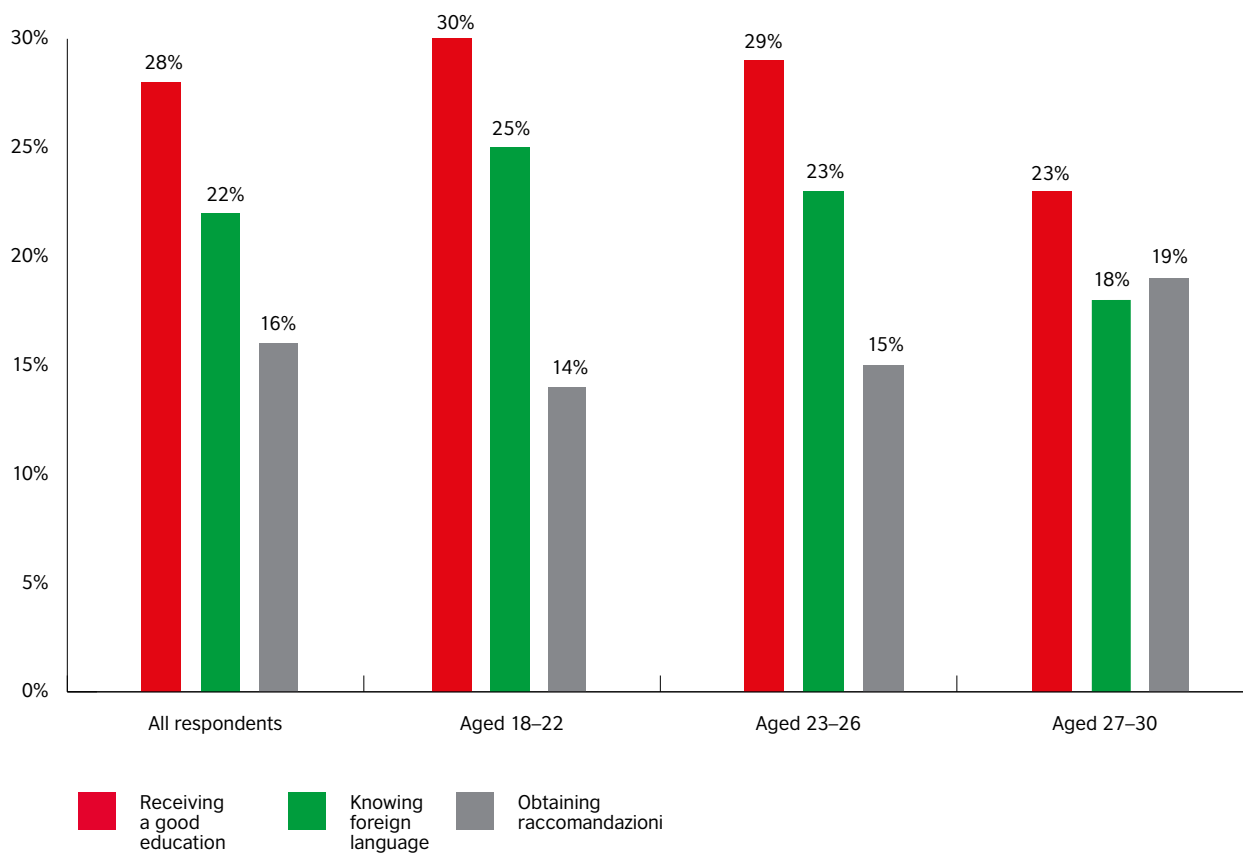
**Figure 8:** Can you indicate what can help a person to obtain a job matching his or her expectations?  
(Top two success factors, percentages are normalised)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**Figure 9:** Can you indicate what can help a person to obtain a job matching his or her expectations? (By age group)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**‘The advantage of being young?  
Hope. Maybe things will change  
for the better sooner or later, in  
general, starting from the fact  
that I personally believe in myself.’**





## > CHAPTER 2: YOUTH INFLUENCES

The results presented in the previous chapter show how young people still believe education to be the main way to access good jobs. Yet Italy's education system is quite traditional compared to other EU countries: oral examinations are still an integral part of assessments; schools largely lack internet connectivity; and teaching practices emphasise theory over practice. A system that has not changed much in the past decades is now reckoning with a generation of young people facing a transformed labour market, requiring new soft skills such as flexibility and empathy, and hard skills such as coding.

Family life has not changed much in the past few decades either in Italy. This report cites research highlighting the endurance of the traditional family model that characterises Italian life. Yet young people are exposed to alternative models more so than at any point in the past. The Church's influence has declined. Young Italians are travelling more than ever thanks to EU mobility and accessing a diverse range of media.

Italy's media offering has changed significantly compared to previous generations. Until the 1980s, Italy's media was still largely state-owned or controlled by corporate conglomerates and political parties and, in any case, conservative. This generation came of age in the heyday of private television, which did not exist until the mid-1980s. The youngest Italians we spoke to grew up in a world where social media was already prevalent. Never have young Italians been exposed to so many different worldviews as they are now.

Education, family and the media play crucial roles in influencing the very same youth attitudes explored in this research. This chapter explores how young people view these institutions, as well as how they might themselves shape them in future.

### Education

Discussions on the education system prompted mixed reactions from our sample of young Italians. Many expressed great pride in having made it through challenging exams and expressed admiration for the unique emphasis placed on culture by the Italian system. 77 per cent of young Italians are happy with the education they received.

*I attended the liceo classico.<sup>8</sup> I had no contact with the job market. My opinion on my schooling is quite positive, but if there had been more opportunities it would have been better.*

Maria, 26, F, Milan

Once more, however, views on their own education clash with perceptions of the system as a whole, which are significantly more negative. This paradox is similar to that explored in the previous chapter on personal satisfaction. Therefore, we chose in this chapter to focus on perceptions of the system.

*The education system is old and slow. It does not reward excellence; it cuts the wings of those who want to grow. It is 50 years behind.*

Giampaolo, 28, M, Naples

*Something is wrong. School should train you to find work, but this does not happen.*

Giulia, 26, F, Padua

Forty-eight per cent of young Italians are satisfied with the education system. Forty-six per cent are unsatisfied. During the focus groups, many highlighted that the system does not prepare young people for work and seems disconnected from the issues of the modern world. Others lamented the prevalence of old-fashioned teaching practices.

This was frequently attributed to the school system's relative isolation from the outside world. Another plausible explanation could be the incentives and conditions faced by teachers themselves. Italy's teachers are the oldest in Europe,<sup>9</sup> meaning they are likely to have been trained at a time when students were facing a very different job market (Eurostat, 2017). Worryingly, during the 2016–17 school year, Italy's annual basic gross statutory salaries for full-time teachers in lower secondary public schools were €10,000 lower than the EU average and €30,000 lower than in Germany (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). Low salaries likely contribute to significant discouragement among Italy's teachers, sapping the energy required to open their classrooms to the world outside.

*The system is valid compared to other countries, but there is no connection with the job market, what you study is not useful, it does not make you suitable for the job market.*

Simone, 27, M, Milan

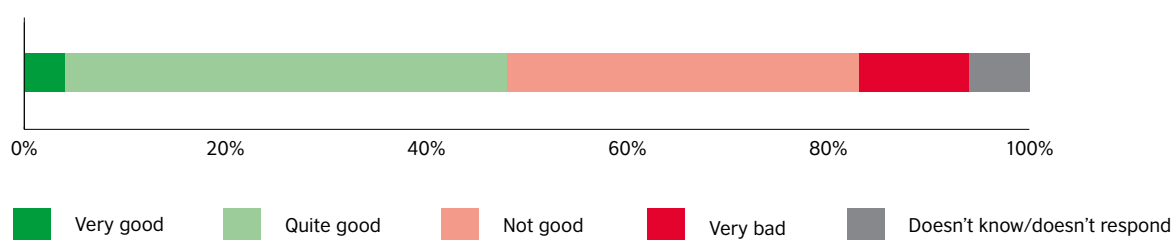
In recent years, remarkable progress has been made on various fronts thanks to education reforms that strengthened vocational training in secondary schooling and encouraged the adoption of innovative teaching practices (OECD, 2017a). Nonetheless, expenditure on education, as a percentage of GDP, decreased from 4.4 per cent in 2008 to 3.9 per cent in 2017, making Italy one of the countries with the lowest level of government spending on education in Europe (Eurostat, 2019c).

*I noticed that the university provides an education, but then you are not ready for the workplace.*

Lorenzo, 22, M, Rome

8 > In Italy's education system, *licei* are general upper secondary schools, as opposed to *Istituti Tecnici*, upper secondary schools providing vocational training. The *liceo classico* curriculum emphasises humanities including ancient Greek and Latin.

9 > 36 per cent of teachers in EU primary and secondary schools were 50 years old or older, while in Italy, 57 per cent of teachers fell into this age group, the most in the OECD EU. Nine per cent of teachers in the EU were over 60 years old, with the highest share in this age group found again in Italy (18 per cent).

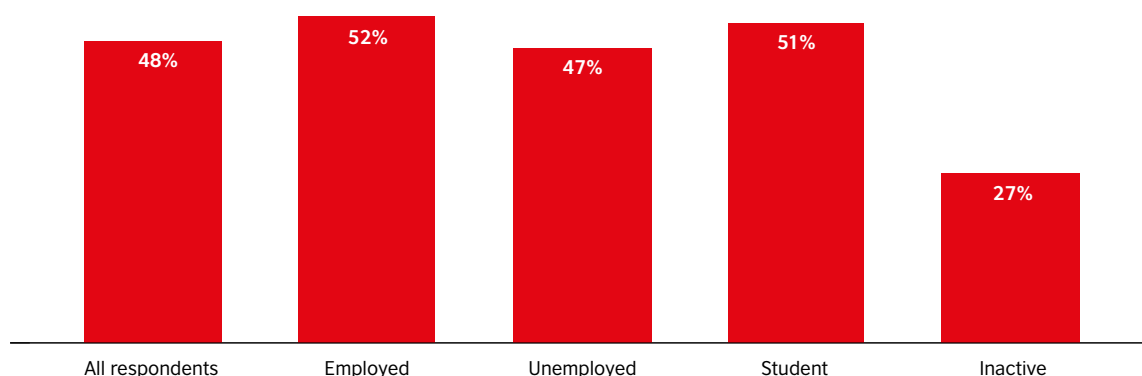
**Figure 10:** Think of the state of the school system in Italy today. Can you give me an opinion on its quality?

Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**Figure 11:** Think of the state of the school system in Italy today. Can you give me an opinion on its quality?

(Respondents answering 'very good' or 'quite good', by employment status)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

Several focus group participants also expressed frustration with the third-level education system, particularly the overemphasis on theory compared to a perceived greater stress on practical skills in universities in other EU countries.

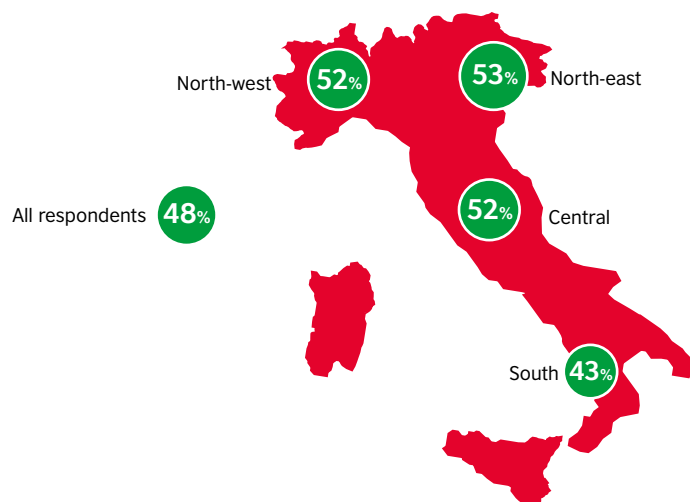
*[In other countries] universities are better organised. We are far behind, for example, in terms of laboratories and other facilities. In Italy they are practically absent.*

Emilia, 23, F, Rome

*The relationship with the professors is profoundly different [in other countries]. For example, I have a friend who went to a professor because he was experiencing a moment of stress, and he organised a personalised plan for him to take an exam. Something that has never been seen in Italy.*

Marco, 25, M, Rome

**Figure 12:** Think of the state of the school system in Italy today. Can you give me an opinion on its quality? (Respondents answering 'very good' or 'quite good', by region)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

Graduates we spoke to expressed pride at having completed degrees they perceived as being more challenging than elsewhere due to a lack of support from academics and poor administration. These factors might help explain why only 22.1 per cent of Italians are university graduates, the second-lowest percentage in Europe (after Greece). Satisfaction with the education system is similar among the employed, the unemployed and students. Unsurprisingly, it is 21 percentage points lower among young people defined as NEET.

Likely because to their precarious condition, many of these NEET young Italians hold negative attitudes towards the school system. Part of their dissatisfaction with the education system might be attributable to what the OECD has recently diagnosed as a case of skills mismatch. While this is certainly due to an education system that is still improving how it prepares young people for work, the OECD's report highlights that large and mid-sized companies systemically fail to invest in skills. The OECD's most recent PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult

Competencies) metrics on adult skills indicate that Italy is struggling more than most other advanced economies to make the transition towards a thriving and dynamic skills-based society. It estimates that about 21 per cent of workers in Italy are under-qualified for the job they have to perform. Despite the low average levels of competence, there is also a skills surplus, with over-qualified workers representing 18 per cent of the Italian workforce. Moreover, 35 per cent of employees work in fields unrelated to their studies (OECD, 2016).

Young people in the South are considerably less satisfied than average with the school system, roughly ten per cent less so than their peers in central and northern Italy. This dissatisfaction may be due to the worse economic and labour conditions in the South, which lower the returns on education. It is also consistent with the significantly poorer academic performance in Italian, mathematics and English regularly found in the South in annual standardised tests run by INVALSI, Italy's public agency for the evaluation of the education system (INVALSI, 2019).

## Family life

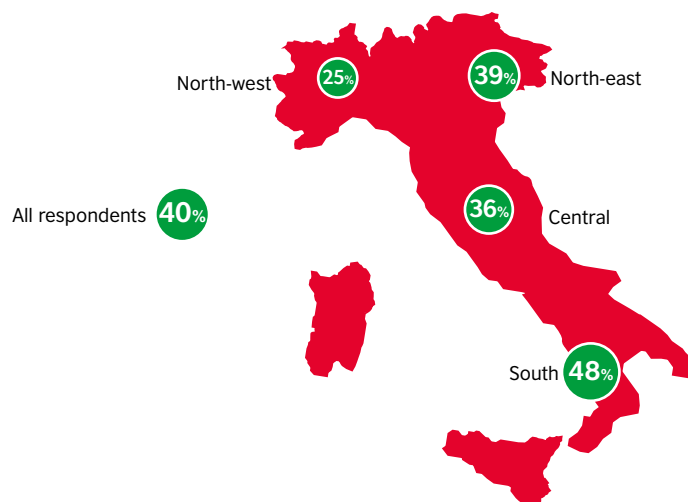
Young people were ambivalent when talking about family. Many described great closeness with their parents, but bitterness about how job instability prevents them from forming a family of their own. Indeed, in 2017 Italy's fertility rate stood at 1.32 children per woman, among the world's lowest. Moreover, 458,151 births were registered in 2017, 120,000 fewer than in 2008 (ISTAT, 2018).

*When there was more labour demand, it was easier to realise one's goals and build a family.*

Andrea, 27, M, Milan

These difficulties are strongest for LGBT+ youth, who told us that new, unconventional family models are not as widely accepted as they are in other EU countries they have visited. Civic society stakeholders representing disabled youth agreed that Italy lacks social welfare safeguards to enable disabled people to form families.

**Figure 13:** Are you satisfied with your family's financial situation?  
(Respondents answering 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied', by region)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

*Although considerable progress has been made in recent years to eliminate some cultural barriers, I believe there are still many obstacles to overcome in order to be able to achieve an independent life for people with disabilities. I am thinking of the reduced possibilities of access to work, but also of obstacles linked to the prejudices of those who believe that people with disabilities cannot aspire to a life condition similar to that of everyone else.*

Alessandro Manfredi, President, League for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

These observations are largely corroborated by demographic data. In 2017, the crude marriage rate in Italy was only 3.2 per cent versus an OECD average of almost five per cent.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in 2015, the youth dependency ratio was ten percentage points lower in Italy than the OECD average of 30 per cent (OECD, 2017b).<sup>11</sup>

### Satisfaction levels

Only 40 per cent of young Italians are satisfied with their family's financial circumstances,<sup>12</sup> a good proxy for intrafamilial solidarity (Young et al., 1995; Gilman, 2003). This is relevant because many young Italians we spoke to in the focus groups openly admitted that they will, or already do, accept financial support from their family to form families of their own.

*If I didn't have the financial security [given by my parents] I probably wouldn't even have had the chance to enrol in the university.*

Emilia, 23, F, Rome

*If you don't have a family that supports you financially, you have to roll up your sleeves.*

Ivano, 26, M, Milan

Oddly, young people in northern Italy are the least satisfied with their family's finances, despite benefiting from a much stronger economy. One potential explanation is that better economic conditions are also associated with higher aspirations and, as a result, a greater potential for disappointment.

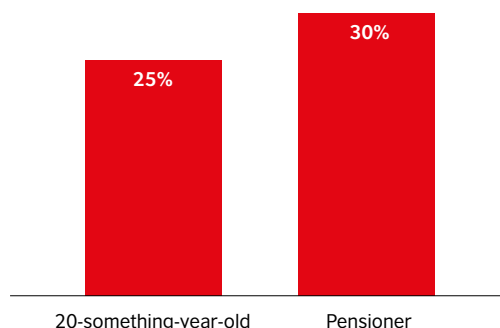
Young Italian women were 11 percentage points less likely than men to report being very or quite satisfied with their family's financial status, a greater difference than that seen for other survey questions. Research has highlighted the persistence of patriarchal family models in Italy, suggesting that young women might be more involved with family life than men and therefore more likely to be concerned with family finances (Toffanin, 2011).

10 > The crude marriage rate is the number of marriages occurring among the population of a given geographical area during a given year, per 1,000 mid-year total population of the given geographical area during the same year.

11 > The youth dependency ratio is defined as the estimated number of children and young people (aged 0 to 20) per 100 people of working age (aged 20 to 64).

12 > Based on demographic data, the vast majority of our sample has likely not formed a family of their own. This question should be interpreted as referring mainly to the families that raised our respondents.

**Figure 14:** In general, can you tell me how you judge the standard of living of an Italian pensioner? Can you tell me how you generally judge the standard of living of an Italian 20-something-year-old? (Respondents answering 'very good' or 'good')



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

### Older generations

The focus group participants described a sense of solidarity not only with their own elders but with older Italians in general, whom they see as suffering a profound set of challenges of their own. This was corroborated by survey data. When asked to consider the welfare of a 20-year-old and a retired person, 25 per cent of young people believed that the former enjoys good living conditions, versus 30 per cent who believed that the latter does.

This runs contrary to macroeconomic data on the topic. The OECD's *Pensions at a Glance* 2017 report found that in a sample of 35 OECD countries, Italy ranks sixth for the generosity of the pension system (OECD, 2017c). A recent Bank of Italy study found that in 2006, the average equivalised income for heads of households aged 40 or under equalled about €19,000, the same as that for heads of households aged 65 or above.

By 2016, the figure had remained stable for over-65-year-olds but shrunk to €16,000 for under-40-year-olds. During this period, wealth levels have remained stable for those aged 60 or above and declined for the rest of the population (Banca D'Italia, 2018).

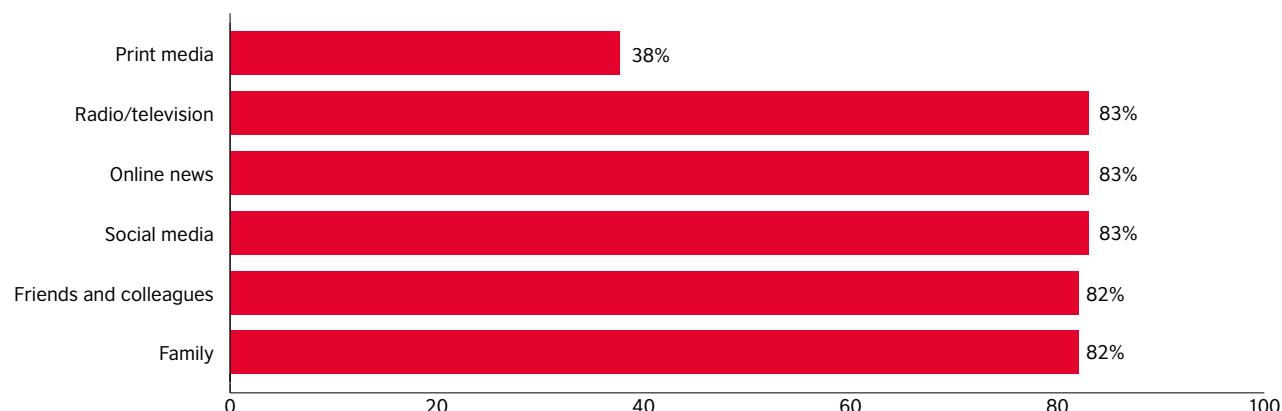
*Inequalities strongly characterise the condition of young people. [...] While 25 years ago poverty was concentrated among the elderly, today it is concentrated in youth.*

Enrico Giovannini, President, ASviS and former Minister of Labour and Social Policies

Young people's limited awareness of this strong intergenerational inequity may be due to Italy's tradition of strong familial solidarity. 62.6 per cent of Italians aged 18 to 34 live with at least one of their parents, versus only 48.1 per cent of their EU peers (ISTAT, 2019c). A recent poll commissioned by CGIL-SPI, a union

for retirees, found that 36 per cent of retirees spend part of their pension to support offspring or siblings, estimating total annual intrafamilial transfers at €10 billion (Fondazione Giuseppe di Vittorio - Tecné, 2019). Indeed, young people's economic status is strongly correlated with their parents. On average it takes five generations for the descendants of a low-income family to reach the average income. In northern European countries, it takes only two to three generations (OECD, 2018). Moreover, a recent study found that the current top-earning families among Italian taxpayers were already at the top socioeconomic ladder six centuries ago (Banca D'Italia, 2016).

**Figure 15:** People use different sources to know what happens in their own country and in the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you have used it in the past week to access information.



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

## Media

The media has a clear role in shaping youth attitudes on a variety of topics. We explore various forms of media use and the level of trust held in each source of information.

### Media audiences

Like their European peers, young Italians access a wide range of sources of information. A notable exception is the print media, which only 37 per cent of young Italians accessed at least once in the week prior to our survey, far less than elsewhere in Europe. The Autumn 2017 Eurobarometer survey reported that six in ten Europeans of all ages read the written press at least once a week (European Commission, 2017).

This largely mirrors the adult population. Italy has historically had low readership, particularly in the South (ISTAT, 2016). This is evident in our survey data, with only 34 per cent of southern Italians accessing print media versus 44 per cent and 41 per cent in the northern regions.

### Trust in media

A further reason behind the low engagement with print media is likely to be a lack of trust. While radio, television and online news are trusted by 28 per cent of young Italians, print media is trusted by only 20 per cent. It does not vary significantly by education level or other factors.

Part of Italian youth's low trust in printed media might be inherited. The Italian print media has historically been state-subsidised and, in many cases, strongly linked to political parties.

Another potential reason for the low level of trust in printed media is that reporting standards in Italy are upheld differently than in other parts of Europe. For instance, Italian media typically extrapolate and interpret freely when composing pull quotes, whereas European media, particularly in the anglosphere, strive to uphold a verbatim standard (Council of Europe, 1993).<sup>13</sup> While this practice is normal in Italy, it raises eyebrows when it is exposed

internationally. A 2018 article on EU austerity policy appearing in *La Repubblica*, Italy's most widely circulated daily, recently prompted a formal denial by the German government (Capone, 2018) for misquoting Chancellor Angela Merkel as saying: 'We cannot allow Italy to continue ignoring common rules, we should treat it like Poland on matters of rule of law' (*La Repubblica*, 2018). Corrections are rarely published. Data sources are seldom quoted. These concerns are not, however, unique to print media. Standards are similar on online media as well.

Radio, television and online news sites are the sources of information most trusted by young Italians. Online news is disproportionately trusted by the most highly educated, possibly reflecting confidence in their ability to select trustworthy sources and interpret information. As in other EU countries, online news sources have grown steadily with time and tend to focus on younger, more tech-savvy audiences.

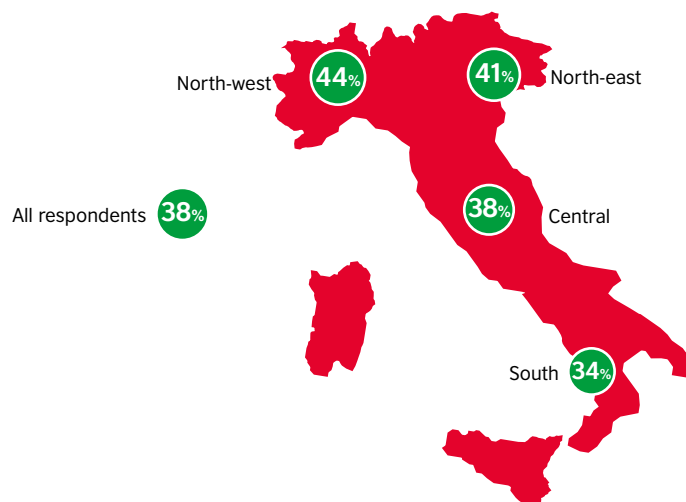
13 > Council of Europe Resolution 1003 (1993) on the Ethics of Journalism states that 'News headlines and summaries must reflect as closely as possible the substance of the facts and data presented'.

*It is undeniable that there is a dark side of social media, of the internet, as in all things. However, I believe that social media has given young people around the world an extraordinary opportunity to express themselves and to dialogue. Therefore, I see many more positive than negative aspects. It is an extraordinary instrument, but things do not end there. It is necessary to not only get informed, but also to take action, always.*

Paolo Petrocelli, Honorary President,  
Italian Youth Association for UNESCO

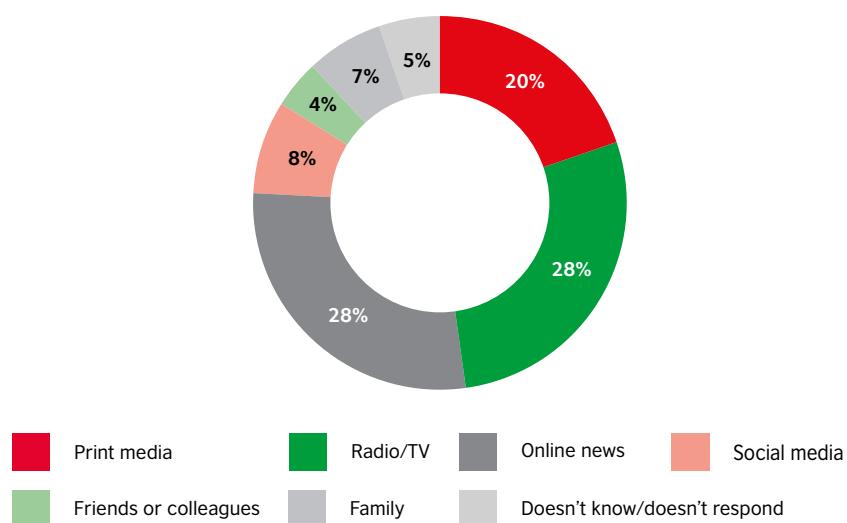
Paywalls are seldom used. Thus, financial considerations might also factor into young people's preference for online media. Interestingly, only eight per cent of young Italians trust social media as a source. This does not vary significantly by respondent type. The young people we spoke to in focus groups were aware of the rising trend of disinformation on social media.

**Figure 16:** Have you used print media to access information over the past week? (By region)



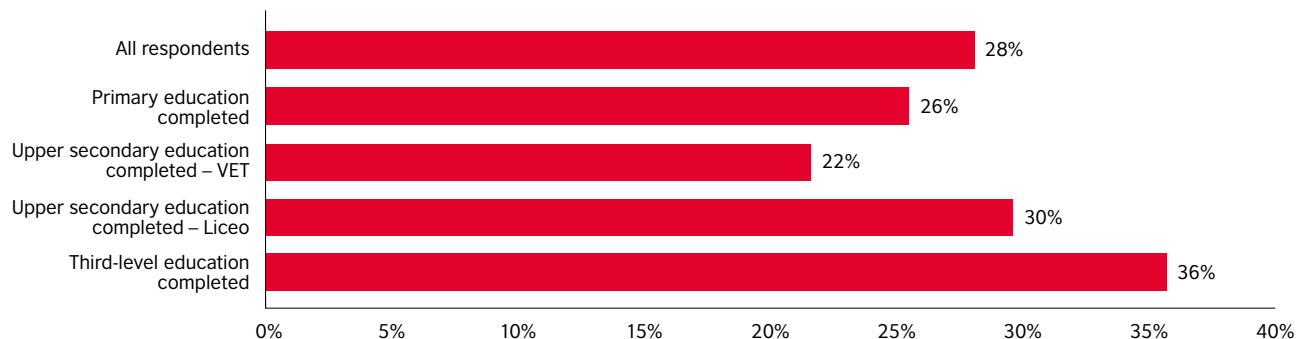
Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**Figure 17:** Can you tell me which of these sources you find most reliable?

Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**Figure 18:** Do you find online news reliable? (Percentage expressing trust, by education level)

Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

# > CHAPTER 3: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Italy's youth were once the protagonists of radical and at times violent political change. Italy's student protests in 1968 and 1977 were among the world's largest and politically consequential. Youth activism was at the heart of both Catholic politics and Italy's Communist Party – at the time the most successful in the West in terms of electoral results. Among the fringes of the radical left and ultra-right were pockets of young extremists that would terrorise the country well into the 1980s. The last rallying cries for mass political mobilisation by young people were the anti-globalisation and anti-war movements at the start of the 2000s. Since then, youth activism has gradually faded from relevance. This is somewhat surprising given the circumstances faced by young people.

Chapter 1 explored youth attitudes towards a changing Italy and found strong discouragement. Chapter 2 looked at the institutions that form those attitudes and found that young people feel let down by them. This chapter explores how young people react in practice to change and asks whether young people are likely to push for change the way their parents' and grandparents' generations did.

Thanks to EU integration and enhanced English language skills, this generation has access to more opportunities for emigration than any before. This chapter also asks whether leaving Italy is becoming an alternative to social engagement.

## Civic life

During the focus groups, young people were often reluctant to talk about their civic engagement, possibly because the group nature of these discussions might have led to political debate. Most described a sense of distance from party politics and reluctance to participate in other forms of engagement. Many described a sense of powerlessness that reflects the low sense of agency explored earlier in this report.

*Today it is hard to solve problems that have been existed for 50 years. These problems will never be solved. We have a history in Italy. We could never be like Denmark or Holland.*

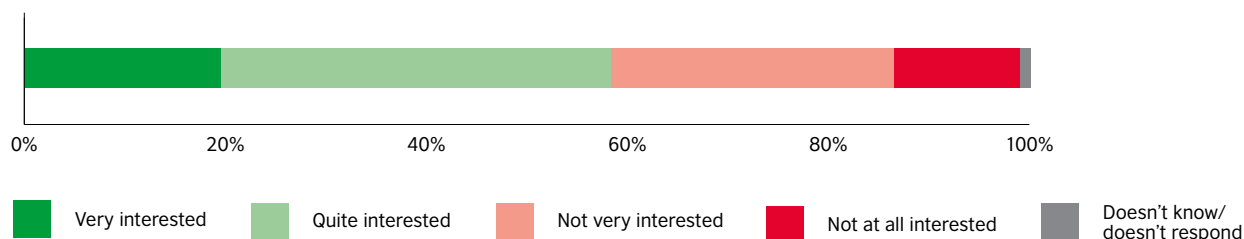
Marco, 29, M, Bari

We focus here on three dimensions of civic life: political participation, trust in institutions and social engagement.

## Political participation

In the 2018 general election, 66 per cent of young Italians voted. This is higher than the EU average for similar elections, but significantly lower than the percentage of Italians over the age of 30 who turned out at a rate of 73 per cent (European Parliament, 2018). In general, this trend is consistent with previous research. When interviewed in 2013, 71 per cent of young Italians said they had voted in an election over the past three years, against an EU average of 56 per cent (Eurobarometer, 2013). This may be limiting the political influence of young people, particularly given that young people are a uniquely low percentage of Italy's overall population. Indeed, 65 per cent of young people feel that the Italian system barely allows them, or does not allow them at all, to influence politics. Nonetheless, interest remains high. 60 per cent of young Italians reported some level of interest, although this may be due to the fact that this survey was carried out in the immediate aftermath of a contentious European election.

**Figure 19:** Now let's talk about politics, economy and society. To what extent would you say you are interested in politics?



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

Once more, this figure declines notably with age. Compared with the young Italians of other age groups within our sample, 27- to 30-year-olds are six percentage points less likely to be interested in politics. Furthermore, robust turnout rates do not necessarily reflect strong political preferences. 46 per cent of young people do not feel any affinity with any of Italy's political parties. When asked which political parties represent the interests of Italians aged 30 or under, 35 per cent did not answer or answered 'don't know'. This is in line with increasingly fluid voting behaviour reported in previous research by Quorum (Cavallaro et al., 2018). Our survey also captured political party preferences and found that a strong plurality of young people (38 per cent) support anti-establishment parties, including the Lega Nord, Movimento 5 Stelle, Fratelli D'Italia and Casa Pound Italia. However, young people seem untethered to party loyalty. The focus group participants, particularly those in Milan and Padova, rarely described endorsing these parties enthusiastically. Rather, their support often seemed centred on an appreciation for clear political messaging in contrast with the perceived opaqueness of mainstream parties.

### Trust in institutions

While many young Italians are interested in politics, fewer trust political parties and the political system in general. This was most evident in focus groups in Bari and Naples, areas with historically higher corruption levels (Del Monte & Papagni, 2006).

*Those in power no longer do good for the country. They care only about their interests.*

Ivan, 27, M, Bari

*They all seem to be on the same level. I don't understand anything about politics, but I don't trust politicians.*

Tiziana, 29, F, Bari

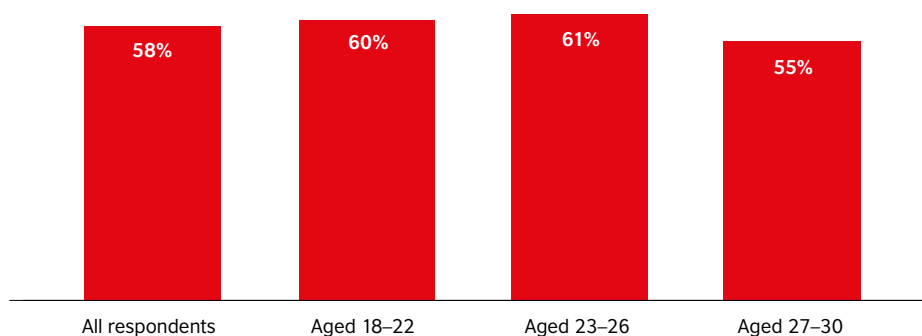
*It's a matter of corruption, our politics do not care about the common good. Things are different abroad, there are problems that have been solved.*

Priscilla, 30, F, Bari

While this is by no means unique to Italy, the extent of this issue is particularly acute. Political parties are trusted by only 20 per cent of young Italians. A greater percentage of young Italians have faith in trade unions (34 per cent), the Catholic Church (28 per cent) and the media (47 per cent).

Interestingly, the most trusted institution is the EU, at 54 per cent, despite an uptick in Euroscepticism in political discourse, chiefly among anti-establishment parties but, in many cases, among mainstream parties such as Forza Italia. Sixty-three per cent of young Italians who had completed third-level education had some or a lot of faith in the EU versus 50 per cent with lower secondary education or less. This is consistent with findings in recent research commissioned by Osservatorio Giovani, which found 37 per cent of young people with lower secondary education or less described themselves as not feeling like EU citizens at all, compared to only 16 per cent of university graduates in the same age group (Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo, 2019). Similar drop-offs occur among the unemployed and NEET groups.

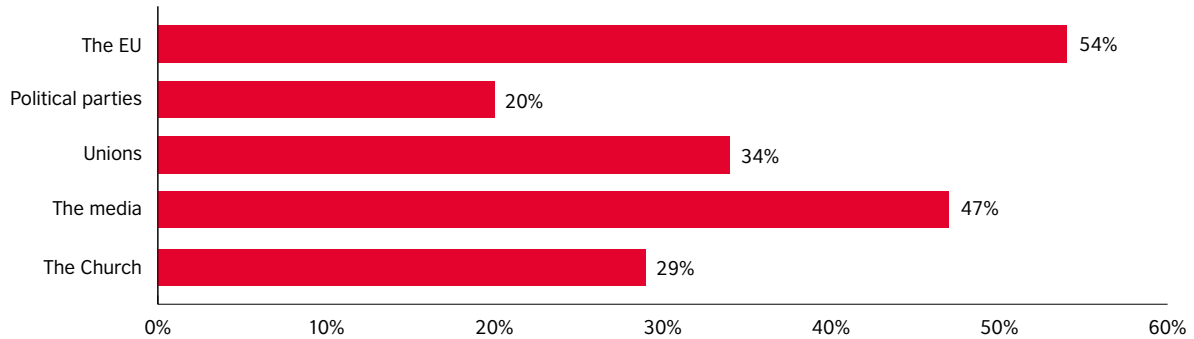
**Figure 20:** Now let's talk about politics, economy and society. To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? (Respondents replying 'very interested' or 'quite interested', by age group)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

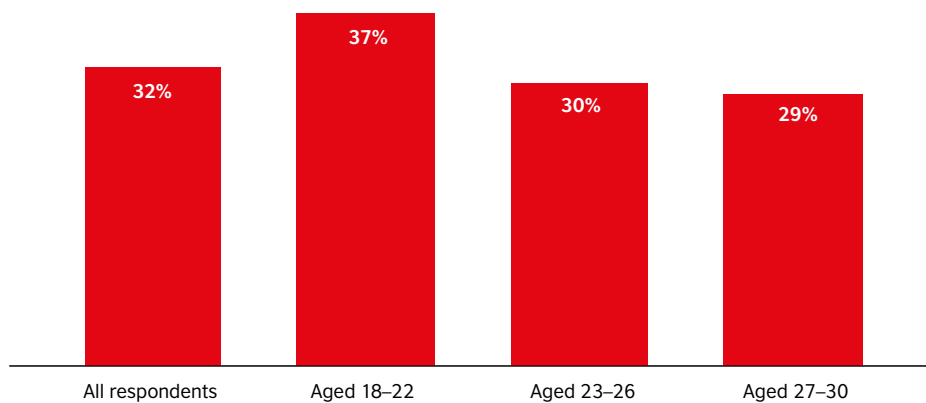
**Figure 21:** I will now mention a series of organisations and institutions. Could you tell me how much trust you have in each of them: a lot, enough, little, none? (Respondents replying 'a lot' or 'enough')



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

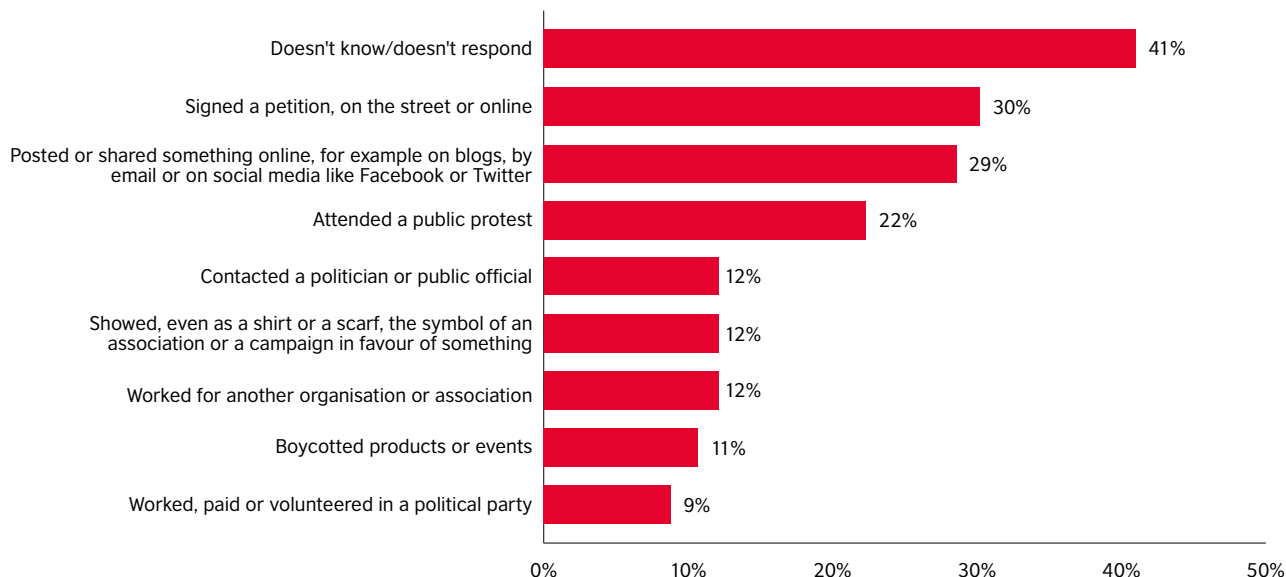
**Figure 22:** Could you tell me how much trust you have in political parties: a lot, enough, little, none? (Respondents replying 'a lot' or 'enough', by age group)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**Figure 23:** There may be different ways to try to improve things in Italy or to prevent them from getting worse. Have you done any of the following activities over the past 12 months?



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

Once more, faith in political parties declines with age. Those aged 23 years old or more are ten percentage points less likely to trust political parties than younger respondents. Trust in the EU varies significantly by education level.

### Social engagement

Political participation is of course only one of many forms of social engagement. While only 30 per cent or less of young Italians have engaged in any of the listed social engagement activities in the past 12 months, these figures are generally above the EU average (European Commission, 2018).

*Until a generation ago, young Italians were among the most politicised in the entire West. Young people today are very engaged in activities that are indirectly political, such as volunteering. This is a resource not only for society but also from a political perspective. But it would be necessary for the political system to know how to use this resource positively.*

Giovanni Lo Storto, Director-General, LUISS University

Nine per cent of young Italians have been involved in the activities of a political party versus only three per cent of their EU peers. Among the young people we spoke to, several described active involvement in political work, often for smaller political parties, despite being acutely aware of its challenges. However, these trends may be partly explained by the fact that this survey was carried out shortly after an election.

Work for civic society organisations and associations was, however, less popular than elsewhere in the EU, although this varies within Italy, with the North being more active. Other forms of participation are more common in Italy than elsewhere. Young Italians seem to prefer taking part in protests (22 per cent), engaging in online activism (29 per cent), or signing petitions (30 per cent). The focus group participants described carrying out these activities on a variety of topics, many of them quite specific and focusing on social inclusion and rights rather than on broader political issues.

*It makes a difference to protest.*

*We have seen how marching for the climate does not leave the citizens indifferent. We need to organise ourselves in the best way to be more effective. Being in small numbers does little or nothing. Even online petitions that bring together many supporters can make a difference.*

Anna, 22, F, Padua

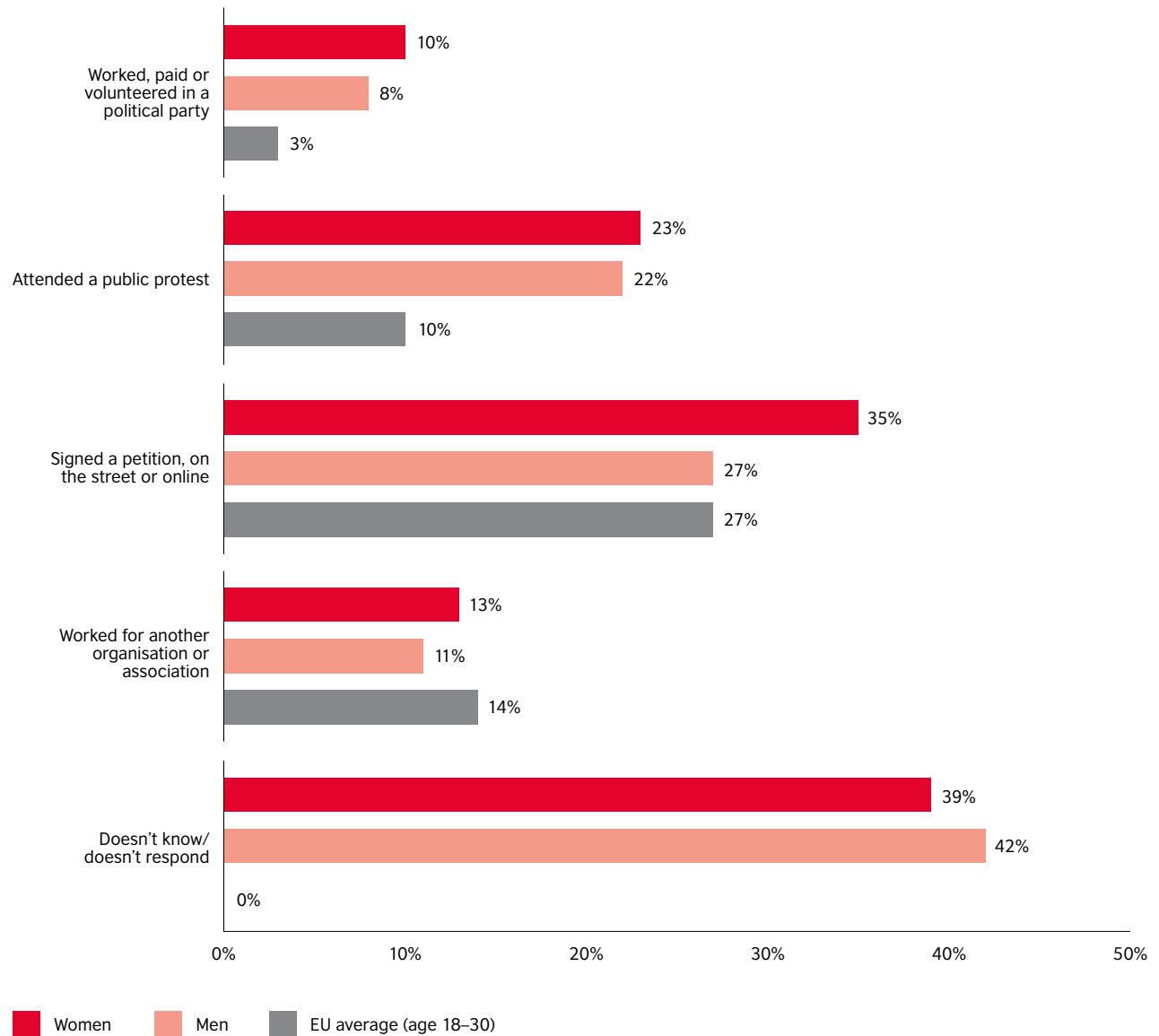
Strikingly, none of them discussed being focused on labour rights, despite consensus in many focus groups around the pressing nature of this issue. Some focus group participants in Padova expressed concern that some of the most popular forms of engagement are in fact carried out superficially.

*Several times I've heard my peers boast about protesting but as an excuse to spend time without having any goal.*

Francesco, 22, M, Padua

Interestingly, women are more socially engaged than men across most fronts. This is encouraging given that women are 12 percentage points less likely to report having a sense of agency.

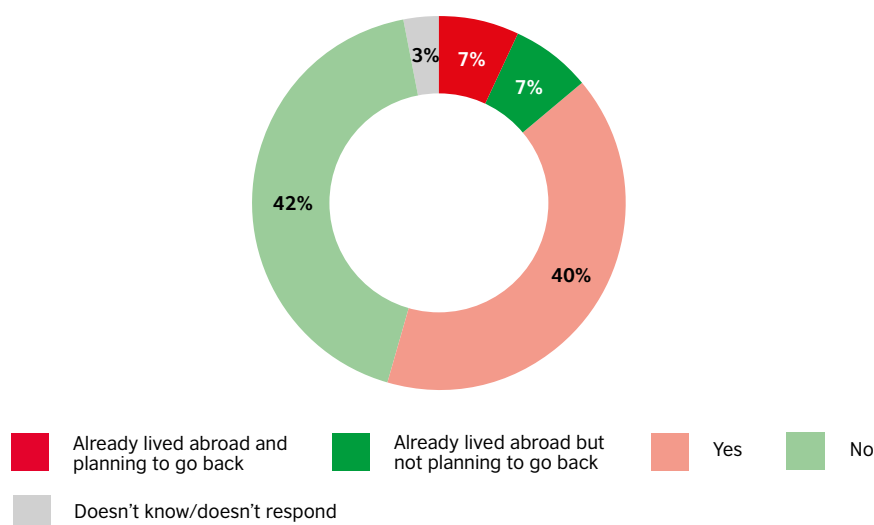
**Figure 24:** There may be different ways to try to improve things in Italy or to prevent them from getting worse. Have you done any of the following activities over the past 12 months? (By gender; EU comparison)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

External source: European Social Survey, 2016.

**Figure 25:** Have you ever planned to go and live abroad, at least for a period of your life?

Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

## Emigration

Many of the young people we spoke to were keenly aware that their language skills and EU mobility allow them opportunities for migration that would have been unthinkable for their parents' generation.

*During job interviews, when I mention I have been an exchange student, the answer I received has always been positive, underlying how this is an advantage in the job market. Experiences abroad enrich you a lot. They make you understand other habits, be more open, they make you grow. These aspects are important for an employer.*

Giulia, 25, F, Rome

*[Experiences abroad] are important because they allow us to learn a second language, which is fundamental.*

Adriano, 23, M, Rome

Emigration has increased greatly since the great recession. In 2018, 160,000 Italians, disproportionately young, moved abroad, the most in a single year since 1981 (ISTAT, 2019a). Ferrara et al. (2018) show that in 2015, the number

of Italians aged 15 to 34 years old residing in EU and European Free Trade Association countries stood at 758,000. Most of them live in Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium and the UK. Moreover, more than 40 per cent of Italian youth living abroad were university graduates. Due to the adverse labour market conditions in Italy, these migration patterns have likely continued to become more prevalent.

## Propensity

Our survey corroborates this. Forty per cent of young Italians had planned to live abroad or were open to the idea. Another seven per cent had done so already.

*Because I'm very tied to things that are perhaps trivial like food, traditions, streets, colours, I would struggle a lot to live elsewhere. On the other hand, I see how much more can be done with talent in another part of the world. Let's say that I try, growing up, to maintain the mentality of the comfort zone that I can have in Milan, Turin, Bologna, etc. but also to think that if I find something interesting on the other side of the world I will consider it.*

Fatima, 23, F, Turin

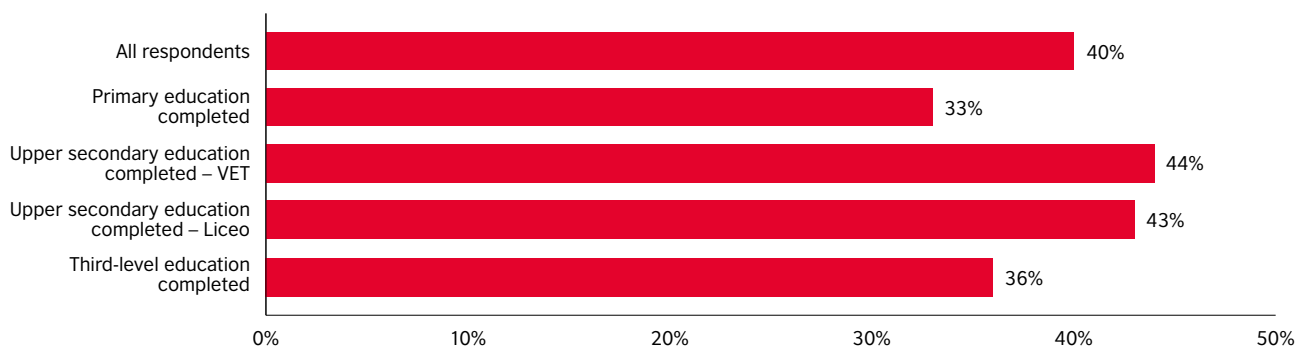
This willingness is strongly driven by education levels. Thirty-three per cent of those lacking a high school diploma are open to living abroad. Thirty-seven per cent of those with a university degree are. The figure is far higher (44 per cent) for those with only a high school diploma.

Focus group conversations on this topic revealed mixed attitudes and difficulty in reaching a shared understanding on the phenomenon. For some, particularly the least educated, leaving Italy was a radical, often irreversible, choice. More highly educated youth celebrated it as an opportunity and saw it as a possibly temporary choice, facilitated by EU free movement.

*In the long term I would still like to stay in Italy because I do not want to leave 'the battlefield': I would still be socially involved and be able to say that I have done something when important goals will be achieved.*

Riccardo, 20, M, Milan

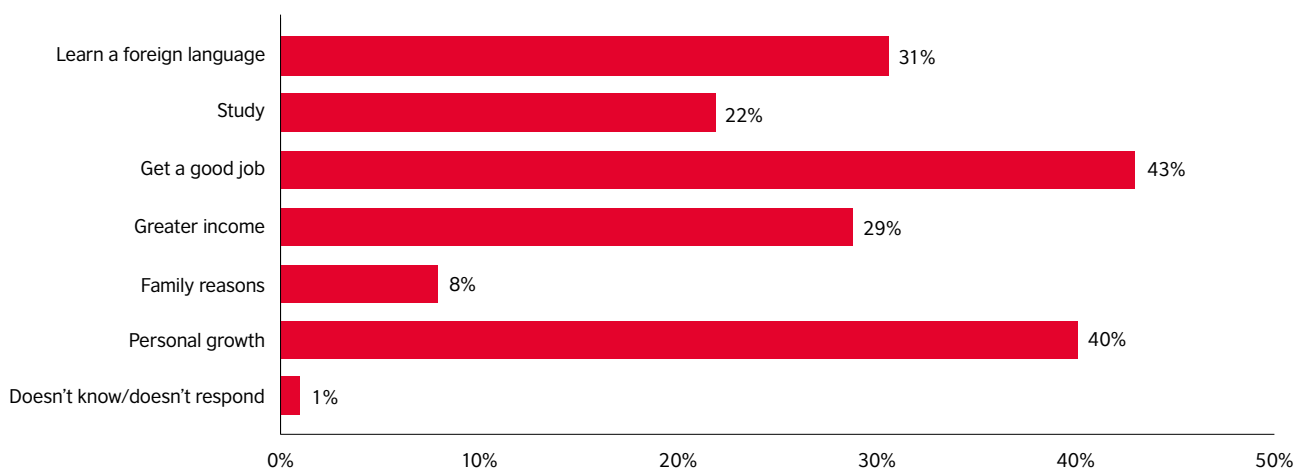
**Figure 26:** Have you ever planned to go and live abroad, at least for a period of your life?  
(By education level, only for respondents planning to go abroad for a period of their lives)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

**Figure 27:** What are your main reasons for potentially emigrating? (Multiple choice)



Base: n=2,015 young Italians aged 18–30, full country representation across regions (including urban versus rural) and nationally representative by education level, gender, employment status and age group.

Fieldwork date: 23–30 May 2019.

### Rationales

Forty per cent of our sample described personal growth as being one of their top two reasons for potentially leaving Italy. Thirty-one per cent identified learning a language, and 22 per cent mentioned study opportunities. These reasons are consistent with cyclical, and therefore more sustainable, migration patterns, where young people move abroad, gain skills and bring them back to Italy. Several participants in our focus groups expressed this intention.

This reflects the opportunities offered by EU mobility and young Italians' openness to new experiences.

However, one of the two main reasons for going abroad for 43 per cent of young Italians was obtaining a good job. Greater income was a factor for 29 per cent. These motivations are more consistent with traditional emigration patterns and were of great concern to the civic society stakeholders we spoke to. They are also explained by young people's concerns about employment, raised elsewhere in this report.

*Italians who emigrate despite not knowing the language, overcoming limits and fears, trying to find a way, is certainly praiseworthy. On the other hand, the fact that young Italians emigrate more than any of their European peers, is lamentable.*

Francesco Cancellato, Vice-Director, Fanpage



# CHAPTER 4:

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Conclusions

Overall, the evidence gathered through this research indicates significant dissatisfaction among young Italians with a variety of topics. This is voiced most explicitly when young people are questioned about their experience with the labour market. Moreover, survey respondents who reported low personal satisfaction, a low sense of agency, dissatisfaction with the labour market and the education system, a low level of trust in institutions, and willingness to emigrate were more likely to have experienced unemployment, to be in the NEET category, or to be in the upper age bracket of our sample, suggesting at least some experience seeking work. Highly educated Italians also reported particularly negative attitudes towards many topics, possibly because greater numeracy enhances their understanding of the country's struggling economy and because the payoff for third-level education is among the lowest in the OECD area.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, the correlation between feeling discouraged about the labour market and being generally dissatisfied with other aspects of society is not exclusive to Italian youth. What is unique about Italy, however, is that more young people fit this description. We can infer that concerns repeatedly voiced by young people about their ability to start a family, their qualms about the education system and their mistrust in institutions likely stem from the fact that few Italians aged 30 or below are in stable, decently paid employment.

Nonetheless, higher-than-EU-average levels of social engagement suggest that young Italians do not get discouraged easily. Women and NEETs, two frequently overlapping categories, are particularly socially engaged. These trends mirror the increased likelihood of women and NEET young people staying in Italy rather than emigrating. This, compounded by some of the qualitative data gathered, suggests

that frustrated young Italians face three choices that might be mutually exclusive: leave the country (or, for some, migrate internally); stay in Italy and accept things as they are; or, for a minority, stay and push for change.<sup>15</sup>

Our data indicates that youth activism occurs most frequently online and focuses on very specific political issues rather than on the broader issues that affect young people as a generation, particularly employment. Despite ample evidence of mounting intergenerational inequity, our research found no evidence of social engagement emphasising it as a central issue. Young Italians do not think they are significantly worse off than older generations. When presented with data on Italy's great intergenerational inequity, several workshop participants identified being financially dependent on their parents and difficulty in forming an alternative value set as the main reasons for not rebelling against older generations. One participant gave a different reason, casting a new light on this generation's unique propensity to emigrate and its involvement in the climate change movement.

*We don't mobilise against older generations in Italy, because it is easier to leave. The only issue on which we do mobilise is climate change, because we can't escape it.*

Bianca, 20, F, Rome

The macroeconomic data presented in this report indicates clearly that young Italians have borne the brunt of Italy's 20-year stagnation, the longest such stretch in a modern European economy. For some young people, this is the only Italy they have ever known. Many simply accept things as they are. For the passionate minority that continues to push for change, their generation's uniquely disadvantaged condition rarely registers as an issue in their civic engagement. Many, particularly the most

highly educated young Italians – who stand to lose significantly from a poor labour market – simply choose to leave for another European country.

Further research should explore the attitudes of young Italian emigrants, asking who they are, whether their attitudes on these topics differ from the Next Generation Italy sample, and how they might react to poor labour market conditions if they were to return or had never left at all.

The evidence compiled in this report suggests a political economy explanation for the link between Italy's macroeconomic stagnation and demographic decline: Italy is one of the world's oldest countries by age structure. This decreases young people's political relevance. Moreover, young people are less likely to vote and are less engaged with politics than their elders. As a result, policy tends to favour older generations. The dual labour market generally is most beneficial to older Italians, who are also far more likely to benefit from the country's comparatively generous pension system. Young people lack voice and are therefore disenfranchised, with relatively less financial or political weight, as the secondary evidence cited throughout this report shows. As a result, young people are forced to rely on their families to get by.

The downside of this strong familial solidarity is that young people are less able to move out and have children of their own, further compounding Italy's negative demographic spiral. Many young people find they must leave not just their homes but their hometowns, often emigrating from the south to the north to secure a decent wage. This is contributing to the former region's de-population and decline. The same trend occurs nationally, with Italy's most highly educated and ambitious youth moving overseas. This shows remarkable

14 > In 2016, Italy ranked fourth last among 32 OECD countries in private net financial returns for a man or a woman attaining tertiary education (OECD, 2019d).

15 > This view is consistent with the theories proposed by Albert O Hirschman in *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970).

resilience, at least on an individual basis. In practice, however, emigration further decreases the number of young people in Italy and as a result further diminishes their collective bargaining power. And with less political clout, the odds decrease of Italy enacting any reforms that would empower young people in the workplace, financially and, as a result, politically and demographically.

This vicious circle poses serious risks for older Italians as well. Italy's debt-to-GDP ratio stands at 147.3 per cent, among the world's highest (OECD, 2019c). Ratings agencies generally hold a negative outlook on the country's public finances, highlighting unsustainable pension expenditure relative to net tax receipts and noting that low market confidence in Italy's ability to finance its debt in the long term could precipitate a run on sovereign bonds (Fitch, 2019). Runs on Italian public debt in 1993 and 2011 have triggered drastic pension cuts and even transfers from private bank accounts to the state. The older Italians who hold much of Italy's wealth but are less likely to emigrate would be most at risk should this occur.

Yet the next generation's lack of empowerment is among the most important drivers of such a scenario. Too often young Italians depend on older generations' support rather than working, earning and paying the taxes necessary to fund their parents' pensions and their own. Our research suggests that intrafamilial wealth transfer likely contributes to positive youth satisfaction levels but might be inhibiting the intergenerational conflict that would be implicit if young Italians seriously attempted to demand drastic labour and welfare reforms to their benefit. It seems that for young Italians to improve not just their own well-being but also Italy's, they must first overcome the incentives of emigration and familial dependency.

This raises two sets of implications for other countries. The first regards Italy's geopolitical standing in the world. If Italy's macroeconomic stagnation,

demographic decline and political dysfunction are as interlinked as this evidence suggests, then Italy's strategic positioning is also weak. Our study of the next generation's attitudes reveals pessimism about the future and suggests that young people see themselves disproportionately as the victims of Italy's most intractable issues, rather than the solution. This of course helps explain their support for anti-establishment parties. Italy-watchers should be concerned, particularly if employment trends drive young people's high emigration and low fertility rates.

Secondly, it bears repeating that the trends described in this research are not specific to Italy. They are simply stronger than similar phenomena occurring in many other OECD countries. Indeed, declining social engagement by young people is common to most Western democracies. Greece and Spain have historically been on a similar trajectory to Italy in terms of youth employment patterns but have seen profound policy change in the past few years. Japan, too, is characterised by a stagnant economy, poor demographics and disenfranchised young people. And in many Eastern European countries, there is evidence that youth emigration is impoverishing local economies. Italy's problems are similar but simply further advanced. The dire condition and negative attitudes of its young people might be more of a precursor of what can happen to youth in other rich countries in decline than an exception to the norm.



**Diagram 2:** What now?

© Lucia Fabiani, 2019

## Recommendations

Next Generation research aims not only to explore youth attitudes but also to help shape youth proposals for the future. Rather than draft the recommendations ourselves, Learn More and Quorum agreed with the British Council to organise a one-day workshop with a diverse set of young people with the aim of enabling them as they develop policy proposals. This work was led by Matter, an industry leader in collaborative problem solving with experience managing similar participative processes for a wide range of international organisations.

The workshop was held in Rome on 17 October and involved the following participants:

- a facilitation team of four people
- five senior civic society stakeholders with the experience necessary to help young people develop recommendations
- two members of the research team to shed light on the data gathered
- 20 socially engaged young people representing civic society organisations and a university
- 15 young people selected by a recruitment agency, predominantly unemployed, underemployed, and in third-level education, as a counterweight to the more socially engaged participants.

In keeping with the theme of the Next Generation research series, participants were first asked what the most significant change they had ever experienced in their lives was. For nearly all the 20 socially engaged participants, this was spending time abroad, generally on short Erasmus exchange programmes elsewhere in the EU. The other participants' answers included completing a university degree and finding work.

Participants were divided into groups, shown much of the primary and secondary data presented in this report, and asked to write their interpretations and then share them in a plenary discussion. Many of the interpretations featured throughout this report were inspired by what young people told us at this stage. This activity spontaneously created a systemic understanding of the many linkages between the themes discussed in this report and the alignment around youth policy as a common denominator.

Italy's lack of good employment opportunities was repeatedly highlighted as participants' main concern. Many participants focused on values, emphasising how concerns over Italy's future often translate into reticence to appear optimistic. They suggested that their generation is more individualistic than their parents and struggles to unite around shared goals. Others opined that this individualism was

the result of divisive media narratives. Participants agreed that many find security, both financial and emotional, in their families and as a result struggle to form their own sets of values. One team suggested that, deep down, young people want to rebel but repress this sentiment out of fear of disappointment.

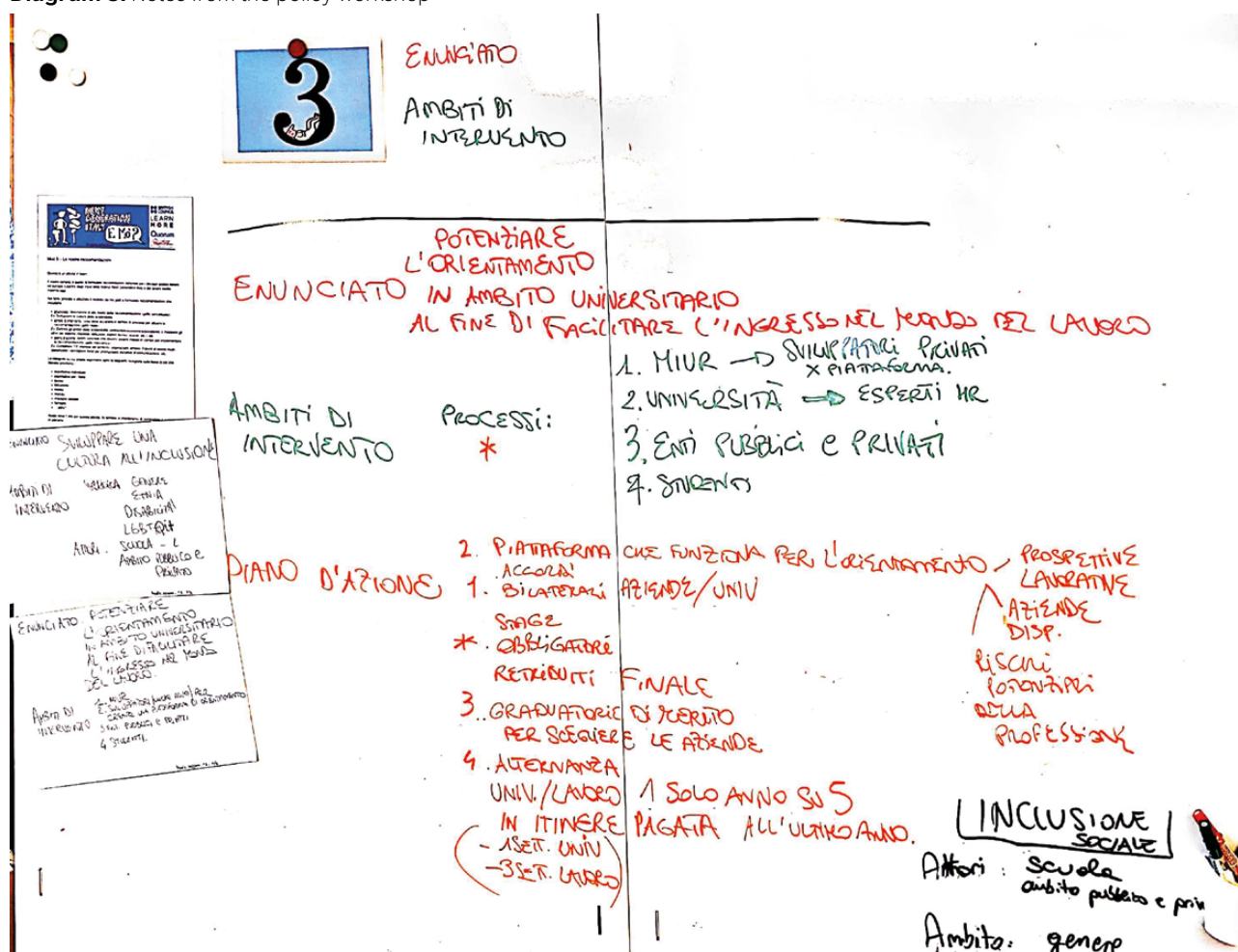
In the afternoon, participants broke up into new groups and iterated various policy recommendation designs. Notably, five out of the six groups initially focused on education independently of one another or any direction from the facilitation team. Their proposals tended to focus on how education should be reformed to better prepare for work. Possible reasons include the fact that the system is what participants were best acquainted with and the strong relationship between education and employment – the root cause of many of their concerns. One team proposed a specific focus on rights, noting how Italy is behind other countries in terms of its acceptance of LGBT+ and other minority youth. This too was framed as a predominantly educational issue.

Strikingly, most recommendations were centred on government intervention, despite repeated suggestions by the facilitation team that proposals be addressed to the private sector, unions, cultural institutions and other agents of change.

The tables and images below summarise the many policy recommendations put forward on education and other themes.

Theme	Education I
Diagnosis	The Italian education system's teaching practices are outdated and do not give young people the skills they need to thrive.
Proposal	Reform teaching practices, emphasising practical and soft skills over theory.
Action plan	<p>The Ministry of Education is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>require up-to-date teaching practices in all school textbooks</li> <li>create incentives for teacher turnover, thereby decreasing the median teacher age</li> <li>require schools to maintain collaboration spaces and practices for teachers, so they can learn from one another</li> <li>radically reform teacher training practices, emphasising not only continuous professional development (an area which has seen great progress in recent years) but also in-service training.</li> </ul>

Diagram 3: Notes from the policy workshop



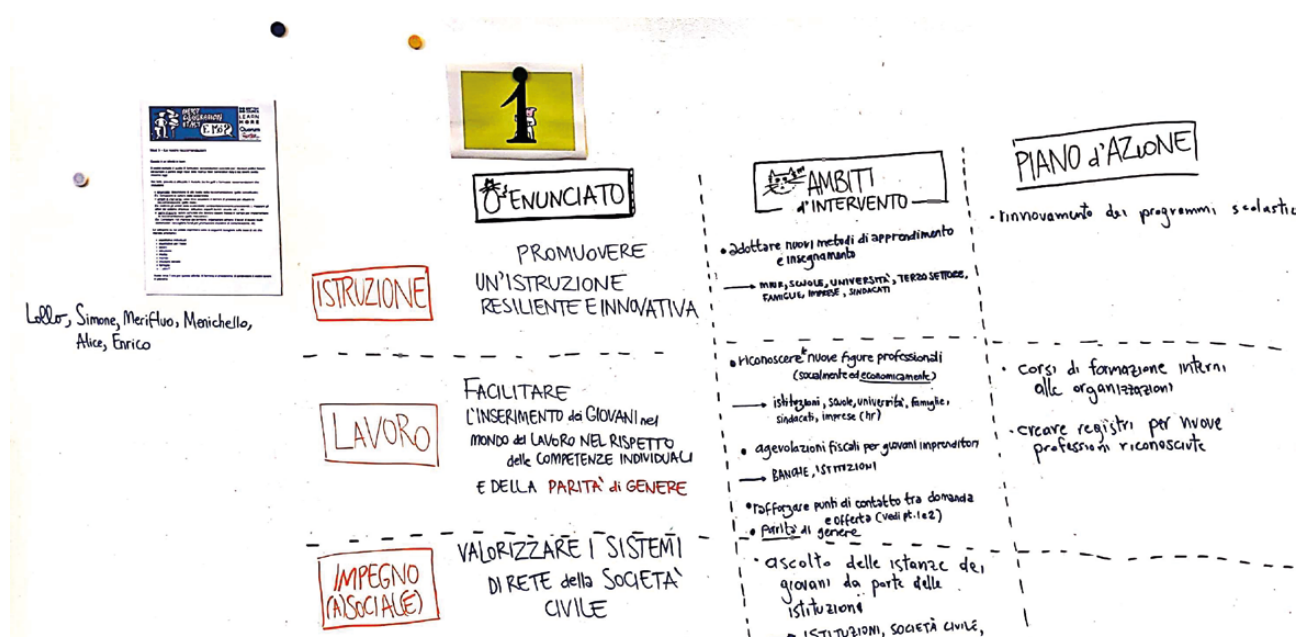
Theme	Education II
Diagnosis	The Italian education system, including its tertiary institutions, is disconnected from the labour market.
Proposal	Expose young people to the job market earlier and more equitably.
Action plan	<p>Parliament and the Ministry of Education are to vote legislation and implement measures to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strengthen and make mandatory paid internships during bachelors' degrees</li> <li>review existing vocational training schemes at the secondary level, ensuring work placement opportunities are actually enhancing skills</li> <li>make mandatory and enforce the ministry's guidelines on academic and career guidance</li> <li>fund and support job fairs in schools</li> <li>reform teacher training practices for teachers entering licei, emphasising a shift towards practical, job-oriented skills.</li> </ul> <p>The Ministry of Education and universities should adopt and enforce measures to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that entrance exams for university courses apply rigorously meritocratic standards and monitor and deter rampant fraud, in line with private sector standards</li> <li>ensure faster turnover of university professorships, enabling younger researchers to gain tenure.</li> </ul>

Diagram 4: Notes from the policy workshop



Theme	Labour
Diagnosis	Italian employers are not ready to accommodate the unique needs, potentials and skills of young Italians.
Proposal	Strengthen legislation on hiring and onboarding practices for young people, emphasising gender parity and skills development.
Action plan	<p>Parliament, the Ministry of Labour and unions are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drastically cut income tax on employees under the age of 30</li> <li>• grant equal welfare benefits to workers on freelance and fixed-term contracts</li> <li>• create and uphold standards for co-working and remote work</li> <li>• vote in and enforce legislation recognising and safeguarding new professions, such as web managers</li> <li>• vote in and enforce menstrual leave legislation.</li> </ul> <p>Parliament and large banks are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drastically increase financing for young entrepreneurs and SMEs that hire young people.</li> </ul>

Diagram 5: Notes from the policy workshop



Theme	Rights
Diagnosis	Minority youth are discriminated against because society lacks a shared conceptual framework for tackling rights issues.
Proposal	Develop a shared language around rights.
Action plan	<p>Education: The Ministry of Education should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce the concept of consent in sexual education</li> <li>require teacher training on inclusive language</li> <li>require publishers to feature alternative role models in textbooks</li> <li>adequately fund and enforce legislation requiring psychologists to be present in each school.</li> </ul> <p>Family: The Ministry of Education should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>require schools to appoint teachers to liaise with families on these and other topics.</li> </ul> <p>Employment: Parliament should approve legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>requiring managers train on inclusivity in the workplace</li> <li>laying out fiscal incentives for companies to organise events promoting inclusivity</li> <li>re-establishing the Ministry of Disability.<sup>16</sup></li> </ul> <p>Media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAI, Italy's state-funded broadcaster, should introduce alternative role models in soap operas and other serials.</li> <li>The private sector should establish a new movie festival featuring Italian films celebrating diversity.</li> </ul>

Diagram 6: Notes from the policy workshop



16 > One month prior to this workshop, the ministry had been re-incorporated as a department within the Ministry of Labour, with its own undersecretary.

Theme	Global integration
Diagnosis	Italy is missing out on opportunities to integrate with the surrounding world, which young people stand to benefit from the most.
Proposal	Create incentives for young people to travel and work with overseas companies.
Action plan	<p>Education: The Ministry of Education and universities are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• significantly increase funding for study and internship opportunities abroad</li> <li>• fund and implement measures to bring more foreign students to Italian universities.</li> </ul> <p>Employment: Parliament and the Ministry of Labour are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase tax incentives for Italian export firms, particularly for those hiring young people.</li> </ul>

# REFERENCES

- Aassve, A et al. (2018) *Never Forget the First Time: The Persistent Effects of Corruption and the Rise of Populism in Italy*. BAFFI CAREFIN Centre.
- Arzheimer, K (2013) 'Working Class Parties 2.0? Competition between Centre Left and Extreme Right Parties', in Rydgren, J (ed) *Class Politics and the Radical Right*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Banca D'Italia (2016) *Intergenerational mobility in the very long run: Florence 1427– 2011*. Florence: Banca D'Italia.
- Banca D'Italia (2018) Indagine sui bilanci delle Famiglie Italiane. Statistiche Banca D'Italia.
- Barbieri, P et al. (2014) 'Italy: A Segmented Labor Market with Stratified Adult Learning', in Blossfeld, H-P (ed) *Adult Learning in Modern Societies: An International Comparison from a Life-course Perspective*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. 327.
- Barbieri, P & Stefani, S (2008) 'Flexibilizing the Italian labour market. Unanticipated consequences of partial and targeted labour market deregulation', in Blossfeld, H-P (ed) *Young Workers, Globalization and the Labour Market: Comparing Early Working Life in Eleven Countries*. Cheltenham UK/ Nor: Edward Elgar Publishing: 155–180.
- Bickerton, C (2018) *The Five Star Movement and the rise of 'techno-populist' parties*. European Politics and Policy. Available online at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/05/24/the-five-star-movement-and-the-rise-of-techno-populist-parties/>
- Bonifazi, C & Heins, F (2017) Internal Migration Patterns in Italy: continuity and change before and during the great recession. *Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica* 71/2. Catania.
- Capone, L (2018) Berlino smentisce al Foglio la frase appioppata da Repubblica alla Merkel. *Il Foglio*.
- Cavallaro, M et al. (2018) *Una Nuova Italia*. Rome: Castelvecchi.
- CIA (2019) *The World Factbook*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency. Available online at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/fields/343rank.html>
- Council of Europe (1993) Resolution 1003 on the Ethics of Journalism.
- Del Monte, A & Papagni, E (2006) The determinants of corruption in Italy: Regional Panel Data Analysis. *European Journal of Political Economy*.
- Dell'Aringa, C & Lucifora, C (2000) *Inside the Black Box: Labour Market Institutions, Wage Formation and Unemployment in Italy*.
- Eurobarometer (2013) *European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life. Flash Eurobarometer 375*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Eurobarometer (2019a) *European Commission Public Opinion*. Available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/16/groupKy/77>
- Eurobarometer (2019b) *European Commission Public Opinion*. Available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/1/groupKy/1>
- European Commission (2017) *Autumn 2017 Standard Eurobarometer: Fixing the roof while the sun is shining*. Available online at: [https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-5312\\_en.htm](https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5312_en.htm)
- European Commission (2018) *Flash Eurobarometer 455: European Youth*.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2018) *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe – 2016/17*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Parliament (2018) *Parlemeter 2018. Taking up the Challenge. Eurobarometer Survey 90 of the European Parliament. A Public Opinion Monitoring Study*. Brussels: European Union.
- European Social Survey (2016) *ESS8 – 2016 Data Download*. Available online at: <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/download.html?r=8>
- Eurostat (2014) *Labour market*. Eurostat regional yearbook: Eurostat.
- Eurostat (2017) *Teachers in the EU*. Eurostat.
- Eurostat (2018) *Unemployment rate by educational attainment level*. Eurostat.
- Eurostat (2019a) *Labour market statistics at regional level*. Eurostat.
- Eurostat (2019b) *Statistics on young People Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training – Statistics Explained*.
- Eurostat (2019c) *Government expenditure on education*. Eurostat.
- Ferrara, R et al. (2018) *Young Italians in European countries: social and economic perspective*.
- Fitch (2019) *Italy Rating Report*. New York: Fitch Ratings. Available online at: <https://www.fitchratings.com/site/re/10085554>
- Fondazione Giuseppe di Vittorio – Tecné (2019) *Sogni e Bisogni dei Pensionati*. Milan: CGIL-SPI. Available online at: <https://www.spi.cgil.it/content/4-blog/179-pensionati-generosi-in-6-milioni-aiutano-famiglie/sintesi-rapporto-spi-2019-10.pdf>

- Garibaldi, P & Taddei, F (2013) *A Dual Labour Market in Transition*. Geneva: International Labor Organization.
- Gilman, R (2003) A Review of Life Satisfaction Research with Children and Adolescents. *School Psychology Quarterly* 18/2: 192–205.
- ILO (2017) *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a better working future*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- IMF (2019) *World Economic Outlook Reports*. Available online at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2019/07/18/WEOupdateJuly2019>
- IMF (2019) *International Monetary Fund Italy*. Available online at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/ITA>
- INVALSI (2019) *Rapporto Nazionale Prove INVALSI*. Roma: INVALSI.
- ISTAT (2016) La Lettura in Italia Anno 2015. *Istat Statistiche Report*.
- ISTAT (2018a) *Le Statistiche Dell'ISTAT Sulla Povertà*. ISTAT.
- ISTAT (2018b) *Birth and fertility among the resident population in Italy*. Available online at: [https://www.istat.it/it/files//2018/11/ENG\\_Births\\_Fertility-\\_20-novembre-2018.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files//2018/11/ENG_Births_Fertility-_20-novembre-2018.pdf)
- ISTAT (2019a) Demographic indicators. *ISTAT Press Release*.
- ISTAT (2019b) *L'Economia non Osservata nei conti nazionali | Anni 2014-2017*. ISTAT.
- ISTAT (2019c) *Multiscopo sulle famiglie: aspetti della vita quotidiana*. Available online at: <http://siqual.istat.it/SIQual/visualizza.do?id=0058000&refresh=true&language=IT>
- Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo (2019) *La condizione giovanile in Italia. Rapporto giovani 2019*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- ITANES (2013) *Voto Amaro: Disincanto e Crisi Economica nelle Elezioni del 2013*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- La Repubblica* (2018) L'Austerità e L'Azzardo. *La Repubblica*.
- Malanima, P & Daniele, V (2007) Il prodotto delle regioni e il divario Nord-Sud in Italia (1861-2004). *Rivista di politica economica*: 267–315.
- Marx, P & Schumacher, G (2018) Do Poor Citizens Vote for Redistribution, Against Immigration or Against the Establishment? *Scandinavian Political Studies*.
- Ministero dell'Interno (2018) *2018 Elections*. Available online at: <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/speciali/2018-elections>
- OECD (2015) *Pensions at a Glance 2015. OECD and G20 Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2016) *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2017a) *Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report: Italy*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2017b) *Population by age of children and young adults, and youth dependency ratio*. Available online at: [www.oecd.org/els/soc/SF\\_1\\_4\\_Population\\_age\\_children\\_youth\\_dependency\\_ratio.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/SF_1_4_Population_age_children_youth_dependency_ratio.pdf)
- OECD (2017c) *Pension at a Glance 2017 OECD and G20 Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2018) *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2019a) *OECD Employment Outlook 2019*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2019b) *Population*. Available online at: <https://data.oecd.org/pop/population.htm>
- OECD (2019c) *OECD Italy Profile*. Available online at: <https://data.oecd.org/italy.htm>
- OECD (2019d) *Education at a Glance 2019*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Piore, M (1980) Economic Fluctuation, Job Security, and Labor-Market Duality in Italy, France and The United States. *Politics and Society* 9/4: 379–407.
- Toffanin, T (2011) The Role of Neoliberal Capitalism in Reproducing Gender Inequality in Italy. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 19/3: 199–218.
- World Bank (2019a) *World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files*. Available online at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2018&start=1998>
- World Bank (2019b) *Population ages 0-14 (% of total population)*. Available online at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO.ZS>
- World Bank (2019c) *Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)*. World Bank DataBank
- World Health Organization (2015) *World Report on Ageing and Health*. WHO.
- Young, M et al. (1995) The effect of parental supportive behaviors on life satisfaction of adolescent offspring. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57: 813–822.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cox, GW et al. (2018) *The Contraction Effect: How Proportional Representation Affects Mobilization and Turnouts*. Oslo.

Herrera, H et al. (2018) *Information Aggregation and Turnout in Proportional Representation: A Laboratory Experiment*.

Mancini, P (2000) How to Combine Media Commercialization and Party Affiliation: The Italian Experience. *Political Communication*, 319–324.

Paul, M & Gijs, S (2018) Do Poor Citizens Vote for Redistribution, Against Immigration or Against the Establishment? *Scandinavian Political Studies*.

Sanz, C (2016) *The Effects of Electoral Systems on Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Natural Experiment*. Madrid.

Seymour, M (2007) Keystone of the patriarchal family? Indissoluble marriage, masculinity and divorce in Liberal Italy. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10/3: 297–313.

Smyth, P (2018) Europe Letter: Misquoted remarks from German commissioner spark fury in Italy. *The Irish Times*.



# > APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

## Quantitative survey

We conducted a survey between 23 and 30 May 2019 employing a mixed CATI/CAMI/CAWI methodology, and reaching a sample of 2,015 respondents of Italians aged 18 to 30, currently living in Italy. This sample size allows for an approximately two per cent margin of error at a 95 per cent confidence level.

A sample size of this type allowed us to investigate a series of subgroups. Education qualifications, employment status and student/non-student status were identified as the main cleavages.

The geographical quotas were defined by combining the principle of territorial continuity with that of socio-political-cultural homogeneity. This yielded six

different macro-regions. This data was re-aggregated in our analysis and in the report to reflect four more commonly used macro-regions: the north-west, north-east, centre and south of Italy.

**Table 1:** Survey sample breakdown by gender and age

Category	Number	Percentage %
Men aged 18–22	368	19.15
Men aged 23–26	320	15.90
Men aged 27–30	353	16.60
Women aged 18–22	339	17.40
Women aged 23–26	301	14.95
Women aged 27–30	334	16.00

**Table 2:** Survey sample breakdown by macro-region

Category	Number	Percentage %
North-West	183	8.20
Lombardia	326	16.55
Triveneto	222	11.00
Western coastal regions	192	9.50
Eastern coastal regions	118	5.50
Central Italy	253	13.30
Southern Italy	721	35.95

**Table 3:** Survey sample breakdown by student and employment status

Category	Number	Percentage %
Student	640	29
Other	1375	71

**Table 4:** Survey sample breakdown by education level

Category	Number	Percentage %
Lower secondary education completed or less	368	20.25
Upper secondary education completed	1,157	60.95
Third-level education completed or more	490	18.80

### Focus groups

After, five focus groups were carried out across the country, representing both sides of the urban–rural divide. Two were carried out in the north of the country, in Milan and Padua, one in

Rome, in the central Lazio region, and two in the South: Naples and Bari. The focus groups in Milan, Rome and Naples involved people from the large metropolitan areas; those in Padua and Bari, instead, saw participants from more

suburban and rural areas. Participants were selected from cross-categories which involved academic qualifications, gender, age and employment status.

**Table 5:** Focus group participant breakdown

	Focus group 1	Focus group 2	Focus group 3	Focus group 4	Focus group 5
Area	North-West	North-East	Centre	South	South
Location	Milan	Padua	Rome	Naples	Bari
Participant origin	Turin/Milan	Veneto	Tuscany and Lazio	Naples	Puglia
Size of city	Large	Small	Large	Large	Small
Number of participants	10	10	10	10	10
Age range	24–30	19–26	19–26	24–30	26–30
Sampling/profile	4–6 men and 4–6 women; third-level education or more; urban; level of interest in current affairs/politics: 8/10 on a 10-point scale; at least 2 international trips in the last 12 months	4–6 men and 4–6 women; employed but with no more than upper secondary education completed; from suburban or rural areas; level of interest in current affairs/politics: 3/10 on a 10-point scale; no international trips in the last 12 months	4–6 men and 4–6 women; third-level education or more; urban; level of interest in current affairs/politics: 8/10 on a 10-point scale; at least 2 international trips in the last 12 months	4–6 men and 4–6 women; third-level education or more; urban; level of interest in current affairs/politics: 8/10 on a 10-point scale; at least 2 international trips in the last 12 months	4–6 men and 4–6 women; not in employment or in education; from suburban or rural areas; level of interest in current affairs/politics: 3/10 on a 10-point scale; no international trips in the last 12 months

**In-depth qualitative interviews**

The research team carried out in-depth interviews with nine young people representing two minority groups: LGBT+ youth and foreign-born youth. These interviews were obtained through civic society organisations. We also attempted to interview disabled youth

but were unable to secure the involvement of a civic society organisation representing them. Instead, we interviewed the heads of two such organisations. The interview guidelines were designed to cover the same topics tackled in the previous research phases, with specific questions concerning their minority group. In

addition, 13 in-depth interviews were carried out with civic society stakeholders with a strong knowledge of youth policy from various standpoints. These included journalists, academics, politicians, activists and cultural leaders. The interview guidelines were again designed to cover the same topics tackled in the previous research phases.

**Table 6:** Breakdown of minority youth interviewed

Name	Minority group	Gender
Eugenio DL	LGBT+ youth	M
Antonio S	LGBT+ youth	M
Pietro S	LGBT+ youth	M
Riccardo R	LGBT+ youth	M
Laura G	LGBT+ youth	F
Fatima F	Foreign-born youth	F
Flavius A	Foreign-born youth	M
Girli G	Foreign-born youth	F
Klevisa R	Foreign-born youth	F

**Table 7:** Breakdown of civic society stakeholders interviewed

Name	Organisational affiliation	Gender
Enrico Giovannini	President of ASviS. Former Minister of Labour and Social Policies	M
Francesco Cancellato	Vice-Director of Fanpage	M
Davide Dattoli	Co-Founder and CEO of Talent Garden	M
Ilaria Giama	Faenza Multietnica	F
Isabella Borrelli	Feminist activist and Founder of MORE	F
Giovanni Lo Storto	Director-General of LUISS University	M
Alessandro Manfredi	President of the League for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	M
Mara Carfagna	Former Minister for Equal Opportunities	F
Maria Cristina Pisani	President of the Forum Nazionale dei Giovani	F
Fabio Pellegatta	President of Arcigay Milano	M
Paolo Petrocelli	Honorary President of the Italian Youth Association for UNESCO	M
Luca Pancalli	President of the Italian Paralympic Committee	M
Michele Schiavi	Youngest Major in Italy	M

## The youth engagement workshop

In the final phase of the research project, a workshop was organised involving young people aged 18 to 30

years old from various parts of Italy, with a greater concentration from the Rome metropolitan area. The sample of participants was representative of employment status.

The aim of the workshop was to develop policy proposals on the most important issues for young Italians, which was achieved through multiple iterations of group work.

**Table 8:** Workshop participant breakdown

Name	Participant type	Age	Gender
Lucrezia C	Student	25	F
Bianca P	Student	20	F
Emanuela Z	Employed	30	F
Alessia M	Student	26	F
Enrico I	Employed	26	M
Francesca B	Employed	26	F
Mauro T	Employed	24	M
Luigi M	Student	27	M
Matteo D	Student	29	M
Davide M	Employed	20	M
Alice R	Employed	28	F
Manuela I	Employed	20	F
Cecilia M	Employed	25	F
Lorenzo P	Employed	25	M
Teresa P	Student	29	F
Martina S	Student	27	F
Giorgio Q	Student	30	M
Enrico M	Student	34	M
Aya M	Student	25	F
Samanta C	Unemployed	30	F
Alberto DS	Employed	27	M
Lorenzo M	Student	23	M
Annarita G	Student	20	F
Diletta C	Employed	28	F
Jessica L	Student	27	F
Lucia DC	Student	25	F
Giulia C	Unemployed	25	F
Marco K	Student	25	M
Sara F	Employed	21	F
Gianluca C	Student	27	M
Eleonora C	Student	26	F
Simone C	Unemployed	22	M
Davide DG	Unemployed	21	M
Niccolò N	Student	26	M
Samuele C	Student	20	M





# LEARN M + RE

Learn More is a boutique consultancy specialised in learning system research and design.

## Quorum

Quorum is a market research, communications and strategy firm working chiefly with corporate clients and political parties.



Matter is a global leader in facilitated collaborative problems solving for large multinationals and non-profits.



The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

The Next Generation series is part of the British Council's commitment to exploring youth voice and choice. It aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voice and support better youth policymaking. The reports focus on young people in countries experiencing a period of significant change, to ensure that young people's voices are heard and their interests represented in decisions that will have lasting implications for their lives.

[www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-series/next-generation](http://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-series/next-generation)

Photography credits: All imagery/Mat Wright

© British Council 2020/K149

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.