

Population

One of the first needs after Italian unification was to conduct a population census. The first census of the Kingdom of Italy was decreed on 8 September 1861¹ and implemented extremely rapidly. With the results obtained, in 1863, the de jure population in municipalities, provinces and districts could be established.

Over time, censuses changed and developed to ensure ever higher quality data and in response to changing information requirements stemming from the transformations that society has undergone. In fact, the form has been revised several times for the various rounds of census surveys in terms of both questions and structure, enabling structural changes in Italian society and its population over the last 150 years to be reconstructed.

The census was followed by the first statistics on population movements, providing the fundamental indications of natural and migratory movements for the annual count of residents. The legislation and data collection system – which was different in pre-unification states – therefore required harmonisation: “the reborn nation needed to fill the gaps, bring the discontinuity of work to an end and regulate everything according to a regular and uniform design [...] the King’s Government, in anticipation of the new code, [...] sought to compensate for statistical shortcomings with regulations”.² From the very first years, statistics staff, considering the limited means available to them, displayed a particularly high level of skill, in terms of critical analysis of results, their interpretation and the timeliness with which they were published.

Demographic statistics constitute one of the most complete and continuous series in Italian history: censuses, births, deaths, migratory flows, marriages and population calculations have refined the survey system over time and extended the range of variables collected, making it possible to reconstruct an overview of the profound changes in population from Italian unification to the present day: from composition by gender, which inverted the relationship within the population, to age distribution, with the transition from a young population to a severely aged population structure, from the number of foreigners present, the transition from a country of emigration to a country of immigration, to trends in birth rates, which led Italy to have one of the lowest fertility rates in the world.

Over the course of these 150 years of Italian history, regional patterns of population settlement have also undergone profound changes, partly due to the change in the country’s administrative structure and above all due to the economic and social transformations that have characterised our country’s recent history. A large part of these dynamics – such as urbanisation processes, rural depopulation and the gradual abandonment of mountain areas – are revealed in the tables of statistics presented in this section.

General population censuses

A population census is a total, simultaneous and individual survey which enumerates the entire population that is either resident or present in a given area at a precise instant in time. The unit of measurement is the household, cohabitants and persons resident or present on the set date. A census is the only survey capable of providing a complete overview of the main demographic and socio-economic aspects of a population, with a high degree of geographical detail.

The first Italian census showed the entire population actually present on the night between 31 December 1861 and 1 January 1862. Subsequent population censuses were held every decade with the sole exceptions of 1891 and 1941, when the census was not conducted: in the first case due to financial

¹ From a Royal Decree, later converted into law on 20 February 1862.

² Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, 1864. “Introduction”. In *Statistics of the Kingdom of Italy: population: changes in civil status in 1862*, Florence.

difficulties, and in the second due to the war. In addition, the 1936 census was held only five years after the previous edition.³

The first four censuses were conducted through the instantaneous recording of the actual conditions of the population in the kingdom, i.e. by simultaneously counting individuals in the place where each was present at midnight on the date of reference. With the 1881 census, the resident population was adopted as the *de jure* population, replacing the present-in-area population. From then right up to the present day, the main aim of the survey has become to record the resident population, i.e. a count of the number of people with place of usual residence in the municipality in which they are recorded, in addition to those who are temporarily absent. The *de facto* population survey (people present in the municipality on the census date) nonetheless continued to be one of the aims of the census. For this purpose, the criteria used to adjudge whether a person is temporarily absent are fundamental. These criteria have been gradually refined over the years. Regarding residential and institutional households, too, definitions have changed over time, as have instructions provided to census bodies for their surveys.⁴

With regard to the geographical organisation of the survey, the 1861 census forms were the reference model for all subsequent censuses, with only slight changes over time. The organisation required – and still requires – a range of participants: the central body⁵ responsible for planning and managing census operations, intermediate bodies at the provincial level responsible for monitoring and providing support for the survey, and peripheral bodies and municipalities with executive functions. The intermediate bodies, responsible for the survey on a provincial level (called Provincial Census Offices since 1951), are made up of Provincial Statistics Offices and Chambers of Commerce. Prefects were, and still are, the officials responsible for provincial census duties, checking that operations are performed correctly. On a peripheral level, municipalities have always been responsible for the survey, setting up Local Census Commissions, known as “Municipal Census Offices” since 1921, for which mayors are responsible. Lastly, census field staff (known as census assistants until 1911 and “census officers” from 1921 to 1951) took on the title of *rilevatori* (enumerators) in 1961.

Census procedures have therefore changed considerably, not so much in the data concerned or the sequence of operations performed as in the methods used to perform them, which have gradually taken advantage of technological progress, with the advantages that this has brought in terms of resources used and quality of results. In 1881, a number of initial changes were introduced with a focus on the statistics function, and the task of sorting the forms compiled passed from municipalities to the General Statistics Department, with the aim of reducing the burden on local authorities and improving the quality of data. In 1901 the reference date was shifted to February and in 1911 to June. Also in 1901, for the first time, individual records were introduced for each member of the household, which had to be placed in an envelope on the outside of which all household members were listed. Moreover, mechanical methods for data classification began to be more widely used.

The 1921 census, partly for economic reasons, saw a return to one form per household laid out in table form, since census field operations were still at the expense of municipalities. Furthermore, mechanical sorting was no longer used, as in the previous census. In the 1930s the government showed a strong interest in censuses: it set census frequency as every five years, allocated considerable funds to the

³ Article 1 of Royal Decree no. 1503 of 1930 established that general population census surveys should be held every five years. The five-year period was confirmed by Law no.446/1941, which also established that the date of the next census should be adopted with a specific provision, as has in fact been the case for all censuses of the Republic of Italy, albeit on a ten-year basis.

⁴ Several different definitions of the “household” survey unit have been used over the years, as described in detail in [Households](#). Regarding institutional households, the first two censuses did not make any distinction between residential and institutional households. In 1881 a distinction was made between “households in the strict sense” and “institutional households”. Nonetheless, from 1901 onwards hotel guests, inns, guesthouses/furnished rooms, in addition to individuals in public or private care institutions and those belonging to other forms of group living, were recorded on the form by the owner or manager, who was designated the head of the household. After 1901 instructions relating to the recording of institutional household populations were differentiated: the census of seafarers was performed by port authorities, while diplomatic and consular staff from foreign states, officers, sailors and others on board Italian royal navy ships, outside Italian waters, and royal troops stationed abroad were recorded respectively by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, War and Defence. Later modifications were introduced in 1951. From 1961 an institutional household/a community, for the purposes of the survey, was defined as a group of people that, without ties of marriage, kinship, affinity or similar, live together for reasons of faith, care, assistance or for military, penal or other reasons. In 2001 it was specified that registered communities form a subset of communities to be recorded; in fact, for census purposes communities also include other types of collective living arrangements which in most cases accommodate only persons who are not permanently resident, such as hotels and hospitals.

⁵ This has changed over time – initially known as the General Statistics Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, established on 9 October 1861 by Royal Decree, it was later replaced by the General Statistics Department (1878) and subsequently by the Central Statistical Institute, established on 9 July 1926, and known as the National Institute of Statistics following a reorganisation in 1989. For a more detailed history of Istat, please see: Istat. 1996. Statistical Yearbooks, vol. 8, series X, year 125. Rome: Istat.

recently established⁶ Institute, and authorised large-scale recruiting of staff precisely on the occasion of census surveys. To mark the event, a broad awareness campaign was held and the census reference date was established as 21 April, the same day as the Birth of Rome and Labour Day under Fascism. The census organisation was extremely detailed and well-structured, with clear, precise divisions of functions and duties. Municipalities and registers were highly monitored by prefectural offices and supervisory committees. The mechanical sorting of data took place using card punching machines and card sorters with 45 column cards.

The 1951 census survey ushered in the era of censuses under the Republic, and was characterised by a number of innovations which would be inherited and improved by subsequent censuses. All expenses were transferred to the State. The census date of reference was fixed for the autumn, as was confirmed in later surveys. At the same time as the population census, the first housing census was conducted to meet the need for an overview of the country's housing stock after the Second World War. For the first time a specific instruction manual was written for peripheral bodies and the first guide to filling in the census form was enclosed with the questionnaires, which were once again in table format. In addition, more modern mechanical equipment was adopted, using 80-column punched cards, and data were sorted and tabulated by machine.

For the 1961 census, second-generation processors were used. Data was processed electronically using a calculator with 40,000 memory positions and equipped with seven magnetic tape units, along with another two processors, each equipped with 4,000 memory positions, a printer, a card reader/puncher and two magnetic tape units. The questionnaire was also modified and divided into sections, although it maintained its table format.

The 1971 edition dedicated particular attention to the recording tool of pre-coded questionnaires, which greatly benefited data quality as well as procedures and speed of operations. For the first time an optical reader was also used for data acquisition, although with only partial success. The collection of information on individual household members was no longer organised in table format. Instead each member had two dedicated pages in the census form. A detachable part was also introduced for comparing the census and municipal registers. Lastly, linguistic groups in Trieste and Bolzano were recorded for the first time and the questionnaire was translated into German.

The last three censuses have been characterised by increasing use of technological innovations, especially in the data processing phase. In the 1981 survey, data acquisition was performed using controlled data entry, which was also performed in a decentralised manner by those local authorities (regions, provinces and municipalities) that so requested, whereas in 1991 all data was recorded centrally, still by controlled data entry, before passing to optical readers in 2001. Computer technology, therefore, revolutionised operating methods for censuses, speeding up data processing procedures and reducing the workload of census operators. The automation of the data correction system in 1991 and the coding process for text variables in 2001, entirely at Istat's expense, were also developed with the aim of rationalising resources and facilitating the production process. Furthermore, in 2001 the development of web technology, in addition to allowing a dedicated census website to be activated for monitoring distribution and collection processes and for publishing instruction material and circulars, marked the transition towards the publication of results online – in fact, paper copies were accompanied by an online publication entitled *DaWinci*. A further evolution took place in 2011 publishing the results on the web only by means of the Istat corporate data warehouse, <http://dati.istat.it/?lang=en>.

Similarly with a view to improving the quality of statistical information, since 1981 pre- and post- census surveys have been conducted (pilot surveys and surveys of quality and coverage) with the aim of testing the reliability of the questionnaire and the final results. Ever larger and more sophisticated awareness campaigns and the setting up in 1991 of a toll-free number for respondents also aimed to extend coverage and improve the reliability of the data collected.

With regard to content, the basic demographic characteristics of the population included in the censuses have been included ever since 1861: age (date of birth from 1921), gender, civil status, place of birth (not recorded in 1936) and citizenship (since 1881), as well as the degree of relationship with the head of household on the household census form, becoming ever more detailed over time. The other main information collected regards the distinction between place of usual residence, temporarily present and absent persons, education, professional status and daily commutes (since 1971). These will all be

⁶ The Central Statistical Institute was established in 1926, following a period of profound crisis in the organisation of Italian statistics. It should be considered that in 1923 the Central Statistics Offices had no more than twenty or so employees. Therefore, the 1930 census was an opportunity to support the renaissance of public statistics, including from a financial point of view (Istat. 1996. Statistical Yearbooks, vol. 8, series X).

discussed further on in specific sections on each theme. Sporadically during the course of the various censuses other information has also been required, such as language spoken, religious affiliation, illness or fertility.⁷ It is worth pointing out that in 1991, for the first time, the form was translated into six languages in addition to Italian, and into 11 languages in 2001. In 1991 an “Individual form for foreigners not resident in Italy” was also drawn up. In 2011 a facsimile of the household form was prepared in long and short versions and translated into 17 languages.

In conclusion, mention should be made of the innovations introduced by the 2011 census, for the first time the census survey was ruled by a European Regulation on contents, dissemination plan and data quality. While previous editions were characterised by a substantially stable framework, albeit open to innovation, the 15th census represented a break with tradition, in the form of numerous changes, especially in census field procedures, i.e. in precisely the phase that had remained almost unchanged over the years. These innovations regarded in particular the sending of questionnaires by mail and by using the information contained in municipal registers of households and communities. To ensure that people with place of usual residence in the municipality but who couldn't be recorded in the population registers are recorded, auxiliary lists were used.

In contrast with the past, respondents had a range of options for returning completed forms: by filling out the form online, or by delivering the paper copy to one of the collection points throughout the country, or to municipal collection centres where assistance was available for completing the form. Citizens could also return the questionnaire to enumerators who, at a certain stage of the process, were sent into the field to complete operations and recover the remaining forms. The 2011 census also relied on a centralised web system for monitoring and managing the survey in the field, providing information on the delivery and collection of forms. The same system allowed direct, online comparisons to be made between the information entered in the forms and the information recorded in municipal registers on the date of the census. An additional innovation regarded towns in municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants. In order to limit the statistical burden on respondents, only a sample of households received the complete version of the form within these areas, while the other survey units were required to fill out a short form (with 35 questions instead of 84).

Warnings for time series comparisons

- The 1891 and 1941 censuses were not conducted: the first for organisational and financial reasons, the second due to the Second World War.
- The population present in the 1921 census was corrected and published at a later date, as the number of inhabitants had been artificially increased in some districts for political and administrative, or economic and financial reasons. The resident population was subsequently estimated (see: Central Statistical Institute of the Kingdom of Italy. 1938. *Preliminary report*. Vol. 1 of *General Population Census 1931*, 24. Rome: Istat).
- The 1936 census was conducted following Legislative Reform no.1503 introduced in 1930, which established that censuses should be conducted every five years instead of every ten years.
- Data on the resident and present-in-area population in censuses until 1936 are available based both on the country's borders at the time and present-day borders only for the total population. Data disaggregated by different characteristics, such as age or civil status, refer to the borders at the time.

Population registers

The resident population

The function of resident population registers is to record the inhabitants of a given municipality by name, according to specific demographic and social characteristics, both as individuals and as members of a

⁷ Language spoken was recorded in the 1861, 1901, 1911 and 1921 censuses. Religious affiliation was recorded in the 1861, 1871, 1901 and 1911 censuses. Illnesses were recorded in 1911. In 1931 questions were introduced for a study of fertility among married, widowed and divorced women. A similar study was conducted in the 1961 and 1971 censuses.

household or community, in addition to subsequent changes in the same population, either Italian or foreign. Population registers in their current form are of fairly recent date, but their history goes back a long way and they have developed in close connection with censuses.

In Italy, the most important cities in the States existing prior to unification already had population registers, although the first provision establishing them under the new Kingdom dates back to 1864. Article 3 of Royal Decree no. 2105 of 31 December 1864 established that “the population census of 31 December 1861, corrected and completed in each municipality according to the changes that took place in the status of people and in those of the population in general until 1 January 1865 and taking into account only those with legal domicile or stable residence there, will serve as the basis for the population register”. The same decree, in Article 6, established population registers in each municipality of the Kingdom, naming them “*Uffici delle anagrafi*” (“Registry Offices”). Failure on the part of several municipalities to observe the decree or apply the regulations on updating the population register meant that in the second census the authorisation law (Law no. 277 of 1871) included two articles on the maintenance of the population register. In 1873 the new regulation on the population register⁸ was approved, with Article 1 stating that “in each municipality of the Kingdom a population register shall be kept. Where none exists, it shall be created within six months of this regulation. Where one already exists, it shall be completed and corrected within the same period of time”. The authorisation laws of the subsequent censuses also decreed that population registers be brought into line with census results. The regulation approved in 1901⁹ was replaced by that of 1929,¹⁰ following the creation of the Central Statistical Institute, which presented a single, but significant, innovation with respect to the past. Indeed, Article 37 imposed the obligation on municipalities to update and revise the registers during the interval between censuses, through a special review, independently of census surveys.¹¹ This regulation, which was amended and supplemented by various circulars, was repealed by legislation enacted after the constitution of the Republic. Law no. 1228 of 24 December 1954, “Regulations governing resident population registers”, laid the basis for the creation of new population registers. The subsequent regulation¹² was later modified and substituted by the one currently in force (Presidential Decree no. 223/1989). Current regulations governing resident population registers still state today, in Article 46,¹³ that census results must be compared with population registers and that municipalities must “revise population registers in order to ascertain the correspondence between the quantities and types of results of the census” on the basis of the instructions provided by Istat.

The census conducted in 2011, by using municipal population registers as the starting point for sending out the questionnaire, will change the traditional relationship between census and population registers, which until now has seen census lists as a primary source for drawing up municipal registers.¹⁴ Paragraph 4 of the same Article 46 obliges municipal population registers to be updated in the interval between censuses “in order to ensure that results coincide, at all times, with the present situation”.

Currently each municipal population register consists of a system of records on individuals, one on households and a third on communities (prisons, barracks, monasteries and convents, etc.).¹⁵ Current regulations governing population registers assign the task of preparing forms used by them to Istat, in order to ensure that they are consistent throughout the country. One of the main surveys based on the registers concerns resident population movements, both natural and migratory. The survey forms the basis for updating the calculation of the resident population, defined using the general population census, through monthly and annual municipal population changes. Each decade – following the definition of the *de jure* population, obtained through the general population census – the population is recounted by summing the starting population (*de jure* population), births and immigration and subtracting deaths and emigration numbers.¹⁶ The calculation provides the resident population divided by gender. The figure

⁸ Royal Decree no. 1363 of 4 April 1873.

⁹ Royal Decree no. 445 of 21 September 1901.

¹⁰ Royal Decree no. 2132 of 2 December 1929.

¹¹ Compare: Central Statistical Institute. 1979. “Introduction”. In *Anagrafe della popolazione (Population registers)*, 5-19. Rome: Istat. (Methods and regulations, no. 18, series B).

¹² Approved by Presidential Decree no. 136 of 31 January 1958.

¹³ The previous regulation also asserted, in Article 41, the obligation to compare population registers with the population census survey.

¹⁴ See [General population censuses](#). Moreover, the availability of computerised individual list helped the population register revision throughout the accurate check of the misaligned positions after the census.

¹⁵ For further information on the structure of population registers, see Istat. 2010. *Guide to the supervision of population registers*. Rome: Istat. (Methods and Standards, no. 48).

¹⁶ Data on population change include, in addition to population movements in themselves (births, deaths, registrations and de-registrations due to transfer of residence), data on registrations and de-registrations for other reasons. The category of registrations for other reasons includes

obtained by algebraic sum, relating to residents as at 31 December each year, is reported by municipalities on the first line of the monthly survey form in January of the following year. This information is then replicated each year until the next census.

The first count of the Italian population regarded the population actually present, and was performed using the data from the 1861 census, only taking natural population movements into account, on the basis of the November 1862 circular sent by the General Statistics Department of the then Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, which issued the necessary provisions at the start of surveys on annual population movements, requiring the use of a number of statistical models. The obligation to compile an annual population change report was confirmed by regulations governing population registers issued in 1873 and 1901. Over time the forms have been refined, and from 1954 a form similar to that used today was introduced for the "Movement and calculation of resident population" survey, containing data on the resident population movements as determined from municipal population registers.

Following the 1951 census, Istat began to publish data on the resident population calculated at a municipal level, with the total published from 1952 to 1954 and the results divided by gender from 1955. From 1958 onwards, annual municipal population movement data were also published. The long series of publications in volumes was interrupted in 2005 with the switch to online publication of population data and annual net increases and decreases, joined in 2003 by the monthly municipal population change previously only published in provincial summaries.¹⁷

The resetting of population figures at each census makes it necessary to recalculate the series for the previous decade, which may be performed using different levels of geographical aggregation and variables such as gender and age. In the past structural population data (age, gender and civil status) were only available after censuses, while since 1992 Istat has implemented a survey of population divided by age, gender and civil status (Posas) in all Italian municipalities, which provides a municipal-level structural datum for each year. Although the information is considerably more detailed, it also results in greater difficulty in reconstructing series between censuses.

For the years up to 1946, the reconstructions regard the population based both on borders at the time and present-day borders. The first large-scale reconstruction of population and population movements based on modern-day borders was performed for the publication of volumes celebrating the centenary of Italian unification, covering data from the period 1861-1961, recalculating the population and movements (in thousands) on a national level for the resident population and population actually present with reference to borders at the time and present-day borders.¹⁸ The same publication also includes a reconstruction of population and population movements for 1951-1961 by province.¹⁹ The reconstructions by individual years of age, gender and region are available for the six decades between censuses from 1951 to 2011. The first series (1951-1961) for which Istat was responsible was published together with the subsequent one (1961-1971) prepared by La Sapienza University in Rome.²⁰ The subsequent series, all edited by Istat, increased geographical detail over time, breaking data down initially to the provincial level (1982-1991) and then to the municipal level (1991-2011).

the following: registrations due to the reappearance of individuals previously de-registered because untraceable, first-time registrations of children aged 1 or over, and post-census corrections. The latter are the result of comparing the register and the census: if registers are found to contain records for people erroneously not included in the census but with place of usual residence in the municipality, the correction is made to include in the calculation anyone who had otherwise been excluded from it. The category of individuals deregistered for other reasons includes those deregistered because they cannot be contacted or because they do not meet registration requirements, such as legal residence status for citizens of non-EU countries, and post-census corrections. In addition, calculation adjustments may be made to these categories in order to correct errors in the previous year's recorded population changes, such as errors in gender attribution, or actual changes of gender by persons already registered, along with registration and de-registration procedures that were subsequently cancelled. Population change data has only distinguished registrations/deregistrations for other reasons since 1977. Prior to that date the category was not recorded separately, with such procedures being included under registrations and deregistrations due to transfers to and from other municipalities.

¹⁷ As in the case of total population, since 1993 Istat has also calculated the resident foreign population.

¹⁸ Compare: Central Statistical Institute. 1965. Ch. 1. In *Demographic balances of the Italian population from 1861 to 1961*, edited by F. Giusti, 87-122. Rome: Istat. (Statistics Yearbooks, vol. 17, series VIII, year 94). The most recent reconstruction performed by Istat according to geographical districts as of 20 October 1991 using census data from 1861 to 1991 presents a different reconstruction of the historical series according to present-day borders (for the census years up to 1936) from the one used in the first reconstruction and used for the reconstruction of the population and annual balances still in use and published here. This difference is due to the fact that this reconstruction, in presenting data on a municipal level, did not use estimates in the totals for the years preceding the acquisition of Italian territories gained in subsequent years. Furthermore, it uses the uncorrected figures from 1921, since the correction, published together with the results of the 1931 survey, was not carried out at a municipal level. Compare: Istat. 1994. *Resident population in Municipalities: censuses from 1861 to 1991: territorial districts as at 20 October 1991*. Rome: Istat.

¹⁹ Compare: Central Statistical Institute. 1965. Ch. 1. In *Retrospective estimate of resident population in the period between 1951-1961*, by M. Natale, 123-155. Rome: Istat. (Statistics Yearbooks, vol.17, series VIII, year 94).

²⁰ La Sapienza University in Rome: Department of Demographic Science. 1983. *Reconstruction of resident population by gender, age and region: 1962-1972*. Rome. (Sources and Tools, no. 1).

Current surveys of overall population structure (Posas) and the foreign population (Strasa) and population changes on a monthly and annual basis collected at a municipal level are completely computerised. Data sent by Internet cover 100 percent of municipalities for annual surveys and approximately 90 percent for monthly surveys. The remaining paper-based forms are sent directly to Istat or, in the case of the monthly survey, to prefectural offices, which forward the forms to the relevant regional Istat office for recording purposes.

Domestic migration

Population registers are currently the source of another two surveys: one regarding births (Istat P.4 form, registrations of births) and the other transfers of residence (administrative Form APR/4 for transfers of residence between municipalities, registrations and deregistrations due to transfers to and from other countries and for other reasons, such as non-traceability, reappearance, etc.). Both surveys are conducted using paper forms or by online data transmission. From the beginning of 2000 the use of software (called Isi-Istatel) distributed to all municipalities for transmitting demographic data from population and civil status registers, has become ever more widespread. This program allows a preliminary check of data quality: once records have been set out according to an agreed template, they are sent to the Ancitel site, from which they are periodically downloaded and acquired by Istat in its own central database. This system makes it possible to acquire already-corrected data, to avoid the recording stage and considerably shortening the data-validation phase. The survey on registrations of births will be covered in more detail in [Marital status changes](#).

Regarding domestic transfers of residence, the first reference to their being recorded is found in Article 8 of the Law issued on 20 June 1871, which stated that “changes of domicile or residence from one municipality to another or within the same municipality must be notified to municipal offices in the manner and within the terms established in the regulation”. Subsequently, Royal Decree no. 666 of 28 January 1872 confirmed the obligation to report changes of address and residence. The law against rural to urban migration issued in 1939,²¹ designed to halt the flow of workers to big cities, led to the formation of large swathes of the population which although usually resident in large municipalities, continued to maintain residence elsewhere. These transfers were not recorded for years, and the survey of domestic population movements was therefore underestimated. This also resulted in the population registers being at variance with the reality that they were supposed to represent. The Second World War accentuated this issue, in no small part due to the forced transfers that took place (refugees, repatriations, evacuees, etc.). The law was only repealed in 1961 (by Law no. 5 of 1961), yet its consequences continued to be felt – judging from a Ministry of Home Affairs circular in 1995 (Circular no.8 of 29 May 1995) reconfirming the repeal of the law and referring to it in criticising the erroneous behaviour of many municipal administrations which, when examining requests for individuals to be recorded in their population registers, demanded documentation proving that the individual worked in the municipal territory, or that accommodation was available, or other illegal criteria, thereby limiting the registration of transfers of residence.

The first survey of transfers of residence was conducted in 1955. In that year, a specific form was created to record certain socio-demographic characteristics of those transferring their residence: age, gender, civil status, profession or occupation, position within their profession and branch of economic activity, to which education level was added at a later date. It was necessary to complete four copies of the form for the transfer of residence between municipalities (Form AP/4). The municipality which initiated the procedure was the municipality of registration which kept one copy and sent the other three to the municipality of deregistration. After carrying out the required checks, the latter consented to the transfer of residence and sent two copies of the form to the municipality of origin, which sent one copy to Istat and kept the remaining copy, which replaced the original.

From 1991 onwards (Istat Circular no. 56 of 30 October 1991), by agreement with the Ministry of Home Affairs, this form was replaced by Form APR/4 entitled “Migratory movements in the resident population”. The reasons that led to the new form are mainly associated with the new regulation on the population register approved two years earlier (Presidential Decree no. 223 of 30 May 1989) and with the need, felt by many municipalities, to simplify migratory procedures. In fact, the new form contains all of the information necessary to complete the individual record in the population register (Form AP/5) required by the new regulation. The form must also be used for transfers to or from other countries and for

²¹ Law no. 1092 of 6 July 1939.

registrations or deregistrations for other reasons, such as deregistration due to untraceability as ascertained by the registry office.²²

Since 2013 to replace paper model, data have been acquired exclusively through the ISI-Istatal software that allows to send data automatically. The new IT procedures simplify the collection and recording of the data, and the statistical correction phases with an improvement both in terms of reduction of time and in quality of the information.

Warnings for time series comparisons

- Population change data contain not only data regarding actual population movements but also information on registrations and deregistrations for other reasons (see note no. 19), including post-census corrections, which are particularly significant in the years immediately following censuses. Population change data only distinguish between registrations and deregistrations for other reasons from 1977 onwards. Prior to that date, the data were recorded under registrations and deregistrations to and from other municipalities. For this reason, irregularities may be observed in the data for domestic migratory movements.
- In 2002 an amnesty was applied (Law no. 189 of 30 July 2002 and Law no. 222 of 9 October 2002) designed to legalise the status of foreign citizens in Italy, which resulted in a huge number of registrations from other countries in the following two years.
- In 2007 Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union, making it easier to register citizens from those countries who were already present in Italy, generating a huge number of registrations from other countries.

Marital status changes

Marital status records register births, deaths and marriages in each municipality. This section will consider the registration of births, while the survey of marriages and deaths will be covered respectively in [Households](#) and [Health](#). As with population registers, since the first years after Italy's unification legislation has sought to organise the keeping of civil status records and the statistical records relating to them. After the first provisions for collecting data in 1862, "in 1863 a circular to Prefects, and specific instructions to parish priests and pastors, to mayors and members of Municipal and Provincial Statistics Councils bearing the date 17 November 1862, established that statistics *commessi* (assistants) should record, both legitimate and illegitimate births and orphans, deaths, still births and marriages, along with civil status and age".²³

Since then natural population movements have been consistently recorded in summary municipal forms which have been joined, over the years, by individual forms relating to the various events, while the monthly municipal summary continued to be active. Births recorded in civil status records concern all births in Italy, regardless of whether the parents are resident in Italy. All "occasional" births of non-residents are also therefore recorded. In contrast, births of Italian residents that take place abroad are not recorded.

From Italian unification until 1924, individual forms were not used to collect data. Instead, municipalities sent a monthly summary of the number of live and still births divided by gender and filiation (legitimate, illegitimate and orphans) to the General Statistics Department. From 1868 onwards this summary also includes the number of multiple births, divided by number and gender of newborns. Filiation, and in particular the "orphans" option, was introduced in the survey as early as 1863 because "the hypocrisy of old Italian administrations removed abandoned children from the view of all statistical surveys".²⁴ The definition of still births was not clearly established at the beginning of the survey, and in many cases it included deaths that occurred in the first few days after birth.²⁵ The complete transfer of the registration of

²² This must be performed after at least one year of absence from the municipality, if the municipality or foreign state where the person is currently resident is not known.

²³ Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, Statistics of the Kingdom of Italy. *Population: changes in civil status in 1862*.

²⁴ Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, Statistics of the Kingdom of Italy. 1864. *Population: changes in civil status in 1863*, IX-XIX. Florence.

²⁵ This circular of 17 November 1862 defined still births as "creatures brought to light dead, who must always be distinguished from those that die immediately after birth", for which the hours of life also had to be noted.

still births to the Registrar's Office took place in 1866, as prior to this date parish priests and ecclesiastical authorities were also involved in this task. From that year on, their number increased, probably due to the fact that they had not been recorded in the past. In 1901 the volume of data includes the following definition for still births: "Children born dead after the sixth month of gestation, but not those who showed signs of life after birth, even if they died before the official declaration of birth was made to the registrar, within the five days permitted by law".

The first individual survey of births took place at the same time as the foundation of the Central Statistical Institute (1926) which began demographic publications specifically with data for 1924. Birth records were sent directly to Istat, although municipalities continued to send monthly summaries to the registrar's office, which were also used to verify that all the individual forms had been sent. The first forms contained very little information. Information on the newborn includes: filiation, date of birth, health, order of birth and type of birth, while data on parents included age, residence and profession.

The questionnaires changed and became more detailed over time.²⁶ Specifically, in 1954 the birth record underwent considerable changes, both in form and content, assuming the shape that it would maintain practically unchanged until it was discontinued in 1998. From 1955 the forms were marked with the codes Istat D/1 (for males) and Istat D/2 (for females). In the mid-1960s the birth form contained 18 questions in the first part (relating to live births) and nine in the second (for still births). Information on the new-born essentially included date of birth, filiation, order of birth, some details of a medical nature, type (single or multiple) and place of birth. Information on the parents, on the other hand, included main personal and socio-economic details, date of marriage, date of birth of any previous children, and the existence of any kinship. The part reserved for still births required the main medical information, i.e. cause of death, type of medical intervention to facilitate birth, time of death, whether before or during birth, and any congenital malformation of the foetus. In the last year that this information was recorded, the first part contained 21 questions, which now included order of birth within the current marriage, the outcome of all previous pregnancies, citizenship of the mother and father and type of birth.

In 1998 the Bassanini Law, by prohibiting the certificate of assistance at birth from being sent to the registrar due to the range of information on the birth and the baby's health, effectively prevented the continuation of records being kept through civil status records. Furthermore, the same law made it possible to declare the birth not only at the registrar's office but also at the birth centre (within three days) where the centre was equipped to do so.²⁷ However, this only resulted in a partial lack of information, as the monthly municipal summary of civil status events continued, collecting the number of births according to type of declaration (health department, registrar's office in the municipality of birth or residence) and filiation, number of still births (which had to be declared in the municipality where the birth took place) and number of multiple births.

In 1999, registrations of births in population registers began to be recorded using Istat Form P.4. This made it possible to record births at a municipal level (and by census section) classified by gender, date of birth, place of birth and citizenship of the newborn, the date of birth, civil status and citizenship of the mother and father, number of family members and number of minors in the family. The data collected regard births to all residents, regardless of place of birth (in Italy or abroad). The birth of non-resident children in Italy, however, continued to be excluded.

Furthermore, the survey allowed for the creation of base lists from which a sample of mothers could be extracted and interviewed in the sample survey on births, the results of which made it possible to reconstruct fertility structure by order of birth on a regional level, and also provided an accurate overview of fertility expectations of mothers, contextual family and social aspects regarding the birth, childcare strategies adopted by the family and the impact of the birth of a child on the mother's work choices. The first edition of the survey was conducted in 2002 and covered mothers of children recorded in the register of births between July 2000 and June 2001. The second edition in 2005 interviewed mothers of children

²⁶ In 1927 a question was introduced to ascertain whether the birth took place with or without assistance, and the date of civil marriage had to be noted for the parents. The 1928 edition also contained, for deaths that occurred before the declaration of birth (which had to be made within five days) the time lived and the cause of death and, for the parents, the indication of their employment status.

In 1931, causes of death were introduced for still births, distinguishing between foetal disease, premature birth and mechanical causes. In 1941 the questions of the causes of still births, assistance and residence were eliminated. In 1946 the demographic information previously eliminated was reintroduced, and the causes of still births were indicated in more detail. In 1947 the question on assistance at birth was reintroduced.

²⁷ The birth centre sends the declaration of birth to the registrar's office of the municipality where the centre is located or, at the parents' request, to the registrar's office of the municipality where the parents are resident. The declaration of birth made at the registrar's office (within 10 days) may be made in either the municipality of birth or of residence. The registrar is responsible for sending the declaration of birth to the population register so that children born to residents can be recorded.

recorded in the register of births in 2003. The third edition of the survey was conducted in 2012 and it involved mothers of children recorded in the register of births between July 2009 to June 2010. Moreover, today data deriving from the records of births registered in population registers - as in the past data deriving from individual survey on births - allow the constant update of fertility tables at NUTS2 level which represents a summary source increasing the potential information about fertility in Italy. They are able to show in time series (since 1952) regional data considering simultaneously birth order and birth cohort of mothers.

Warnings for time series comparisons

- In 1866 civil status records began to be recorded in municipal registrar's offices.
- Still birth was still not clearly defined at the beginning of surveys. In 1901 the definition introduces the month of gestation (the birth must take place after the sixth month).
- From 1924 to 1998 individual birth records were included in the civil status survey, accompanied by the municipal monthly summary which until 1924 had been the only source of information on births. The data published refer to the summary survey until 1924 and the individual survey until 1998. Some data interrupt the series in that year (legitimate live births by age of the mother and number of births by number), while other switch sources between the civil records office and the municipal registry (live births by age of the mother).
- The tables relating to the natural population movement (net change and rate of natural increase) use data from civil status records until 1980 and from municipal registers from 1981 to 2009.
- In 1999, the survey of birth records in the municipal registry began. Therefore the survey includes detailed records of births to residents, regardless of the place of birth (in Italy or abroad). Nonetheless, the survey of births recorded by the registrar's office continues, exclusively through the monthly municipal summary form.

National emigration and returning migrants

Measurement of migration to and from other countries long relied on attempts to make estimates based on census data.²⁸ Over the years, procedures for measuring emigration and return migration flows has undergone considerable transformations, both regarding the definition of migrants and the methods used. In the first few years after Italian unification, an emigrant was defined as anyone without material goods who travelled abroad to find any kind of work.

The principle applied by the General Statistics Department from 1876 to 1913 was to classify expatriates as "emigrants" and "non-emigrants" according to whether they had been issued with a passport at a normal or reduced rate of tax. Later, however, the statistics were aligned with the definitions used in 1901 emigration legislation. Therefore all citizens who "travel in third class or its equivalent to countries beyond the Straits of Gibraltar, excluding European coasts, and beyond the Suez Canal" were considered emigrants, although the number of those falling under the latter definition was less than 50.

Law no. 1075 of 2 August 1913 introduced more restrictive criteria for defining emigrants, including anyone who "travelled with the aim of seeking manual work, owning a small business or joining relations by blood or marriage who previously emigrated for work". Subsequent laws in 1919 and 1925 repeated this definition, which was essentially associated with deprived social conditions. From 1928, following the passing of new legislation, the term "emigrant" was abolished for the purpose of official statistics and replaced by "worker", although the content remained practically unchanged.

In 1947, following the general reorganisation of statistics that took place after the Second World War, the Central Statistical Institute used a new definition for the term "emigrant" which, in keeping with the relevant legislation, was closer to a more "modern" type of emigration. Emigrants were therefore defined as those who move abroad to:

²⁸ For a discussion of Italian censuses abroad, please see: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2005. *Surveying Italians abroad as at 21 March 2003: demographic features*. Rome: Istat.

- carry on a profession, art or trade on a self-employed basis or employed by others (worker emigrants);
- follow a worker emigrant for reasons other than work reasons, on being called by family members already abroad (family emigrants);
- establish residence abroad following a call from non-family members for reasons other than work (emigrants for other reasons).

The grouping of emigrants according to these three classes remained, until recent times, the main classification used to analyse the phenomenon of emigration abroad.

Traditionally migration statistics have considered emigration from Italy by Italian citizens resident in the national territory as “leaving”, and return immigration by Italian citizens who previously emigrated as “entering”. In Italian statistics, the classification used has traditionally referred to the principle of citizenship, an essentially legal notion, while other countries refer to the principle of nationality or country of provenance. The first official statistics on Italian emigration date to 1876 when the General Statistics Division began recording authorisations granted by the relevant municipal authorities for the issue of passports to emigrants. Of course this did not guarantee that the person then took delivery of the passport, or that they actually emigrated. Therefore, in 1904 the number of emigrants was calculated using the number of passports issued by police authorities. These registers remained in use, albeit only as a source for the purpose of verification, until 1958. In 1901 passenger boarding lists were created, i.e. lists featuring all the main characteristics of each person, which enabled statistics on emigration to non-European countries to be improved. In 1921, when responsibility for emigration statistics passed to the General Emigration Commission, an important modification was introduced with the creation of statistics coupons attached to passports. In 1933 emigration statistics, after briefly passing to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were once again transferred to the Central Statistical Institute. Following the abolition of the coupons (September 1957), the measurement of migratory flows abroad was organised on a new basis. From 1958, police authorities in Italy and diplomatic services abroad filled out an individual card for each passport issued or renewed. These cards were sent to the relevant municipal authorities which, following the necessary checks, processed the various statistical data. In parallel with this survey, additional data on migration to and from countries outside Europe was drawn from the lists of passengers embarking and disembarking compiled by shipping companies and sent to Istat by port and airport authorities.

From 1964 onwards (Circular no. 34 of 5 June 1964) Istat, by agreement with the Ministry of Home Affairs, gave precise instructions to municipalities for the creation of a specific “Register of individuals migrating or who have already migrated abroad” designed to make population records as close as possible to the actual situation and to better track the flow of people moving abroad temporarily. The register consisted of individual records (Form AP/5a) containing information of socio-demographic nature. At the beginning of each year municipalities were required to transfer movements recorded during the previous year onto two specific forms, one for movements to and from European countries (Form Istat/P/26) and the other for movements to and from non-European countries (Form Istat/P/27), and send them to Istat.

In order to ensure that population registers were kept regularly and – through constant updates – that emigrants were issued with the necessary certification, in 1969 Istat issued a specific circular (no. 22 of 21 February 1969) on the recommendation of a specific commission comprised by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs, creating the AIRE (Register of Italians Resident Abroad) held by municipalities, and implementing a system which for several years provided data on Italian emigration. Provisions regarding the AIRE register were later improved by Law no. 470 of 27 October 1988 (Official Gazette no. 261 of 7 November 1988) and governed by Presidential Decree no. 323 of 6 September 1989. The AIRE register is a special population register held by each municipality which records all Italians who transfer their residence abroad for a period of more than one year,²⁹ and are thus

²⁹ In accordance with current legislation, an Italian citizen who transfers his/her residence abroad is obliged, within ninety days, to declare the fact to the consular office in the foreign immigration district. In turn, the consular office sends the declaration to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which transmits it to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The latter sends the details to the most recent municipality of residence which in turn, within sixty days, removes the individual from the resident population register, transferring him/her to the AIRE (Registry of Italians Resident Abroad). The process also takes place contrariwise, when an Italian citizen returns to Italy. In this case the municipal registry clerk removes the person from the AIRE register within 48 hours of his/her return, records him/her in the population register and reports the change to the Ministry of Home Affairs, which in turn communicates it within 60 days to the relevant consular authority.

removed from the Italian population register. The event is recorded by municipal registrar's offices on an administrative form (APR/4), currently also used by Istat for statistics on migratory movements.

Today the survey of those recorded in the AIRE register is conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Law no.104/2002 has also established that the records comprising the AIRE register must be compared with records in consular registers to produce a single list of Italian citizens resident abroad. This operation is currently underway. Foreign immigration, on the other hand, is recorded in the survey of the annual migration movement of foreigners and the survey conducted using Form APR/4 (see [Foreign Immigration](#)).

Warnings for time series comparisons

- From 1876 to 1913 emigrants were divided into “emigrants” and “non-emigrants” according to whether the passport was issued at a normal or reduced rate of tax.
- The Law of 1913 introduced a more substantial criterion indicating emigrants as those who travel with the purpose of finding manual work, owning a small business or joining relations by blood or marriage who previously emigrated for work reasons.
- From 1876 to 1904 the authorisation granted by the relevant municipal authorities for the issue of passports to emigrants was used to count emigration numbers.
- From 1902 onwards migratory movements to and from countries outside Europe were also recorded through sea passenger movements (boarding lists).
- From 1904 onwards the number of passports issued by police authorities was recorded.
- From 1921 onwards the statistics coupons attached to passports (emigration and return immigration) were counted, and subsequently abolished, in September 1957.
- From 1928 onwards the term “emigrant” was replaced by the term “worker”.
- In 1958 a new survey of emigration and return immigration was conducted: on issuing or renewing passports, prefectural offices in Italy and consular authorities abroad compiled an individual record to be sent to municipalities.
- In 1964 a register of emigrants abroad was set up at municipalities and two survey forms were created to record, at the municipal level, emigration to European or non-European countries.
- In 1969 the Registry of Italian Residents Abroad (AIRE) was established.
- From 1989 Form AP/4 and from 1991 Form APR/4 have been used for transfer of residence, counting the data for Italians.

Foreign immigration

Data on foreign immigration into Italy regard both stock and flow figures. The main sources for the former are the population census, population registers and permits to stay, while for the latter they are population registers and civil status records.

The population census provides a constant record of citizenship stretching back to 1881. Some additional information was added to the 1911 census (which required non-Italian citizens to indicate, in addition to their citizenship, the duration of their stay in the kingdom) and to the 1931 census which also required stateless foreigners to indicate “the most recent citizenship held or, failing that, their nationality”.

The series presented here include information starting from 1981, since before that date numbers were negligible. However, the presence of foreigners in Italy has taken on far greater significance since 1991. From this year onwards, the information collected by the census was extended to include the year in which their place of usual residence became Italy and, since 2001, the method by which they acquired Italian citizenship (by birth or by acquisition) and – for foreign citizens and stateless persons born abroad – the year and main reason for transfer to usual residence in Italy. Furthermore, to make completing the questionnaire easier for foreign citizens, a facsimile of the Household Form was translated into 11 languages (Arabic, English, Albanian, French, Spanish, Serbo-Croat, German, Chinese, Singhalese, Polish and Portuguese).

The results of the 14th Population Census highlighted how the reasons for coming to Italy were mainly for work or to join family members. Therefore, this question has been removed from the 2011 edition. On the contrary, information was collected on the mother and father's place of birth, in order to extend the observation of the group of foreign origin to include those who have had Italian citizenship since birth as

children of mixed couples or parents who have acquired citizenship. For the 14th Census a facsimile of the Household Form was translated into 17 languages (Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, English, Albanian, French, Macedonian, Spanish, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Chinese, Singhalese, Polish, Urdu and Portuguese). As is well known, census data count the entire population of foreigners that declare themselves resident in Italy on a given date. Nonetheless, in the past considerable difficulties have been encountered in recording foreigners in the population.

Population registers are also a valid source of information on foreigners, and in fact are used for stock figures on resident foreigners and for flow figures on their natural and migratory movements. Since 1993, in fact, Istat has calculated the resident foreign population in the same way as for the population as a whole, along with their distribution by citizenship. At each census, starting with the total number of foreigners and adding the figures relating to natural and migratory movements, the number of foreigners resident in each Italian municipality at the end of the year is calculated, divided by gender. Thus a detailed overview of their legal residence and the related demographic trend is obtained.

Recording foreigners in population registers is a necessary act and is possible only when they meet the requirements for legally residing in Italy.³⁰ The regulation on the population register and subsequent legislation and circulars relating to the presence of foreigners dictated the rules for the correct maintenance of population registers relating to the registration and deregistration of foreigners and EU citizens. The effects of various laws on immigration (e.g. the amnesty for illegal foreign citizens or new Member States joining the EU) and migratory movements recorded as registrations of individuals in municipal population registers is clear.

Since 2002, Istat has also recorded the distribution of the foreign population by gender and age. The individual data relating to resident population movements, such as births and transfers of residence, are also divided by country of citizenship. In the same way, data from the “civil status” source, such as marriages and deaths, identify events relating to foreign citizens, separately for residents and non-residents (see [Households](#) and [Health](#)).

The last important source of information on the foreign population relates to permits to stay. Since 1992, Istat has calculated the number of foreigners present at the beginning of the year using information drawn from the archive provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs after at least six months from the date of reference. In fact, in addition to permits to stay that are valid on 1 January, those documents whose validity extends to this date but are entered into the records at a later date due to lengthy procedures to issue a first permit, must also be counted. Furthermore, permits that expired on 1 January but have been extended, and which therefore refer to foreigners that are to be considered legally resident at the beginning of the year, are also included.

The resulting data makes it possible to examine the foreign population in terms of certain demographic features (sex, age, civil status) and according to reasons for staying in Italy. Istat also provides detailed information by immigrants’ geographical area of citizenship, with particular reference to the most important communities. Geographical disaggregation is necessarily limited to the provincial level, since permits to stay are issued by provincial police authorities. Since 2008 Istat has been drawing up a new series of data on permits to stay which since 27 March 2007 have not included EU citizens, who no longer require a permit to stay. Furthermore, in contrast to the past, the data include not only currently valid permits but also any minors recorded on adult permits. Since January the 1st 2011 data on long-term permits have been provided. This kind of permit hasn’t an expiration time. It’s not issued for a specific reason (family, work, etc.) and only foreigners present in Italy for 5 or more years can apply for it.

It is pointed out that those holding a permit to stay are not necessarily recorded in the population register, just as the records in the register may also include foreigners with expired permits to stay. Therefore, the two sources provide different estimates.

Warnings for time series comparisons

- Since 2008 the data has not included EU citizens, who have no longer required a permit to stay since 27 March 2007.

³⁰ See Presidential Decree no. 223/1989.

Territory and urbanisation process

The population census not only records the number of individuals and their main socio-economic characteristics,³¹ but also provides important information on the type of municipality and geographical area in which they live (size of municipality, altitude zone and type of residential centre), thereby making it possible to analyse trends of settlement in the territory. The exploitation of the potential of the census survey has improved over time, and the information available on urbanisation have become ever wider and more detailed with respect to the past. The analysis of time series regarding the phenomenon of urbanisation, in the same way as for the depopulation of rural and mountainous areas, has however been made more complex by the fact that over time the administrative structure of Italy and the areas belonging to the various regions has undergone profound changes. For this reason, the time series relating to the geographical area, both on a national and regional level, refer to historical borders.³² For the same reasons, some tables use modern-day geographical divisions, re-aggregating regions or districts according to recent structures.³³

Furthermore, it is important to consider that in the course of the various census surveys, the definitions of some aggregates that play an important role in analysing geographical population distribution have changed. This is the case for “small inhabited areas”, known as “rural houses” in 1861³⁴, and for “localities”, the definition of which has changed several times in the various census editions, although without substantially modifying the meaning. In the censuses conducted between 1871 and 1921, the analysis of population settlement focused on the terms “agglomerates” and “scattered”, without defining intermediate settlements. Reduced interest in these aspects also had a negative influence on the study localities in that, while the concept of centre as “an aggregation of houses separated by roads where the inhabitants of nearby places gather for religious, business or similar reasons” remained constant (censuses of 1871, 1881 and 1901), the municipalities were left considerable latitude for establishing the importance a group of houses should have in order for it to constitute a population centre. “This was done in consideration of the fact that it was impossible to set down consistent rules to cover all municipalities, given the extremely varied conditions of life in the various regions and provinces in our country” (see *1881 census report*).

In the 1931 census a significant step forward was taken with the introduction of the obligation for municipalities to draw up a map of their areas on the 1:25,000 maps of the Military Geographical Institute, marking on them the border of the municipality and the division of the area into enumeration areas, and indicating the position of the town hall. This meant that for the first time, the higher census bodies (prefectural offices and cadastral offices) could count on a means of checking the work done by municipalities. The most evident result of this work was the list of localities in each municipality, divided by enumeration areas.³⁵

In the next census in 1936, it was required to indicate the position of localities on the municipal map. The maps were then systematically reviewed by the central body. For the 1951 census, the collection of data on the forms of population settlement was preceded by a study phase partly conducted directly by Istat and partly with the collaboration of university professors of geography. These studies led to the definition of the features of geographical fractions (no longer recorded from the 1991 census onwards), localities, small inhabited areas and wide spread houses, as follows:

- *geographical fraction*: the part of the municipal area including, usually, a locality and small inhabited areas with surrounding wide spread houses, gravitating around the centre;
- *locality*: a group of houses located near or attached to one another, with roads, squares or otherwise small gaps between them, characterised by the existence of public services or establishments forming a gathering place, where the inhabitants of nearby places typically congregate for religious, educational or business reasons or for obtaining provisions and suchlike;

³¹ More detailed information on the census is provided in: [General population censuses](#).

³² For the main changes to the Italian administrative structure over the last 150 years, please refer to the Warnings for time series comparisons.

³³ The districts – geographically similar to modern-day regions, but without any form of administrative function – were used only for statistical purposes from the 1861 census to the one of 1936.

³⁴ The original definition read: “Hamlet is defined as a group of houses divided by roads determined by the convenience of living together without any contact with the places nearby”.

³⁵ Istat. 1935. Built-up areas. Vol. 7 of the General Population Census of 21 April 1931. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato

- *small inhabited area*: a group of houses with at least fifteen households without any form of gathering place such as the one that characterises a built-up area;
- *wide spread houses*: houses spread over the countryside or located along roads with such a distance between them that they do not even form a residential nucleus.

It should be noted that during the course of the censuses the population used to describe these forms of settlement has changed: until the 1931 census the present population was used, while censuses from 1951 onwards refer to the resident population.

Warnings for time series comparisons:

- The 1891 and 1941 censuses were not conducted, the first due to organisational and financial issues and the second due to the war.
- The total present population in the 1921 census was corrected and published at a later date, as the number of inhabitants was artificially increased in some districts for political and administrative or economic and financial reasons. The resident population was subsequently estimated (compare: Central Statistical Institute of the Kingdom of Italy. 1938. *Preliminary report*. Vol. 1 of the *1931 General Population Census*, 24. Rome: Istat).
- The 1936 census was conducted following Legislative Reform no. 1503, introduced in 1930, which specified that censuses should be conducted every five years instead of every ten years.
- Until the 1931 census, the population figure presented refers to the present population, and from 1951 to the resident population.
- Regarding the centralised and scattered population, the 1861 census classifies population as those with residence in “localities”, “rural houses” and “wide spread houses”. In the 1871 and 1921 censuses rural houses were not recorded, and the related population was considered as “scattered”, and only the “agglomerate” and “scattered” categories were used while the concept of “centre” was maintained. In the 1931 census municipalities were required for the first time to draw up a topographical plan, while the 1936 census required this plan to indicate the position of localities and their names. Some types of agglomerates (rural houses, small inhabited areas, wide spread houses, etc.) have therefore undergone significant changes in their conceptual and effective definitions, while the definition of localities has, maintained substantially comparable features ever since the 1861 census.

Main modifications in Italian administrative structure:

- In 1861 the Kingdom of Italy did not include the territories that roughly correspond to the modern-day regions of Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige/*Südtirol* and Lazio.
- In 1866 the Veneto region (which then also included a province in the modern-day Friuli-Venezia Giulia known as the Province of Friuli) and Mantua were annexed to the Kingdom of Italy.
- In 1870 Rome and part of the modern-day region of Lazio (the Province of Rieti, the Sora and Gaeta districts and the Pontine Islands had already been annexed in 1860) were annexed to the newly-constituted Kingdom of Italy.
- In 1919 Trentino, Alto Adige, Gorizia and eastern Friuli, Istria, Trieste, Zara and the islands of Carnaro, Lagosta, Cazza and Pelagosa were annexed to the Kingdom of Italy, followed by Sazan Island in 1920 and Fiume in 1924.
- In 1921 the territories of Venezia Giulia (then including the provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Pola and Fiume), Venezia Tridentina (approximately corresponding to the modern-day autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano/*Bozen*) were annexed to the Kingdom of Italy.
- In 1927, the province of Caserta was abolished and its municipalities were passed to the neighbouring provinces of Benevento, Napoli, Campobasso, Roma and Frosinone. The province was again established in 1945.

- In 1947, Istria, Fiume, Dalmatia (with the islands of Pelagosa, Lagosta and Cazza), annexed during the Second World War, were ceded to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, while Sazan Island was ceded to Albania.
- In 1951 the Valle d’Aosta region was separated from the Piedmont region.
- In 1963 the Molise region was formed and, separately from the Abruzzi and Molise region, became the twentieth region of Italy (Constitutional Law no. 3 of 27 December 1963).
- In 2009, the municipalities of Casteldelci, Maiolo, Novafeltria, Pennabilli, Sant’Agata Feltria and Talamello were separated from the province of Pesaro Urbino, in the region Marche, and aggregated to the province of Rimini, in Emilia-Romagna.