

Elections, political and social activities

The time series of data on political and social activities presented in this section deal with both the participation of citizens in political elections and referendums and their involvement in social and political activities in a wider sense.

The results of the various political elections cover the entire period from the founding of the Kingdom of Italy to the current day. These data, all drawn from administrative sources, are inevitably affected by changes over time in the regulations on the right to vote in Italy (from restricted male-only suffrage to universal suffrage, extension of the right to vote to women, regulation of the right to vote for Italian citizens residing abroad, etc.). These modifications introduced considerable variations in the electorate which are to be considered when reading data.

Information on political and social activities, on the other hand, is drawn from sample surveys on households, dating back to the early 1990s when Istat launched a systematic monitoring of the Italian social life through the multipurpose system of household surveys.

Elections

The collection of data on electorate, participation in elections and their results is currently entrusted to the Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for all the necessary measures for all sorts elections and referendums ruled by the national law. Over the years electoral data have been collected and subsequently published by various bodies, in various publications. During the Kingdom of Italy up to 1946, data were published by the General Statistics Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, and, from 1926 onwards, by Istat then known as the Central Statistical Institute. Once Italy became a Republic, data were published by Istat in collaboration with the Ministry for the Constituent assembly and subsequently with the Ministry of the Interior.

The results of political elections, once validated by the electoral Commissions, were published from the first term in 1948 up until the 8th term in 1979, disaggregated both by municipality and electoral constituency. Immediately after the elections, Istat started publishing data by electoral constituency. Since 1980 onwards the Ministry of Interior has been in charge of the detailed publication of the results of all elections. It directly publishes the results of elections and referendums ruled by the national law, namely political, European, regional (with the exception of those under regional law), provincial and municipal elections (in ordinary statute regions); abrogative and constitutional referendums; referendums for territorial separation.

Once results have been scrutinised, the Ministry is in charge of collecting the initial results through the network of Electoral offices in Prefectures and Municipalities, and of their immediate publication for information. The final data are published after the official announcement of the winners only. The information is announced by the Central district office at the Court of Appeals or the competent court for the Municipality of the constituency, in addition to the Supreme Court, which performs non-judicial duties regarding legislative elections and popular referendums for the repeal of laws (Law no. 361/1957; Official Gazette no. 139 dated 03 June 1957).

The Ministry publishes updated electoral data on its website and attends, updates and publishes the Historical election archive, an online database containing the results of elections (announced by the competent Offices held by magistrates) presented on a municipality basis. Within the scope of its duties and using its own organisational structures, the Ministry produces, processes and archives data on the electorate resident in Italy and abroad, surveyed every six months by the Italian municipalities on the fixed dates of 30 June and 31 December.

Warnings for time series comparisons

For a correct reading of the data in the time series, changes in the voting right laws are to be considered. Changes introduced by law over the years affected the definition and composition of the electorate from a personal and socio-cultural point of view. The main regulatory changes are listed below:

a) The right to vote and its evolution in the electorate extension and composition from a socio-demographic point of view:

- 1861. Men's right to vote is recognised to the aged 25 and over capable to read and write and who have paid not less than 40 liras in taxes. This right allowed 2 percent of the Italian population to vote.
- 1882. Law no. 299 dated 24 September 1882 extended suffrage to all male citizens aged 21 and over, who were literate (having passed the obligatory two years of primary school or military school) and who paid direct taxes of at least 19.8 liras during the year. The resulting electorate was more than tripled.
- 1912. A law passed on 25 May 1912 and established an almost universal suffrage for men, extended to all men aged 21 and over capable to read and write, while the illiterate had the right to vote when aged 30 and over. The right to vote was also extended to all citizens who completed the military service.
- 1918. The previous electoral law was modified to give the right to vote to all male citizens aged 21 and over, including the illiterate. Voting rights were also extended to minors who had performed military service during the war.
- 1945. Universal suffrage was adopted and extended the right to vote to women for the first time. Since then voting rights were recognised to all the Italian residents aged 21 and over, both males and females for electing the Chamber of Deputies and aged 25 and over for electing the Senate (Lieutenant's Legislative Decree no. 23 dated 02 February 1945).
- 1947. Voting rights were withdrawn for the population residing in the territories ceded to France and to former Yugoslavia in 1947 (Paris Treaty of 10 February 1947).
- 1975. The age for voting rights was reduced for the resident population and all Italian citizens aged 18 were recognised the right to vote for the Chamber of Deputies (Law no. 39 dated 08 March 1975).

b) Extension of voting rights to Italian voters resident abroad:

- 1979. The electoral base was extended and Italian voters resident abroad were included in the electoral lists of their municipalities of origin in Italy, thanks to Law no. 40 dated 07 February 1979.
- 1989. For the consultative referendum of 1989 Italian citizens resident in a Member State of the European Community were granted the right to vote at the specific polling sections set up in the Italian Consulates, in compliance with art. 1, paragraph 2 of Law no. 132 dated 18 April 1989 and art. 26 of Law no. 18 dated 24 January 1979. The Elections for the European Parliament were held on 18 June 1989.
- 1994. For the election of the European Parliament, in addition to the voters established by Law no. 40 dated 07 February 1979, citizens of Eu member states may vote in Italy if resident in Italy and applied to vote in their municipality of residence. In this case, the European citizens are enrolled as voters in an additional list other than that of their municipality of residence. They vote in the polling sections of the local district they reside in (art. 2, Legislative Decree no. 408 dated 24 June 1994). The same regulation (art. 3, Legislative Decree no. 408 dated 1994) established that Italian voters resident in another Eu Member country may vote for the election of the Italian representatives at the European Parliament in case they do not claim for the right to vote in their country of residence and if enrolled in the Ministry of the Interior's list of Italian voters resident abroad in the polling sections set up for the purpose in their country of residence. In addition to Italian citizens resident in Eu Member Countries, Italian citizens who are temporarily in other Eu country for various reasons (study, work), and who submitted an application for voting in that country are included in the electoral lists of the country (art. 3, Legislative Decree No. 408 dated 24 June 1994 and art. 26 of Law no. 18 dated 24 January 1979). Italian voters who have applied to vote as citizens of another member State, however, are excluded from the Italian electorate and

from the Ministry of the Interior's electoral list of Italian voters abroad.

- 2001. For the reopening of the Italian Parliament and for national referendums (both abrogative and constitutional referendums) a specific "Foreign constituency" was created in accordance with Law no. 459 dated 27 December 2001. Due to the same law, in addition to the Presidential Decree no. 104 dated 02 April 2003, Italian voters resident abroad have the right to express their vote by correspondence in the country in which they reside, if they prefer not to return to Italy in person to vote. From this year on, voters resident abroad are separated from the national electorate and vote in the "Foreign constituency".

Political and social participation

Istat has collected information on political and social participation since 1993, as part of the annual survey *Aspetti della vita quotidiana* (Aspects of daily life) - see [Households](#) -. With regard to social participation, the activities taken into consideration range from the attendance to meetings of environmental associations, civil-right or peace groups, cultural and professional associations to volunteering for free in organisations or groups.

Political participation, as measured by the survey, relates to both direct involvement, such as participation in assemblies or demonstrations, or simply discussing or being interested in political matters. Religious participation is also surveyed through a question on the frequency of church or other worship attendance. Information on political and social participation is collected for those aged 14 and over, while for religious participation the aged 6 and over are also involved (in 1993 and 1994 the age limit was 11 years).

Data on participation in associations, groups, demonstrations or attendance of political debates refer to the 12 months prior to the interview, while those on religious participation, discussion and interest in political matters refer to usual behaviour.

Information on political and social participation is collected using a self-compiled questionnaire. From 1993 to 2003 the survey was carried out on November. In 2004 the survey was not performed due to the change in the survey calendar and since 2005 it has been carried out on February.