



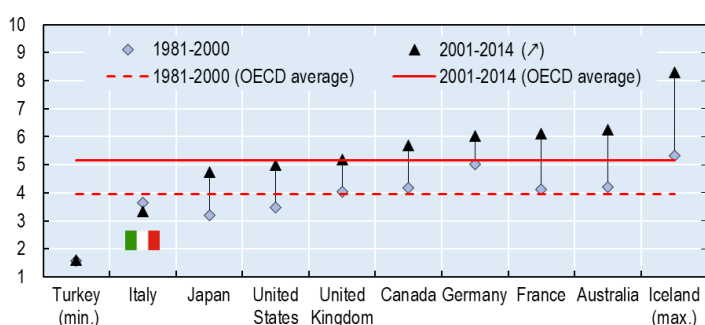
How does Italy compare?

Embargo 27th March 2019



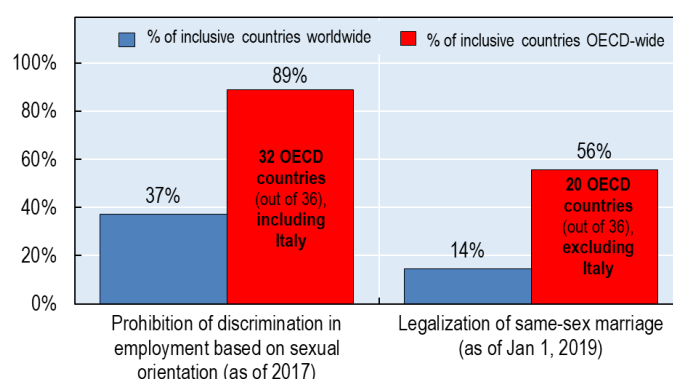
The 2019 edition of *Society at a Glance (SAG)* examines trends in social well-being across the OECD. It features a special chapter on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people: their numbers, how they fare in terms of their economic situation and well-being, and what policies can improve LGBT inclusivity. It also includes a special chapter based on the 2018 OECD Risks That Matter Survey on people's perceptions of social and economic risks and the extent to which they think governments address those risks. The publication also presents 25 indicators on general context, self-sufficiency, equity, health and social cohesion.

Fig.1. Despite improvements, acceptance of homosexuality remains limited



Note: Acceptance of homosexuality is measured on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that homosexuality is never justifiable and 10 means that it is always justifiable. Source: [Figure 1.6 of OECD Society at a Glance 2019]

Fig.2. There is still a long way before sexual and gender minorities meet full-fledged legal recognition, and Italy is no exception



Source: [Figure 1.18 of OECD Society at a Glance 2019]

A SPOTLIGHT ON LGBT PEOPLE

Italy is one of the 15 OECD countries that have included a question on self-identification as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual in at least one of their nationally representative surveys. According to a survey on discriminations by gender, sexual orientation and ethnic origin conducted by Istat, the share of LGB people in Italy amounted to 1.6% in 2011. In other OECD countries where estimations from different survey rounds are available, the share of LGB people is on the rise [Figure 1.4 of OECD Society at a Glance 2019]. Increasing disclosure of an LGB identity is likely to continue in the future since it is driven by younger cohorts. As most OECD countries, Italy does not yet collect information on the share of transgender people among the adult population.

Attitudes toward LGBT people are improving worldwide and have consistently been more positive in OECD countries than elsewhere. However, there remains substantial room for progress. Italy performs worse than the OECD average regarding acceptance of homosexuality: Italian citizens score nearly three on a 1-to-10 acceptance scale, two points below the average OECD score [Figure 1 above]. Moreover, only a minority of Italian respondents (37%) would feel comfortable

having a transgender or transsexual person in the highest elected political position, as a work colleague, or as a daughter- or son-in-law [Figure 1.8, Panel A].

Low acceptance of LGBT people puts them at risk of discrimination. Representative survey data (that do not cover Italy) reveal that LGBT people are penalised with respect to employment status and labour earnings [Figure 1.12]. Experimental data confirm that this penalty at least partly reflects labour market discrimination: with the same curriculum vitae, homosexual Italian applicants are about 30% less likely to be invited to a job interview than heterosexual Italian applicants.

A range of policies can help improve LGBT inclusivity. Making LGBT individuals and the penalties they face visible in national statistics is a prerequisite for their inclusion, suggesting that Italy could collect information on sexual orientation on a regular basis, and in a broader range of surveys, including the Italian labour force survey and the Italian census, and start collecting information on gender identity as well.

Legally prohibiting anti-LGBT discrimination and ensuring equal rights for LGBT individuals is also essential to improve their situation. While Italy is one of the 32 OECD countries that prohibit discrimination in employment

based on sexual orientation, same-sex marriage is still not legal in Italy [Figure 2 above]. In the United States, for instance, same-sex marriage policies caused a reduction by nearly 15% of suicide attempts among adolescents who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Finally, educating people in countering their unconscious bias is a key component of any policy package aiming to better LGBT inclusion. Evidence shows that these interventions can be highly effective, even when they are short.

OECD Risks that Matter survey suggests Italians still feel financially insecure

Although the Italian labour market has gradually improved since the crisis, many Italians are still worried about making ends meet. Over half (56%) of Italians say “struggling to meet daily expenses despite working” is one of their top-three short-term worries [Figure 3.1]. When looking beyond the next decade, 71% of Italians list financial security in old age as a top-three risk. Fears about social mobility and crime/violence are also top concerns [Figure 3.2].

In the face of these risks, many Italians are sceptical of their government’s ability to provide them with adequate support. Only 15% of Italians feel that they could easily access public benefits if they needed them [Figure 3.3], which may reflect the fact that Italy’s social safety net for working-age people is indeed weaker than in many other countries. Italians want more support: a strong majority (85%) say that the government should do more to ensure their economic and social security [Figure 3.6].

OVERVIEW OF OTHER SOCIAL INDICATORS

Affordable housing is a challenge

With 58% of the households owning their dwelling outright, home ownership is more widespread in Italy than in OECD countries on average (44%). Even so, **the housing cost burden is important for low-income people**. About 51% of low-income owners with a mortgage in Italy spent over 40% of their disposable income on a mortgage in 2016, the highest share among OECD countries. The same indicator decreases to 39% for low-income renters and to 12% for low-income subsidised renters [Figure 6.14].

Low spending for people most in need

Italy is a country with a strong social insurance dimension where most benefits are related to past earnings and only 8% of cash benefits received by working-age individuals go to the 20% poorest [Figure 6.12]. As opposed to many other OECD countries, a single person who has exhausted unemployment benefit entitlement receives no cash

support [Figure 6.9]. The government has recently launched a *citizen’s income scheme* (Reddito di Cittadinanza) that builds on the previous inclusion income (Reddito d’Inclusione) to provide a means-tested support to people at risk of poverty. It will be important to monitor its financial sustainability, as well as its take-up rate and effect on job-search of beneficiaries.

Ageing population

The Italian population is ageing rapidly. In Italy in 2015, there were 38 elderly (aged 65 and over) per 100 persons aged 20 to 64. This share is twice as much as in 1970 (19 per 100), and by 2060, it will almost double to 69 per 100 [Figure 4.13]. Italy also has the lowest share (15%) of youth aged 15-29 in its population, compared to an OECD average of 19% [Figure 4.15].

Low level of trust in institutions

A cohesive society is one where citizens have confidence in public institutions. However, **only 23% of Italians report confidence in national government**, the second lowest rate and below OECD average of 43% [Figure 8.4]. Almost 9 Italians out of 10 also report that there is widespread corruption in their government, the highest level in OECD countries [Figure 8.6].

Italians feel unsafe on the street

Nearly one in two Italian women (46%) and more than one in three Italian men (35%) do not feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live in. These shares are amongst the highest among OECD countries, placing Italy third in the OECD ranking for men and fifth for women [Figure 8.9]. At the same time, reporting of intimate partner violence is less widespread in Italy than in OECD countries on average [Figure 8.7].

Limited internet access

Despite a regular and significant increase during the last decade, internet is not universally used in Italy. In 2018, **only 74% of the adult Italian population had access to internet, the fourth lowest rate among OECD countries** [Figure 8.13]. Internet access is also the fifth lowest among 16-25-year olds at 92% and the eighth lowest among 55-74-year olds at only 51%.

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