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Statistics on acquisitions of citizenship: an integrated and longitudinal approach

Note by Istat- Italian National Institute of Statistics*

Summary

During the last decade, more than 600 thousand people obtained Italian citizenship. In 2017, most new citizenships of an EU-28 Member State were granted by Italy (146 600 or 18 % of the EU-28 total) (Eurostat, 2019). Nevertheless, the corresponding statistics on the stock of population with acquired Italian citizenship are not available in Italy.

In June 2019, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) disseminated for the first time, data on the stock of "naturalized" Italians. The statistics have been produced by updating the stock of Italians by acquisition, available at the Census (9th October 2011), with administrative flows (acquisition of citizens and demographic flows) from the Census date to the 1/1/2018.

In the first part of the paper, we will describe the methods and present the main results of the data integration.

The longitudinal approach, applied in the second part of this work, has been recommended by many authors (Perrin, 2006). Therefore, the different propensity of migrants to acquire the Italian citizenship has been analyzed by using regression models. The linkage with the Census data gives the opportunity to take into account many relevant characteristics (socio-demographic, migratory, and territorial) in order to individuate the elements that could be more relevant in the choice of becoming Italian.

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I. Estimates of Italian population by acquisition of citizenship

A. Data and methods

1. In 2019 Istat has implemented a procedure in order to produce the stock of population with acquired Italian citizenship at the 1st of January 2018. The procedure is based on:

   a. Census 2011 data;

   b. Data on citizenship acquisitions (9/10 / 2011- 1/1/2018);

   c. Demographic flows from 9/10/2011 to 1/1/2018.

2. The record linkage between these individual databases has been carried out by two stages, using different keys: fiscal code and SIM code[1]. The availability of Italian data allows to identify the stock of people that have acquire the citizenship only at the census date (9 October 2011). The census data for 2011 show a total of 671,282 Italian citizens for acquisition. This subgroup of interest has been updated by using the acquisitions of citizenship (862,814 new citizens) and the international migration flows between 9 October 2011 and the 1 January 2018. This longitudinal database allows measuring the "gross" stock of Italians with acquired citizenship at the end of the period, approximately 1,338,796.

3. For the new citizens the following variables available:

   a. For those present at the Census, all the information collected in 2011;

   b. For those present at the end of the period: gender, age, previous citizenship, country of birth, province of residence as of 1 January 2018;

   c. For those who have acquired citizenship after the Census it is possible to distinguish between a more comprehensive typologies of proceeding (residence, marriage, transmission, other; those who had acquired citizenship before the census it is possible to distinguish only between "marriage" and "other proceeding".

B. Description of the "naturalized" population

4. On 1th January 2018, more than 1 million and 340 thousand Italian residents became Italians by acquisition of citizenship. Women represent the 56.3% of the total (Fig.1). There are about 274,746 minors, over 20% of all residents who have acquired citizenship. Some communities, such as Albanian and Moroccan, show a higher propensity to acquire the Italian citizenship, while for others the number of those who have decided to become Italians is very limited: this is the case - for example - of the Chinese. The reasons behind the different behaviour are multiple and both objective and subjective. It is important to take into account, among the other explanations, the greater convenience to acquire citizenship for non-EU citizens and the significant role of the duration of the presence (especially in the case of acquisition by residence, which for non-EU citizens requires at least ten years of permanent stay in our country). Furthermore, in several cases, the lack of recognition of dual citizenship by the countries of origin is an element that can discourage immigrants from acquiring Italian citizenship. Residents who acquired citizenship in

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[1] Istat is moving in this direction by centralizing some functions for the acquisition, storage, integration and administrative data quality evaluation. In the new system SIM (Integrated System of Microdata) is realized the microdata integration and the attribution of the unique identification codes for: individuals and economic units; places; relationships among individuals and units (Ambroselli, 2014).

the 13.7% of cases are Moroccan and in the 12.6% Albanian. In particular, for every 100 Moroccan foreigners there are 44 Italians of Moroccan origin; for every 100 Albanians 38 Italians of Albanian origin. Moroccans and Albanians represent 8.1% and 8.6% respectively of foreign residents but considering the population of foreign origin (foreign residents + Italians for acquisition) they represent more than 9% (Tab.1). The opposite is true for the Romanian community: it has a percentage weight that exceeds 23% of foreigners but weighs less than 20% when considering also the foreign origin. As already mentioned, the propensity to acquire Italian citizenship is also very low for the Chinese.

Table 1
Foreign population and Population with acquired Italian citizenship in Italy, absolute values, percentages and coexistence rate, 1th January 2018

Citizenship/Citisenship of Origin	Foreign population	Foreign population (%)	Naturalized[a] population	Naturalized[a] population (%)	Naturalized[a] population per 100 foreigners of the same citizenship of origin	Foreign and Naturalized[a] population	Foreign and Naturalized[a] population (%)
Romania	1,190,091	23.1	77,046	5.7	6.5	1,267,137	19.5
Albania	440,465	8.6	169,644	12.6	38.5	610,109	9.4
Morocco	416,531	8.1	184,333	13.7	44.3	600,864	9.3
China	290,681	5.6	12,552	0.9	4.3	303,233	4.7
Ukraine	237,047	4.6	23,096	1.7	9.7	260,143	4.0
Philippines	167,859	3.3	16,725	1.2	10.0	184,584	2.8
India	151,791	3.0	39,360	2.9	25.9	191,151	2.9
Bangladesh	131,967	2.6	22,394	1.7	17.0	154,361	2.4
Moldova	131,814	2.6	18,654	1.4	14.2	150,468	2.3
Egypt	119,513	2.3	24,125	1.8	20.2	143,638	2.2
Other countries	*1,866,681*	*36.3*	*757,332*	*56.3*	*40.6*	*2,624,013*	*40.4*
Total	5,144,440	100.0	1,345,261	100.0	26.1	6,489,701	100.0

Note: (a) "Naturalized" indicates all the persons that have acquired the Italian citizenship for any reasons (residence, marriage, etc.)
Source: Istat estimates

Figure 1
Age pyramid of Foreign population and Population with acquired Italian citizenship in Italy, 1th January 2018
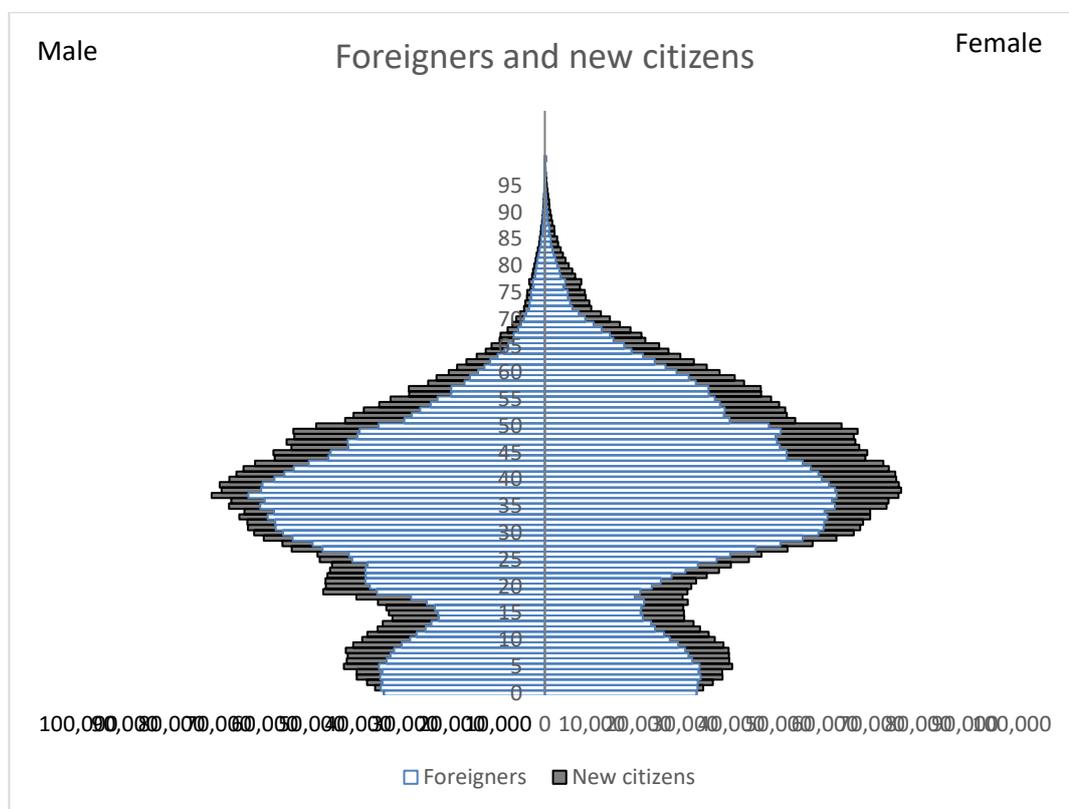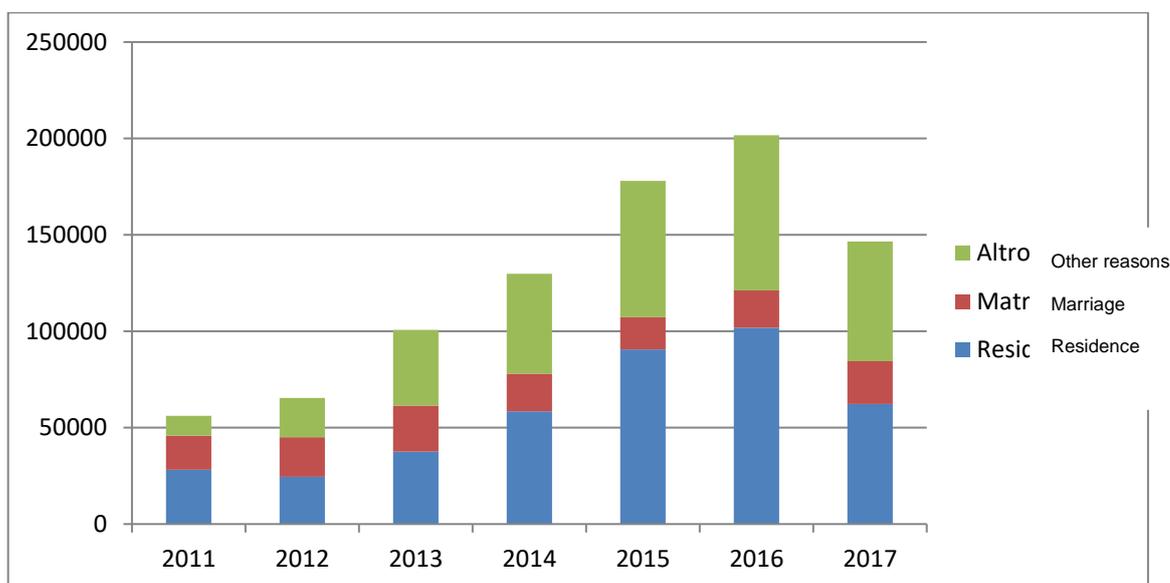

Source: Istat estimates

II. A longitudinal approach of analysis: different propensity to acquire the Italian citizenship

5. In literature, the acquisition of citizenship is considered a sign of stability on the territory and a signal of integration. The Zaragoza Declaration - which established the basic integration indicators for European countries - included among them the acquisition of citizenship (Zaragoza Declaration, 2010). In fact, recent studies have highlighted how (Bonifazi et al., 2013) the acquisition of Italian citizenship does not always correspond to a desire to remain long-term in Italy, especially for some citizenships. Furthermore, naturalized population is considered as a population with specific characteristics different from those of Italians and foreigners.

6. In Italy the acquisitions trend has been increasing up to 2017 when there was a decrease compared to the previous year (Figure 3.2). However, almost 804,000 acquisition of citizenships were registered between 2011 and 2017. A great number of acquisitions involved minors who became Italians due to transmission of citizenship by parents or born in Italy and at the age of eighteen, they chose to become Italian (Fig.2).

Figure 2
Acquisition of citizenship by type (9th October 2011-31st December 2017)

Source: Istat estimates

7. The longitudinal approach could be of particular interest, especially for acquisitions by residence[5]. For naturalizations in the strict sense, the need for a cohort approach has long been underlined (Perrin 2006). This view was recently taken up by Reichel (2011) who pointed out that it would be necessary, for the calculation of rates, for the foreign population at risk of experiencing the naturalization event. As pointed out by Nicolas Perrin (2006), an approach for cohorts to measure citizenship acquisition rates would allow to calculate the probability of obtaining citizenship for individual immigrant cohorts and would provide a better measure of the impact of policies on the acquisition models of citizenship. The same author claims that the lack of appropriate data makes it difficult to calculate longitudinal naturalization rates, which require the availability of information on the immigration year. This is, however, the road on which different countries are moving, also thanks to the availability of statistical sources based on registers that allow longitudinal data to be extracted.

8. In the Italian case, the 2011 census data were linked to those of citizenship acquisitions that occurred between 2011 and 2017. It emerged that between 2011 and 2017 there were 679,470 citizenship acquisitions of registered foreigners. The years in which the largest number of acquisitions was registered were 2015 and 2016. The shares of people who have acquired Italian citizenship change considerably depending on the community. It exceeds or nearly 30% of foreigners surveyed for Morocco, Albania and India (Fig.3). It is minimal for China, Ukraine and Romania. It must be emphasized that the countries mentioned have different laws about the dual citizenship and different geo-political locations. It is true, in fact, for example that China and Ukraine do not recognize dual citizenship, but the same is also true for India, whose citizens, however, seem very inclined to acquire Italian citizenship anyway. At the same time, the citizens of Romania, now part of the European Union, may no longer be interested in acquiring citizenship, but the citizens of Poland, an EU country, show a higher propensity (albeit slightly). Obviously it is also a matter of communities that have a minor or longer migration history on the Italian territory. As mentioned, especially in the case of acquisitions by naturalization the "time" factor plays a fundamental role.

Figure 3
Foreigners at 2011 Census that have acquired the Italian citizenship between 9th October and 31st December. Percentages
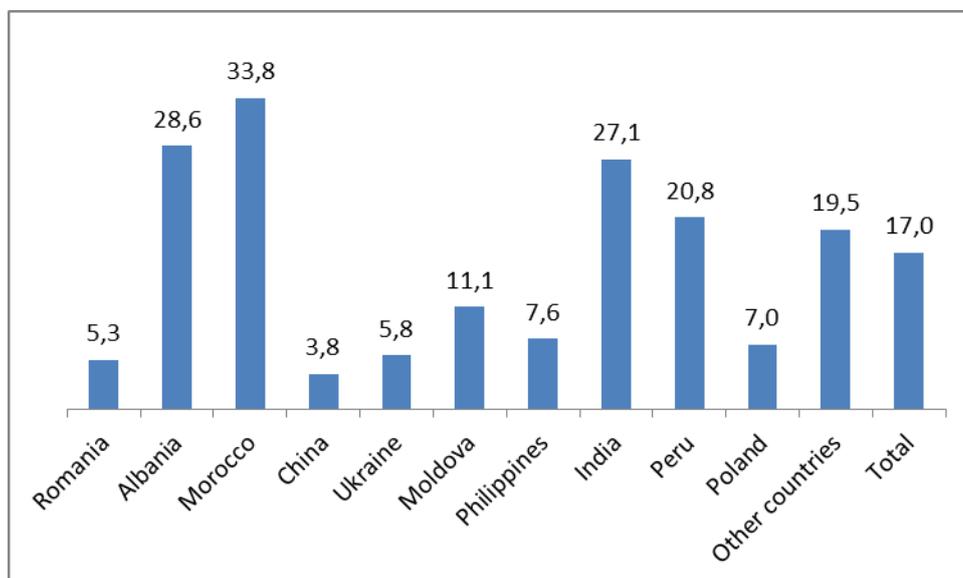
Source: Istat estimates

9. The longitudinal approach gives the opportunity to consider the acquisitions of citizenship referred only to the population really "exposed to the risk". In tab.2 we consider only the non EU population registered at 2011 Census and arrived in Italy before 2006. At the end of the observation period all the population have reached at least 13 years of presence in Italy (ten years of residence is the period required for non EU citizens in order to obtain the acquisitions by residence). We can consider both all the population at the beginning of the period or the population still present at the end of the observation period.

Table 2
Non-EU citizens registered at 2011 Census as arrived in Italy before 2006, still present (or not) at 1th January 2018 and percentage of naturalizeda between 2012-2017.

Citizenship	Total	% still present at 1th January 2018	% naturalized[a] on total	% naturalized[a] on still present
Albania	301,606	92.7	25.2	27.2
Morocco	232,269	88.1	24.9	28.3
China	133,143	90.4	1.7	1.9
Ukraine	120,990	90.0	2.8	3.1
Philippines	92,783	91.7	4.6	5.0
Moldova	68,219	89.6	10.5	11.8
Peru	60,629	92.3	18.0	19.6
Ecuador	59,762	89.5	11.1	12.4
India	58,497	85.9	25.4	29.7
Tunisia	50,789	83.4	14.5	17.4
Macedonia	48,417	79.2	19.9	25.1

Citizenship	Total	*% still present at 1th January 2018*	*% naturalized[a] on total*	*% naturalized[a] on still present*
Sri Lanka	46,281	89.2	6.5	7.4
Senegal	45,820	89.1	17.7	19.9
Bangladesh	43,151	80.0	26.2	32.9
Egypt	37,827	74.1	11.4	15.4
Pakistan	34,600	84.5	27.7	32.8
Serbia	31,954	68.6	11.7	17.1
Nigeria	27,355	84.2	14.5	17.3
Ghana	25,210	80.7	31.3	38.9
Kosovo	23,624	60.9	16.5	27.2
Other countries	*255,707*	*82.6*	*13.6*	*16.5*
Total	**1,798,633**	**87.0**	**16.2**	**18.6**

Note: (a) "Naturalized" indicates all the persons that have acquired the Italian citizenship for any reasons (residence, marriage, etc.)
*Source: Istat, provisional data*

10. It may be interesting, therefore, to study the behaviours in a multidimensional perspective that allows to hold together a multiplicity of factors connected with an higher or lower propensity to the acquisition of citizenship. Exploiting, therefore, the perspective of a longitudinal integration of the archives, it is possible to study the different propensity to acquire the Italian citizenship on the basis of some characteristics of the foreigners as collected at the 2011 Census. The following analysis is focused only on non-EU foreigners since, as stated, foreigners belonging to the European Union are generally less interested in acquiring Italian citizenship. The analysis was also limited to foreigners for whom all the information included in the analysis was available.

11. Compared to the older age group (over 45 years) the two younger classes between 18 and 34 years show a lower propensity to acquire citizenship. It is clear that the long time required for the acquisition of citizenship in Italy "favours" more advanced age groups. Class 35-44 is the one that shows the greatest propensity to acquire citizenship with respect to the reference grouping.

12. The logistic regression model uses as dichotomous dependent variable "citizenship acquired / citizenship not acquired" after the 2011 census. As predictors, the model has nine variables, relating to demographic and social characteristics, collected at the census date: gender, age class , citizenship, country of birth, residence 5 years before the census, residence at census date, employment status, household typology and educational attainment (Fig.4).

13. Women show a greater propensity to acquire Italian citizenship than men. Excluding the acquisitions by marriage, more frequent for women, the model shows the opposite result: men who have a greater propensity to become Italian by naturalization.

14. The two younger classes between 18 and 34 years show a lower propensity to acquire citizenship than to the older age group (over 45 years). It is clear that the long time required for the acquisition of citizenship facilitates the older age groups. Class 35-44 is the one that shows the greatest propensity to acquire Italian citizenship.

15. Certainly, a fundamental predictor is the previous citizenship of origin. Chinese citizens show a lower propensity to acquire Italian citizenship compared to Indians. Both mentioned countries do not recognize dual citizenship. On the contrary, citizens of India, Morocco, Bangladesh and Albania have a greater propensity to acquire citizenship than Indians. Morocco and Albania recognize dual citizenship while it is particularly the case of Bangladeshi people who show a high

propensity, although they were interested in early 2017 by a regulatory change that introduces disadvantages for those who acquire another citizenship.

16. Filipino and Ukrainian citizens, two other countries that do not recognize dual citizenship, also show a lower propensity than Indians. It seems that the recognition of dual citizenship by the country of origin plays a role in determining the behaviour of foreigners, however it also seems clear that other factors come into play as the greater propensity to move from Italy to other countries European Union Member States.

17. Even if only countries that do not recognize dual citizenship are considered in the model, it emerges that the Chinese nonetheless highlight the lower propensity to acquire Italian citizenship. Going back to the general model, we note that those born in Italy have a greater propensity to acquire citizenship as well as those who, at the time of the census, had been in Italy 5 years before.

18. The residents at the census date in South Italy highlight a lower propensity to acquire citizenship compared to other macro territorial areas and in particular with respect to the North west. As regards employment condition, it can be noted that those employed in the census have a greater propensity to acquire citizenship, both with respect to the non-employed, and to housewives, and to people in other conditions. Finally, those with a higher level of education have, even with other conditions being equal, a greater propensity to acquire Italian citizenship.

19. These last two evidences confirm that the propensity to acquire citizenship is higher for those who experience better economic and working conditions. In general, the multidimensional analysis carried out shows that even with other numerous individual characteristics being equal, and also taking into account the different laws in force in the various States, the citizenship variable is significantly connected with the propensity to become Italian.

Figure 4
Effect of some individual and familiar characteristics on the probability of acquiring the Italian citizenship. Results of logistic regression. Foreign adults registered at the 2011 Census
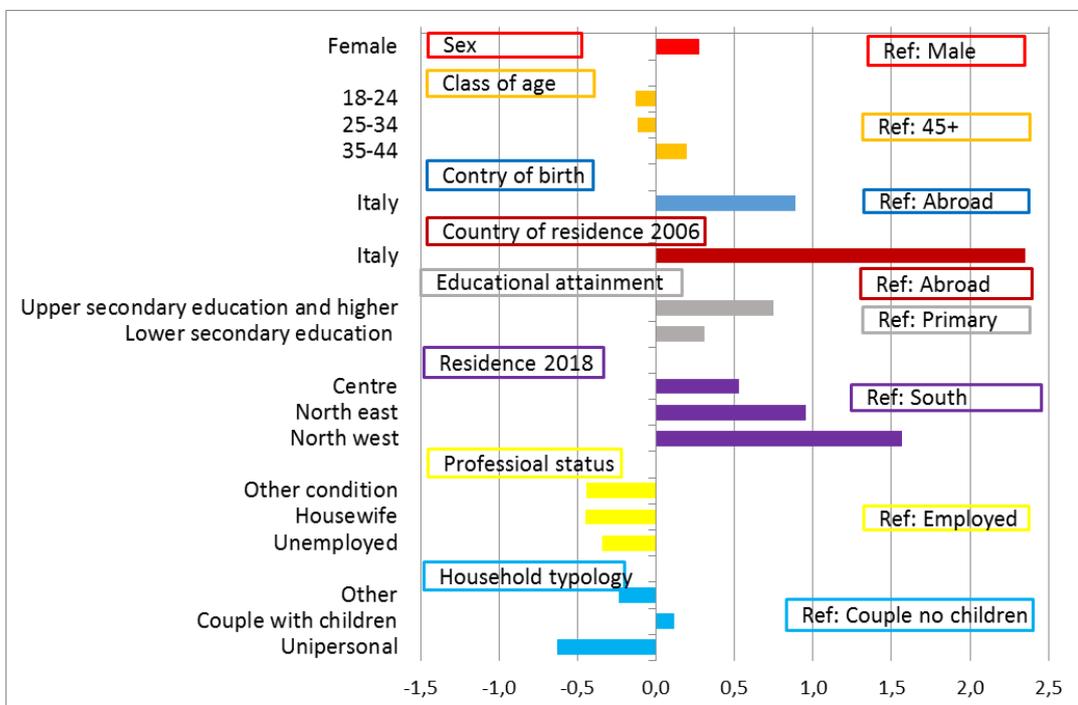
Source: Istat estimates

Figure 5
Effect of the citizenship on the probability of acquiring the Italian citizenship. Results of logistic regression. Foreign adults registered at the 2011 Census Ref. China
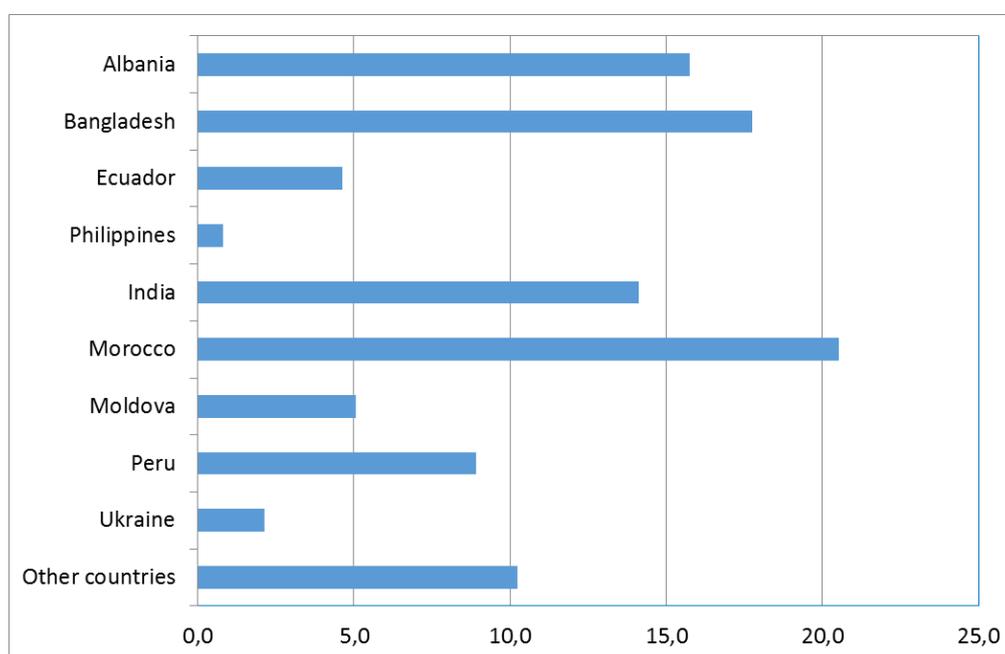
Source: Istat estimates

III. Next steps

20. The paper highlighted the potentialities offered by the integration of data and the longitudinal approach. Another important element, which does not emerge directly from the conducted analyses, but which will be considered in the future, is the possibility of integrating, even at the individual level, the results of the new permanent census.

We believe the collection and analysis of statistical data should quickly react to the changes of international migrations, a phenomenon that becomes increasingly complex. In this context, the integrated and longitudinal approach makes it possible to observe the migratory trajectories of migrants and seems more appropriate to grasp the changes and new forms of migration. A sufficient number of observations are not yet available, but over time this type of approach may lead to other types of analysis such as event history analysis.

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