

# FACT SHEET ON VOLUNTEERING IN ITALY

## General Information



## KEY INFORMATION ABOUT ITALY

**Capital:** Rome

**Official Language:** Italian

**Population:** 58.943.464 (ISTAT)<sup>1</sup>

**Currency:** Euro (EUR)

**Calling Code:** +39

## KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

**GDP per capita:** \$40,226 in 2024 (World Bank)<sup>2</sup>

**Real GDP growth:** +0.8% (2025) (ISTAT)

**Unemployment rate in July 2025<sup>4</sup>:** 6.5% (2024 average) (ISTAT)

## Statistics and Demographics

Total number of volunteers: 4.7 million (ISTAT)

Volunteering rate: 9.1% of population aged 15+ (ISTAT)

Annual economic value: Italy has no single official annual monetary valuation; ISTAT follows ILO valuation methods; an academic estimate (2013) put volunteer work at ~€8bn (ANSA)<sup>3</sup>.

## GENDER ANALYSIS

Overall, men represent about 49% and women about 51% of volunteers, with broadly similar participation rates across genders. (ISTAT)

## AGE DISTRIBUTION (ISTAT)

- **15–24 years:** 8.2 % of this group are volunteers
- **25–44 years:** 9.7 % of this group are volunteers
- **45–64 years:** 13.1 % of this group are volunteers
- **65–74 years:** 11.7 % of this group are volunteers
- **75+ years:** 5.7 % of this group are volunteers

## EDUCATION LEVELS (ISTAT)

- University degree or higher 18.2%
- High school diploma 11.7%
- Middle school certificate 6.5%
- Elementary school certificate / No title 3.2%

## DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

A volunteer is a person who, of their own free will, carries out activities for the benefit of the community and the common good, even through a third sector organisation, offering their time and skills to promote responses to the needs of the individuals and communities who benefit from their work, in a personal, spontaneous, and voluntary manner, without profit, even indirectly, and exclusively for solidarity purposes.<sup>4</sup>

## SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering in Italy is deeply rooted in a secular and religious tradition of solidarity, evolving from local mutual aid societies into a cornerstone of the modern welfare state. While the public overwhelmingly views volunteering as a vital expression of civic altruism and social cohesion, it is often traditionally associated with emergency response and social assistance. Consequently, the broader potential for volunteering to drive political advocacy, environmental sustainability, and systemic social innovation is sometimes overshadowed by its more visible humanitarian role.<sup>5</sup>

## Types of Volunteer Activities

- Recreational & cultural 23.9%
- Social assistance & civil protection 22%,
- Religious 17.2%
- Health 15.1%
- Sport 7%
- Environment 5.1%
- Education/research 3.2% (ISTAT)

## Challenges to the Development of Volunteering

Volunteering in Italy faces several challenges, including generational turnover and declining participation among the 25–44 age group. Time constraints, administrative burdens linked to compliance with the Third Sector Code and RUNTS registration, and the need for stronger collaboration with public authorities through co-programming and co-design also pose obstacles. These factors require innovative strategies to attract younger volunteers and simplify bureaucratic processes.<sup>8</sup>

## Impact of Volunteering

Volunteering in Italy significantly strengthens social cohesion by generating "relational goods" that reduce social isolation and improve community resilience. Research indicates that active participation in non-profit activities contributes to an estimated 2% of the national GDP through unpaid labor, while simultaneously enhancing the subjective well-being and physical health of the volunteers themselves. According to ISTAT (2024) and the National Council of Third Sector, these impacts are most profound in the health and civil protection sectors, where volunteer intervention remains an essential pillar of the Italian welfare system.<sup>6</sup>

## The Volunteer Awards

The annual nomination to Capitale italiana del volontariato (promoted by CSVnet with Forum Terzo Settore and Caritas).<sup>7</sup>



1. <https://www.istat.it/dati/banche-dati/>

2. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=IT>

3. [https://www.ansa.it/english/news/2025/03/13/number-in-employment-in-italy-increased-by-352000-in-2024\\_cb1abc2-4189-4cd5-be47-b603b4655854.html](https://www.ansa.it/english/news/2025/03/13/number-in-employment-in-italy-increased-by-352000-in-2024_cb1abc2-4189-4cd5-be47-b603b4655854.html)

4. [https://www.brocardi.it/codice-terzo-settore/titolo-iii/art17.html#google\\_vignette](https://www.brocardi.it/codice-terzo-settore/titolo-iii/art17.html#google_vignette)

5. <https://eurispes.eu/ricerca-rapporto/rapporto-italia-2025/>

6. [Rapporto Bes 2024: il benessere eguo e sostenibile in Italia – Istat](https://www.istat.it/it/temi/benessere/2024/03/13/rapporto-bes-2024-il-benessere-eguo-e-sostenibile-in-italia-istat)

7. <https://capitaleitalianavolontariato.it/>

8. <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/il-volontariato-italia-e-europa-numeri-tendenze-e-sfide-AGFfu28C>



## Institutional and Legal Framework for Volunteering in Italy

Volunteering is regulated by the Third Sector Code (Legislative Decree 117/2017), which defines volunteers, mandates insurance coverage, and sets transparency obligations through RUNTS. It also introduces co-programming and co-design mechanisms for collaboration with public authorities. Sector-specific laws, such as the Civil Protection Code, govern emergency volunteering.<sup>1</sup>

## Key Stakeholders in the Development of Volunteering

CSVnet and the network of Centri di Servizio per il Volontariato (CSV); Forum Nazionale del Terzo Settore; Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (RUNTS); ACRI and Foundations of banking origin (supporting CSV through the FUN); Protezione Civile (volunteer corps); Caritas.

### National E-platform for Volunteering

Italy does not have a single government-run volunteering platform, but national tools include CSVnet's Gluo<sup>3</sup> (for training and resources) and Italia Non Profit's "Mappa del Non Profit – Dove fare volontariato"<sup>4</sup>. Sector-specific portals, such as Protezione Civile, manage emergency volunteer enrolment.



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## Trends in the Development of Volunteering

Recent trends show stable organised volunteering but growing hybrid participation and informal volunteering focused on community and environmental causes. Digital tools and platforms are increasingly used for training and coordination, reflecting a shift toward flexible and technology-supported engagement.<sup>2</sup>

## Measuring the Impact of Volunteering

In Italy, the impact of volunteering is measured through a mix of mandatory social reporting and well-being indicators. Under the Third Sector Reform, larger organisations must draft a Social Report (Bilancio Sociale) to justify their societal value beyond simple numbers. At a national level, ISTAT uses the BES framework (Equitable and Sustainable Well-being) to track how volunteering specifically improves the country's social fabric and collective quality of life.



## Research in the Field of Volunteering

ISTAT conducts regular surveys aligned with ILO standards to measure volunteer work. Academic institutions, such as Italian Universities and networks like Secondo Welfare, study the economic and social impact of volunteering, including its role in welfare co-production and social capital development.



## Financial Support for the Development of Volunteering

The main source of funding is provided by banking foundations and specific public and government grants.

## Quality Standards in the field of Volunteering

There is no single national quality standard, but legal requirements include mandatory insurance for volunteers and transparency obligations through RUNTS. Many CSVs also provide training and capacity-building programs to ensure effective and safe volunteering practices.



## Motivation for Volunteering

Direct help most often driven by emergencies (27.5%) and supporting those in need (24.6%); many prefer flexible, self-directed engagement (e.g., 54.4% say no organised group is needed). (ANSA)<sup>6</sup>

1. <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2017;117:vig=>

2. <https://www.secondowelfare.it/novita/ndossier-e-percorsi-di-secondo-welfare-insieme-per-capire-come-cambia-il-volontariato/>

3. <https://gluo.org/gluo/>

4. <https://mappa.italianonprofit.it/dove-fare-volontariato/>

5. <https://eurispes.eu/ricerca-rapporto/rapporto-italia-2025/Rapporto-Bes-2024-il-benessere-equivo-sostenibile-in-Italia-Istat>

<https://capitaleitalianavolontariato.it/> <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/il-volontariato-italia-e-europa-numeri-tendenze-e-sfide-AGFfu28CRapporto-Bes-2024-il-benessere-equivo-sostenibile-in-Italia-Istat>

6. <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/il-volontariato-italia-e-europa-numeri-tendenze-e-sfide-AGFfu28C>