

2. Education and training¹

The domain includes a set of indicators that follow the individuals in their education, training, and cultural participation path. Most of the measures (10) show an improvement in 2023, while five worsen compared to 2019 and three remain substantially stable (Table 1).

A positive picture emerges, in particular, for the increase in the population holding a higher qualification: 65.5% of individuals aged 25-64 have obtained at least an upper secondary school diploma (it was 63% in 2022 and 62.3% in 2019); 30.6% of youngsters aged 25-34 have a university degree or tertiary qualification (it was 29.2% in 2022 and 27.9% in 2019). Furthermore, the share of those who graduated with tertiary education in STEM programs (Sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) is witnessing a growth. In 2021, in fact, 17.8 people aged 20-29 in 1,000 obtained a degree in STEM disciplines, a figure on the rise compared to 2020 (16.5 every 1,000) as well as 2019 (16.1 out of 1,000).

Table 1. Education and training indicators: values for the latest available year and percentage changes compared to the previous year and 2019

INDICATORS	Year	Value	Unit of measure	Polarity	Percentages changes	
					compared to previous year	compared to 2019
Children aged 0-2 years enrolled in nursery school	2022	31.7	%	+		
Participation in the school system of children aged 4-5	2022	94.0	%	+		
People with at least upper secondary education level (25-64 years old)	2023	65.5	%	+		
People having completed tertiary education (25-34 years old)	2023	30.6	%	+		
First-time entry rate to university by cohort of upper secondary graduates	2021	51.4	%	+		
Early leavers from education and training	2023	10.5	%	-		
People not in education, employment, or training (NEET)	2023	16.1	%	-		
Participation in life-long learning	2023	11.6	%	+		
Inadequate level of literacy (students in grade 8)	2023	38.5	%	-		
Inadequate level of numeracy (students in grade 8)	2023	44.2	%	-		
Individuals with basic or above basic overall digital skills	2023	45.9	%	+		
STEM graduates	2021	16.5	Per 1,000	+		
Cultural participation outside the home	2023	35.2	%	+		
Reading books and newspapers	2023	35.5	%	+		
Use of libraries	2023	12.4	%	+		

Source: Istat, Bes indicators

Note: The green colour indicates improvement, red worsening and grey stability, taking into account the polarity of the indicator. The indicators have positive polarity if the increase in their value shows an improvement in well-being, negative polarity if the increase in their value shows a deterioration in well-being. For variations within $\pm 1\%$ the indicators are considered stable in the reference period.

Very positive are the trends for indicators on the NEET (People not in education, employment, or training), dropping to 16.1% of the population aged 15-29 (they were 19.0% in 2022), and on Early leavers from education and training (young people aged 18-24 who dropped out of school before obtaining any qualification or upper secondary school diploma), down to 10.5% (they were 11.5% in 2022). Both measures are also showing a marked improvement compared to 2019 (they were respectively 22.1% and 13.3%), after they had worsened during the pandemic.

¹ This Chapter was edited by Barbara Baldazzi, with contributions from Emanuela Bologna, Claudia Buseti, Raffaella Cascioli, Francesca Dota, Donatella Grassi, Marina Musci, Azzurra Tivoli, and Laura Zannella. The box “Cultural participation in Europe” was edited by Marina Musci, with contributions from Francesca Gallo and Daniela Lo Castro.

Participation in training by the population aged 25-64 continues the growing trend of recent years after the immobility that had stretched over a long period and the significant drop detected in 2020 due to the restrictions and closures aimed at contrasting *COVID-19*. In 2023, 11.6% of the population aged 25-64 attended at least one training course in the previous 4 weeks, a rise of 2 percentage points compared to 2022 (9.6%) and 3.5 percentage points compared to 2019 (8.1%).

Furthermore, participation by the youngest (children aged 0 to 2) in childhood services is on the rise: in 2022, 31.7% of children were enrolled in nursery schools (they were 29.5% in 2021 and 28.0% in 2019). Attendance by children aged 4-5 at pre-primary schools recognised by the Ministry of Education and Merit has returned to its usual levels: in 2022, children aged 4-5 included in the education system were 94.0% (they were 92.8% in 2021). In 2023, the indicator that monitors cultural participation outside the home for the population aged 6 and over stands at 35.2%, up 12 percentage points over the figure recorded in 2022 (23.1%). For the first time after 4 years, the value goes back to the levels observed in the pre-pandemic period (in 2019 it was 35.1%).

Lastly, the percentage of people aged 3 and over who went to the library at least once in the 12 months preceding the interview has risen, from 10.2% in 2022 to 12.4% in 2023, without however regaining the 2019 levels (15.3%).

In 2023, the digital skills of the population aged 16-74 remain essentially stable compared to the previous year: 45.9% have at least a basic level thereof. Instead, the levels of literacy skills in Italian, as well as the numerical ones in Mathematics of students in the third year of the lower secondary school, are worse than in 2019. The 2023 data indicates that 38.5% of students do not attain adequate skills in Italian (it was 35.2% in 2019), while 44.2% fail to acquire base skills in Mathematics (39.6% in 2019).

One of the negative signals is also the continuous decrease of the indicator that monitors books and newspapers reading, down by 2.5 percentage points in the last four years: among people aged 6 and over, the percentage of those who have read books and newspapers was 38.0% in 2019 and is 35.5% in 2023.

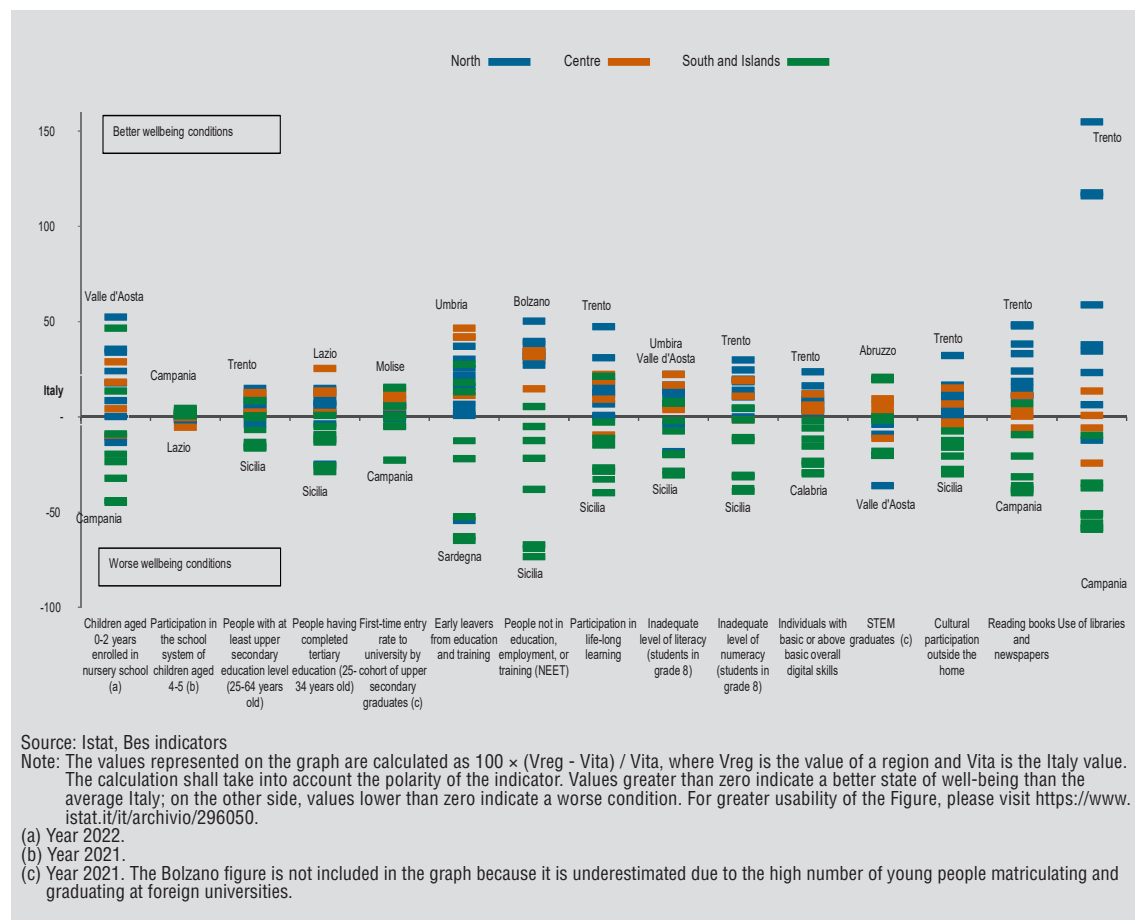
The indicators of this domain in the regions of the Centre and the North generally show values in excess of the national average, thereby indicating better well-being conditions in the field of Education and training (Figure 1).

One of the indicators that prove the closest to the national average is that of participation by children aged 4-5 in the school system, which has a narrow range of variation around the average for Italy (94.0%) and reaches the highest value in Campania (98.3%) and the lowest in Lazio (88.9%). The percentage of new graduates enrolling for the first time at university in the same year in which they obtained the upper secondary school diploma (indicator of transition to university) varies from 39.8% in Campania to 59.4% in Molise. The share of upper secondary graduates out of the total population aged 25-64 ranges from 54.9% for Sicilia to 75.3% for the autonomous province of Trento, while that of the population with a university degree or other tertiary qualifications goes from 21.8% in Sicilia to 38.4% in Lazio. On the contrary, some indicators describe more differentiated situations across the territory, often due to the lack of services as well. The share of the population aged 3 and over who attend libraries ranges from a minimum of 5.1% in Campania to a maximum of 31.6% in the autonomous province of Trento (more than 4 times the percentage for Calabria). Children aged 0 to 2 who attend nursery schools are 48.3% in Valle d'Aosta and only 17.8% in Calabria.

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Figure 1. Education and training indicators: percentage differences between regional values and the Italian value. Year 2023. Italy = 0



The percentage of young people aged 15-29 not in education, employment, or training goes from 27.9% (about one in 4 young people) in Sicilia to 8% (about one in 10 young people) in the autonomous province of Bolzano. Overall, most of the indicators in the South and Islands express worse performances than those in the regions of the Centre-North.

Between 2022 and 2023, the number of children attending early childhood educational services rose again

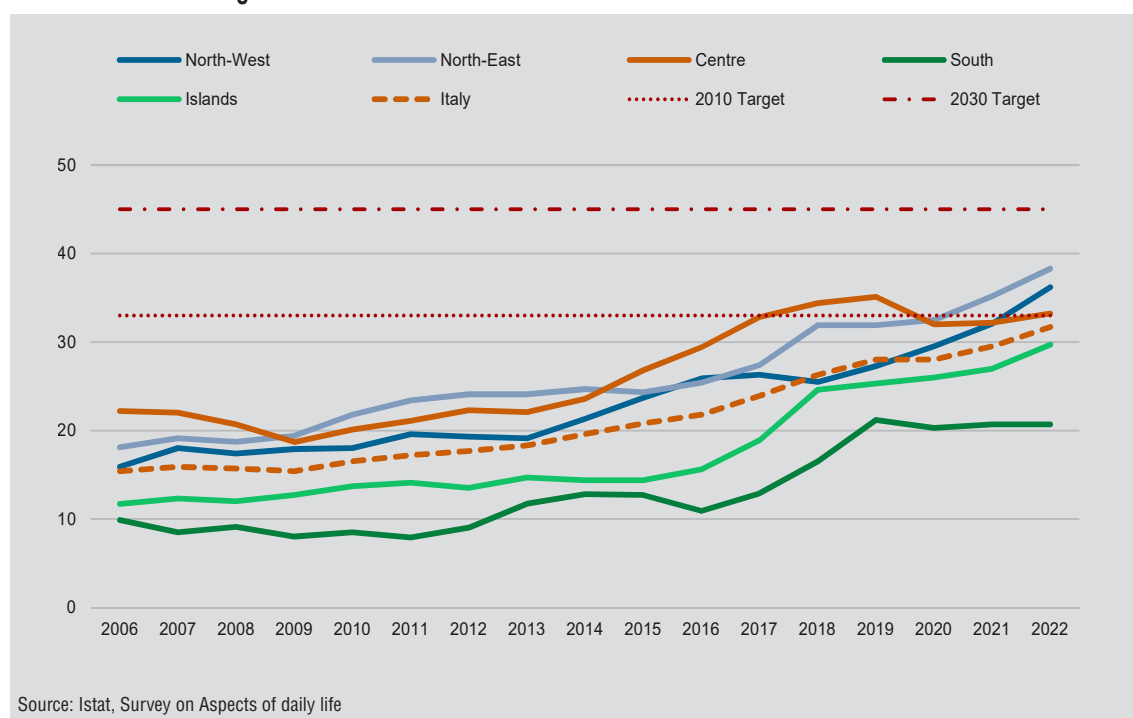
The 2021/2022 educational year, 13,518 early childhood services² were in place, with over 350 thousand authorised places (about half of which publicly owned). Due to the decline in births, the gap between number of potential users of the services and available places in nursery schools is gradually decreasing, although there are still substantial differences between territories. In fact, the participation of children between 0 and 2 years of age in the early childhood educational services reproduces the geography of availability of structures across the Italian territory, with sizeable delays in the South, except for Sardegna.

² See: National Institute of Statistics - Istat. 2023. "Offer of nursery schools and supplementary services for early childhood. 2021/2022 educational year". Statistiche Report. Rome, Italy: Istat. <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/291186> (in Italian).

In the 2021-2023 three-year period, early childhood services were attended by 31.7% of children between 0 and 2 years of age (2.2 percentage points more compared to the 2020-2022 period). Some regions and macro areas reached and surpassed the European target of 33% foreseen for 2010 (Figure 2), whereas the 2030 target of 45% of attending children has so far been reached only by Valle d'Aosta (48,3%) and Sardegna (46,5%). In addition to these two regions, a particularly sharp increase in the share of children enrolled in nursery schools was recorded in 2023 for Marche, Emilia-Romagna, Abruzzo, Basilicata, Lombardia and Calabria. Despite the continuous progress, the highest shares are still observed in the North-East and North-West (respectively 38.3% and 36.2% of children aged 0-2 enrolled in nursery schools).

When they reach the age of 4-5, however, the near totality of children are included in the educational system. In the 2021/2022 school year, the share of children of this age who attended pre-primary school or the first year of primary school rose back to 94.0% (it was 92.8% in 2020/2021), with lower values for the Centre (91.6%) and higher ones for the South (97.5%).

Figure 2. Children aged 0-2 enrolled in nursery school, by geographic area. Years 2006-2022. Three-year average. Per 100 children aged 0-2



In the 2022/23 school year, students' skills in Mathematics and Italian did not improve, except in the southern regions

During the 2022/23 school year, the share of young people attending the third and last year of junior secondary schools and failing to pass (low performers) is 38.5% for skills in Italian and 44.2% in Mathematics. Among girls, who are more deficient in Mathematics, 46.9% fail to achieve adequate levels (the percentage was 40.8% in the 2018/19 school year), whereas boys stop at 41.5% (they were 38.4% in 2018/19). In Italian, the situation is inverted: 42.9% of boys show greater difficulties (the share was 39.8% in 2018/19), while girls who fail are 33.9% (they were 30.3% in 2018/19).

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The highest share of students failing to reach a sufficient level of skills in Italian or in Mathematics is observed in the South and Islands. The situation is particularly serious in Sicilia (with 50.2% of students below pass level), Calabria (49.4%), Campania (46.1%) and Sardegna (45.9%). For Mathematics, the highest percentages of students with insufficient skills are found in Sicilia (61.4%), Calabria (60.7%), Sardegna (58.1%) and Campania (57.7%). Compared to the previous school year, percentages remain essentially stable, except for some regions of the South, and still decidedly worse than the percentages reached in the pre-pandemic period (Figures 3 and 4). The improvements in the last year concern boys and girls from the South, where the share of low performer in Italian drops from 45.3% to 43.9% (with more pronounced improvements in Molise, Campania, Calabria and Puglia) and the share of low performer in Mathematics shifts from 54.6% to 53.9% (with stronger improvements in Calabria and Abruzzo).

Figure 3. Inadequate level of literacy (students in grade 8), by geographic area. School years (a).
Percentage values

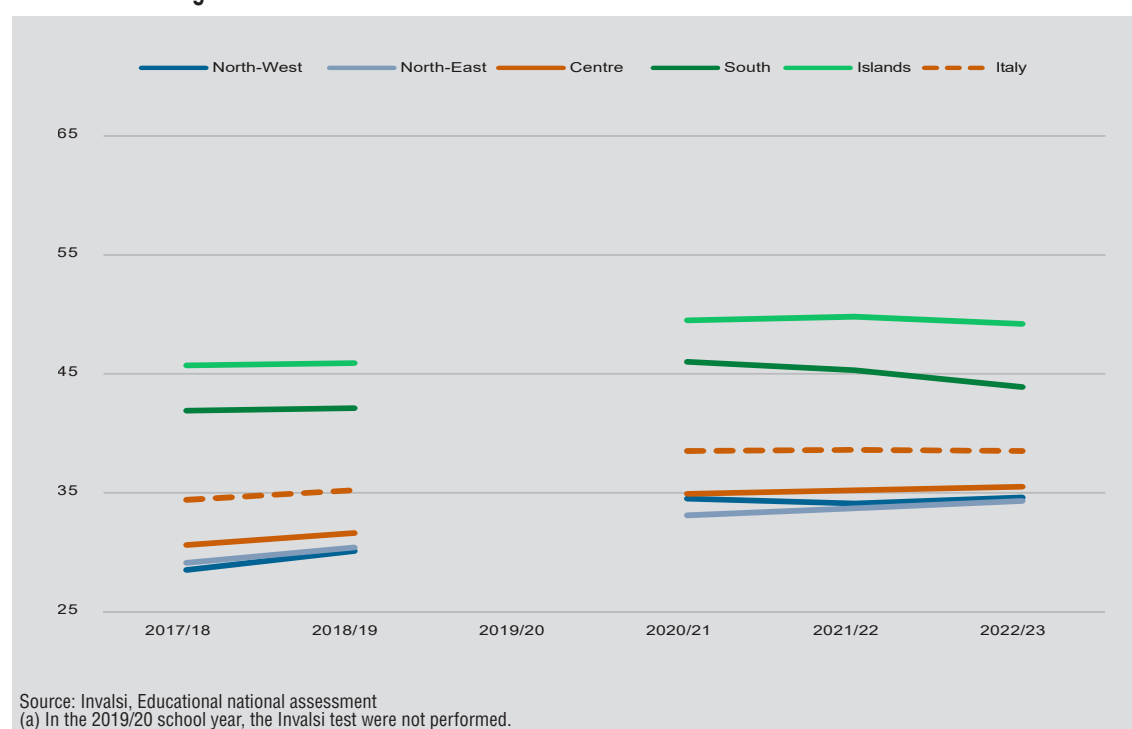
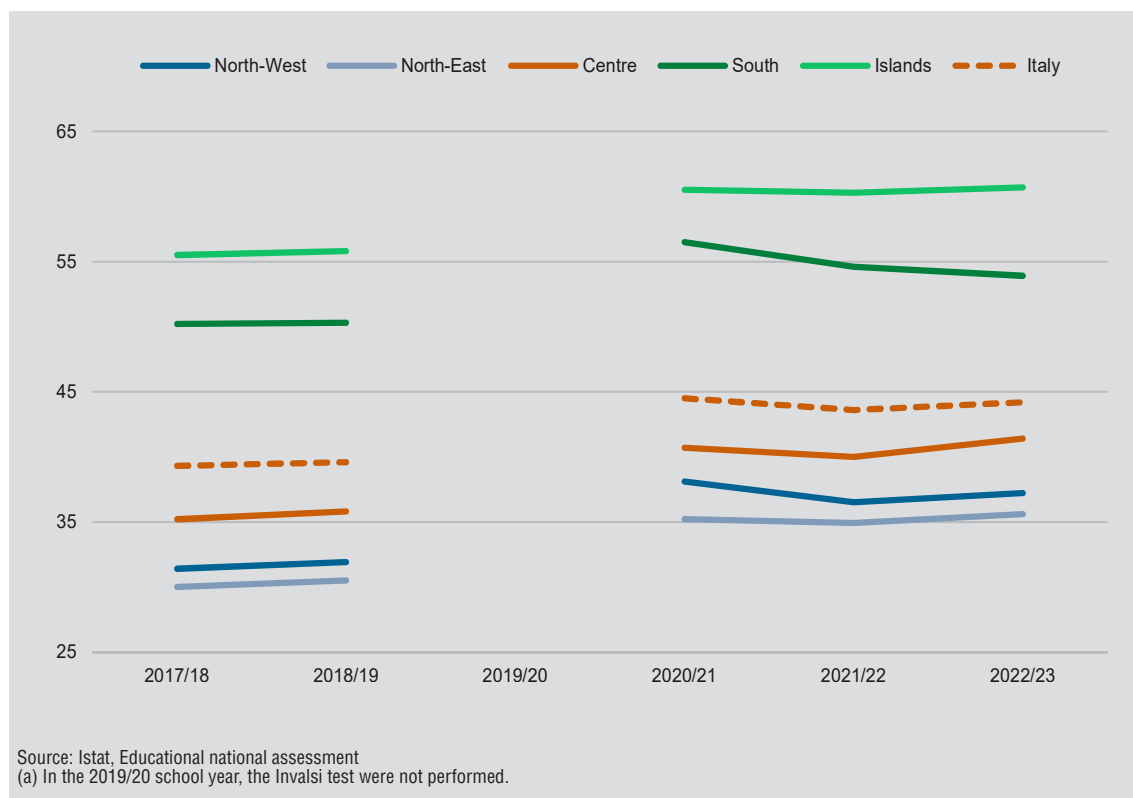


Figure 4. Inadequate level of numeracy (students in grade 8), by geographic area. School years 2017/18-2022/23 (a). Percentage values



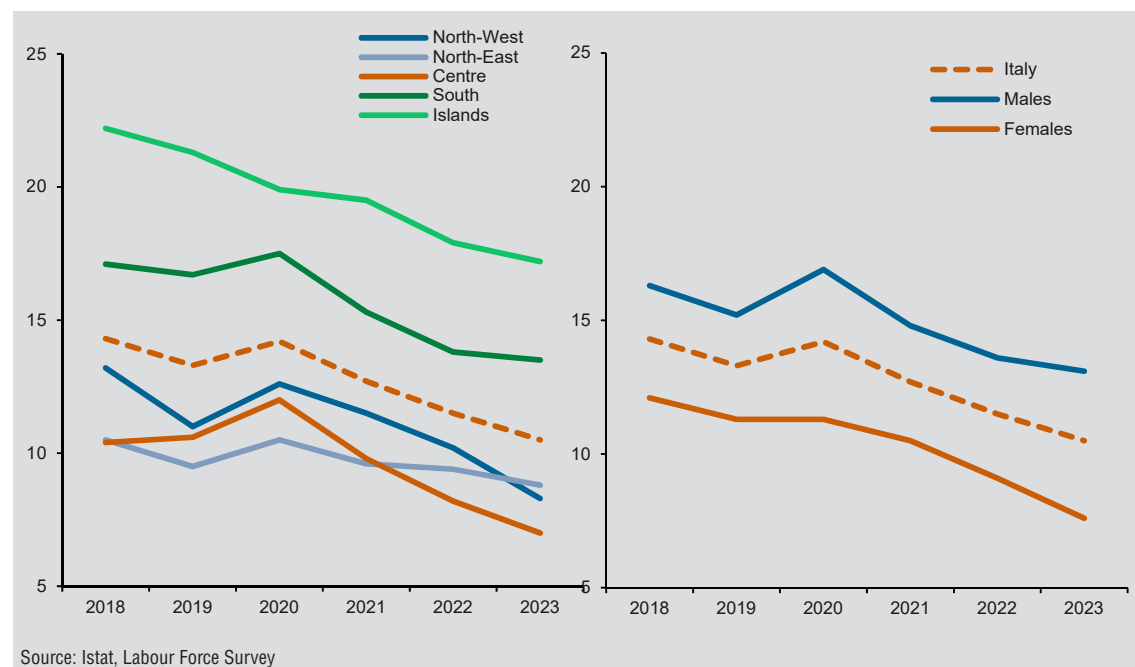
The share of young people who drop out of the education and training system early is declining and approaching the European target of 9%

In 2023, 10.5% of young people aged 18-24 has obtained a lower secondary school qualification at the most, leaving the education and training system early (early leavers). This share is continuously declining compared to previous years and is approaching 9%, the target proposed by the European Union for 2030. Between 2022 and 2023, the drop is more pronounced for the North-West, the Centre and among girls. Therefore, there is still a gender gap to the detriment of boys, who leave school early more often (13.1% as opposed to 7.6% for girls - Figure 5), with particularly high percentages in Sardegna (23.4% of males drop out of school), Campania (19.3%) and Sicilia (18.6%).

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Figure 5. Early leavers from the education and training system, by geographic area and gender. Years 2018-2023. Percentage values



In 2023, the share of NEETs has decreased sharply

In line with the decline in the share of young people who have dropped out of educational programs and in the employment rate, the percentage of young people no longer included in a school/training program and not involved in a work activity, the NEETs (Not in Employment, Education and Training), is also decreasing. In 2023, out of the total number of young people aged 15-29, the share of NEETs is 16.1% (Figure 6), down from 2022 (19.0%). Four regions in the South and Islands nevertheless show values in excess of 20%: Sicilia with 27.9% of NEETs, Calabria with 27.2%, Campania with 26.9% and Puglia with 22.2%. The share of NEETs among young women is still higher (17.8%) than among men (14.4%). If we break down the data by age group and gender, the different components that influence the overall share of NEETs emerge (Figure 7). The percentage among the very young aged 15-19 is minimum (7.0% for boys and 5.5% for girls), a pointer to the greater inclusion in the school system, especially as regards girls. As for young people aged 20-24, the share of NEETs rises to 19.0% for both sexes, by virtue of the high rate of failed participation in the labour market. The widest gender gap manifests among young people aged 25-29: 28.7% of NEETs for women as opposed to 17% for men due to the different participation in the labour market and the higher rates of inactivity due to family reasons and responsibilities for women.

Figure 6. People not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), by geographic area. Years 2019 and 2023. Percentage values

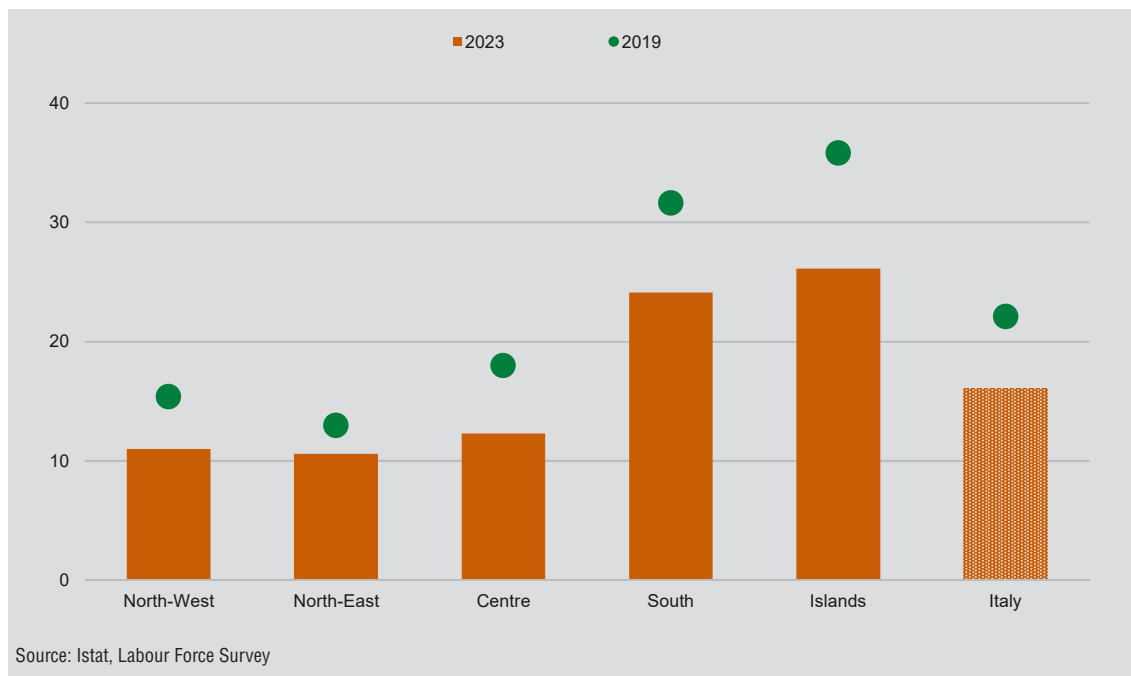
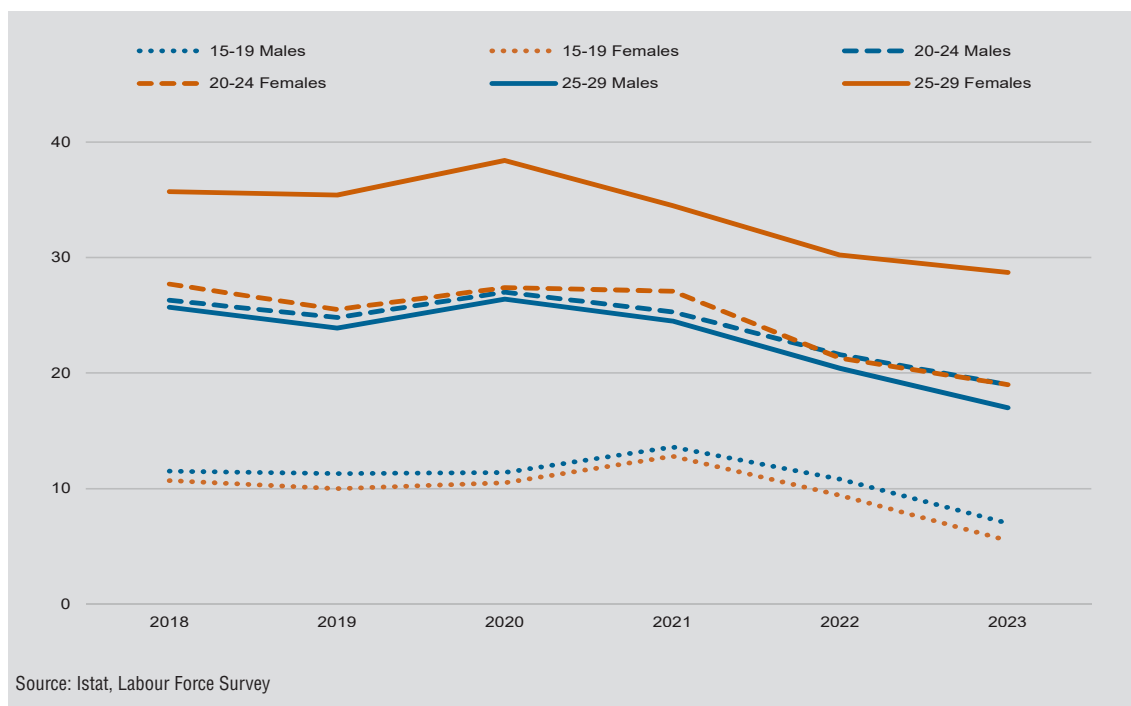


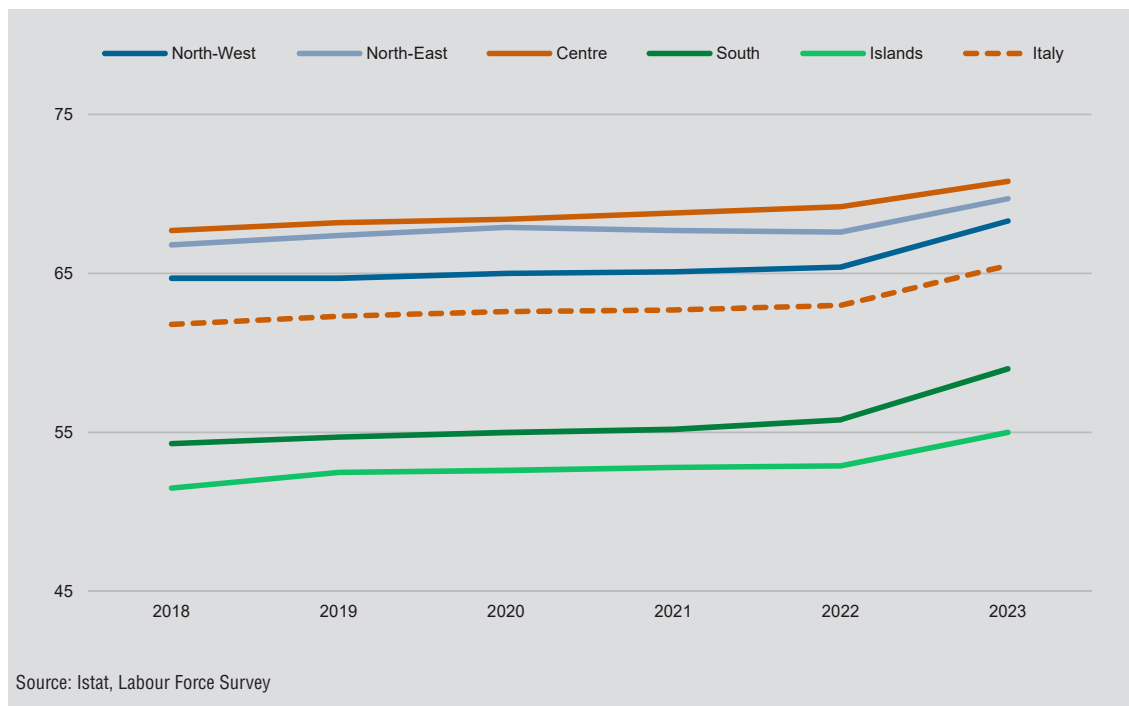
Figure 7. People not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), by gender and age group. Years 2018-2023. Percentage values



In 2023, the share of graduates and postgraduates continues to grow

The achievement of a medium-high educational level is measured considering the share of people aged 25-64 with at least a upper secondary school diploma and the share of people aged 25-34 who have obtained a university degree or other tertiary qualification³. In 2022, the two indicators resumed their growth, accentuating the increase in 2023 (Figure 8). 65.5% of people aged 25-64 have at least a qualification or an upper secondary school diploma (+2.5 percentage points compared to 2022). They are 68.0% among women, and 62.9% among men. Still below 60% are Campania (56.8%), Puglia (55.7%), Sardegna (55%) and Sicilia (54.9%).

Figure 8. People aged 25-64 with at least an upper secondary school diploma, by geographic area. Years 2018-2023. Per 100 persons aged 25-64



In 2023, young people aged 25-34 who hold a tertiary study qualification are 30.6% (they were 29.2% in 2022). In 2023, in the North-West the share returned to the 2019 levels, while it grew in the Centre and in the South (Figure 9). Percentages remain below the national average in Piemonte (29.5%), Abruzzo (29.1%), Basilicata (27.8%), Calabria (27.6%), Sardegna (27.0%), Campania (26.6%), the autonomous province of Bolzano (23.0%), Puglia (22.8%) and Sicilia (21.8%).

The increase in university graduates and people with other tertiary qualifications among residents aged 25-34 is mainly due to women, who show increasingly higher shares on the reference population than those of men, shares that are growing faster on top of that. Nevertheless, wide territorial gaps still persist (Figure 10). In 2023, the share of female graduates in the North is 39.9% (as opposed to 24.4% of male graduates), rises to 43.1% in the Centre (28.3% for males), and settles at 30.5% in the South and Islands (19.9% for men).

³ Tertiary qualifications include university qualifications, academic ones (AFAM) and post-diploma technological specialisations from higher technical institutes (ITS); they comprise post-graduate and post-AFAM qualifications. Tertiary qualifications correspond to levels 5-8 of the ISCED 2011 International Classification.

Figure 9. People aged 25-34 who have obtained a tertiary qualification, by geographic area. Years 2019 and 2023. Per 100 people aged 25-34

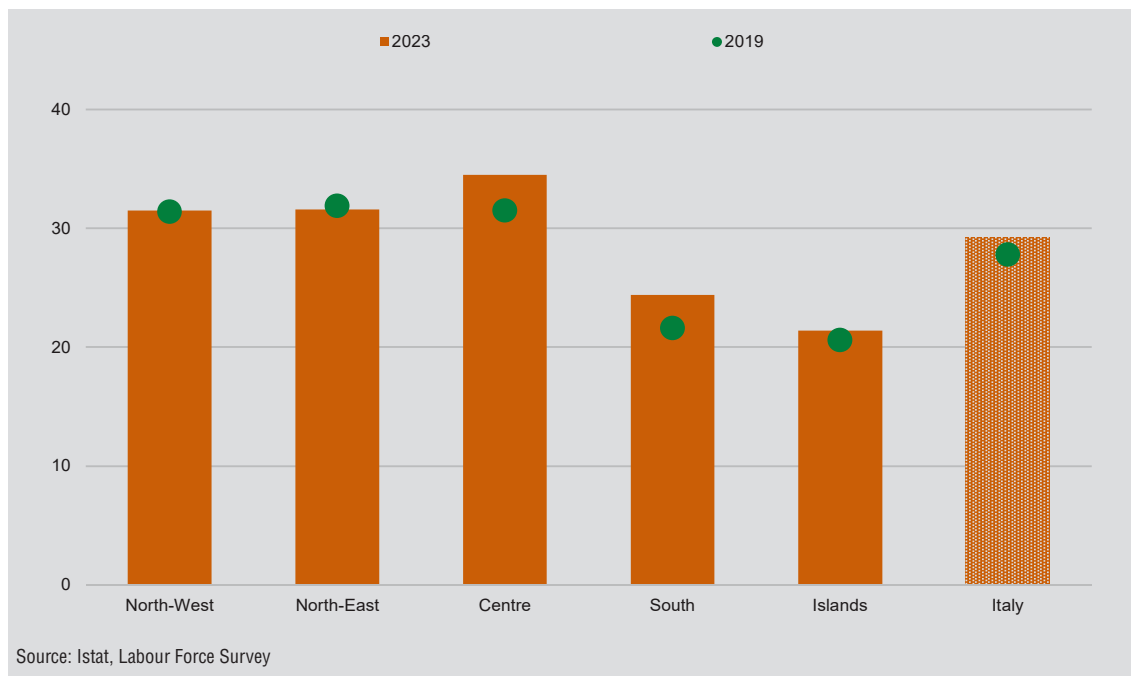
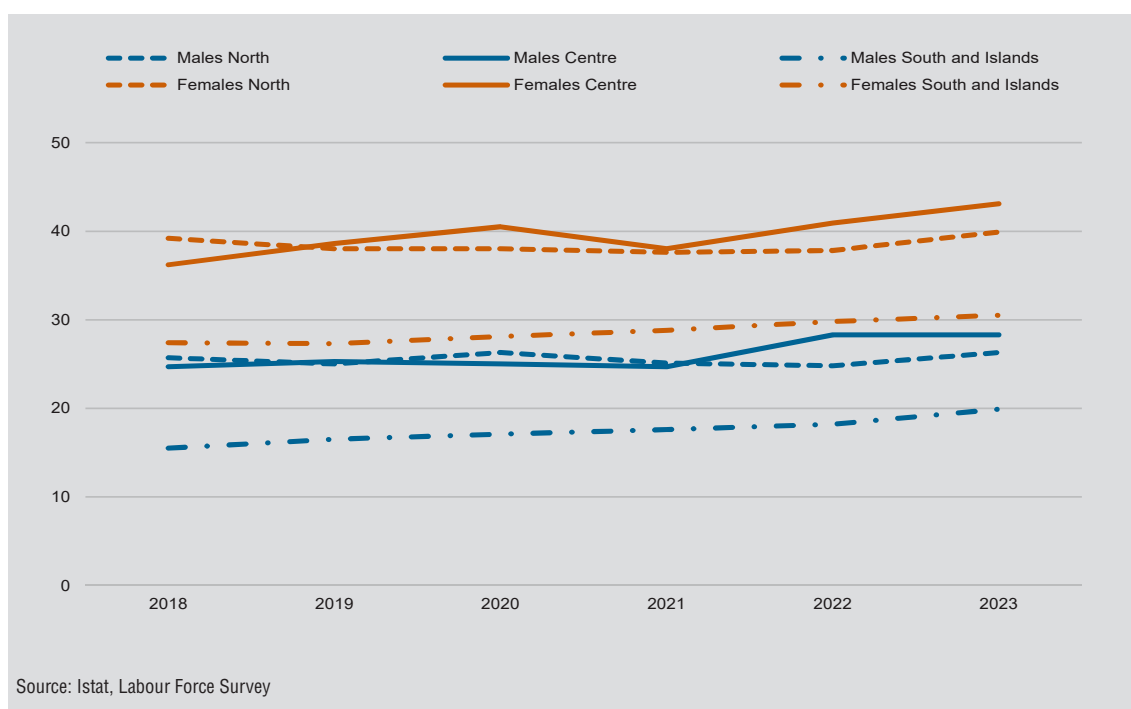


Figure 10. People aged 25-34 who have obtained a tertiary qualification, by gender and geographic area. Years 2019-2023. Per 100 people aged 25-34

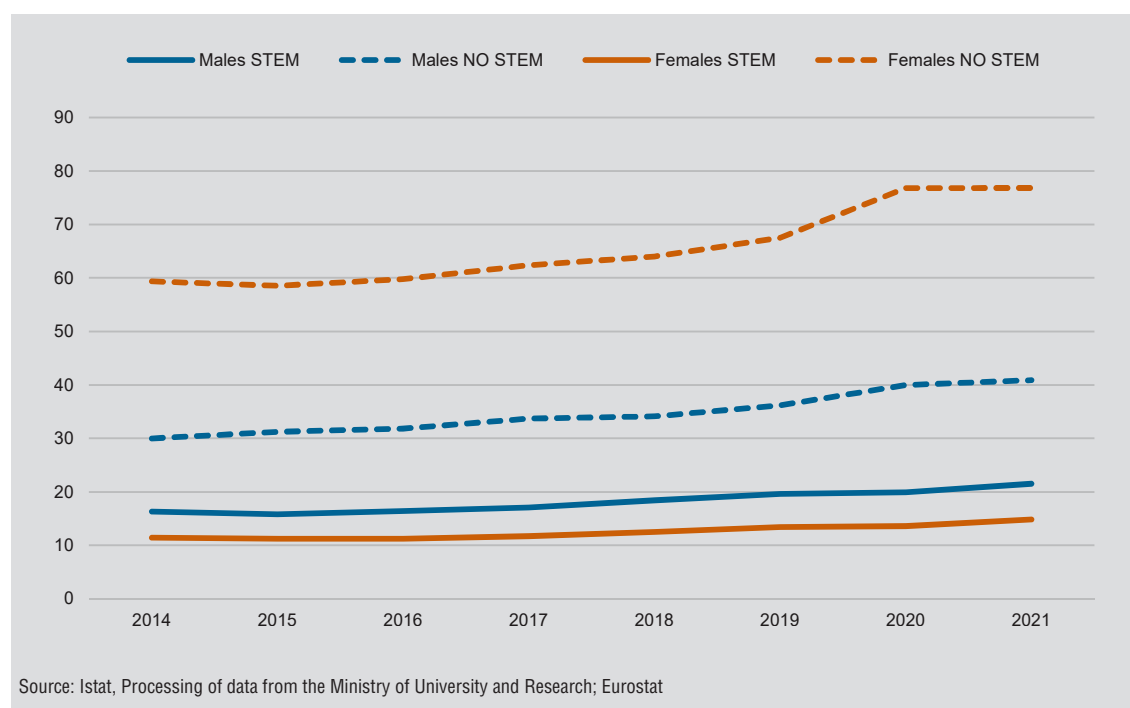


More women tertiary graduates compared to men, but fewer in scientific disciplines

In the European Union as a whole (EU27), 4 million and 300 thousand people obtained a tertiary qualification in 2021, of which 459 thousand in Italy (65,000 more in Italy compared to 2020). In the EU27, those who obtained a tertiary qualification in 2021 represented 86 per 1,000 of young people aged 20-29 (reference population conventionally used to measure the intensity of the phenomenon). In Italy, this indicator is equal to 76.4 people per 1,000, of whom 18.3 per 1,000 achieved a tertiary qualification in STEM disciplines and the remaining 58.1 per 1,000 in non-STEM disciplines.

Broken down by gender, this indicator shows how women choose STEM disciplines in a markedly less proportion than men: out of every 1,000 women aged 20-29, 14.3 graduate in STEM disciplines, as opposed to 21.0 men every 1,000. Conversely, in non-STEM disciplines 76.8 women every 1,000 obtained a tertiary qualification compared to 40.9 men per thousand (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Tertiary Graduates in STEM and non-STEM disciplines by gender. Years 2014-2021. Values per 1,000 residents aged 20-29

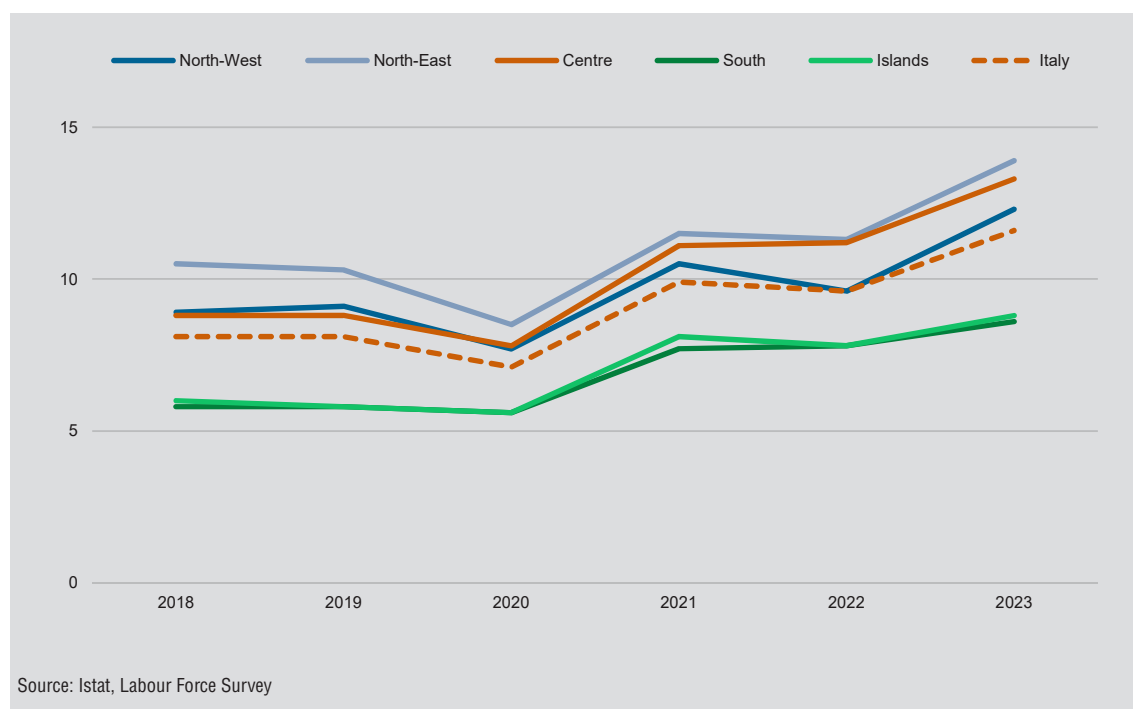


Participation in life-long learning remains high

In 2023, 11.6% of the population aged 25-64 and residing in Italy recurred to life-long learning in the 4 weeks preceding the interview, 2 percentage points more than 2022. This value is growing significantly, not only if compared to the low participation recorded in 2020 (7.1%), but also compared to the 2018 and 2019 levels (8.1% in both years). The availability of learning activities in forms that are alternative to in-person lessons encouraged the use of distance learning, and these methods endured once the *COVID* emergency had drawn to a close.

Although regional discrepancies persist in favour of central and northern regions, the rising participation in training involves people residing in all territories, of all ages, genders and study qualifications (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Participation in life-long learning in the previous 4 weeks, by geographic area. Years 2018-2023. Percentage values on the population aged 25-64



Stable digital skills

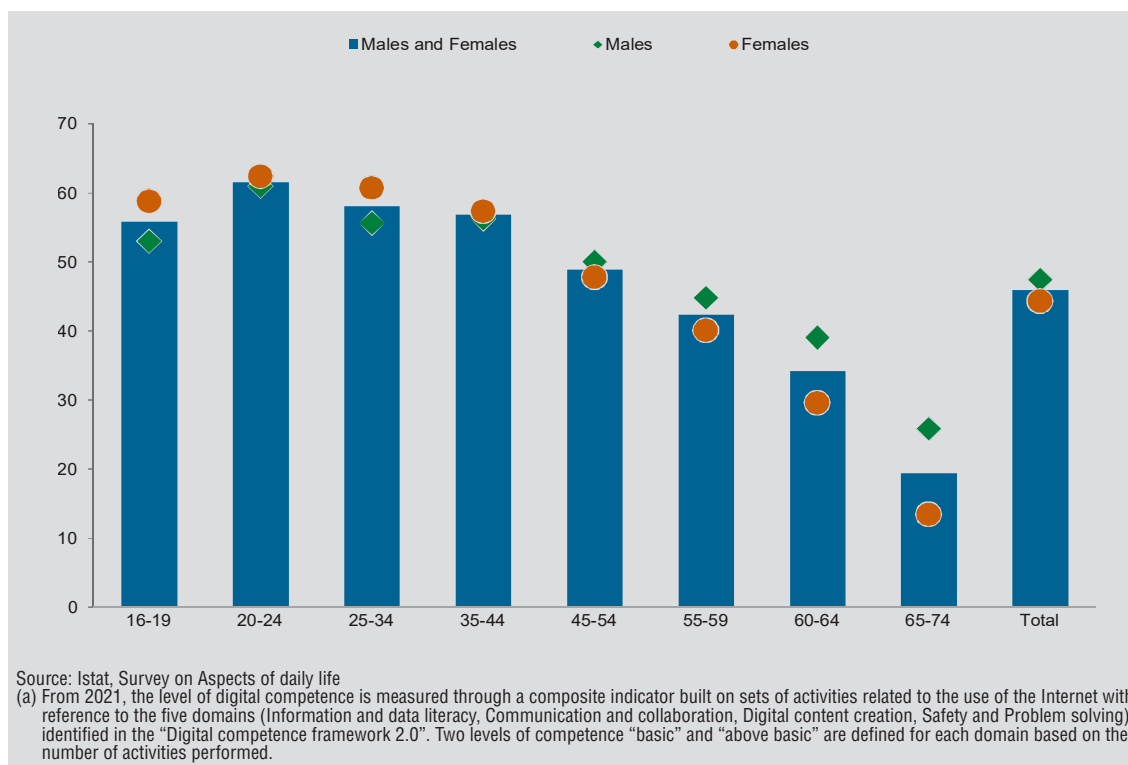
In 2023, in Italy, 45.9% of people aged 16-74 who used the Internet in the last 3 months possess at least basic digital skills. This value is stable compared to 2021, about 10 percentage points below the European level of 55.5%. In Italy, as in other European countries, digital skills are characterised by wide gaps associated with demographic and socio-cultural characteristics of the population. In 2023, 61.6% of boys and girls aged 20-24 who used the Internet in the last 3 months have at least basic digital skills. This share quickly decreases with age, reaching 42.4% among 55-59 year-olds and settling at 19.4% among those aged 65-74. This level of skills is characterised by a marked disparity in favour of men, 3.1 percentage points higher than women. However, a female advantage is observed among people under 45 (Figure 13). Digital skills are still the prerogative of people with a high educational qualification. 78.3% of people aged 35-54 with a tertiary education have at least basic digital skills. The share drops to 25.7% among 35-54 year-olds with a lower secondary school diploma. Significant differences are also encountered when considering the employment status.

An analysis of individual Italian regions evinces a strong gradient between Centre-North and South and Islands, except for Sardegna that settles around the average value. The regions that rank the best in this context are the autonomous province of

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Trento (56.8%), Lombardia (53.4%), Emilia Romagna and Lazio (both with 51.5%), while Calabria (32.2%) and Campania (32.5%) rank last.

Figure 13. People aged 16-74 who used the Internet in the last 3 months and possess at least basic digital skills. Year 2023. Percentage values (a)



In 2023, cultural participation outside the home increases, going back to pre-pandemic levels

In 2023, the indicator that monitors cultural participation outside the home⁴ stands at 35.2% of the population aged 6 and over, a marked increase compared to 2022 (+12 p. p.), returning, for the first time after 4 years, to the levels observed in the pre-pandemic period (it was 35.1% in 2019). Compared to 2022, the enjoyment of all cultural activities outside the home rises on average by about one and a half p.p. and almost doubles for participation in non-classical music concerts, which moves from 11.2% to 21.7% (Figure 14).

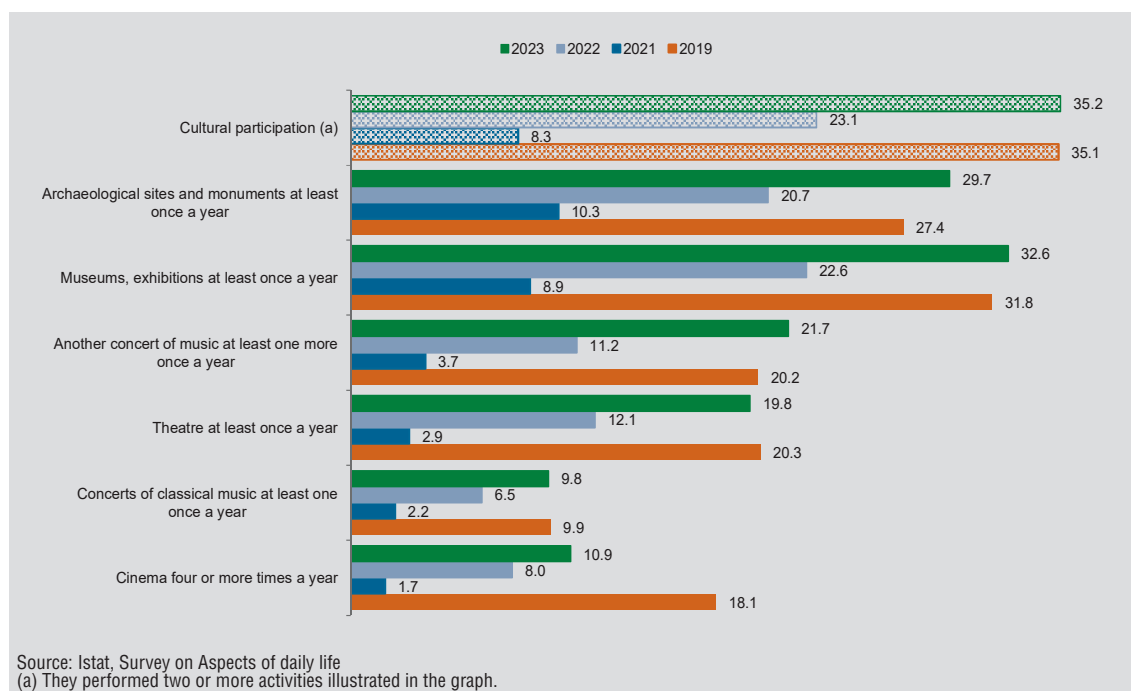
Increased participation in cultural activities has concerned both women and men, with a recovery that brings them both back to the levels observed in 2019.

The recovery recorded in 2023 has embraced all cultural activities outside the home, with the exception of going to the cinema, an activity that involves 10.9% of people aged 6 and over going at least 4 times a year (in 2019 they were 18.1%), the decline of which has already been affected for some years by the strong spread of streaming platforms that have deeply changed users' viewing habits.

⁴ The indicator that monitors cultural participation outside the home is the percentage of people aged 6 years and over who have carried out 2 or more activities in the 12 months before the interview out of total people aged 6 years and over. The activities considered are 6: going to the cinema at least four times; at least once to: theatre; exhibitions and museums; archaeological sites, monuments; concerts of classical music, opera; concerts of other kind of music.

Even in 2023, as in the previous year, a slightly higher level of participation for women compared to men is confirmed (36.1% compared to 34.3%).

Figure 14. People aged 6 and over who carried out 2 or more cultural activities outside the home in the 12 months preceding the interview by type of activities. Years 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023. Percentage values



The younger population is characterised by higher cultural participation levels than the adult and elderly age groups. This tendency is further confirmed in 2023: the highest values of participation in cultural activities outside the home are recorded among the very young aged 6-14 (47.2%) and 15-24 (52.9%), and then progressively decrease as age increases. It should be noted, however, that during the years of the pandemic, it was precisely the youngest who suffered the greatest reductions and that the strong recovery in the last two years is not enough to regain the 2019 levels for this population group. For the rest of the population, on the contrary, the recovery has been almost complete.

Women up to the age of 64 show higher cultural participation levels across all age groups. In the older age groups, the small differences recorded are to the advantage of males. The activities that women undertake to a greater extent than men are going to the theatre and visiting museums or exhibitions at least once a year.

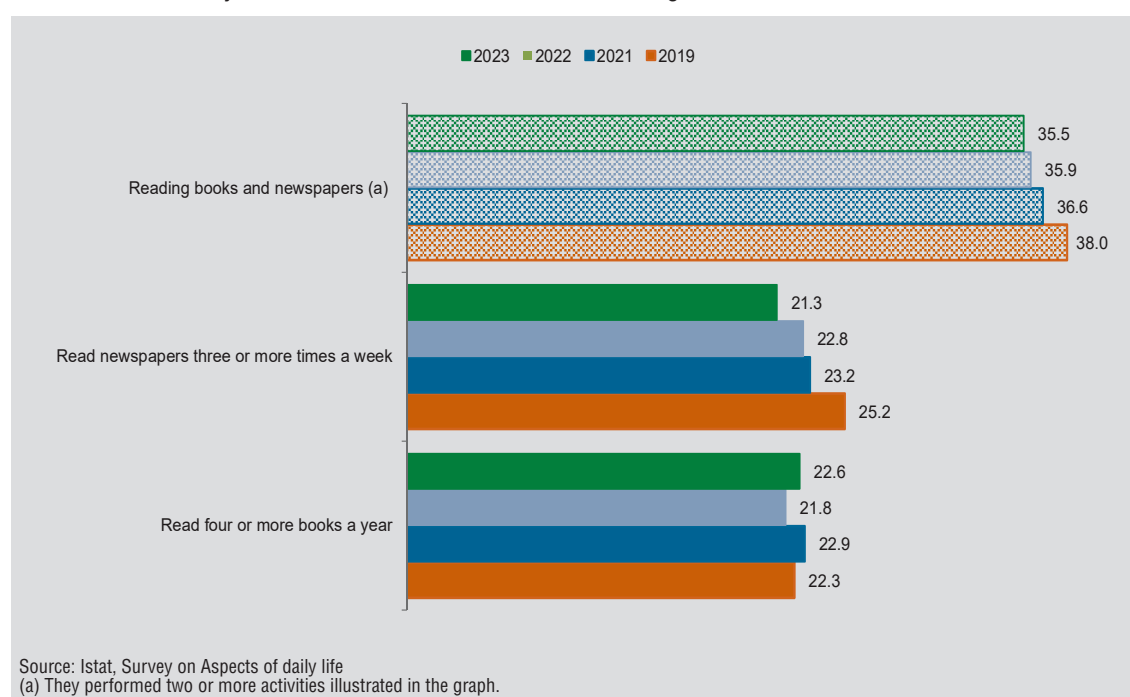
In 2023, the rising participation in cultural activities outside the home is across the whole national territory. However, the already wide gap between the regions of the Centre-North and those of the South and Islands, which penalises the latter, increases slightly. In the South and the Islands, moreover, pre-pandemic levels cannot be fully recovered. The enjoyment of cultural activities outside the home observed among people with high educational qualifications constantly remains, over time, higher than that of people with low study qualifications. During the pandemic, the gap between the behaviours of people with high and low educational qualifications respectively had widened (reaching a ratio of 1 to 5 in 2021), and then gradually decreased starting from 2022. In 2023, we notice the same level of inequalities as in 2019: 3 persons with high educational qualification

took part in cultural activities outside the home as opposed to one person with a lower educational qualification.

Between 2019 and 2023, book reading remained stable, while newspaper reading decreased

Unlike what was observed for cultural enjoyment outside the home, book and newspaper reading did not undergo a sudden change in habits during the *COVID-19* pandemic. However, the indicator that monitors book and newspaper reading⁵ dropped by 2.5 p.p. over the last four years, down from 38.0% in 2019 to 35.5% in 2023, due in particular to the decreasing trend in newspaper readers (Figure 15). In fact, the indicator includes two types of reading, which, in recent years, show different dynamics: on the one hand, the share of people who read four or more books has remained stable (22.3% in 2019 and 22.6% in 2023), while on the other, the percentage of those who read newspapers at least three times a week has constantly decreased, shifting from 25.2% in 2019 to 21.3% in 2023.

Figure 15. People aged 6 and over who read at least 4 books and/or at least 3 newspapers (in paper form or online) per week in the year. Years 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023. Percentage values



Higher rates of book reading are confirmed among women, +8.6 p.p. compared to men, who prevail instead among newspaper readers (+5.6 points more than women). Starting from 2020, as a consequence of the recent dynamics of dwindling numbers of newspaper readers, the overall indicator of book and newspaper reading has shown higher levels for women and the gender gap inverted its sign, widening until it rose in 2023 to +2.3 p.p. in

⁵ The indicator that monitors book reading is the percentage of people aged 6 and over who have read at least four books a year for reasons not strictly educational or professional (paper books, e-books, online books, audio books) and/or have read newspapers (paper and/ or online) at least three times per week out of total people aged 6 years and over.

favour of female readers. Particularly high differences are observed among young people aged 15-24, 42.9% of them female readers, as opposed to 27.4% of male readers. Instead, among older people, especially those aged 75 and over, the practice of reading is more widespread among men: 36.8% versus 25.5% for women.

Altogether, the proportion of people aged 35-74 who read books and newspapers is higher than the general average. A larger number of book readers are found among young people up to 34 years of age than in the rest of the population, but fewer newspaper readers (in particular, as one would expect, the youngest, between 6 and 14 years old).

In 2023, high differences in reading habits persist among the regions of the Centre-North and those of the South and Islands. In the North, 42.8% of the population reads, in the Centre 37.2% and in the South and Islands 24.4%. The only exception – not for the first time – is Sardegna, which stands at 38.0%, despite the marked drop from previous years (-7 percentage points compared to 2022), mostly linked to the decrease in newspaper readers. Significant disparities also remain in relation to the level of education. In 2023, the share of people with a tertiary qualification that read books and/or newspapers is about two and a half times higher than the share among those who have a lower secondary school diploma at the most (respectively, 61.8% and 23.7%).

In 2023, the habit of attending libraries is on the rise, albeit still below the pre-pandemic period

In 2023, 12.4% of people aged 3 and over went to the library at least once in the 12 months preceding the interview. The data is up 2.2 p.p. compared to 2022 and is almost double what it was in 2021 (when it had dipped to 7.4%, the lowest value in recent years), though still below the 15.3% share observed in 2019.

The increase recorded over the last year has cut across the whole population and is proportionally stronger among children and boys up to 14 years of age. Nevertheless, almost no age group recovered the pre-pandemic levels, with the exception of elderly people aged 75 and over.

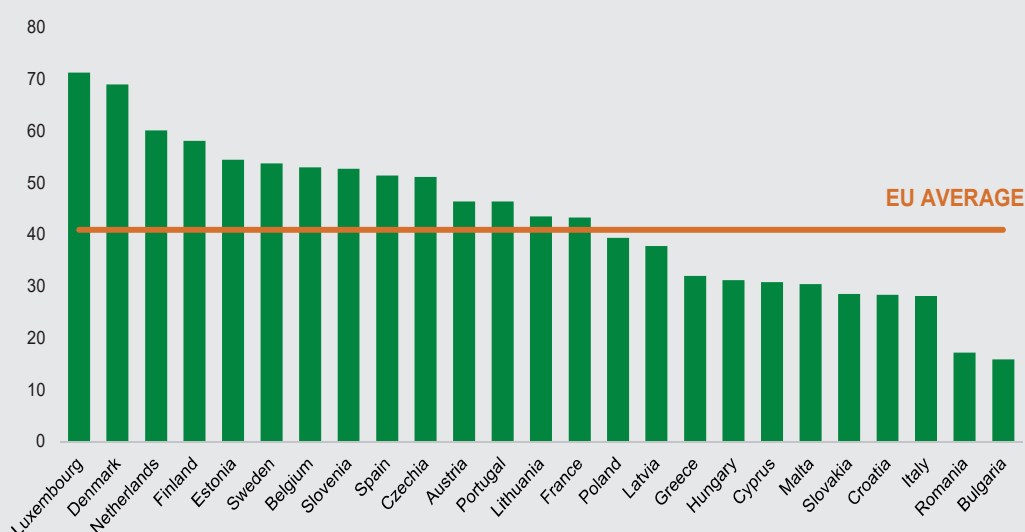
As was the case before the *COVID-19* pandemic, in 2023 the share of women who went to the library is higher than that for men (+3.3 percentage points) and the difference is particularly high among young people aged 15-24 (+9.5 points in favour of women). Levels are still below the pre-pandemic period among both men and women.

Lastly, it should be noted that in 2023 the share of users aged 6 and over who benefited from online library services (to consult catalogues or books, reserve titles, etc.) remained essentially unchanged (6.5% compared to 6.4% in 2022) and, overall, the share of users who accessed libraries, in a “real” or “virtual” way, has settled at 15.4%.

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE

It is possible to draw a European comparison on some cultural participation indicators using the information¹ of the 2022 ad hoc module on cultural participation included by Eurostat in the European Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). According to the data collected by Eurostat, in 2022, within the European setting, Italy occupied one of the last positions in terms of cultural participation outside the home, ahead only of Romania and Bulgaria (Figure A). The level of enjoyment of activities, such as going to the cinema, visiting cultural sites or attending live shows, on the part of the Italian population aged 16 and over, was about 12.7 p.p. below the average of the 25 EU countries for which the most up-to-date data is available. All individual cultural activities outdoors are carried out in Italy by a smaller share of residents than the European average, albeit with some differences: the situation is better when it comes to attending the cinema (12th position) compared to the enjoyment of cultural sites and concerts (21st position for both). A similar trend is discernible if we analyse the behaviour of young people aged 16-24 and compare them to their European peers. This is a structural scenario for our country: even in 2015² Italy languished at the bottom of the ranking in terms of cultural participation level, more or less the same position it occupied in 2022.

Figure A. People aged 16 and over who have attended cinemas, cultural sites or live shows in 25 EU countries. Year 2022. Percentage values



Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC Survey

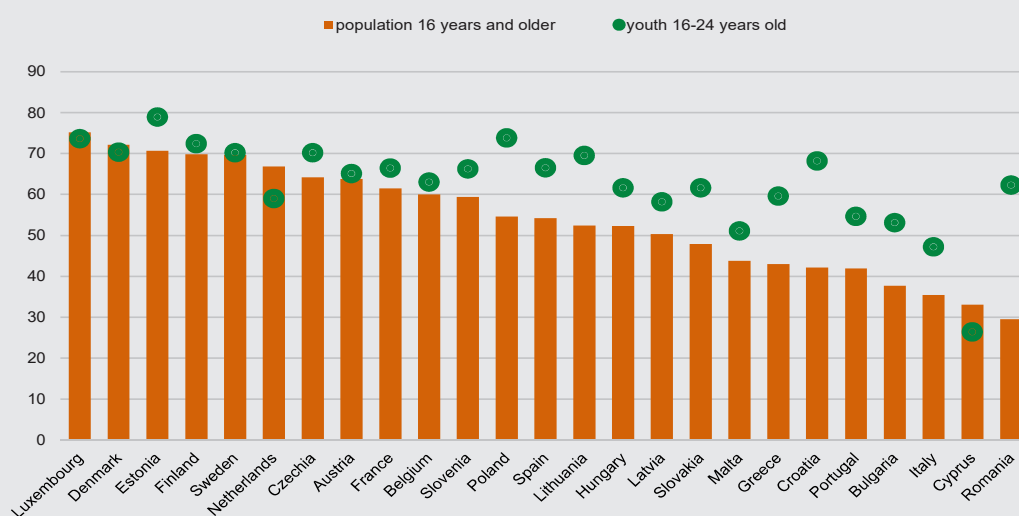
As regards book reading, too, in 2022 Italy ranked third last among European countries, and only Cyprus and Romania have a lower percentage of people who read at least one book in the last year (Figure B). If we consider young people aged 16-24, known to read more than the average of the population, we are the only country, together with Cyprus, where less than half of young people have read at least one book during the year.

¹ These are indicators thematically similar to those used in the Education and training domain of the Bes, although a few differences in the questions posed do not allow for a direct comparison.

² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_participation.

If we analyse the intensity of reading through the number of books read, Italy occupies the last position for the share of people aged 16 and over who read at least four books a year, with a share almost halved compared to the European average. Conversely, the share of those who read more than 10 books annually is slightly below the European average, and for this indicator Italy ranks fourteenth.

Figure B. People who have read at least one book in the previous 12 months by age group in 25 EU countries. Year 2022. Percentage values



Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC Survey

Indicators

- 1. Children aged 0-2 years enrolled in nursery school:** Pupils aged 0-2 years enrolled in early childcare services (per 100 children aged 0-2 years).
Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life.
- 2. Participation in the school system of children aged 4-5:** Percentage of children aged 4-5 years participating in pre-primary education or in primary education on total children aged 4-5 years.
Source: Istat, Processing of data from Ministry of Education and Merit.
- 3. People with at least upper secondary education level (25-64 years old):** Percentage of people aged 25-64 years having completed at least upper secondary education (ISCED level not below 3) on total people aged 25-64 years.
Source: Istat, Labour force survey.
- 4. People having completed tertiary education (25-34 years old):** Percentage of people aged 25-34 years having completed tertiary education (ISCED 5, 6, 7 or 8) on total people aged 25-34 years.
Source: Istat, Labour force survey.
- 5. First-time entry rate to university by cohort of upper secondary graduates:** Proportion of new-graduates from upper secondary education enrolled for the first time at university in the same year of upper secondary graduation (cohort-specific rate). Students enrolled in "Istituti Tecnici Superiori", "Istituti di Alta Formazione Artistica, Musicale e Coreutica", "Scuole superiori per Mediatori linguistici" and at foreign universities are excluded.
Source: Ministry of Education and Merit; Ministry of University and Research.
- 6. Early leavers from education and training:** Percentage of people aged 18-24 years who have achieved only lower secondary (ISCED 2) and are not included in a training program on total people aged 18-24 years.
Source: Istat, Labour force survey.
- 7. People not in education, employment, or training (NEET):** Percentage of people aged 15-29 years that are not in education, employment, or training on total people aged 15-29 years.
Source: Istat, Labour force survey.
- 8. Participation in life-long learning:** Percentage of people aged 25-64 years participating in formal or non-formal education on total people aged 25-64 years.
Source: Istat, Labour force survey.
- 9. Inadequate level of literacy (students in grade 8):** Share of students in grade 8 (third year of lower secondary education) who do not reach an adequate level of proficiency in literacy competence (level 2 out of 5 levels).
Source: Invalsi, Educational national assessment.
- 10. Inadequate level of numeracy (students in grade 8):** Share of students in grade 8 (third year of lower secondary education) who do not reach an adequate level of proficiency in numerical competence (level 2 out of 5 levels).
Source: Invalsi, Educational national assessment.
- 11. Individuals with basic or above basic overall digital skills:** Percentage of people aged 16-74 with basic or above basic digital skills in all 5 areas (Information and data literacy, Communication and collaboration, Digital content creation, Safety and Problem solving), identified in the "Digital competence framework 2.0".
Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life.
- 12. STEM graduates:** Graduates in tertiary education, in science, math., computing, engineering, manufacturing, construction per 100 residents aged 20-29. The numerator includes graduates with a Short-cycle tertiary education, Bachelor's or equivalent level, Master's or equivalent level, Doctoral or equivalent level (ISCED 5, 6, 7 or 8)).
Source: Istat, Processing of data from Ministry of University and Research.
- 13. Cultural participation outside the home:** Percentage of people aged 6 years and over who have carried out 2 or more activities in the 12 months before the interview out of total people aged 6 years and over. The activities considered are 6: going to the cinema at least four times; at least once to: theatre; exhibitions and museums; archaeological sites, monuments; concerts of classical music, opera; concerts of other kind of music.
Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life.
- 14. Reading books and newspapers:** Percentage of people aged 6 and over who have read at least four books a year for reasons not strictly educational or professional (paper books, e-books, online books, audio books) and / or have read newspapers (paper and/ or online) at least three times per week out of total people aged 6 years and over.
Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life.
- 15. Use of libraries:** Percentage of people aged 3 and over who went to the library at least once in the past 12 months before interview out of total people aged 3 years and over.
Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life.

Indicators by region and geographic area

REGIONS GEOGRAPHIC AREAS	Children aged 0-2 years enrolled in nursery school (a)	Participation in the school system of children aged 4-5 (b)	People with at least upper secondary education level (25-64 years old) (c)	People having completed tertiary education (25-34 years old) (d)	First-time entry rate to university by cohort of upper secondary graduates (e)	Early leavers from education and training (f)
	2021/2023	2021/2022	2023	2023	2021	2023
Piemonte	43.0	94.2	66.6	29.5	53.3	8.8
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	48.3	95.5	63.0	32.5	51.0	10.4
Liguria	27.5	94.9	71.5	31.2	56.4	10.2
Lombardia	34.4	92.1	68.6	35.2	54.5	7.8
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	35.1	94.2	72.9	28.5	38.4	12.3
<i>Bolzano/Bozen</i>	<i>31.8</i>	<i>92.9</i>	<i>70.6</i>	<i>23.0</i>	19.7	<i>16.2</i>
<i>Trento</i>	<i>39.3</i>	<i>95.9</i>	<i>75.3</i>	<i>34.1</i>	<i>54.2</i>	<i>8.2</i>
Veneto	37.4	93.0	68.1	32.9	52.3	9.8
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	28.4	94.0	72.7	31.6	54.8	6.6
Emilia-Romagna	42.5	92.7	69.9	32.9	54.9	7.3
Toscana	28.7	93.8	66.4	31.3	54.1	9.3
Umbria	37.5	96.0	73.7	34.4	58.4	5.6
Marche	40.9	95.1	67.2	34.8	57.4	6.1
Lazio	33.1	88.9	74.0	38.4	56.3	6.1
Abruzzo	28.9	96.3	71.2	29.1	59.2	9.1
Molise	36.0	94.6	65.9	30.9	59.4	7.6
Campania	17.5	98.3	56.8	26.6	39.8	16.0
Puglia	24.3	97.3	55.7	22.8	51.8	12.8
Basilicata	21.5	96.9	65.3	27.8	54.3	8.6
Calabria	17.8	96.8	61.1	27.6	51.2	11.8
Sicilia	25.5	94.9	54.9	21.8	49.1	17.1
Sardegna	46.5	96.2	55.0	27.0	48.9	17.3
North	37.2	93.0	68.9	32.9	53.4	8.5
North-West	36.2	92.9	68.3	33.4	54.3	8.3
North-East	38.3	93.1	69.7	32.3	52.3	8.8
Centre	33.2	91.6	70.8	35.5	56.0	7.0
South and islands	23.7	96.8	57.7	25.1	47.2	14.6
South	20.7	97.5	59.0	26.0	46.4	13.5
Islands	29.7	95.1	55.0	22.9	49.1	17.2
Italy	31.7	94.0	65.5	30.6	51.4	10.5

(a) Per 100 children aged 0-2;

(b) Per 100 children aged 4-5;

(c) Per 100 persons aged 25-64;

(d) Per 100 persons aged 25-34;

(e) Specific cohort rate;

(f) Per 100 persons aged 18-24;

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People not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (g)	Participation in life-long learning (c)	Inadequate level of literacy (students in grade 8) (h)	Inadequate level of numeracy (students in grade 8) (h)	Individuals with basic or above basic overall digital skills (i)	STEM graduates (j)	Cultural participation outside the home (k)	Reading books and newspapers (k)	Use of libraries (l)
2023	2023	2022/2023	2022/2023	2023	2021	2023	2023	2023
11.7	11.6	36.1	39.5	49.4	17.8	35.1	39.4	13.2
9.9	11.7	29.9	36.0	47.7	11.4	36.2	47.3	26.8
11.3	13.1	40.0	44.2	47.1	17.9	36.2	39.7	10.9
10.6	12.4	33.3	35.4	53.4	16.2	41.1	44.1	19.7
8.8	15.1	52.5	8.4	43.2	52.6	29.3
8.0	13.0	45.5	42.2	48.0	2.9	39.6	52.5	27.0
9.7	17.1	32.0	30.9	56.8	14.2	46.6	52.7	31.6
10.5	13.4	33.0	33.3	50.1	17.7	39.7	41.0	15.3
11.0	15.2	33.9	35.6	49.9	17.1	37.2	49.1	16.7
11.0	13.8	35.8	38.0	51.5	17.8	38.5	42.1	17.1
11.0	12.7	37.0	39.4	48.5	15.8	37.6	39.5	14.1
10.5	13.8	29.9	35.8	47.4	19.0	34.3	33.5	12.5
10.6	10.5	32.0	35.6	48.8	18.3	33.1	35.7	11.7
13.7	14.2	36.3	44.9	51.5	19.5	40.6	36.7	9.4
15.2	9.9	35.7	42.1	45.1	21.5	30.9	32.2	8.1
18.1	11.3	35.3	44.8	40.6	21.3	29.6	28.2	5.2
26.9	8.3	46.1	57.7	32.5	17.8	30.6	21.4	5.1
22.2	8.5	41.3	49.6	38.9	17.5	28.0	24.4	6.1
16.9	10.3	39.2	49.0	35.3	21.3	25.5	22.3	7.8
27.2	7.8	49.4	60.7	32.2	17.7	24.9	22.8	6.0
27.9	7.0	50.2	61.4	34.5	14.2	24.7	21.9	5.5
19.6	14.1	45.9	58.1	43.3	14.6	32.6	38.0	11.2
10.8	13.0	34.5	36.5	51.3	16.7	39.1	42.8	17.3
11.0	12.3	34.6	37.2	51.7	16.7	39.0	42.4	17.2
10.6	13.9	34.3	35.6	50.8	16.7	39.3	43.3	17.4
12.3	13.3	35.5	41.4	49.9	18.2	38.2	37.2	11.4
24.7	8.7	45.6	56.0	36.1	17.0	28.2	24.4	6.2
24.1	8.6	43.9	53.9	35.8	18.2	28.9	23.7	5.9
26.1	8.8	49.2	60.7	36.7	14.3	26.6	25.9	6.9
16.1	11.6	38.5	44.2	45.9	17.8	35.2	35.5	12.4

(g) Per 100 persons aged 15-29

(h) Per 100 students attending grade III of secondary school;

(i) Per 100 persons aged 16-74;

(j) Per 100 inhabitants aged 20-29;

(k) Per 100 persons aged 6 and over;

(l) Per 100 persons aged 3 and over.

