

Statistics on Acquisitions of Citizenship: An Integrated Longitudinal Approach

Cinzia Conti, Fabio Massimo Rottino, Salvatore Strozza and Enrico Tucci

Extended Abstract

Background

The indicator about the acquisitions of citizenship provided to Eurostat by Italy for Regulation (EC) No. 862/2007 is currently calculated as: “The ratio between the number of residents who acquired citizenship in the country during a calendar year and the total number of resident foreigners in that country at the beginning of the year.” In this case the longitudinal approach may be of particular interest, especially for acquisitions obtained for residence. The need for a cohort approach has been emphasized for some time in regard to naturalizations in the strict sense (Perrin, 2006). This perspective has recently been proposed once more by Reichel (2011), who stressed that: “to do so, it would be necessary to base the rate on the foreign population actually eligible for naturalization, or as statisticians call it, the population at risk of experiencing the event. As pointed out by Nicolas Perrin (2006) a cohort approach towards measuring rates of citizenship acquisition would allow the calculation of the likelihood of obtaining citizenship for individual cohorts of immigrants which would provide a much better measure of the impact of policy measures on patterns of citizenship acquisition.” The same author also points out that the lack of appropriate data makes it difficult to calculate longitudinal naturalization rates, which require the availability of information on the year of immigration. Several countries are moving in this direction, also due to the availability of data sources based on registers that allow the production of longitudinal data (ibid.).

Data and methods

In 2019 Istat has produced the stock of population divided by Italian at birth and Italian by acquisition of citizenship at the 1st of January 2018. The procedure is based on the integration of the following data sources:

- a. Census 2011 data;
- b. Flow data on citizenship acquisitions (from 9/10 /2011 to 1/1/2018);
- c. Demographic flows from 9/10/2011 to 1/1/2018.

The record linkage between these databases at individual level has been carried out in two stages, using different keys: fiscal code and SIM code. The current availability of Italian statistics 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 by acquisition of

citizenship. 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 (without considering emigrations and deaths), approximately 1,515 thousand, even if the analysis will consider the amount of still present and alive (about 1,340 thousand).

For the new Italian citizens the following variables are available:

- a. For those present at the Census, all the information collected in 2011 by mean of the questionnaire;
- b. For those not present at Census but present at the end of the period: gender, age, previous citizenship, country of birth, province of residence as of 1st January 2018 and acquisition reason;

Considering the acquisition process, 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".

Main results on "new Italian citizens"

On 1st January 2018, more than 1 million and 340 thousand Nationals became Italians by acquisition of citizenship. Women represent the 56.3% of the total. 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 behavior are multiple and both objective and subjective. It is important to take into account, among the other explanations, the greater advantage 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 dissuade immigrants from acquiring Italian citizenship. Residents who have acquired citizenship in 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%. 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.

Longitudinal approach

It may be interesting to study the behavior in a multidimensional perspective that allows to hold together a multiplicity of factors connected with a 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.

The applied 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

Certainly, the key-predictor is the previous citizenship. 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 higher propensity, although in early 2017 a regulatory change that introduces disadvantages for Bangladeshi people who acquire another citizenship. 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 European Union Member States. Even if only countries that do not recognize dual citizenship are included in the model, it emerges that the Chinese highlight the lower propensity to acquire Italian citizenship. We also 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. Other models have been applied in order to study the effects for different sub-populations.

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