



Freedom in the World 2017

Italy *Profile*

FREEDOM STATUS: FREE

Freedom in the World Scores

Aggregate Score



(0=Least Free, 100=Most Free)

Freedom Rating: 1/7

Political Rights



Civil Liberties



(1=Most Free, 7=Least Free)

Quick Facts

Population:	60,600,000
Capital:	Rome
GDP/capita:	\$29,958
Press Freedom Status:	Partly Free
Net Freedom Status:	Free

Overview:



Italy's parliamentary system features competitive multiparty elections. The Vatican has traditionally held significant influence over the country's politics, and ties between organized crime and public officials persist. Civil liberties are generally respected, though the judicial system is undermined by long trial delays and the influence of organized crime.

Key Developments in 2016:

- In May, the parliament approved a law recognizing same-sex civil unions, providing same-sex couples with the opportunity to claim nearly all of the rights conferred by marriage.
- Authorities struggled to provide adequate housing for asylum seekers and refugees and to process asylum applications in a timely manner, as the country continued to experience large-scale migration by sea from the Middle East and North Africa.

Executive Summary:

In 2016, the parliament approved same-sex civil unions, after a lively debate that lasted for nearly two years. The law provides same-sex couples who enter a civil union with almost all rights conferred by marriage. The possibility of stepchild adoption was removed from the legislation, however.

Italy continued to face large-scale migration by sea from the Middle East and North Africa during 2016, with over 180,000 registered arrivals during the year. Immediate emergency services for arriving migrants, many of whom were asylum seekers, were

routine and included medical treatment, food, water, and temporary shelter. However, the authorities still struggled to provide adequate longer-term housing and ensure the timely processing of asylum applications. Reports of excessive use of force by police against migrants have persisted.



A controversial new electoral law approved in 2015 entered into force in July 2016. The measure, designed to encourage majorities and avoid postelection deadlock, mandates that a party that wins more than 40 percent of the popular vote in a legislative election be granted at least 54 percent of seats in the lower house; if no party wins more than 40 percent, a special election round is held in which the winning party receives at least 54 percent of lower-house seats. The Constitutional Court is expected to rule on the reform's legality in 2017.

Separately, constitutional reforms designed to streamline Italy's time-consuming legislative processes by reducing the size and powers of the Senate were approved by parliament in April 2016, but rejected by voters in a December referendum amid concerns that the changes could give outsized powers to the prime minister. Prime Minister Matteo Renzi subsequently resigned and was replaced by foreign affairs minister Paolo Gentiloni.

Political Rights

Political Rights 36/40

A. Electoral Process 12 / 12

A1. Is the head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

A2. Are the national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?



A3. Are the electoral laws and framework fair?

B. Political Pluralism and Participation 14 / 16

B1. Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system open to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

B2. Is there a significant opposition vote and a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

B3. Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group?

B4. Do cultural, ethnic, religious, or other minority groups have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

C. Functioning of Government 10 / 12

C1. Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

C2. Is the government free from pervasive corruption?

C3. Is the government accountable to the electorate between elections, and does it operate with openness and transparency?

Civil Liberties



Civil Liberties *53/60*

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief 15 / 16

- D1. Are there free and independent media and other forms of cultural expression?
- D2. Are religious institutions and communities free to practice their faith and express themselves in public and private?
- D3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free of extensive political indoctrination?
- D4. Is there open and free private discussion?

E. Associational and Organizational Rights 12 / 12

- E1. Is there freedom of assembly, demonstration, and open public discussion?
- E2. Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations?
- E3. Are there free trade unions and peasant organizations or equivalents, and is there effective collective bargaining? Are there free professional and other private organizations?

F. Rule of Law 12 / 16



- F1. Is there an independent judiciary?
- F2. Does the rule of law prevail in civil and criminal matters? Are police under direct civilian control?
- F3. Is there protection from political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture, whether by groups that support or oppose the system? Is there freedom from war and insurgencies?
- F4. Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights 14 / 16

- G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of travel or choice of residence, employment, or institution of higher education?
- G2. Do individuals have the right to own property and establish private businesses? Is private business activity unduly influenced by government officials, the security forces, political parties/organizations, or organized crime?
- G3. Are there personal social freedoms, including gender equality, choice of marriage partners, and size of family?
- G4. Is there equality of opportunity and the absence of economic exploitation?

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

Full Methodology

Explanatory Note:



This country report has been abridged for *Freedom in the World 2017*. For background information on political rights and civil liberties in Italy, see *Freedom in the World 2016*.

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