

USDOS – US Department of State

2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Italy

Italy (Tier 2)

The Government of Italy does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Italy remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing prosecutions and convictions compared with the prior year. The government continued to implement its three-year plan to combat labor exploitation in agriculture by increasing training for labor inspectors and informing vulnerable populations, like foreign workers in agriculture, of their rights. The government approved its first national referral mechanism (NRM) for the identification and assistance of labor trafficking and exploitation victims in the agricultural sector. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government reported fewer trafficking investigations compared with the prior two years and remained without a national action plan (NAP) or national rapporteur, hindering efforts to coordinate national and local anti-trafficking actions. The government assisted fewer victims compared with the prior year and did not report awarding compensation or restitution to any victims. Gaps in victim identification systems persisted, and the government again did not identify any Italian nationals as victims and very few children, despite high estimates by civil society. The government also continued to lack legal safeguards to protect victims against potential penalization for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, which resulted in the conviction and punishment of several trafficking victims.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase proactive victim identification by improving and consistently implementing the national identification referral mechanism across the country, including for Italian nationals and vulnerable populations such as foreign migrants and children.
- Vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking cases and convict and sentence traffickers with adequate sentences.
- Intensify efforts to effectively screen for labor trafficking through increased inspections and improved training of labor inspectors to spot trafficking indicators and refer victim for services.
- Strengthen interagency coordination and partnership with civil society.
- Adopt a NAP.
- Continue to increase migrant worker protections by consistently enforcing strong regulations and oversight of labor recruitment agencies and labor brokers, including investigating and prosecuting for labor trafficking.
- Ensure labor trafficking is investigated and prosecuted as a trafficking offense and not pursued as an administrative labor code violation or other lesser crime.
- Consolidate data among different ministries and make public a database on investigations, prosecutions, and convictions, including sentencing data. • Implement a licensing and accreditation process for massage parlors and increase oversight.
- Increase awareness of and trafficking survivor access to compensation and increase prosecutors' efforts to systematically request restitution for survivors during criminal trials.
- Continue to increase international cooperation with source and transit countries on information sharing and countering trafficking rings. • Improve security standards in and around reception centers to limit contact between traffickers and victims or potential victims.
- Continue to strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to prevent and investigate child sex tourism.
- Amend the law on the non-punishment of victims to ensure that trafficking victims could not be inappropriately penalized for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit.

- Appoint a national rapporteur to provide an independent review of government efforts.
- Increase survivor engagement, including by establishing accessible mechanisms for receiving and providing compensation for survivor input when forming policies, programs, and trainings.
- Increase efforts to pursue financial crime investigations in tandem with human trafficking cases.

PROSECUTION

The government made uneven law enforcement efforts. Article 601 of the penal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of eight to 20 years' imprisonment, which increased by one third to one half if the offense involved a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with penalties prescribed for other serious offenses, such as rape. Additional penal code provisions were utilized to prosecute trafficking crimes. Article 600 criminalized placing or holding a person in conditions of slavery or servitude, and Article 602 criminalized the sale and purchase of slaves—both prescribed the same penalties as Article 601. Additionally, Article 600-bis criminalized offenses relating to child sex trafficking and prescribed punishments of six to 12 years' imprisonment and a fine.

The pandemic decreased the capacity of law enforcement to conduct trafficking investigations, and courts reported a delay in judicial proceedings for all crimes due to its increased workload adjudicating pandemic-related infractions during the prior year. The government did not disaggregate between sex and labor trafficking for investigations, prosecutions, or convictions for Articles 600, 601, or 602, making law enforcement efforts on labor trafficking indeterminate. In 2021, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) reported investigating 214 persons under Articles 600, 601, and 602, a decrease compared with 254 in 2020 and 323 in 2019. The government prosecuted 121 suspects under articles 600, 601, and 602, an increase compared with 106 in 2020, but significantly fewer than 202 in 2019. In 2021, trial and appellate courts convicted 204 traffickers under articles 600, 601, and 602, an increase compared with both 175 in 2020 and 198 in 2019. While the government did not report comprehensive sentencing data in a format that allowed for an assessment of the significance of sentencing, it reported the average sentence for convicted traffickers was 9.2 years in 2021. The government also confirmed that at least 51 percent of the convicted traffickers in 2021 were sentenced to significant sentences of one year or longer imprisonment.

The government did not maintain a consolidated database on investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and sentencing of traffickers, or of their victims, a deficiency noted by GRETA. Specialized anti-mafia units of prosecutors and judiciary police handled trafficking prosecutions. Whenever investigators found clear evidence of trafficking, they referred the case to an anti-mafia unit, which relaunched the investigation and consequently extended the timeframe for prosecution and trial. To avoid delays, non-specialized investigators and prosecutors sometimes charged perpetrators with crimes other than trafficking. Anti-mafia units continued to prioritize investigations of criminal networks over individual cases, citing limits on available resources. Lack of a sufficient number of interpreters, especially for West African dialects, continued to limit law enforcement arrests and investigations, as well as diminish the benefits of investigators' wiretapping capability. Italian prosecutors and police continued to cite insufficient cooperation in investigations from officials in source and transit countries; with many transnational cases, this hindered prosecutions and convictions.

Law enforcement agencies received training on victim identification and investigation of trafficking crimes within their standard curriculum. In 2021, the government did not report details on training efforts for law enforcement or front-line officials. The government cooperated in international law enforcement investigations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, and Moldova through a cooperative partnership, which resulted in the identification of 25 suspects and 148 victims. The government continued to provide funding to an international organization for an anti-trafficking project across Africa, part of which focused on improving international judicial cooperation between Italy and Nigeria; although the exchange program with Nigeria was suspended due to the pandemic, in 2021, a prosecutor exchange program was established with Niger, in which one prosecutor was hosted by Italy. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes.

PROTECTION

The government maintained uneven protection efforts. In 2021, authorities reported pandemic-related restrictions and the increased use of private residences and online platforms continued to hinder their identification of sex trafficking victims, while workplace closures and further isolation made the identification of labor trafficking victims more difficult. The government identified 463 new victims in 2021, similar to 470 in 2020 but less than 657 in 2019. Of the victims identified, 255 were sex trafficking victims, and 192 were labor trafficking victims, which included 169 victims of forced labor, nine victims of forced criminality, seven victims of domestic servitude, and seven victims of forced begging. Sixteen of the 463 victims were exploited in trafficking abroad or in transit to Italy.

The government also identified 201 persons at migration centers whom the government believed were likely to become victims of trafficking but had not yet been exploited in Italy. All newly identified victims were foreign nationals and undocumented migrants, and asylum-seekers continued to make up the majority of identified trafficking victims, with most victims originating in Nigeria and a smaller percentage from Pakistan and Morocco. NGOs reported gaps in authorities' proactive victim identification efforts persisted during the reporting period. The government again did not identify any Italian nationals as victims and very few children (less than 1 percent despite prior year high estimates of such victims by civil society); experts raised concerns about this potential gap in victim identification. Furthermore, NGOs reported police forces in some provinces did not fully cooperate with civil society organizations focused on undocumented migrants, due to a lack of understanding or mutual distrust, which subsequently limited the ability of local authorities to identify victims among this population.

The government cooperated with NGOs and international organizations to provide shelter and services to victims. In 2021, the government provided victim assistance through 12 projects submitted by regional and local authorities and nine submitted by NGOs from across Italy and allocated €24 million (\$27.21 million) to these projects; the same as in 2020 and 2019. NGOs reported high standards of assistance programs across regions, with occasional localized differences in quality. NGOs reported the Department of Equal Opportunity (DEO), which coordinated protection efforts, was not sufficiently funded or staffed to consistently monitor assistance programs nationally. In 2021, the DEO reported government-funded NGOs assisted 1,347 trafficking victims, including 907 sex trafficking victims, 406 labor trafficking victims (including 350 forced labor victims, 27 forced criminality victims, 15 forced begging victims, and 14 domestic servitude victims), and 34 victims exploited in trafficking abroad or in transit to Italy. This was a decrease compared with 1,444 trafficking victims assisted in 2020 and 1,877 assisted in 2019. The government also assisted 16 witnesses and 490 persons at migration centers whom the government believed were likely to become trafficking victims but had not yet been exploited in Italy. Statistics pertaining to the number of victims assisted by the government included victims assisted for the first time in 2021, as well as ongoing assistance to victims identified in prior years. While the government had a formal and comprehensive national identification and referral mechanism that addressed all forms of trafficking, it was implemented unevenly throughout Italy during the reporting period. Both NGOs and the government could identify trafficking victims. NGOs and the DEO recognized inconsistencies in the efficiency and effectiveness of the current referral process between regions and found that quality standards were lower in the south. In October 2021, the government approved its first national identification and referral mechanism specifically for labor trafficking and exploitation in agriculture, which included minimum standards, standard procedures, and available assistance for victims. Insufficient availability of interpretation services for lesser-known African dialects, with victims coming from as many as 15 different language groups, remained a significant challenge. Trustworthy interpreters were also difficult to secure, as reportedly many interpreters came from the same communities as the accused traffickers.

While the government had a victim identification and referral mechanism for some forms of child trafficking and children within the asylum system, it remained without a separate national mechanism that included all forms of trafficking. In its 2019 report, GRETA recommended establishing a separate NRM specifically for the specialized needs of children. NGOs estimated there were several thousand children in Italy who were victims of trafficking in 2021. Many unaccompanied Nigerian child victims misrepresented their age to gain placement in adult reception centers, giving them greater freedom to leave the center unnoticed with their trafficker. NGOs, however, welcomed increased scrutiny by authorities of these age-claims, and authorities more often sent victims into child protection if unable to confirm adult age-status. Foreign child victims automatically received a residence permit until age 18 and accommodations in a general children's center or a designated center for trafficking victims who were also asylum-seekers. Children received counseling and were enrolled in public schools with the support of mentors. The government reported, by March 2022, approximately 300 unaccompanied children sought refuge in Italy after fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine; the government reported identifying all unaccompanied children as they crossed the border and subsequently provided them with accommodation and access to educational facilities.

The government reported observing standard UNHCR procedures to screen for trafficking victims among the approximately 67,500 asylum-seekers, unaccompanied children, and undocumented migrants that arrived by sea in 2021. Civil society coordinated with law enforcement and immigration officials at both the arrival points and the longer-term reception centers, and an international organization reported providing information on potential trafficking victims to local officials responsible for assigning migrants to migration centers and trafficking victims to shelters. However, NGOs continued to assert authorities did not properly identify many trafficking victims upon arrival, potentially leaving some victims unidentified within the system and classified them instead as asylum-seekers or undocumented migrants and therefore subject to deportation. NGOs continued to stress the need for more time to screen refugees and migrants at arrival ports to more accurately ascertain victim status, but they acknowledged conditions were not conducive to a stay at the ports beyond one or two days. During the reporting period, regional committees continued to utilize

national guidelines for asylum-seekers to adjudicate asylum applications to identify trafficking victims among applicants; however, inconsistencies in implementation persisted. In 2021, the number of asylum applications doubled to approximately 56,000, with 42,000 pending at the end of the reporting period. The government processed 53,000 applications during the year, including applications from previous years, and granted asylum status or subsidiary protections to roughly 56 percent of the applicants.

The law allowed for an initial three to six months of government assistance to all trafficking victims. After initial assistance, foreign victims were eligible to obtain temporary residency and work permits and had a path to permanent residency; additionally, foreign victims were eligible for six months of shelter benefits, renewable for an additional six months only if the victim obtained a job or enrolled in a training program. However, in some cases, the government housed victims and potential victims with undocumented migrants, and such housing lacked adequate security against traffickers seeking to recruit victims or remove those already under their control. Between January and June 2021, the MOI reported identifying 493 potential trafficking victims and providing them with either a temporary residence permit, refugee status, or subsidiary and special protection. This compared with 108 temporary residence permits in 2020 and 155 permits in 2019. The government reported that foreign and Italian nationals were entitled to the same benefits and that the law entitled all crime victims to free legal assistance. Italian criminal law lacked a provision specifically prohibiting punishment of trafficking victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, but rather prosecutors and judges had discretion on whether to prosecute a trafficking victim based on the principle of the “state of necessity.” Current law required proof of exploitation in a criminal action against the perpetrator, which left victims and potential victims at risk of prosecution and conviction when a court did not first convict the perpetrators. Experts and GRETA urged the government to adopt a legal provision explicitly preventing inappropriate penalization of victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, which would also prevent unfair application of the principle of the “state of necessity.” During the reporting period, NGOs reported several instances where authorities penalized victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. NGOs reported a case in which Nigerian trafficking victims in migration centers were forced to commit drug-related crimes but initially remained unidentified as trafficking victims; however, once authorities recognized them as victims, prosecutors continued to pursue the case, and courts ultimately convicted the trafficking victims, but with reduced sentences. The government did not require victims to cooperate with law enforcement to obtain assistance like shelter, medical care, or a residence permit, although NGOs and international organizations reported authorities did not consistently implement this policy and sometimes gave preference to those who cooperated. The government reported it often had difficulty prosecuting trafficking cases because victims were often unwilling to cooperate with law enforcement, and in a March 2021 document, NGOs urged the government to adopt a victim-centered approach. The government had a witness protection program but did not report whether any trafficking victims were able to access this protection during the reporting period.

The government continued to lack comprehensive statistics on restitution and damages awarded to victims and did not require prosecutors to systematically request restitution during criminal trials. The government could offer a single payment of €1,500 (\$1,700) to victims for compensation, although GRETA and NGOs noted the application was overly complex, the amount insufficient, and very few victims ever received compensation. The government did not report granting compensation to any victims during the reporting period. GRETA further recommended the government increase the use of existing legal remedies to provide restitution to victims and more proactively seize assets and pursue forfeiture against perpetrators. The government did not award restitution from criminal cases or damages from civil suits to any trafficking victims.

PREVENTION

The government maintained prevention efforts. The DEO, as coordinator of the interagency steering committee on trafficking, was responsible for drafting the national anti-trafficking action plan, coordinating programs for prevention and victim assistance, and submitting a biannual anti-trafficking report. The government remained without a national rapporteur to provide independent analysis of government efforts to combat human trafficking; in a March 2021 document submitted to the government, several NGOs urged the government to establish such a body. The interagency steering committee met once in 2021 and tasked a technical committee with drafting a new NAP, as the prior plan expired in 2018; however, the government did not adopt a new plan during the reporting period. Civil society reported that the DEO was not effective at steering and coordinating national anti-trafficking efforts. NGOs urged the government to strengthen interagency coordination and partnership with civil society and adopt a victim-centered approach. The inter-ministerial working group on labor exploitation, which focused on the agricultural sector and illicit labor brokers and aimed to prevent exploitation and offer legal alternatives to illegal employment, met an unknown number of times and continued to implement its three-year plan (2020-2022) to combat labor exploitation in agriculture. In 2021, under its three-year plan, the government continued to contribute trained cultural mediators to inform vulnerable populations of their rights and raise awareness among refugees, migrants, and victims, especially in the agricultural sector. This

awareness campaign among migrant workers and refugees resulted in authorities identifying a total of 62 labor trafficking victims among foreign workers between June 2020 and June 2021; authorities referred 28 to assistance services and reported that 104 workers filed suits for back wages. The government did not report any national-level public awareness campaigns.

The government continued to provide funding to international organizations for anti-trafficking related projects, primarily in Africa. In March 2022, the government approved a decree allocating €428 million (\$485.26 million) to assist and integrate up to 75,000 Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine by increasing space in migrant centers and funding for NGOs to provide psychological assistance and legal counseling. The government continued to cooperate with Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and the Government of Libya to reduce the number of undocumented migrants entering Italy from Libya. However, many NGOs criticized this coordinated effort because it often resulted in the occupants of vessels identified in the Libyan search and rescue area being returned to Libyan shores; NGOs cited severe security and human rights conditions inside Libya and Libyan detention centers—including sex and labor trafficking—for the more than 12,000 undocumented migrants forced to remain in the detention centers. In March 2022, the Government of Germany announced it would no longer commit to training the Libyan coast guard, due to concerns about their treatment of migrants and NGOs.

Labor inspectors did not have the authority to identify trafficking victims but could refer them to police and NGOs. In 2021, the government reported labor inspectors conducted 117,600 inspections but did not report referring any trafficking victims to police as a result of these inspections. Law enforcement, immigration guards, and labor inspectors participated in joint inspections that focused on the agricultural sector, which resulted in the identification of at least 21 suspected traffickers and the identification of at least 134 victims of trafficking. In 2021, in partnership with an international organization, the Ministry of Labor and the National Labor Inspectorate reported training 2,400 participants, most of whom were labor inspectors. The international organization and the government created a labor exploitation working group at the national level and local task forces in various regions to address labor exploitation. Experts estimated that in 2021, as many as 200,000 agricultural workers, especially seasonal workers, and 500,000 undocumented migrants were at risk of labor trafficking and exploitation in Italy. In May 2020, the government adopted a decree allowing for the regularization of workers informally employed in the agricultural, fishing, home care, and domestic-work sectors; of the 230,000 applicants, the government had only interviewed one-third and granted permits to 38,000 foreign care providers and farmers by October 2021. In December 2021, the government adopted another decree, which granted temporary residence permits to an additional 69,700 seasonal and permanent foreign workers. Fraudulent labor recruitment and passport retention remained concerns. Although illegal, employers or labor recruiters sometimes charged a placement fee to employees, which increased their risk of trafficking. The government had a licensing and accreditation system for labor brokers and labor recruitment agencies. However, there was a lack of regulation, including a licensing or accreditation system, and oversight on massage parlors, which remained likely locations for sex trafficking. In 2021, the government continued efforts to hold labor recruiters accountable for illicit labor mediation by arresting 48 suspects, prosecuting 523 suspects, and convicting 163 criminals. Illicit labor mediation did not meet the threshold for labor trafficking; however, law enforcement efforts in this sector helped prevent and reduce the demand for forced labor. While authorities often arrested many suspects for crimes that could potentially reach the threshold of labor trafficking, the government did not report investigating or prosecuting any recruiters or companies for fraudulent recruitment or labor trafficking, but instead it arrested suspects for other related crimes. GRETA recommended the government intensify efforts to more effectively screen for trafficking victims through increased labor inspections and expanded training of inspectors and in monitoring of recruitment practices including in agriculture, domestic labor, hospitality, and food service.

The law required businesses to submit reports on their actions to minimize the risk of forced labor and prohibited the purchase of products made with forced labor. In 2021, the government signed a multilateral labor rights agreement with the Government of Moldova, which included major trade unions in both countries, to protect migrant workers in both countries. The government also signed another bilateral agreement with the Government of Cote d'Ivoire in 2021, with a focus on law enforcement cooperation on trafficking investigations and prosecutions; however, the government did not report further trafficking-related results for either agreement. The DEO continued to operate its 24-hour hotline for victims of human trafficking, available in 12 languages, which reported receiving 1,507 relevant calls 2021, but the government did not report the number of potential trafficking victims identified as a result. Of the relevant calls, operators provided 19 percent of callers with information on available assistance and 45 percent of callers with shelter information; 53 percent of the calls pertained to sexual exploitation, 34 percent pertained to labor exploitation, and the remainder were unspecified. In June 2021, the government also established a help desk dedicated to victims of labor exploitation, including trafficking; the help desk included a hotline, social media accounts, a website, and a chat function, and the government reported identifying 37 labor exploitation victims during the reporting period. The government did not report national

efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex. The government did not report making efforts to reduce the demand for participation in international sex tourism by its citizens and did not report further efforts regarding the two investigations initiated in 2020.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit foreign and, to a lesser degree, domestic victims in Italy. Victims originate primarily from Bulgaria, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Romania, including ethnic Roma. The pandemic exacerbates vulnerabilities for sex trafficking victims through the increased use of private residences—instead of brothels or clubs—and online recruitment. Sex traffickers are increasingly using online platforms, like social networks, mobile applications, and the dark web, to recruit, exploit victims, and book apartment rentals to make their illicit operations difficult to track; this was exacerbated by the pandemic. During the pandemic, sex traffickers left thousands of Nigerian women and children trafficking survivors destitute and without basic needs, such as food, during the national lockdowns; many anti-trafficking NGOs raised concerns that travel restrictions and limited social and public services make it more difficult for trafficking victims to escape and return home. In 2022, Ukrainian refugees, predominantly women and children fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, are vulnerable to trafficking. LGBTQI+ individuals, many from Brazil and other Latin American countries, are vulnerable to sex trafficking in Italy. Traffickers, often part of criminal networks run by PRC nationals, systematically exploit women from the PRC in sex trafficking in apartments, beauty centers, clubs, and massage parlors, as well as labor trafficking in a variety of PRC national-owned businesses, sometimes forcing drug addiction on victims. Massage parlors are frequently used as fronts for the purchase of commercial sex, raising concerns about sex trafficking. Of an estimated 40,000 to 45,000 individuals involved in commercial sex on the streets, NGOs reported approximately 60 percent (or 24,000 to 27,000) are trafficking victims or at risk of trafficking and between 5 and 8 percent are children (or approximately 2,000 to 3,600). The government and civil society maintain that Nigerian women and unaccompanied children remain extremely vulnerable to trafficking because of the continued operation of organized Nigerian trafficking networks. Trafficking networks and gangs continue to grow more sophisticated, organized, and violent, particularly Nigerian gangs linked to the Black Axe, Supreme Viking Confraternity, and the Eiye syndicate. Several Nigerian trafficking networks have expanded operations across Italy and reportedly receive protection from Italian crime syndicates. International organizations estimated up to 75 percent of the Nigerian women and unaccompanied children who arrived in 2018 were trafficking victims. Traffickers subject Nigerian women and girls to sex trafficking through debt-based coercion and voodoo rituals. Authorities report traffickers encourage Nigerian victims to claim asylum to obtain legal residency and facilitate their continued exploitation. Traffickers sometimes exploit migrant women in sex trafficking in and around migration centers. The Government of France reports receiving Nigerian victims who were exploited in trafficking while awaiting legal residency in Italy. Italian citizens will sometimes engage in child sex tourism abroad. Children are exploited in child sex trafficking, forced to commit crimes or beg, and forced to work in the agricultural sector, shops, bars, restaurants, and bakeries. Ethnic Roma children are at risk for trafficking, including forced begging and child sex trafficking. Traffickers frequently target unaccompanied children, who are especially vulnerable to trafficking. International organizations reported the number of seaborne, unaccompanied children increased in 2021 to approximately 10,000, predominantly from Bangladesh, Egypt, and Tunisia; compared with 4,631 in 2020, 1,680 in 2019, 3,534 in 2018, and 15,731 in 2017. NGOs reported that most unaccompanied minors identified among seaborne arrivals were younger than 15.

Labor traffickers operate in agriculture, predominantly in southern Italy, construction, household labor, hospitality, and restaurants. The pandemic exacerbated vulnerabilities for trafficking victims, including increased isolation of migrant and seasonal workers. Traffickers use fraudulent recruitment, passport retention, and debt-based coercion to control trafficking victims; traffickers also extort payments from the victim's family in the source country. Cuban medical professionals working in Italy during the pandemic in 2020 may have been forced to work by the Cuban government. Italy has an estimated 1.5 million unregistered workers and 3.7 million undocumented workers in the informal market who are at risk for labor trafficking. Specifically for the agricultural sector, experts estimated that as many as 200,000 workers in 2021, particularly seasonal workers, are at risk for forced labor and exploitation in Italy. Employers in the agricultural sector will sometimes submit falsified forms pertaining to their workers, which impedes labor inspections and the potential identification of trafficking victims. Italy had approximately 500,000 undocumented migrants in 2021, many of whom are at risk for trafficking. Italy received approximately 67,500 undocumented migrant arrivals by sea in 2021—a significant increase compared with 34,154 in 2020 and 11,471 in 2019—many through Libya, where victims reported experiencing extortion, torture, human trafficking, and rape by militias or traffickers while awaiting passage to Italy. In 2019, of the roughly 31,000 persons requesting asylum, authorities estimate up to 30 percent were at risk for sex trafficking or forced labor while waiting for adjudication of their petitions. Traffickers target migrant centers to recruit and later exploit asylum-seekers, sometimes claiming to be family members to gain access to the centers. Asylum-seekers may legally work beginning two months after filing their

applications, although many seek illegal employment immediately in informal sectors, increasing their risk for trafficking. Many also attempt passage to other European countries; under the European Commission's Dublin Regulation, countries have six months to repatriate victims to the EU country of their arrival but must accept their asylum claim if they fail to transfer them in due time. This regulation likely increased the number of asylum-seekers or trafficking victims forced to remain in Italy or return to Italy from another country.

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Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and
Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
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