

15 April 2003

Luciano Petrioli.

Definitive data of the Census 21.10.2001 for the resident Italian population.

In our “News” of 21 December 2002 we predicted that the ISTAT data relative to the Italian population resulting from the census of 21 October 2001 would have to begin a phase of important corrections.

In 2002, ISTAT announced the provisional result of 56,305,568 resident individuals, that we believe is around 1.5 million less compared to the more reliable number derived from the examination of registry office data, but also from the forecasts of the population elaborated by ISTAT and by ourselves between 1995-96, and by the United Nations in 1999.

The definitive results regarding the resident population from the 2001 census were announced last month on April 7th.

In that data, the “legal” population of Italy was declared at 56,996 million people (Official Bulletin n. 81 ordinary supplement n. 54 of 7 April 2003).

Other adjustments that will involve the recognition of further increases regarding the provisional data of 2002 are expected during the next few years.

The basic data that will be utilised in the next forecasts of the Italian population will always have a certain degree of error. ISTAT continues to believe, yet today, that on 1 January 2001 the resident population was 57,844 million, while the census found a million less (See the recent ISTAT publication: "Previsione della popolazione residente. Periodo di tempo 2001-2051" Forecast of the resident population. Time period 2001-2051).

In judging the quality of the projections of population, we must examine, among other things, the model of forecasting used, the criteria and the sources that guided the formation of the development factors, and principally the basic data that were used for the projection.

There are many fundamental factors of forecasts. The principle factor is given by the number of the population and the starting point of the projection, by its distinction for sex, age classes, etc.

In the ISTAT projections for sex, age and region with the basis of January 1996, the initial population was 57.33 million people with the tendency to increase until 2006, when it would reach 57.613 million, according to the “central” hypothesis, for decreasing later ; in 2015 it would be 56.89 million, or rather almost as much as the legal population in 2001.

Looking at the data of the latest census, it seems, however, that the phase of decline had already begun in 1996.

The legal population in 2001 can be subdivided between northern, central and southern Italy and the islands, which we report in Table 1. In this table the data are compared with those of our forecasts based on 1955. The differences are

relatively low for the north and centre, while the major differences are noted for the southern regions and the islands.

Table 1 – Italy, legal population at the census of October 2001 and the resident population on 31 December 2001 calculated by us in projections from 1955. (News 21 December 2002). Population in thousands of individuals.

Region	legal population	our projections	differences %
Northern Italy	25575	25237	- 1.03
Central Italy	10907	10943	+ 0.33
Southern Italy and islands	20516	21401	- 4.31
Total	56998	57581	- 1.02

In recent projections, ISTAT uses as the base number the registry office population of 2000 and 2001 without waiting for the definitive result of the Census. This involves, in both cases, the use of an initial population that is superior, by around 1,000,000, to the legal number, also making these forecasts very uncertain.

New forecasts will soon be elaborated, but we advise that they should begin with reliable basic data.

Table. 2 Forecast of the Italian resident population on 1 January of every year from 2001 to 2020 (the data are in thousands). Furthermore, we consider that: for the UN data these are at mid-year and with varying media; for the ISTAT data: the central hypothesis; for the forecasts by Petrioli and Menchiari: tendential mortality and fertility.

Year	Projections and basic year.				
	Istat 1996	Istat (1) 2000	Istat 2001	UN (2)	Petrioli-Menchiari 1995 (3)
2001	57495	57777	57844	57457	57563
2005	57602	58170	58242	57165	57537
2010	57494	58488	58565	56390	57153
2015	56884	-	58490	55239	56335
2020	55939	-	58123	53861	55190

(1)-(2)-(3): See Notes.

In this regard, the distinction between resident population and the present population can also be involved.

All of the people that habitually reside in the territory of the Republic constitute the resident population.

The resident population constitutes the legal population of the nation at the moment in which its number is published in the Official Bulletin of the Republic.

The number of the legal population and the relative strictly demographic characteristics such as sex, age, marital status, birthplace, residency, etc., have important consequences in public and social life.

Among the other aspects, the number of seats in parliament, assignment of funds and taxes, and the distribution of duties and prerogatives of the various territorial areas are derived from the legal population.

For many reasons, there is the necessity of having definitive results that are as correct as possible and in a short period of time. This necessity is often accompanied by solicitations of a various nature which produce the publication of demographic data when the electoral operations are fairly near, as in this moment in Italy.

The people who are present in the territory at the time of the census, for any reason, form the present population.

In the 1991 census it resulted that the resident population at the time of the 1991 census amounted to 56778031 inhabitants, higher in measure by 0.023 percent of the present population, while in the preceding censuses this value was higher.

In the 2001 census the resident population was calculated at 56.30 million individuals (with provisional data), which the present population would be 56.13 million individuals, with a difference of 0.3 percent.

Notes

- (1) These are short-term forecasts. See also: **ISTAT (1997)**, “Previsioni della popolazione residente per sesso, età e regione. Base 1.1.1996”, Abete, Via Prenestina 683, Roma, and **Istat**: Annual demographics and monthly Bulletins of statistics, various editions.
- (2) **United Nations (1999)**, “World Population Prospects. The 1998 Revision”, United Nations Publication, ISBN 92-1- 151333-2
- (3) **Ministero del Tesoro – Ragioneria Generale dello Stato (1995)**, “Tendenze evolutive della popolazione italiana. Un’analisi per sesso, età e regione (1994-2044)”, Istituto poligrafico e zecca dello Stato-Roma. For a copy of this report and the complete packet of data, contact this same Ministry. Forecasts were elaborated from Luciano Petrioli and Andrea Menchiari of the University of Siena (Italy).