



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2020

Italy

FREE

89

/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	36 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	53 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

89 /100 Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



Overview

Italy's parliamentary system features competitive multiparty elections. Civil liberties are generally respected but concerns about the rights of migrants as well as the endemic problem of corruption persist. Organized crime groups retain some ability to intimidate and influence politicians, especially at local levels.

Key Developments in 2019

- In August, former deputy prime minister and interior minister (and leader of the right-wing political party the League), Matteo Salvini, withdrew his party's support of the coalition government and called for snap elections. Instead, the Five Star Movement, the opposition Democratic Party (PD), and the left-wing Free and Equals (LeU) formed a new coalition government.
- In December, several public and political officials were arrested for connections to and participation in the organized crime group 'Ndrangheta; they were among over 300 apprehended by police, the second largest police action against organized crime in Italy's history.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

<p>Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?</p>	<p>4/4</p>
---	-------------------

Parliament and regional representatives elect the president, whose role is largely ceremonial but sometimes politically influential, for a seven-year term. The legitimacy of the presidential vote rests largely on the fairness of legislative elections. Sergio

Mattarella, a former constitutional judge backed by the center-left Democratic Party, was elected president in 2015.

The president appoints the prime minister, who serves as head of government and is often, but not always, the leader of the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies, Italy's lower house. The prime minister proposes a Council of Ministers that requires confirmation by parliament.

Giuseppe Conte, an independent law professor who was not a member of parliament, became prime minister in June 2018 as part of the coalition agreement between the Five Star Movement and the League. After the dissolution of the coalition in August 2019, Conte was reinstated as prime minister of the new government formed by Five Star, PD, and LeU.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

4/4

The bicameral parliament consists of the 630-member Chamber of Deputies and the 315-member Senate. Members of both houses are popularly elected for five-year terms, though the president can appoint five additional senators, and former presidents are also entitled to Senate seats.

The March 2018 elections were considered free and fair by international observers. The center-right coalition comprising Forward Italy (Forza Italia), the League, Brothers of Italy, and We with Italy–Union of the Center obtained 265 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 137 in the Senate. The Five Star Movement took 227 seats in the chamber and 111 in the Senate, while the center-left coalition comprising the Democratic Party, the Popular Civic List, More Europe, and Italy Europe Together won 122 seats in the chamber and 60 in the Senate.

After months of negotiations in 2018, the League and the Five Star Movement formed a coalition government. In August 2019, after he implemented a series of high-profile, antirefugee reforms, the popularity of Salvini's party, the League, was very high: polls

suggested the League would win an outright parliamentary majority if new elections were held. Salvini dissolved the coalition government that month. Instead of calling for a new vote, President Mattarella approved a new coalition government of Five Star, the PD, and LeU to form in September. Matteo Renzi left the PD to create a new party, Italia Viva, which also supported the new coalition.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

4/4

While Italy's electoral framework and campaign finance regulations are complex, the elections they enable have consistently been deemed fair and credible.

In early 2017, the Constitutional Court struck down part of a 2015 electoral reform that was designed to encourage majorities and avoid postelection deadlock. The reform mandated a two-round system that awarded a supermajority of 340 seats in the lower house to a single party, or to the party that won more than 40 percent of the vote in a single election round. However, in November 2017, parliament adopted a new electoral law that introduced a mixed system in both houses, with 36 percent of seats allocated using the first-past-the-post method, and 64 percent using a proportional, party-list method. Unlike the 2015 measure, the new law encouraged coalition governments, as demonstrated by the 2018 election results.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

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

4/4

Political parties are generally able to form and operate freely, and the political landscape features a high level of pluralism and competition. Since the beginning of the 1990s, politics have been characterized by unstable coalitions and the frequent emergence of new parties. In September 2019, Matteo Renzi, a prominent public figure, successfully formed a new political party, Italia Viva, after disagreements with his former party, PD.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?	4/4
---	------------

Italy has a long record of frequent changes in the governing coalition, with multiple transfers of power since the early 1990s. The 2018 elections ended a period of leadership by the Democratic Party that began in 2013. However, one year later, the Democratic Party is once again in a coalition government after the fall of the first Conte government in August 2019.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?	3/4
--	------------

The public is generally free to make political choices without undue interference. However, organized crime groups retain some ability to intimidate and influence politicians, especially at the local level. In the Campania region, the Camorra crime group, while less widespread than other mafias in Italy, has an established network within the government's public administration.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	3/4
---	------------

Electoral laws contain provisions designed to encourage political participation by linguistic minorities. Women enjoy equal political rights under the law, though their interests are not always well represented in practice. Issues of concern to ethnic minorities play only a marginal role in national and local political agendas, and some municipal policies aggravate the exclusion of Roma.

Legal changes enacted at the end of 2018 tightened restrictions on citizenship and naturalization, forcing many applicants to wait several years for their documentation to be reviewed and introducing an Italian language fluency requirement in some cases.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	4/4
--	------------

Elected officials are able to craft and implement policy without improper interference from unelected entities. Prime Minister Conte took office in 2018 without having won a seat in parliament. However, he was chosen as a compromise by the League and the Five Star Movement, which together commanded a legislative majority and generally was able to determine policies of government without improper interference.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	3/4
---	------------

Corruption remains a serious problem despite long-term efforts to combat it, and ties between organized crime and public officials persist. A number of local and regional officeholders have been sentenced to prison on graft charges in recent years. A 2017 antimafia law was intended to make some anticorruption procedures

more efficient; it also created a government department to oversee assets confiscated in anticorruption cases. Nevertheless, the problem persists. Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese warned in an October meeting of Italy's antimafia commission that organized crime groups have become increasingly more sophisticated, and have infiltrated the government's administrative system and institutions, so as to hide illicit activities and cover up money trails.

In December 2019, Italian police arrested over 300 people on suspicion of membership in the organized crime group 'Ndrangheta. Among those arrested were several politicians and public officials, including a mayor, a police commander, and a political party official, in what was the second largest mafia bust in the country's history.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	3/4
--	------------

A 2013 legislative decree established greater transparency of information within public administration. The government regularly complies with public requests for information, though delayed responses have been reported.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	3/4
--	------------

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed. Despite the rapid growth of the online news industry, traditional media still play a large role in news consumption. There are more than 100 daily newspapers, most of them locally or regionally based, as well as political party papers, free papers, and weekly publications. Concentration of ownership remains a major concern, but many viewpoints are available in the country's media overall. Internet access is generally unrestricted.

Scores of journalists have received temporary or long-term police protection in response to credible death threats, mostly from organized crime or extremist groups. In November 2019, journalist Mario De Michele was shot at while driving his car near the town of Aversa in southern Italy. The assailants are suspected to be members of the Camorra crime group. De Michele said he believes this incident, as well as another that took place just days before it, is connected to his investigation of the Camorra's activities.

In January 2019, two journalists were attacked by far-right extremists at an event commemorating the victims of a 1978 deadly attack.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	4/4
---	------------

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed and respected in practice. There is no official religion; while the Roman Catholic Church receives certain benefits under a treaty with the state, other groups have access to similar benefits through their own accords. Some local governments have raised obstacles to the construction and recognition of mosques.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	4/4
---	------------

Academic freedom is generally respected.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	4/4
---	------------

There are no major restrictions on people's ability to discuss controversial or sensitive topics in public without fear of surveillance or retribution.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	4/4
--------------------------------------	------------

The freedom to assemble peacefully is guaranteed in the constitution and typically upheld in practice.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work?	4/4
--	------------

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are generally free to organize and operate. However, the government has had tense relations with those involved in rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea, where hundreds and sometimes thousands of migrants and refugees die each year as they attempt to reach Europe from North Africa. Five NGOs, including Doctors Without Borders (MSF), refused to sign a new code of conduct issued by the government in 2017, citing concerns about rules that would allow police to board their vessels and that could limit their ability to transfer migrants from their own vessels to other ships.

With new legislation adopted in June 2019, former interior minister Salvini enabled his ministry to fine ships up to €50,000 (\$57,000) for bringing asylum seekers into Italian ports; or even prevent them from entering Italian territory. In July, a boat operated by the Italian humanitarian group Mediterranea Saving Humans' carrying 40 migrants from Libya seeking asylum was denied entry into Italian waters. This was the 21st confrontation between the Italian government and NGOs rescuing migrants at sea in recent years. Salvini then increased the maximum fine for ships entering Italian waters without authorization to €1 million (\$1.12 million) in early August and provided for the arrest of captains who ignore orders to stay away. These measures were rescinded by the second Conte government after its installment in September.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?	4/4
---	------------

Trade unions are generally free to organize and operate. The constitution recognizes the right to strike but places restrictions on strikes by employees in essential sectors like transportation, sanitation, and health, as well as by some self-employed individuals, including lawyers, doctors, and truck drivers.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	3/4
---	------------

The judiciary is generally independent, though the slowness of the judicial system remains a concern.

Former interior minister Salvini further escalated attacks on judges in June 2019, when he sought to have three magistrates be investigated. The judges had denied appeals from his ministry to reverse rulings that allowed asylum seekers to enroll in

civic registries. Salvini took issue with their decisions and used social media to voice his feelings; his posts spurred a bevy of death threats hurled at the judges, and at one in particular, with whom Salvini had previously feuded.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	3/4
--	------------

Due process rights are largely upheld. However, judicial procedures are often characterized by lengthy delays; Italy has one of the lowest numbers of judges per capita in the European Union. The government has been criticized for denying detained migrants access to lawyers.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	3/4
---	------------

While the population is generally free from major threats to physical security, there have been reports of excessive use of force by police, particularly against people in the country illegally. Asylum seekers and undocumented migrants have been held in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions.

A 2017 law criminalized torture, though rights groups criticized it for defining torture narrowly and mandating a relatively short statute of limitations, which they identified as problematic in light of the delays that plague the justice system.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	3/4
--	------------

The law prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and other categories, and these protections are generally enforced. However, members of the

Romany minority have unequal access to housing, and many live in segregated settlements that lack adequate infrastructure. LGBT+ people face societal discrimination and occasional acts of violence.

Migration to Italy by sea has decreased since 2017, and in late 2018, parliament approved legal changes that tightened conditions for granting asylum and humanitarian protection, extended possible detention of and eased deportation for irregular migrants, and reduced access to decentralized housing and integration services for asylum seekers. Salvini, in his capacity as interior minister, increased pressure on NGOs engaged in search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean and criminalized the transport of rescued migrants into Italian ports in August 2019. After the collapse of the League and Five Star Movement coalition in early September, which ousted Salvini from his position, the rescue of refugees in Italian waters was decriminalized. It was the first time in 2019 that refugees landed on Italian shores, and Prime Minister Conte promised to roll back much of the anti-immigrant policies implemented by the previous government.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	4/4
--	------------

Individuals are generally free to travel and to change their place of residence, employment, and education.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	3/4
--	------------

The legal and regulatory framework supports property rights and the operation of private businesses, but corruption and organized crime can hinder normal business activity, as can onerous bureaucratic obstacles. Delays in court proceedings often undermine enforcement of protections for property rights.

G3 0-4 pts

<p>Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?</p>	<p>4/4</p>
---	-------------------

The law protects individual freedom on personal status issues such as marriage and divorce. Same-sex civil unions with nearly all the benefits of marriage are permitted, and courts have begun to recognize second-parent adoption rights for same-sex couples. Domestic violence is a persistent problem, though public awareness of the issue is increasing due to advocacy campaigns. In March, two men were cleared of rape charges after judges deemed the victim to be “too unattractive” to be a target.

G4 0-4 pts

<p>Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?</p>	<p>3/4</p>
--	-------------------

The authorities generally enforce legal protections against exploitative working conditions. However, informally employed workers, including the many migrants and asylum seekers who have entered the country in recent years, are more vulnerable to abuses. The trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation also remains a concern, and the 2019 US State Department’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* noted that Italian government does not meet minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Despite the government actively working to identify and prosecute traffickers and fund services for victims, they have decreased law enforcement and protection efforts and trafficking rings and networks have become more sophisticated and violent. Italy also did not heed or adequately assess referrals of

victims of trafficking from international NGOs and humanitarian organizations, returning victims to countries where they would be at high risk of further danger.



On Italy

See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.

See More >

Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

89/100 Free

Internet Freedom Score

75/100 Free

Other Years

2019

Be the first to know what's happening.

Email

Join the Freedom House monthly newsletter

Subscribe

ADDRESS

GENERAL INQUIRIES

ADDRESS

1850 M St. NW Floor 11
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-5101

GENERAL INQUIRIES

info@freedomhouse.org

PRESS & MEDIA

press@freedomhouse.org

@2020 FreedomHouse