



**N E X T
G E N E R A T I O N**

Italy, February 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from mixed-method research exploring the attitudes and aspirations of Italians aged 18 to 30 as part of the British Council's Next Generation research series. This series explores young people's needs, daily lives and outlooks in countries undergoing significant change, with the aim of ensuring their voices in relation to these changes are heard and put at the forefront of youth policy.

Our findings are drawn from a nationally representative quantitative survey of 2,015 young people, five focus groups each involving ten young people, and in-depth interviews with nine young people representing minority groups and 13 civic society stakeholders. A thorough literature review produced the secondary data cited throughout the report to interpret young people's attitudes. A one-day youth engagement workshop yielded policy recommendations and provided original interpretations of our quantitative data. This survey data was gathered from a nationally representative sample of respondents in terms of age, gender and region, employment status and educational background (see Appendix 1 for a full breakdown of demographics).

Research was conducted by Learn More, a consultancy, and Quorum, a polling agency, under the stewardship of the British Council's Christine Wilson and the Next Generation Italy Task Force composed of Irene Tinagli, Salvatore Vassallo, Stefania Giannini and Marta Dassù. Matter, a workshop facilitation firm, designed and facilitated the youth engagement workshop.

This report attempts to answer three questions.

1. What are young Italians' attitudes in the face of change?
2. What are young Italians' relationships with the institutions that shape their worldview?
3. How are young Italians reacting to and effecting change themselves?

Italian youth are overwhelmingly aware of the disadvantages faced by their generation, many of which stem from Italy's chronic, EU-high youth unemployment rate. Attitudes around employment are largely negative, with many young people lamenting a lack of jobs, discriminatory hiring, exploitative contractual practices and other issues. This appears to be the root cause of negative perceptions of the education system – which many feel does not prepare young people for work and family life – and many described a lack of job security as preventing them from moving out and marrying. Young Italians' disillusionment with party politics appears to reflect their sense that Italy's future has been compromised by the political class they rejected in the 2018 general election. These findings vary, with negative attitudes towards the topics explored in this research generally more common in the country's south, among older youth, the underemployed and unemployed.

Yet young Italians' social engagement levels are higher than the EU average. Most survey respondents described being satisfied with their own lives and the education they themselves received.

In our focus groups, young people expressed pride in their personal accomplishments in the face of adversity. Overall, our analysis of youth attitudes has found that young people are more resilient than indicators on economic stagnation and employment suggest they might otherwise be. This may be partly due to the strong financial and emotional ties they described having with their families. However, perhaps because family bonds are so strong, young people did not appear to be aware of the strong intergenerational wealth and income inequality that characterises Italian society.

Young Italians declare willingness to take action to improve their lives, through self-betterment and the pursuit of specific political goals. During our youth engagement workshop, young people were most interested in promoting a more meritocratic and job-oriented education system. For many of the young people we spoke to, this drive for self-improvement means leaving Italy. Italian youth are largely grateful for the opportunities granted to them by EU mobility and told us they are likely to leave Italy at some point in the future. Indeed, Italian youth are currently emigrating in numbers unmatched by any other European country except Romania.

Overwhelmingly, young people told us that they do not feel listened to politically. If we consider the rising youth emigration rate, along with Italy's population ranking fifth oldest by median age in the world, the risk is that youth voice will decrease in politics and contribute to a vicious circle.

Learn More

Learn More is a boutique consultancy specialised in learning system research and design.

Quorum

Quorum is a market research, communications and strategy firm working chiefly with corporate clients and political parties.



Matter is a global leader in facilitated collaborative problems solving for large multinationals and non-profits.



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The Next Generation series is part of the British Council's commitment to exploring youth voice and choice. It aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voice and support better youth policymaking. The reports focus on young people in countries experiencing a period of significant change, to ensure that young people's voices are heard and their interests represented in decisions that will have lasting implications for their lives.

www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-series/next-generation

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