

IMMIGRANT YOUTHS  
BETWEEN EARLY LEAVING AND CONTINUE THEIR STUDIES  
by Alessio Buonomo<sup>1</sup>, Salvatore Strozza and Giuseppe Gabrielli<sup>2</sup>

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School enrollment and early school leaving are crucial issues in many EU countries, particularly Italy. According to Eurostat data (European Labour Force Survey - EULFS), in 2011 Italy was ranked 28th out of 33 countries for early leaving from education and training (ELET). High school dropout rates, low academic achievement, and loss of school years (which are all directly reflected in the labour market) are the main issues that the children of immigrants face in Italian schools. This paper contributes to the growing literature on these issues and highlights their main characteristics and determinants.

The main source of this work is the first (and only) survey on the Condition and Social Integration of Foreign Citizens in 2011-2012 of ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics in Italy), which was released in 2017. The survey collects data on families with at least one foreign citizen and provides unprecedented information on foreigners living in Italy. We analyzed ELET and the intention to enroll in university of young people of foreign citizenship. This paper evaluates the importance of some individual demographic characteristics, the family socio-economic context, school inclusion, and (or) the average level of family integration.

The results showed that the risk of ELET was significantly lower for girls; increased with age and on arrival in Italy; was higher in Southern Italy; and was higher for those encountering problems with the language. Family characteristics played a decisive role: young foreigners living either without parents or with poorly-educated parents exhibited a greater risk of early leaving from studies. The analysis also showed that the risk of early leaving from studies affected young people who arrived in Italy between the ages of 13 and 17, especially Albanian or Chinese citizens. When analyzing the intention to enroll in university, it was also possible to use variables related to the study path of young foreigners. The intention of not going to university is clearly associated with school failure and with low levels of parental interest in following their children's school career.

Although the Italian Government and other institutions have shown high levels of interest in the challenges foreigners face in education, the indicators studied in this paper show the persistence of high rates of school dropout and low education levels of young people of foreign citizenship. As international literature also states, the school represents an extraordinary context for achieving social inclusion and professional success for the young people of foreign citizenship. Introducing school policies to overcome these obstacles is strategic to achieving a multiethnic and inclusive society. This paper identifies the individual and family characteristics associated with the difficulties around the inclusion of immigrant children in school and allows the knowledge of measures to address the problem.

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