

**How many and who?  
An up-date picture of the foreign migrants in Italy**

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**DRAFT**

**ABSTRACT**

New knowledge on foreign migrants in Italy has been recently made available by the results of a national survey carried out during 2005 on a sample of 30,000 units, representative of the whole universe of foreign migrants. Processing of sampling data together with the latest official statistics leads to estimate 3,3 million foreigners coming from the so called “High emigration countries” and living in Italy at 1st July 2005, mainly (85%) in Central-Northern Italy. Legal migrants, in possession of a residence permit, are about 2,8 millions; the evaluation of the total number of migrants without a regular permit of stay is about 540 thousands. The rates related to the latter estimate are higher in Southern Italy (27 per cent) than in Central- Northern regions (14 per cent) and about 16 per cent at national level. Some important changes can be stressed as regard to the geography of origin. If in the early 1990’s the pair “North Africa – Central East and South Asia” was still dominating the scene, in the new century Eastern Europe and (to a lesser extent) Latin America have become the privileged areas of origin of migration flows. On 1st July 2005 the most frequent sending country is Albania (460,000 units), followed by Romania (430,000) and Morocco (400,000), whose showed unquestionable leadership until few years ago. At the same time the number of migrants coming from a new entry like Ukraine has become higher than those from a traditional origin like Tunisia; even small countries like Ecuador (90,000 units) or Moldavia (70,000) are becoming more and more important. Therefore, it seems that migration flows to Italy have been recently reoriented -even if without any explicit project- to a pattern of “more similar migrants”: East European instead of North Africans and, conversely, Christians (often Catholic) instead of Muslim.

**Key words:** *foreign migrants, legal and undocumented migrants, Italy*

***1.1 How many?: the estimated consistency of foreign migration***

According to the most recent official data at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005 [Istat, 2005], foreign residents, in possession of a regular residence permit, exceeded 2.7 millions in Italy: approximately one million more than the estimate in the period before the regularisation occurred in 2002 (tab. 1). At the beginning of 2005, the foreign residents – both legal and undocumented – were about 3.26 millions, three times higher than the estimate referred to the beginning of the Nineties [Istat, 1989].

**Tab. 1 – Estimate of the total number of foreign residents in Italy: 1990-2005**

<i>Total residents (any citizenship)</i>	<i>Legal status</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Legal</i>	<i>Undocumented</i>	
At 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1990	671,000	473,000	1,444,000
At 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2005*	2,740,000	522,000	3,262,000

Source: Istat

\* The undocumented component at 1st January has been estimated by the ISMU Foundation.

A more up-dated and detailed estimate of the consistency of foreign population in Italy is computed on the basis of new statistics data sources. The estimate is referred to the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005 [Fondazione ISMU, 2006]. Information from official data sources provided by the National Institute of Statistics and from a survey carried out on a representative sample of 30,000 foreigners coming from the so called “High emigration countries” (HEC) and living in Italy at 1st July 2005, have been processed together, following a specific methodology. In this way, it is possible first to bring up to date the latest official data provided by Istat and second to enlarge the knowledge of the foreign population in Italy, analysing both its features and its territorial distribution [Blangiardo and Tanturri, 2006].

As a result, the amount of foreign migrants coming from HECs is estimated to be more than 3.3 millions on the whole national territory. Most of them (85%) live in the Central and Northern area – the most economically developed one– while only the residual 15% (about half million of foreigners) lives in the South.

On the whole, the foreigners in possession of a regular residence permit, are about 2,8 millions<sup>1</sup>. The majority of them - 9 out of 10 - are recorded in the population register of one among the Italian municipalities.

The foreigners are increasing their weight in the whole population : at 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2005, 4.3 foreigners are recorded every 100 residents in the population register (either Italians or not). The foreigners’ density, however is remarkably more conspicuous in the North and in the Centre (close to 6%), while is rather small in the South (just 1.5%).

It should be noted that the number of undocumented migrants is estimated to be more than half a million, a forth of whom living in the Southern regions. Consequently it is immediately evident that the South is characterised for a particularly high proportion of irregular immigrant: in this area 27 undocumented immigrant every 100 total resident are found, versus an average national level of 16 out of 100. Moreover the foreign population living in the South seems to be less stable: indeed, the proportion of legal resident recorded in the population register of any municipality is about two third in the South, while reaches three forth in the Centre and in the North.

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<sup>1</sup> For a correct comparison with data reported in tab. 1, it is useful to recall that here data are referred only to foreigners from High Migration Countries (while ISTAT data encompass foreigners from all the world) and to six month later the estimate provided by ISTAT. At this regards, it is useful to remark that since January to April 2005 the net migration registered an inflow of 143thousands individuals, most of whom from abroad. If we extrapolate these trend to cover the whole semester, the results seem to be consistent with the estimates provided in these paper.

**Tab.2 - Estimate of the total number of foreign residents coming from “High emigration countries” and residents in Italy at 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005.**

	Italy	Northern & Central	Southern
	<i>Absolute numbers (in thousand)</i>		
Legal residents	2,817	2,455	362
<i>Of which NrPR *</i>	318	267	51
Illegal residents	541	408	133
Total	3,358	2,863	495
	<i>% Value (every 100 residents)</i>		
Legal residents	83.9	83.7	73.1
<i>Of which NrPR *</i>	9.5	9.3	10.3
Illegal residents	16.1	14.3	26.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: ISMU Foundation

\* Not yet recorded in the population register of any Italian municipality

### **1.2 Who? The foreign population's structure**

The so called “great 2002 regularization” provoked not only a relevant growth in the size of the foreign population, but also a sort of earthquake in its structure.

First of all, within the analysis of the intense growth of the migrants population, the study of the young components' dynamic is of paramount importance. The 1991 census counted about 50 thousands minors who were recorded in the population register, but the number of the young risen sharply in ten years time, reaching 284 thousands individuals. At the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2005 the young component registers a further increase reaching the amount of 502 thousands individuals. It is opportune to remark that a notable increase of over 147 thousands minors is occurred just in a couple of years, since 2003 to 2004.

Therefore it is evident that the upsurge of less than a million foreigners in two years time can be in part the direct result of the last regularization process (2002) - when about 650 thousands undocumented migrants were regularised - while for the residual third is an important side-effect of the same process: indeed, the rapid increase in the amount of regular foreign workers has triggered many family reunifications. Consequently, the component of non-economic migrant – basically children and spouses - has increased its weight in the foreign population structure. This interpretation is supported by the evidence: an increase in the number of residence permits for family reunification (+ 100 thousands) has been observed since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2004 to the beginning of 2005, while the amount of residence permits for work remained stable [Istat, 2005]. Moreover, it is not surprising that most of the young component's growth has followed the regularization procedures temporally.

Nowadays the minors represents almost a fifth of legal foreigners in the population register and also a conspicuous proportion of the total young population (foreigners and natives): one out of 20 minors living in Italy has a foreign citizenship (Tab. 3).

**Tab. 3 Foreign minors recorded in the population register in Italy: 1991-2005**

	Census 1991	Census 2001	1.1.2004	1.1.2005
Total foreign minors in the population register (Thousands)	51	284	412	502
Foreign minors every 100 foreigners in the population register	15,2	21,3	20,7	20,9
Ratio between foreigner minors and total minors in the population register	1 every 200	1 every 34	1 every 24	1 every 20

Source: own elaboration on Istat data

The increasing number of spouses allowed to come with a family reunification permit contributes to balance the foreigners' sex ratio. Comparing the number of foreign people in the population register at 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2004 and at the end of the same year, it is immediately evident that male growth rate is higher among those communities that showed a female predominance (e.g. Ecuador, Ukraine, Moldavia and Dominican Republic). Similarly - even if in this case the process is less evident - the highest growth rate is observed among females in those communities originally composed mainly by men, such as Senegal and Macedonia, for instance. Few exceptions to this phenomenon are worth to be mentioned: in some communities where the male component used to be prevalent (e.g. Egypt, India and Bangladesh) the number of males continues to increase at a higher speed than the female counterpart. Moreover there are communities (China, Romania, Albania, Ghana), traditionally characterised by a balanced sex ratio, where the male and female components still grow at the same pace.

**Tab.4 – Gender dynamic among main foreign communities (with more than 10 thousands resident in the population register) in Italy since 1st January 2004 to the end of the same year**

	Sex ratio (Foreign resident male every 100 female)	Variation rate (%) Male	Female
<b>Communities where the female component is predominant</b>			
Ukraine	17	81	58
Cuba	22	17	11
Russia	24	21	20
Poland	35	26	26
Moldavia	37	78	45
Dominican Rep.	38	16	8
Brazil	38	21	12
Colombia	44	17	11
Ecuador	51	73	52
Peru'	58	26	23
Philippine	66	16	13
Nigeria	68	22	19
<b>Communities where the male component is predominant</b>			
Senegal	554	15	21
Algeria	298	21	22
Pakistan	254	28	28
Egypt	228	37	15
Bangladesh	228	35	22
Tunisia	200	14	14
India	159	24	16
Turkey	155	23	19
Morocco	163	16	17
Macedonia	153	13	15
<b>Countries with a balanced sex ratio</b>			
Bulgaria	75	36	33
Romania	95	42	38
China	111	31	27
Ivory Coast	115	15	16
Sri Lanka	123	18	14
Serbia e Montenegro	123	14	10
Bosnia-Herzegovina	130	13	9
Albania	135	17	17
Ghana	137	13	11

Source: own elaboration on Istat data

### 1.3 Who?: a medley of citizenships

With regard to the areas of origin, the latest data show the clear change occurred in the last decade: the predominant position of Northern African migrants – at the 1991 Census they still represented 30% of the whole foreign community - has been rapidly overcome by the Eastern European component.

Indeed during the Nineties the immigration from Europe became more and more important, while immigration from North African, gradually diminished its weight. The process has been accelerated in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, also as effect of the “great 2002 regularization” which have been benefited particularly by the Rumanian and the Ukrainian, representing over a third of the migrants who have been legalised. Therefore, the regularization processes allow a great change in the structure of foreign population by citizenship in Italy, in the framework of over 160 foreign communities, from High Migration Countries.

**Tab. 5 – Foreign people registered in the population register in Italy at 1991 and 2001 Census. Absolute number and percentages.**

	1991	2001	% 1991	%2001
<b>Central and Eastern Europe</b>	<b>41690</b>	<b>396506</b>	<b>17,6</b>	<b>34,3</b>
-Albania	10594	173064	4,5	15,0
-Romania	9446	74885	4,0	6,5
<b>North Africa</b>	<b>68957</b>	<b>267700</b>	<b>29,1</b>	<b>23,2</b>
-Egypt	9441	27331	4,0	2,4
-Morocco	39911	180103	16,9	15,6
-Tunisia	16695	47656	7,1	4,1
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	<b>37133</b>	<b>118794</b>	<b>15,7</b>	<b>10,3</b>
-Senegal	10603	31174	4,5	2,7
<b>Asia</b>	<b>54018</b>	<b>214728</b>	<b>22,8</b>	<b>18,6</b>
-China	7585	46887	3,2	4,1
-Philippine	15371	53994	6,5	4,7
-India	7585	46887	3,2	4,1
<b>Latin America</b>	<b>31256</b>	<b>122186</b>	<b>13,2</b>	<b>10,6</b>
-Peru	3028	29425	1,3	2,5
<b>Total HMCs</b>	<b>236781</b>	<b>1155357</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Source: Istat

**Tab.6 – Main citizenships by number and typology of resident (legal in the population register, legal not yet in the population register, illegal) in Italy at 1st July 2005.**

	Total resident		Typology (%)	
	(thousands)	Legal residents	Of which NrPR	Illegal residents
Albania	459	85.7	10,7	14.3
Romania	437	78.4	10.1	21.6
Marocco	408	85.8	7.4	14.2
Ucraina	180	77.6	9.4	22.4
China R.P.	169	88.6	12.5	11.4
Philippine	110	89.6	9.3	10.4
Tunisia	110	83.9	7.5	16.1
Ecuador	89	85.8	8.4	14.2
Macedonia	88	81.8	9.9	18.2
Polonia	83	78.7	9.8	21.3
Serbia e Montenegro	83	85.6	9.3	14.4
Senegal	82	82.0	10.8	18.0
Peru	78	84.2	7.8	15.8
India	77	88.2	9.8	11.8
Egitto	75	81,2	6.4	12.5
Moldova	68	80.9	10.1	19.1
Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	60	88.3	6.4	11.7
Bangladesh	52	88.0	8.8	12.0
Pakistan	51	88.3	9.4	11.7
Nigeria	50	80.4	10.4	19.6
Total, first 20 countries	2,810			
Totale	3,357	83.9	9.5	16.1

Source: ISMU Foundation

At 1st of July 2005, the 400 thousands Moroccan – either legal or not – are now just the third community by number of individuals in the ranking. The first two positions are occupied respectively by 460 thousands Albanian and 430 thousands Rumanian. At the same time, the Ukrainian become more numerous than the Tunisian, and some minor communities increase their importance, such as the foreigners from Ecuador (about 90 thousands) and Moldova (about 70 thousands). It seems conceivable to argue that the present situation is characterised by migrants closer and closer to the Italian culture and traditions, and therefore more likely to integrate quickly. In this sense, it is not surprising that the proportion of Christian migrants (most of whom are Catholic) gets higher than the Muslim counterpart, by 10 percentage points.

In conclusion, it seems that migration flows to Italy have been recently reoriented - even if without any explicit project- to a pattern of “more similar migrants”: East European instead of North Africans and, conversely, Christians (often Catholic) instead of Muslim. Paradoxically this unintended result was wished by some intellectuals and authorities, few years ago, prompting a vivacious debate between the ones in favour and the one against explicit selection policies.

**Tab.7 – Composition of foreign population in Italy by year of arrival and declared religion.**

	Year of arrival in Italy					Total
	<1990	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2002	2003-2005	
	(% composition by year of arrival)					
Catholic	23.6	29.1	29.0	28.2	24.9	27.7
Muslim	50.2	41.8	38.2	32.0	30.7	36.2
Other Christians	8.8	11.2	17.0	27.4	32.9	21.7
Buddhist	4.2	4.2	3.9	2.7	3.6	3.5
Hindi	0.8	1.6	1.3	1.1	1.4	1.2
Other	1.6	2.7	2.5	2.2	1.2	2.1
None	9.1	7.7	6.3	5.3	4.4	6.0
Non response	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.2	0.9	1.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

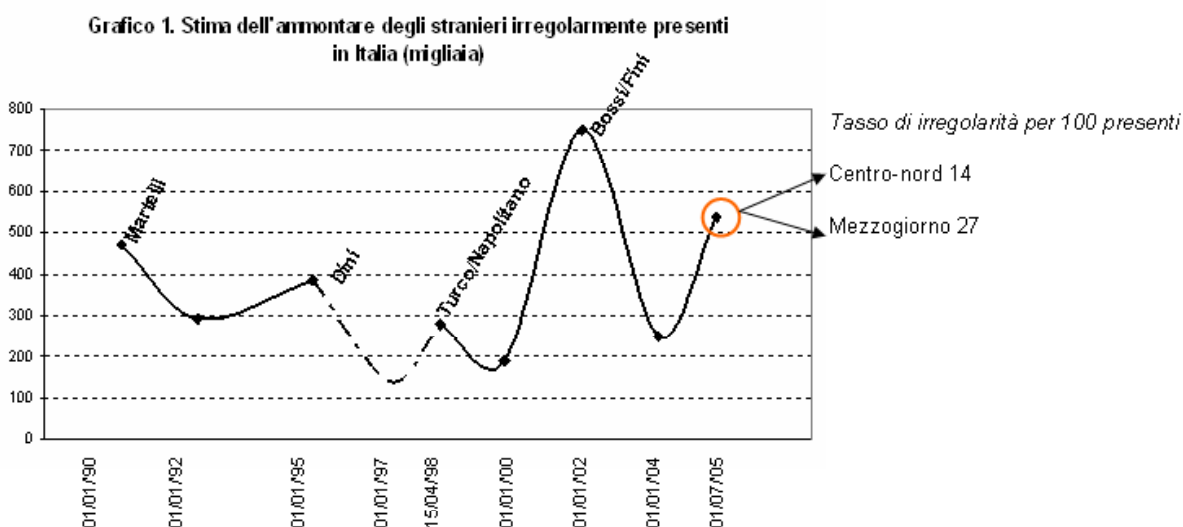
Source: ISMU Foundation

#### ***1.4 The vicious effect of regularization: a roller-coaster trend of irregularity***

If the absolute number of the undocumented foreigners is analysed by itself, it seems sensible to argue that the situation remains unchanged across time: the estimated number of illegal immigrants were half a million in 1990 (before the so called “Martelli amnesty”), and are almost the same nowadays. However, if a more detailed analysis of the phenomenon is carried out, one notices the roller-coaster trend of the number of the irregulars during the last fifteen years.

The erratic dynamic is the results of five amnesty processes, the first of which in the mid Eighties, and it is not only limited to the absolute numbers: the same trend is observed also for the irregularity rates. The physiological minimum amount of undocumented migrants can be observed in 1996 and in 2000, while the maximum in the years before the last “great 2002 regularization” (the so-called Bossi-Fini regularization). In 2005, 16 irregular foreigners every 100 foreign resident (either legal or not) are estimated to live in the whole country, but the situation reveals substantial territorial differences: only 14 irregulars every 100 foreigners are estimated to live in the North, while in the South the rate grows up to 27% [Cesareo, 2005].

**Fig.1 – Estimate of irregular foreigner living in Italy (in thousands), since 1990 to 2005** (\*).



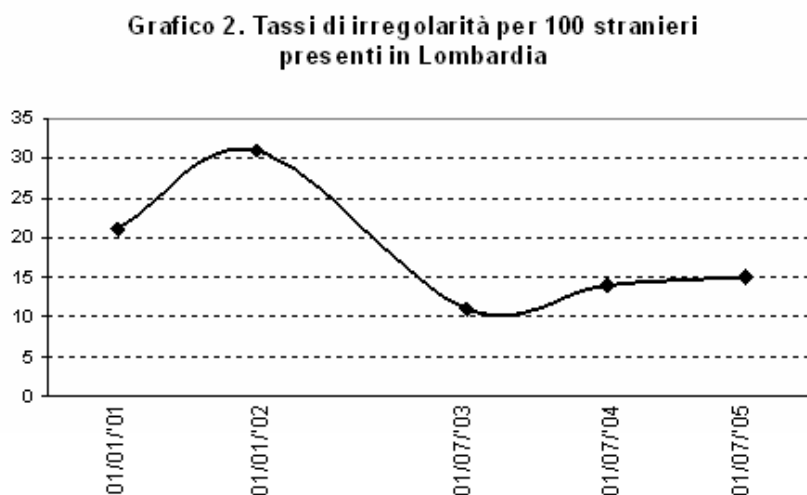
(\*). Names are referred to politicians who promoted the corresponding regularization/amnesty laws

The roller-coaster trend characterising the incidence of the irregulars seems to indicate a two-fold effect of the subsequent amnesty processes:

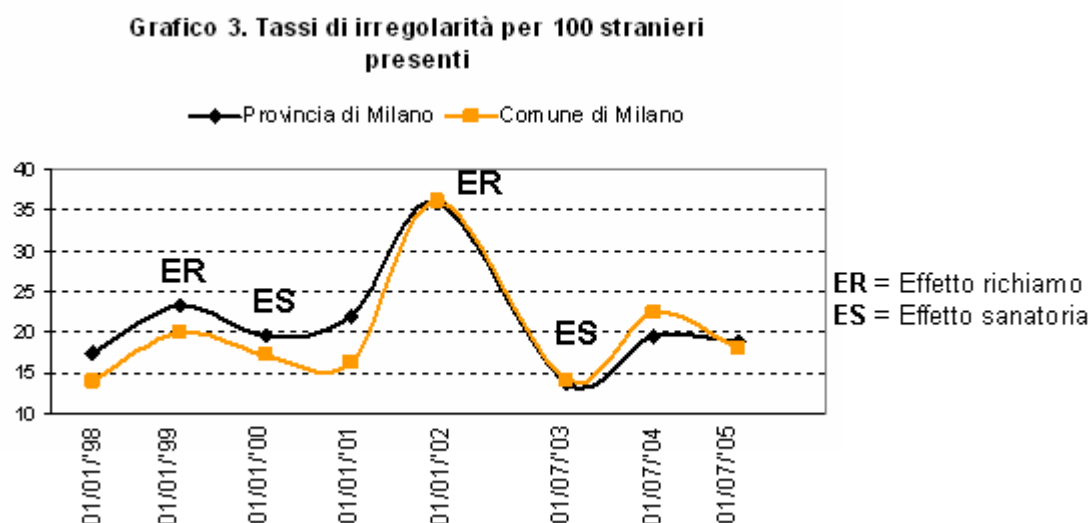
- a so-called *recall effect* (ER=“*effetto richiamo*”), i.e. the increase of irregularity in the period immediately preceding the amnesties
- a *amnesty effect* (ES=“*effetto sanatoria*”), i.e. the reduction of irregularity immediately after an amnesty process

Both the effect result to be well documented in recent studies conducted in Lombardy, using a very rich and detailed data-set, provided for the region on the whole and in particular for the urban area of Milan [Fondazione ISMU, 2006].

**Fig.2 – Estimate of irregular rate every 100 foreigners (either regular or not) living in Lombardy, since 1990 to 2005.**



**Fig.3 – Estimate of irregular rate every 100 foreigners (either regular or not) living in Milan Municipality and Province, since 1998 to 2005.**



It is important to notice that in general smuggled and undocumented migrants benefited from the regularizations process, and not foreigners who had been regularised before: only exceptionally, migrants who have been regularised once, became irregular again. An emblematic case in this regard is represented by the Lombardy, where 92% of migrants, who have been regularised in 2002 had never been regularised before in any of the amnesty processes [Blangiardo, 2003].

It is opportune to recall, however, that smuggling (as well as over-staying) seems to be a rule rather than an exception in the migration histories of foreign people living in Italy: in 2003, 62% of migrants from HMCs living in Lombardy reveals to have benefited from at least one of the amnesties [Blangiardo, 2005].

### **1.5 The regularizations: a selective process?**

As stated before, the regularizations have not only contributed to provide evidence on the incidence of irregular migration in Italy, but to some extent they also have substituted explicit policies regulating migration inflows for many years. At the same time, they have helped to reshape the structure of regular foreign population, according to many characteristics, among which the area of origin. The increasing weight of the Christians over the Muslim – documented here by the case of Lombardy [Blangiardo, 2001-2004], but that can be easily extended to the whole Country – is an emblematic example in this direction.

**Tab. 8 – Percentage proportions of foreigners, living in Lombardy in al 2001, 2002 e 2004, by area of origin and religion.**

Year	Are of origin					Religion	
	East Europe	Asia	Northern Africa	Other Africa	Latin America	% Christians	% Muslims
2001	21,1	27,6	26,5	13,4	11,5	41,4	45,7
2002	21,9	27,3	26,2	13,4	11,1	39,3	47,6
2004	27,0	24,3	23,9	11,9	12,9	46,4	40,1

Source: ISMU Foundation



Data provided by the Ismu Foundation sample survey allow to distinguish the regular foreigners who have been regularised at least once (the “regularised people”), from those who passed the border regularly and who have always had a regular residence permit to live in Italy [Blangiardo e Tanturri, 2004]. The firsts, with respect to the seconds, are more likely to be male and less educated. They came to Italy profiting from a migratory chain composed basically by friends, instead of taking advantage from family network.

It is surprising to notice that a higher proportion of “regularised” foreigners – compared to the group who has always been regular - reported to be better off, with a monthly average income between 750 and 1500 euros. Just a minority of them revealed not to have any income. Consequently, it seems that having been an irregular migrant in Italy for some time does not imply a failure in economics term, at least once they have regularised their position. The same results have been obtained also replicating the analysis on the active foreigners only. In addition, the regularised more often have a regular work contract as employed, with respect to the “always regular” group; however the situation is reversed among the foreigners who have passed the border very recently. Moreover it is useful to remark, that among the regularised people, a higher proportion of workers has a short-term contract: thus it is possible to argue that a certain disadvantage in terms of occupational stability affects the regularised. This seems to be confirmed by their major presence in the irregular labour market, at least among those who arrived in Italy since the mid Nineties.

In conclusion, on the one hand the economic performance of the regularised people appears to be remarkably better compared to the foreigners who have always been regular. On the other hand, they seem condemned either to have temporary occupation in the regular labour market or to be employed in the irregular economy. However the disadvantages in terms of occupational positions seem to be limited to the short-run. Indeed in the long-run, the regularised people have even better results both in terms of occupational stability and economic performance.

### ***Sources and notes***

#### *Figure 1.*

Sources: Cesareo V., *Il mercato del lavoro e gli immigrati a tre anni dalla regolarizzazione*, Convegno Europeo PON SICUREZZA 2000-2006, Palermo, 18 novembre 2005.

#### *Figure 2.*

Sources: G.C. Blangiardo (a cura di) *L'immigrazione straniera in Lombardia*, Rapporti statistici dell'Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multiethnicità, Fondazione ISMU. - Anni 2001-2005.

Note: Rates are calculated using the average estimate of irregular component, between the maximum estimate and the minimum one.

#### *Figure 3.*

Sources: M. Blangiardo, A. Menonna, *Annuario statistico dell'immigrazione straniera. Approfondimento territoriale nella provincia di Milano*, anno 2004, Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multiethnicità, Fondazione ISMU.

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Note: Rates are calculated using the average estimate of irregular component, between the maximum estimate and the minimum one.

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