

# **Will the COVID-19 pandemic have little effect on internal migration patterns in Italy?**

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An end to rural population decline?

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# Introduction

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The focus of this presentation is twofold:

- Giving a first general overview of the dynamics of the changes of residence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. The focus is on internal migration, even if international migration drives also internal changes of residence.
- Attempting a first assessment of the variations in the changes of residence that occurred in 2020 (2021) compared to the situation during the previous years.

# Italy and the pandemic

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- Italy is one of the European countries earliest and hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first national lockdown was put in place from March to May 2020 and the second lockdown started in October 2020.
- Whereas international restrictions put in place triggered a general decline in international moves the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are less straight forward in the case of internal migration.
- The possible effects regarding internal migration: the general lockdown brought about a general slowdown in administrative and business activities, being it the public administration, the housing market, the labour market, higher education, ....
- It is useful to remember that Italy is in a certain way a low mobility country/society and that Italy was hit by the pandemic when just emerging from the economic crisis that began in 2008.

# Data used

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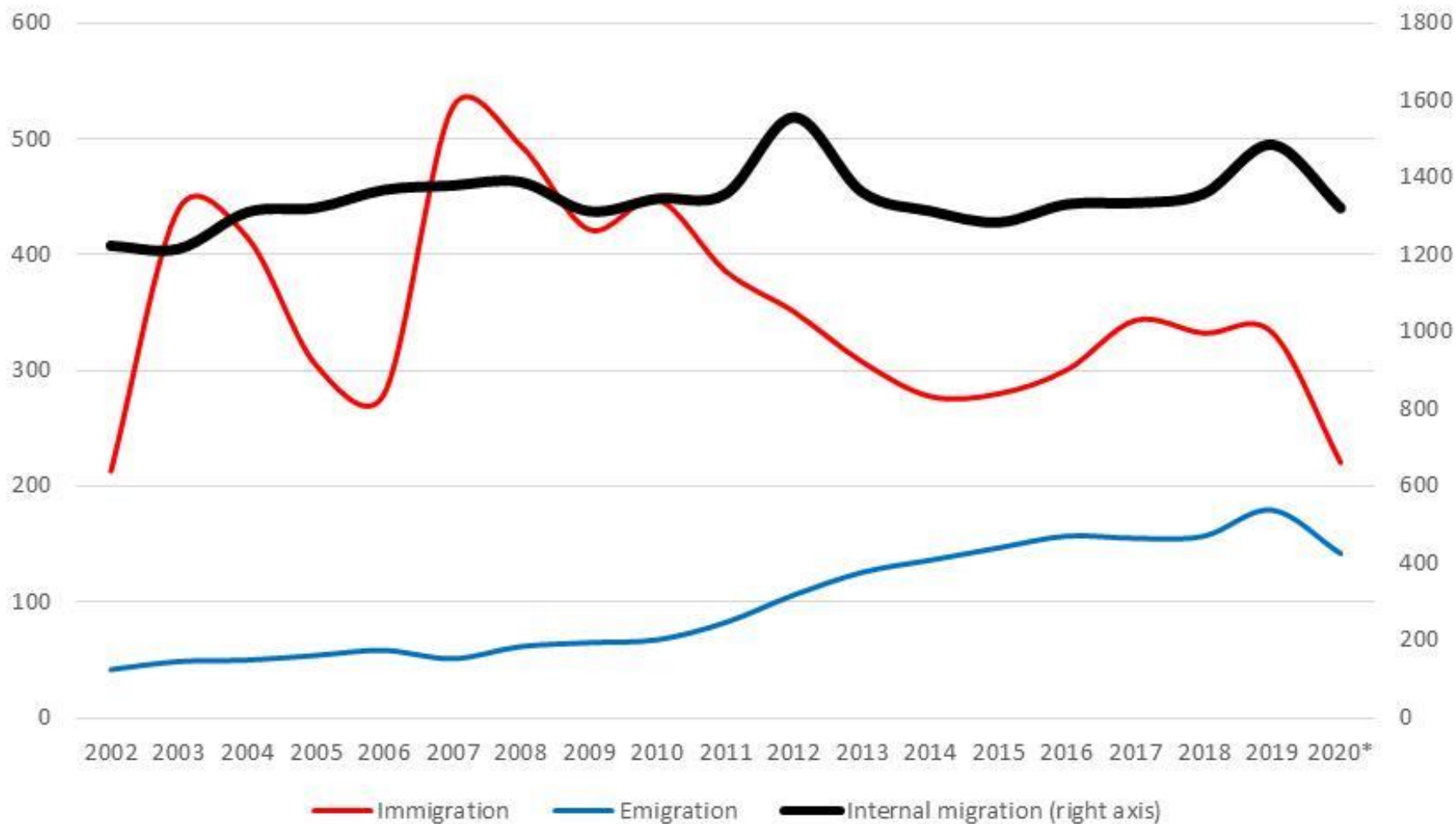
- Geographic reference: the Italian municipalities and the 107 Italian provinces.
- Internal migration flow data are based on the municipal population registers. These municipal registers are in the phase of being organised in a national register. Due to the progress of integrating the registers a higher number of changes of residence are observed in 2019.
- Population by citizenship, gender and age are also based on information from population registers, corrected by 2017/2018 population census results.
- The number of foreign residents in Italy grew significantly until 2014 ... since then stable just above 8 % of the total population (in 2002 just above 2 %).

# Changing residence in Italy

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- In Italy changing residence is often linked to the purchase of a home.
- In the first months of the pandemic also real estate agents were not very active since demand and supply of homes have been low and the number of transactions were very low in the first months of the pandemic.
- It is unusual to move into a home immediately after the purchase. Usually the purchased home needs to be refurbished.
- So, putting these information together it is unlikely that we are able to observe already in 2020 changes of residence in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes in the organisation of the workplace (home office).
- In addition the pandemic created a general sense of insecurity that made making plans difficult.

# Number of changes of residence, Italy, 2002-2020. (in 1,000)



# Monthly numbers of changes of residence Italy 2019-2021

## Internally

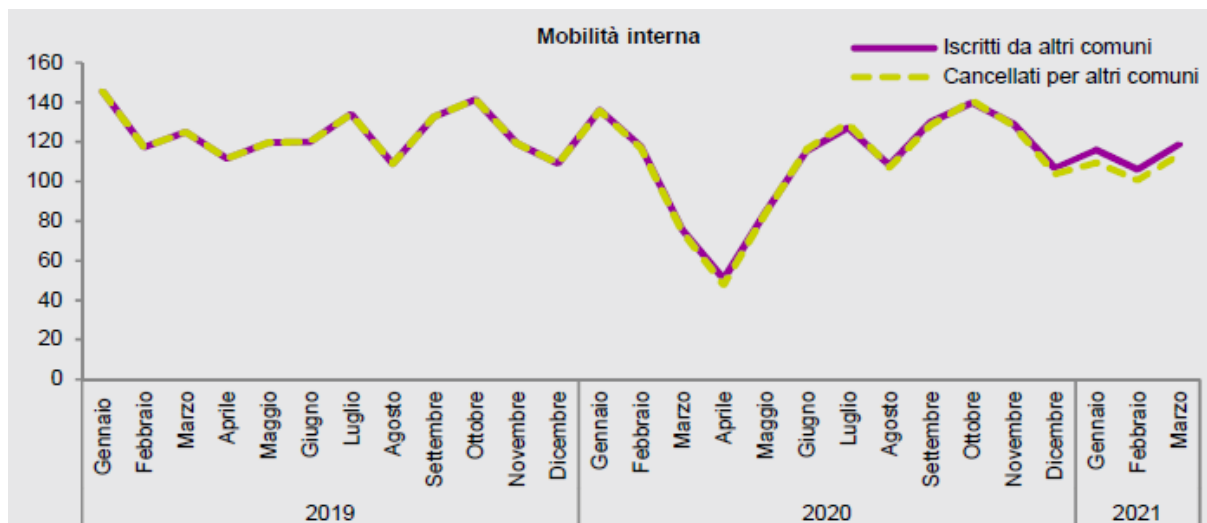
2015: 1,284,000

2016: 1,331,000

2017: 1,335,000

2018: 1,358,000

2019: 1,485,000



## Internationally

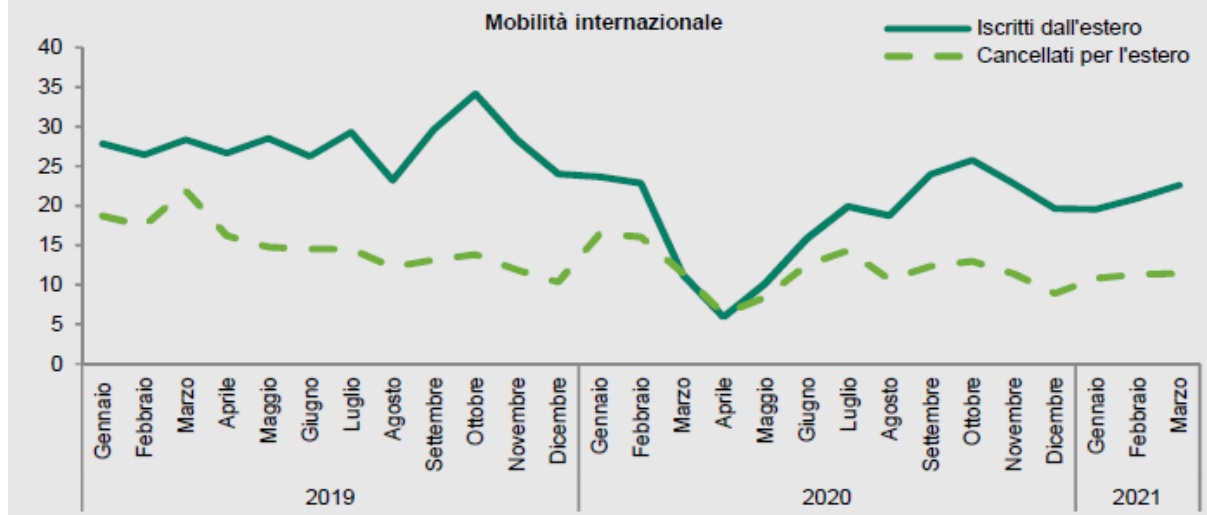
2015: 280,000/147,000

2016: 301,000/157,000

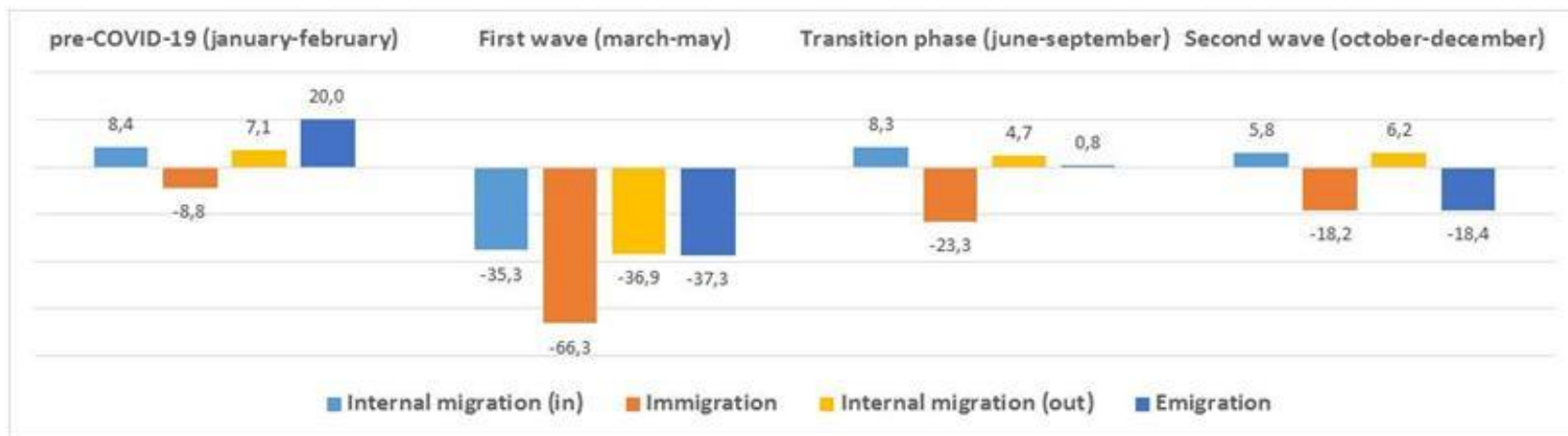
2017: 343,440/155,000

2018: 332,000/157,000

2019: 333,000/180,000

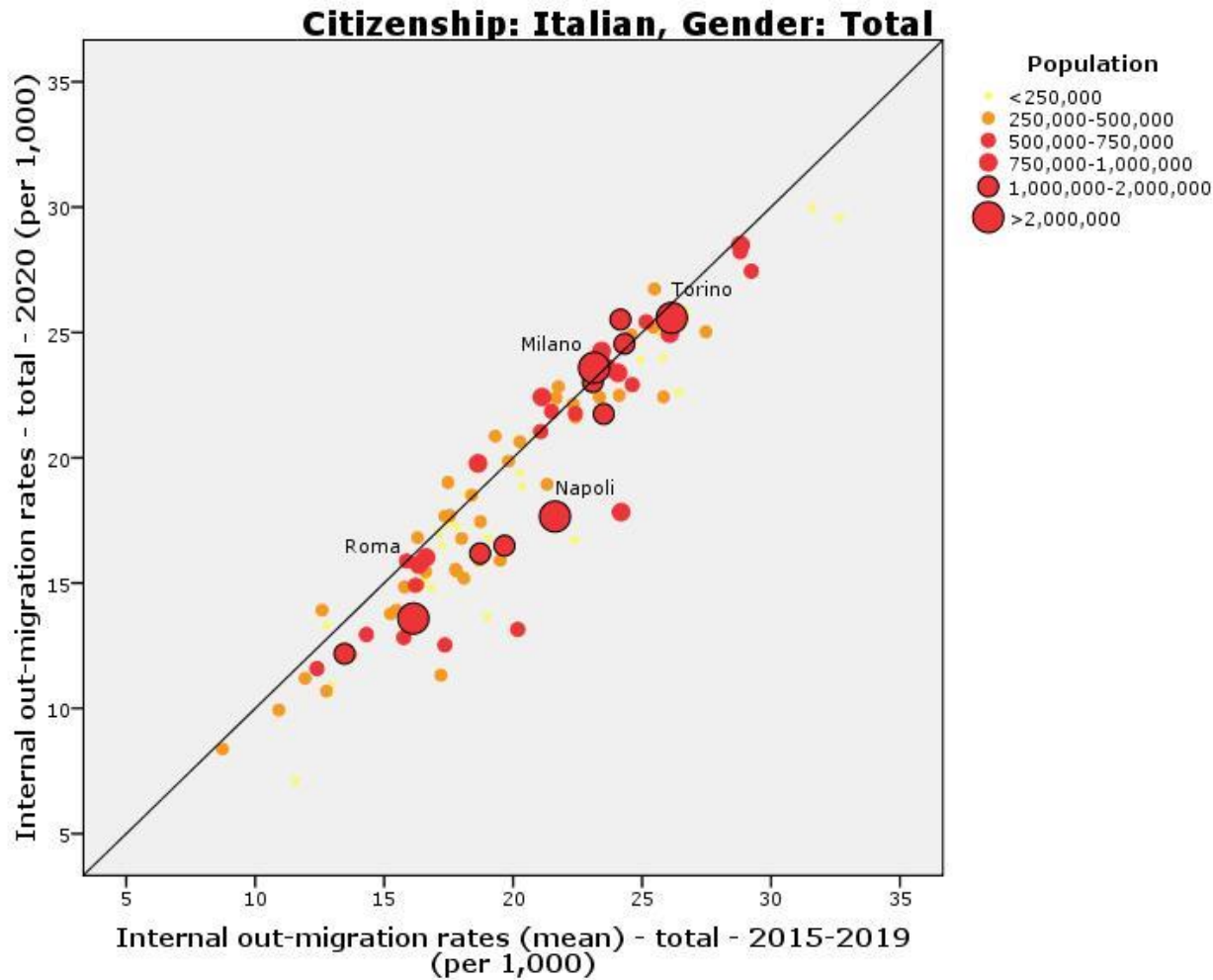


# Changes in migration flows 2020 compared to the average 2015 to 2019. (in %)



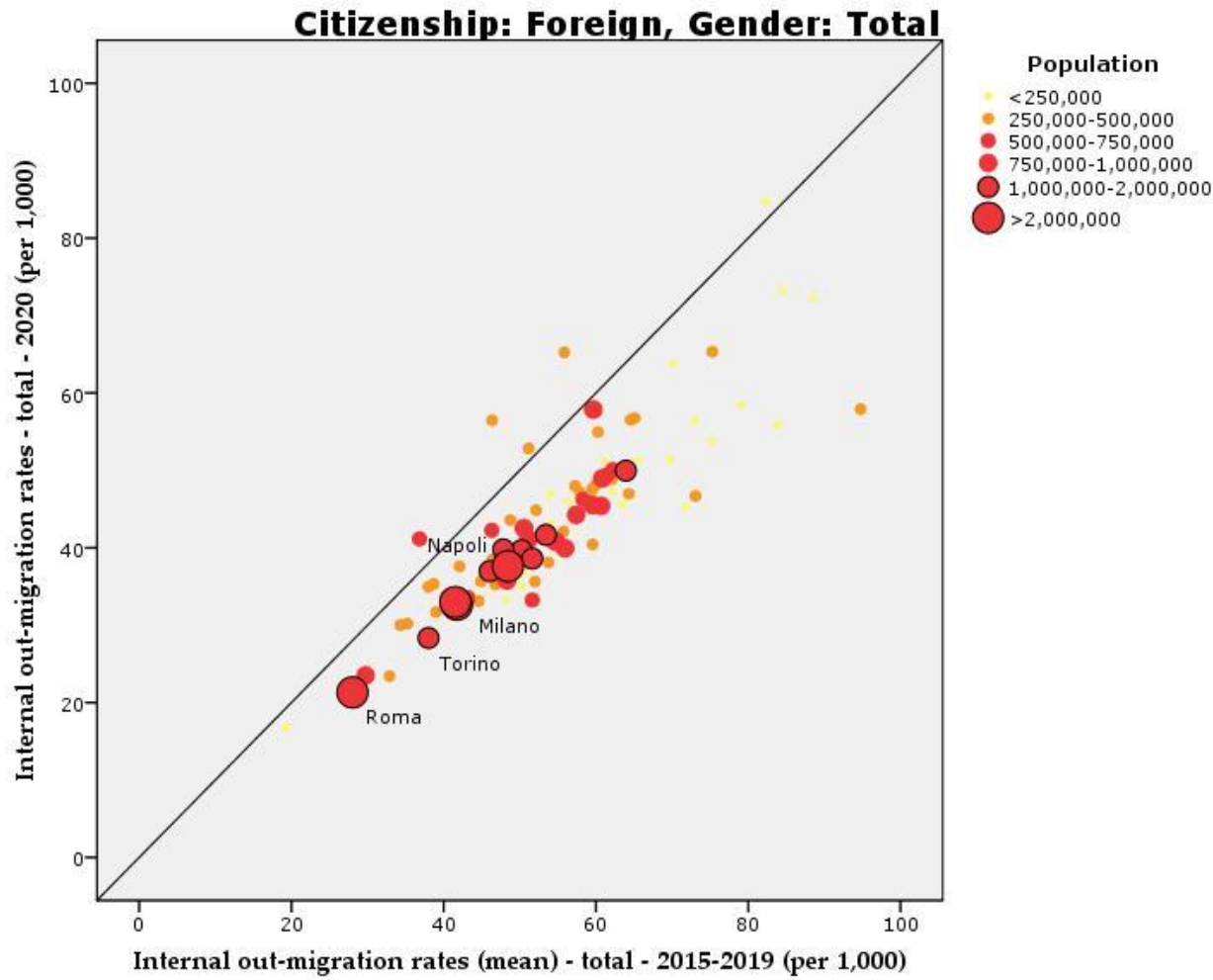


# Changes in internal out-migration in 2020 - Italians

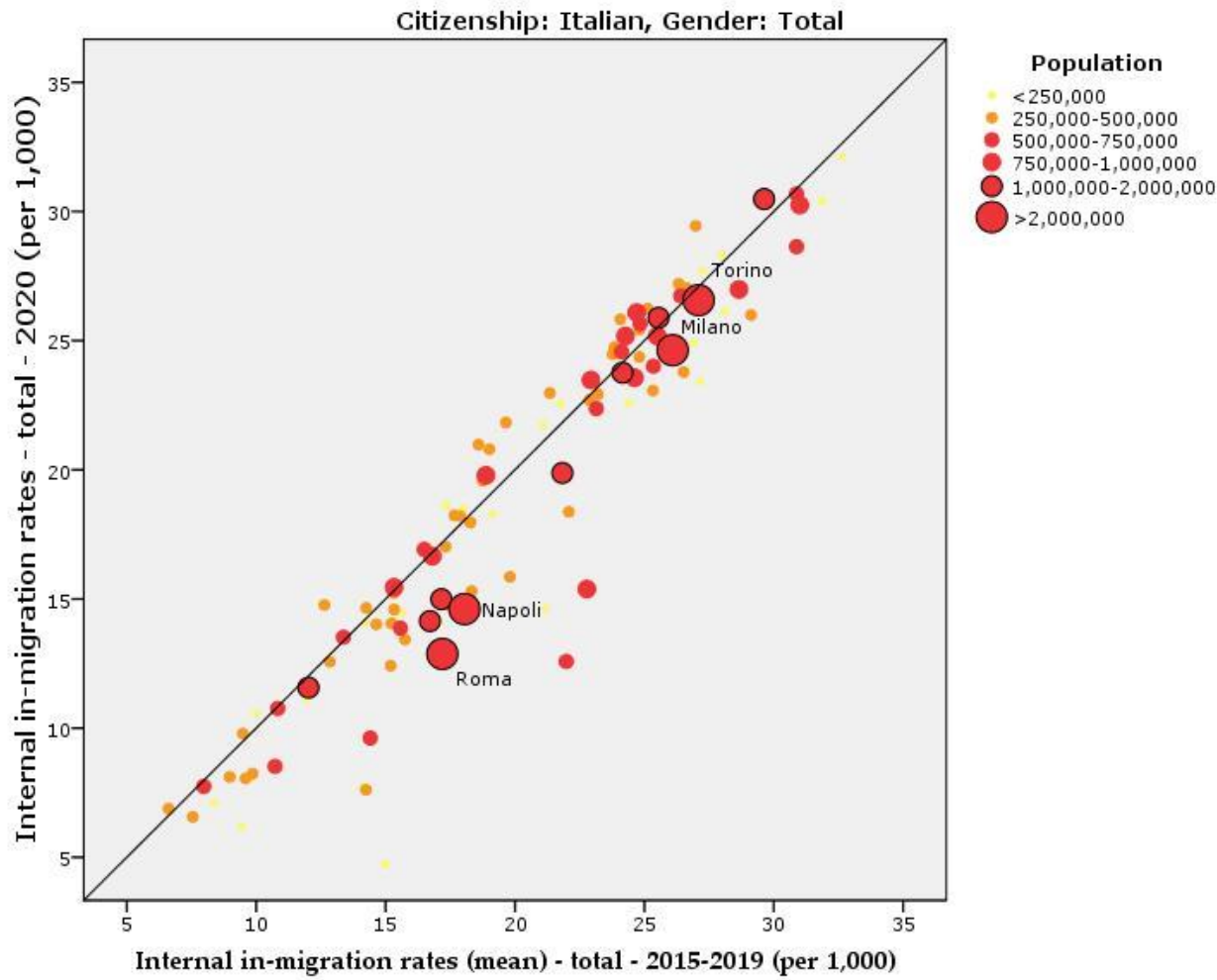


# Changes in internal out-migration in 2020 - Foreigners

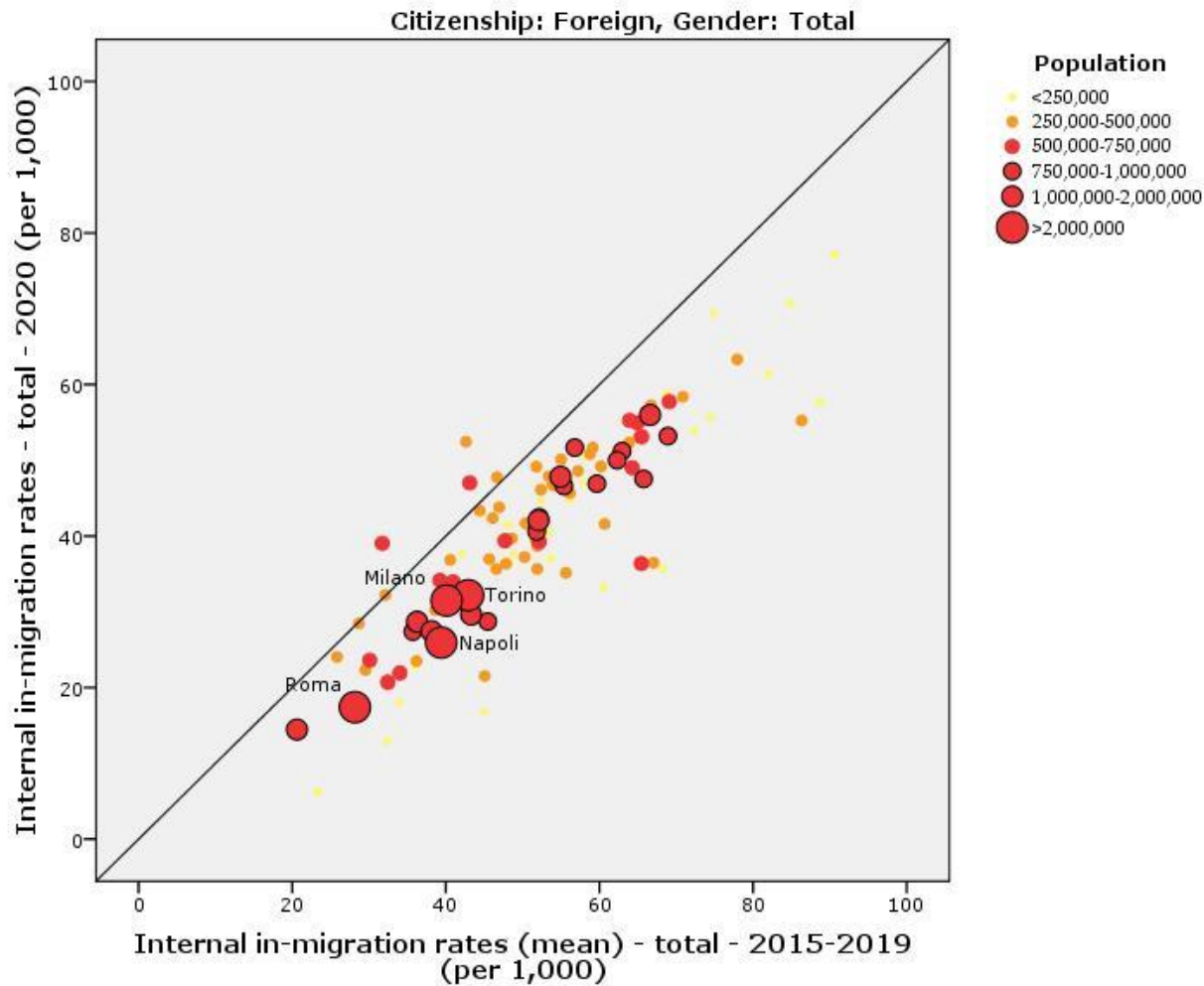
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# Changes in internal in-migration in 2020 - Italians



# Changes in internal in-migration in 2020 - Foreigners



# The municipal level 2019/2020

## Municipal population registers - percentage distribution of in- and out-'migration'

	2019						2020					
	Total		Italians		Foreigners		Total		Italians		Foreigners	
	In-	Out-	In-	Out-	In-	Out-	In-	Out-	In-	Out-	In-	Out-
<b>City</b> (Densely populated areas)	30.1	30.0	30.4	29.8	28.7	30.5	28.5	30.2	28.8	30.1	27.4	30.8
<b>Small towns and suburbs</b> (Intermediate population density areas)	52.1	51.0	51.9	51.4	52.7	49.6	52.6	50.9	52.5	51.2	52.9	49.2
<b>Rural areas</b> (Sparsely populated areas)	17.9	19.0	17.7	18.8	18.6	19.8	18.9	18.9	18.7	18.7	19.7	19.9

# The municipal level 2019/2020

## Net 'migration' rates (municipal population registers) – the role of altitude and population density

Net migration rates (per 1,000)	Total		Italians		Foreigners	
	Altitude	Density	Altitude	Density	Altitude	Density
<b>Internal 2019</b>	-0.109**	0.144**	-0.096**	0.166**	-0.071**	0.045**
<b>Total 2019</b>	-0.158**	0.225**	-0.101**	0.176**	-0.032**	0.029**
<b>Internal 2020</b>	-0.015**	-0.068**	0.000*	-0.055**	-0.057**	0.006**
<b>Total 2020</b>	-0.059**	0.000**	-0.007**	-0.050**	0.001**	-0.050**
<b>Total 2020</b>	-0.060**	-0.034**				

Altitude (in meters)

Population density 31.12.2020 (persons per sq. km of land area) (logarithmic scale)

# Conclusions

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- The COVID-19 pandemic had undoubtedly an effect on internal migration, however an assessment is difficult. The internal migration of the foreign population slowed down significantly probably related to the sectors of activity it is involved in. For the Italian population the regional internal in- and out-migration patterns seem to have changed to a certain degree. However, it seems too early to pronounce a final judgement.
- It seems that short- and medium-distance moves were more affected than the long-distance ones. First indications suggest a, perhaps temporary, decline in migratory flows towards metropolitan or urban areas. It seems too early to suppose a change in territorial preferences that would ignore the economic fundamentals.