

# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Italy

Arcadia  
Abroad

*Read for more information on LGBTQ+ rights in Italy, race and ethnicity, religious diversity, women's rights, and physical accessibility*

## For Students Studying in Italy

The conversation about diversity in Italy is imported from the U.S., so discussions around it are still fairly new. In fact, most universities don't have any particular office or mission statement directly related to it. While our Italian university partnerships tend to have a more diverse student population compared to our other partner institutions, and they are sensitive and aware of the importance of it, the same kind of policies and curriculum additions focused on diversity and equity are not present.

## Race and Ethnicity in Italy

Italy, for a lot of its history, was a country of emigrants. Nowadays, due to its position in the world, it is a natural transitional place for people arriving in Europe. Perugia specifically is accustomed to seeing a vast diversity of people from all walks of life. And, at the Accademia Italiana Florence, 40% of the students are from areas of the world outside of Italy, and 20% of these students are from the United States. However, the country is 93% white. The non-white citizens are usually immigrants from Northern Africa. Anyone who is non-white may be stereotyped such as assumed to be immigrants, not educated, working low-paying jobs, so students may experience this stereotype while abroad. Black or non-white students visiting Italy may not experience blatant racism, but may receive unwanted attention through compliments, touching skin/hair, or jokes.

## LGBTQ+ in Italy

Unions of same-sex couples are legal in Italy, but in the public will react to same-sex couples, and sometimes it can be a negative reaction. There have been some progressions in law such as anyone regardless of sexual orientation can be in the military, there are no censorship laws in place, and it is legally recognized if someone wants to change their gender (regardless of whether surgery is involved). However, Italy still falls behind many countries when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights. Those in the LGBTQ+ community cannot legally adopt, conversion therapy still is present in some regions, and there are few laws in place that protect against discrimination, specifically housing discrimination and employment discrimination when it comes to sexual orientation.

In academia, there are conversations around the gender-binary present in the Italian language. Specifically, the professors at the Umbra Institute are at the forefront of this movement. However, while academia is one space that is more progressive in this area, the gender-binary is still vastly present in speech and conversation. If you are looking for a community that is LGBTQ+ friendly with events and meetings, check out Omphalos, an organization in Perugia that is quite prominent.

## Religious Diversity in Italy

Italy, while secular, has a heavy Catholic presence. On Sundays, you can hear church bells and many shops close as well. However, all religions are present in Italy. Specifically in larger cities there are accommodations and places to worship for religions other than Catholicism. Particularly in Perugia, there is a large Muslim population as well as youth groups you can participate in and events to attend. In bigger cities, it is easy to find international food options and food that is [Kosher](#) or [Halal](#).

## Women's Rights in Italy

Women in Italy did not gain suffrage until 1945 and it was not until 1963 that a woman could even hold political office (unless a post was given up by a man) or be a part of a political party. Legally, today, women hold equal status to men. This is due to a huge push in the 70s that granted women the right to divorce, the right to have an abortion, and legal equality between in marriages between a husband and wife. However, socially and systemically, women's rights still have a ways to go. There is still a pretty serious gender pay gap, and due to historical laws banning women from many fields of work, there is a large gap between men and women in the type of work done (for example, 20% of women work in domestic jobs), and only half of women of working age are actually in the workforce. However, the conversation is progressing and the push for more action has not slowed. This is in part due to the MeToo movement being brought to Italy. While some say that the MeToo movement failed in Italy, others argue that it started the conversation and is a pushing force for future developments to improve women's rights and recognition.

## Physical Accessibility in Italy

Although there has been a major shift in the acceptance of people with disability within the last 20 years, there is still a long way to go. The historical nature of Italy makes it difficult for those with physical disabilities to navigate the city. While Arcadia is here to work with students and any accommodations they may need, it is important to consider the physical challenges (cobblestones, narrow doorways, the ancient nature of the cities themselves with laws preventing major renovations, etc.) present. Moreover, our housing accommodations traditionally will most likely not be wheelchair accessible. In many cases the student apartments (either in Rome, in Florence, or Perugia) are characteristic and ancient, dating back to the renaissance period sometimes. These apartments have never been modernized to meet special needs. There are however new possibilities like in Florence that offer a more modern and accessible possibility for housing with accessible public transportation from the building to school.

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## **Bibliography**

[LGBT Rights in Italy](#)

[Race and Ethnicity in Italy - Umbra Institute](#)

[Women in Italy](#)

[Women's rights](#)

[Women Employment](#)