

Italian family life



The old movies present Italian families as huge, often with more than six children but in more recent times Italian families have become much smaller, often with one or two children. The structure of the Italian family has changed a lot.

In the past

Italian families, especially those of the South, were made up of a lot of children and often the women didn't work.

The social revolution has also changed the concept of the family unit itself resulting in new types of families such as one-single parent, unmarried couples, divorced parents, couples without children.



But, everyday culture explains that Italians have stronger feelings of loyalty to their family than they have to their country.

Even though there is increasing migration with some families geographically separated, the family is still the center of the social structure providing unity and stability.

In the South, extended families often live together, but in the North, you are more likely to find nuclear families.

In both cases, the grandparents take an active role in helping with childcare, especially when both parents work.

A large part of an Italian family's social life is eating and celebrating together.

They meet in pizzerias and restaurants, and frequently share meals at home.

Industrialization and modern city life mean that parents work hours and hours, more for Northerners, the midday meal is lighter and not at home.

The larger family meal is in the evening.

Italian climate, encourages families to go out, especially during the spring and summer. In rural communities, the village square is a place for meetings between families.

Especially in the mountain town, the squares are a meeting place for families.

The big cities however, as Rome, gives more opportunity of meetings also in the evening.

Celebrations are other occasions to stay together and Italian families enjoy the meetings sitting around the table eating and talking. The meal is an occasion for social entertainment.

There are still strong ties among family members even when they create new family units or if they live far from their original families, and most still join their

parents or relatives during festivities like Christmas or Easter and during summer holidays.

Surveys and statistics carried out by ISTAT (Italy's National Statistics Institute) show that there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of average members per family. This is due to some important factors: a reduction in the number of new births (which has led to an increase in the number of couples without children); a decrease in the number of marriages; and a rise in the number of single-parent families.

Additionally, another type of family is now widespread all over Italy, the so-called reconstituted family, where a member of the family is a commuter or lives for some period in other parts of the country because of work. All this contributes to a re-conceptualization of the roles that the individuals play in different stages of life, both inside and outside their families.

There is also another typical factor which is the time the children leave their parents' home. They leave home later compared to the past. It is common to find children who live with their parents up to their thirties, sometimes even if they have a job they carry on living with their parents.

The most common reasons people decide to marry later or not to marry at all are education and expenses linked to attending university, lack of economic independence, and lack of a steady job, as ISTAT points out. In Italy, those who attend university are not, on average, economically independent. Moreover, nowadays Italians have difficulty finding a steady job and they do not want to start a family without having economic stability.

It is not possible to classify the Italian family under a single category any longer. Next to the traditional model of family, which has dominated for ages, there now coexist new models of families that express the economic and social changes Italy has gone through in its recent history.

What has caused great changes in the Italian family structure: the increase in women working outside the home, the number of young people who go on for higher education, and the legalization of divorce. Yet family values are still the focus of our society, and the Italian family remains a very close social unit. Whether married, single or divorced, all Italians tend to maintain very strong links with their parents, adult children, and other relatives.

The Italian mother

Although roles have changed for women, the mother remains the dominant figure in the Italian home. She typically runs every aspect of domestic life even if nowadays young couple tend to share housework and even the care of the children. Anyway, it is thought that Italian mothers spoil their children and husbands, or sacrifice too much to please every member of the family and the family dynamic can seem unfair and unbalanced. However, Italians themselves believe that it is the mother who keeps the family together, who creates and

maintains the familial links, who is the bond that unifies all members. She, in turn, knows she can depend on the rest of her family in her time of need.

SOURCES:

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by Giulia C. 2D

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ITALIAN FAMILY

If you think that Italian families are formed of at least seven people... You are a little back in time!

The idea of an Italian family with more than six **children**, is just an old memory.

Now typical Italian families are made up of one or two children wherever some of those of the South are formed of more children.

BEFORE



NOW



SUNDAY

Sunday is the favourite day of most of Italian people because there is just a little part of Italian who works on Sunday. This day is usually dedicated to one thing: the family.

... and they lived happily ever after... THE MARRIAGE

There are a lot of traditions when you get married in Italy...

I'll show you some examples:

1) The first is the WEDDING DRESS

The bride should not look in the mirror with the dress on the wedding day and guests should avoid wearing white or black clothes.

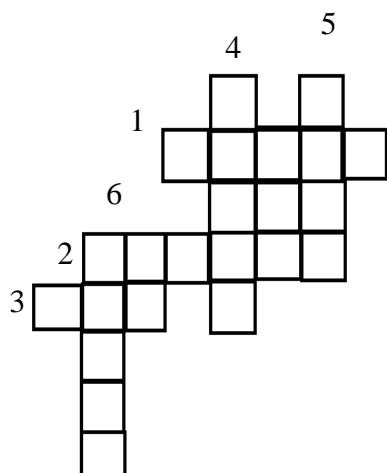
2) The second is the BOUQUET

The bouquet should be bought by the groom. At the end of the ceremony, the bride throws her bouquet to a group of single women, and according to tradition the woman who fetches the bouquet will be the next to marry.

3) The third is BREAK THE POT

In Sardinia, there is an ancient tradition, the breaking of a plate full of rice, coins, salt, wheat and other symbols of abundance, in the doorway. A traditional way to wish much joy and prosperity to the new couple.

LET'S PLAY A QUICK GAME!



ACROSS

1) According to the tradition, who have to buy the bouquet?

2) Which is the day that Italians usually dedicate only to family?

3) What do spouses freak following the Sardinia's tradition?

DOWN

- 4) On the wedding day, who is that should not look in the mirror?
- 5) The breaking of the _____ is a traditional way to wish much _____
- 6) In which part of Italy families are made up of a lot of children?

by Martina G. 2E

