

## Italy's Poverty on the Rise

Mario Gates (October 19, 2011)



The Catholic charity Caritas announced that there has been a 80.8% rise in requests for help at its offices across Italy during the four years of economic crisis from 2007 to 2010. Most requests were for help in getting out of poverty while some sought assistance in getting jobs or solving family issues.

Italian newspapers are writing about what has now been labeled a “new poverty,” a poverty whose victims are people who do own a house and do have a job but who still have serious financial problems. From 2007 to 2010 there has been an increase of people in this situation of about 13.8%; in Southern Italy the increase reached 74%. The data was provided by the Catholic charity [Caritas-Fondazione Zancan](#) [2]. ([Caritas Internationalis](#) [3] is a confederation of 165 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations operating in over 200 countries and territories worldwide).

The “new poverty” phenomenon has been growing in the last four years (every four years,



representatives from all Caritas member countries meet in the Vatican City to review work carried out and approve a budget). Differently from the classic concept of “poverty,” regarding someone homeless and jobless, these people do have a place to residence, they do have an occupation and they do have a family but getting by is extremely difficult. The majority of them are young: about 20% of those asking for assistance at specialized centers are below 35 years of age. In just five years, from 2005-2010, the percentage of young people in a poverty situation has increased by 59.6%. 76.1% (it was 70% in 2005) does not study or work.

In four years (2007-2010) the requests of economic support at the Caritas Centers has increased by 80.8%. Overall, more people (19.8% total) are contacting them with different requests. In 2010 Caritas had counted 8.272.000 poor people (about 13.8% of all population); in 2009 they were 7.810.000 (13.1%).

Among the first issues reported there is economic poverty, that is followed by lack of jobs and family crises. Overall in the last four years the request of external help, such as groups of volunteers, public or private organizations, churches and charities, has increased by 83.1%. There is also a strong increase of financial aids (+80.8%) and professional consulting (+46.1%).

There is a decrease of requests for social support (-38.6%) and job assistance (-8.5%).

According to Caritas “poverty strikes the entire family: everybody suffers from stress, on a different level, although women and young kids are the ones who suffer the most.”

In 2004, for example, 75% of issues involved primary needs such as, home, food and healthcare; in 2010 that value increased to 81.9% while post-materialistic problems, such as psychological matters and addiction emergencies decreased from 25 to 18.1%. The “home issue” has become an emergency, as it has increased of 23.6% in the last four years.

Foreigners are particularly vulnerable and they represent 70% of those who ask for assistance. According to a survey done by Caritas operators, those who suffer major hardship are immigrants who live alone, who are male, between 25-40 years of age. Generally speaking they have job-related issues (66.4%) and live in economic poverty (62.5%).

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### Links

[1] <http://ftp.iitaly.org/files/mensa1319055786jpg>

[2] <http://www.fondazionezancan.it/tags/browse/caritas>

[3] <http://www.caritas.org/>