Dual Citizenship:
Ireland & Italy

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What is Dual Citizenship?

Dual citizenship is the status in which a person is a citizen of two countries at the same time. In order for an individual to become a citizen of two countries, each country must permit dual citizenship with the other country. Many countries do not allow dual citizenship, and countries that do are particular about which nations their citizens can hold dual citizenship with. Citizenship is generally obtained by:

- *Jus Soli* – right of birth
- *Jus Sanguinis* – right of blood (also known as citizenship by descent)

Advantages of Dual Citizenship

- European Union Citizenship
- Ability to work in EU member states
- Ease of travel
- Property ownership
- Right to vote
- Financial, tax, and business benefits
- Health care benefits
- Educational rights
- Documenting family history
- Passing citizenship to future descendants
- Ethnic and cultural meaning

Irish Citizenship By Descent

Laws

The Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts (of 1956, 1986, 1994, 2001 and 2004) set forth laws governing citizenship. The 1956 act allows citizenship by descent for persons born outside of Ireland who descend from Irish citizens.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include:

- any person whose grandparent was born in Ireland
- any person whose parent is an Irish citizen through naturalization, adoption, post-nuptial citizenship, or foreign birth registration prior to the applicant's birth

Northern Ireland

- Individuals born prior to 1922 in the area that became known as Northern Ireland are considered to be Irish citizens. If an applicant's parent or grandparent (whom citizenship is being applied through) was born in this area prior to 1922, the applicant may be eligible for Irish citizenship.

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Foreign Births Register (FBR) Application

In order to become an Irish citizen by descent, eligible individuals must register their births on the Foreign Births Register (FBR). The applicant may then apply for an Irish passport. The FBR application:

- Must be signed by a witness
- Be accompanied by two passport-sized photos

Necessary Documents

Applicant

- Birth certificate
- Marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Name change documentation (if applicable—does not apply to marital name changes)
- Three proofs of identity
    - One photo ID (passport, driver's license, ID card)
    - One identifying current address (utility bill, paycheck, bank statement, etc.)

Applicant's Parent (through whom citizenship is being claimed)

- Birth certificate
- Marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Death certificate (or photo ID, if living)
- Name change documentation (if applicable—does not apply to marital name changes)
- Proof of Irish citizenship (if parent not born in Ireland)
    - Naturalization records (if applicable)
    - Foreign Births Registration Certificate (if applicable)
    - Post-Nuptial Declaration (if applicable)
    - Adoption records (if applicable)

Applicant's Grandparent

- Irish birth certificate
- Marriage certificate
- Name change documentation (if applicable—does not apply to marital name changes)
- Death certificate (or photo ID, if living)

Substitute Records

For births not listed in Irish civil registers, a form 24R must be obtained to show that an unsuccessful search for the record was performed. In the event that a United States vital record cannot be found, a letter stating such must be obtained from the agency (usually called Certificate of No Record). In these cases, the Irish consulate often allows record substitutes, such

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as church records (baptismal and marriage registers), which are most often used to document births of the first generation of individuals born in the United States (for whom vital records often do not exist). Depending on the complexity of the application, the consulate may ask for additional documents to clarify relationships.

Record Corrections

Discrepancies in vital records (varying birth dates, inconsistent use of middle names, etc.) may need to be corrected, depending on the severity of the discrepancy. The policies and procedures for vital records corrections vary by agency and may take anywhere from several weeks to two years to be completed.

Italian Citizenship By Descent

Important: 2025–2026 Changes

Italian citizenship law changed significantly in 2025 and 2026. The rules described in the rest of this section still determine whether a line of citizenship is unbroken, but the following now also apply (current as of November 2026):

- **New limit on who qualifies (2025).** Under Decree-Law no. 36/2025, converted by Law no. 74/2025, a person born outside Italy who holds another citizenship is recognized as an Italian citizen only if (1) a parent or grandparent held only Italian citizenship on the day the applicant was born (or at death, if that ancestor died earlier), **or** (2) a parent lived in Italy for at least two consecutive years after becoming an Italian citizen and before the applicant's birth. This applies to applications made after 27 March 2025, no matter when the applicant was born. A parent or grandparent who had already naturalized in the United States, or who was a dual citizen from birth, does not meet the first test.
- **Who remains under the prior rules.** People already recognized as citizens, and applicants who by 11:59 p.m. (Rome time) on 27 March 2025 had submitted a complete application, received a confirmed appointment from the consulate or comune, or filed a court case.
- **Where the law stands.** Italy's Constitutional Court upheld the 2025 law (judgment no. 63/2026, published 30 April 2026). In July 2026 the same court asked the Court of Justice of the European Union whether the law is compatible with EU law (Case C-816/26). The law remains in force while that case is pending, and no decision date has been set.
- **The "minor issue" has been reversed.** The 2024 rule on minor children of naturalized ancestors is no longer applied (see Factors Impacting Citizenship).
- **Application process.** Under Law no. 11/2026, each consulate may accept only a limited number of adult applications per year and has up to 36 months to decide them. Beginning 1 January 2029, adults living outside Italy will apply to a central office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome instead of a consulate.
- **Other routes.** Minor children of a parent who is an Italian citizen by birth may acquire citizenship through a declaration by the parents (generally within three years of the

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child's birth, or by 31 May 2029 for children who were under 18 on 24 May 2025 and whose parent was recognized under the prior rules). A person born in Italy who lost Italian citizenship by naturalizing elsewhere on or before 15 August 1992 may reacquire it by declaration at the consulate through 31 December 2027. A person whose parent or grandparent is or was an Italian citizen by birth may apply for naturalization after two years of legal residence in Italy.

Laws

Italian citizens are permitted to hold more than one citizenship, per:

- Law no. 91/1992
    - Decree of the President of the Republic (DPR) no. 572 of 12 October 1993
    - DPR no. 362 of 18 April 1994

Citizenship by descent is also governed by Law no. 555 of 13 June 1912 (for events before 16 August 1992); Decree-Law no. 36 of 28 March 2025, converted by Law no. 74 of 23 May 2025 (limits for people born outside Italy); and Law no. 11 of 19 January 2026 (application procedures).

When Italian citizens left Italy, they were supposed to report any change in their status to the Italian government, including marriages, births of children, naturalizations, and name changes. When an individual applies for Italian citizenship, these events (regardless of where they took place) will be recorded in the Italian-born ancestor's comune. Italian citizenship by descent has traditionally been based on the principle that the applicant has been an Italian citizen since his or her birth; thus, once the ancestral events are recorded, the applicant will receive an Italian birth certificate and citizenship will be granted. The 2025 law limits this principle for most people born outside Italy (see Important: 2025–2026 Changes).

Eligibility

Applicants must demonstrate that their Italian citizenship has been transmitted in an unbroken line from an Italian-born ascendant and, for applications made after 27 March 2025, that they meet the new limit described above. Citizenship may be obtained:

- through the paternal line, as long as the ancestor through whom citizenship is being claimed was alive after Italy became a nation on 17 March 1861. (Before the 2025 law, there was no limit on the number of generations.)
- through a female ascendant, as long as the female ascendant's citizenship was transmitted to her child after January 1, 1948.

Factors Impacting Citizenship

There are many ways in which a line of Italian citizenship may be broken. The following dates and laws can impact the transfer of citizenship:

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- Italy became a nation on **17 March 1861**. Italian-born ancestors must have lived after this date to be considered Italian citizens.
- A federal law passed on **20 February 1907** mandated that women automatically took the citizenship of their husband.
- Beginning **22 September 1922**, the United States no longer granted automatic citizenship to the wives of naturalized men.
- An Italian-born ancestor who naturalized before **1 July 1912** lost Italian citizenship, as did that ancestor's minor children (including those already born in the United States). From that date through **15 August 1992**, an Italian who naturalized abroad still lost his or her own Italian citizenship, but children already born in the United States, who were U.S. citizens from birth, kept theirs. Since **16 August 1992**, naturalizing abroad did not cause the loss of Italian citizenship.
- **The "minor issue" (2024–2026; no longer applied)**: Under a rule introduced in October 2024, if your Italian-born ancestor naturalized before **16 August 1992**, *when their U.S.-born child was a minor*, the minor child was treated as having lost their Italian citizenship as a result of their parent's naturalization. The definition of minor varies based on time period (under the age of 21 up until 9 March 1975, and under the age of 18 for all dates thereafter). Italy's Supreme Court (Corte di Cassazione, Sezioni Unite, judgment no. 24045/2026) rejected this rule in July 2026: a child born in a country that made him or her a citizen at birth, such as the United States, kept Italian citizenship when a parent later naturalized. In August 2026 the Ministry of the Interior issued Circular no. 65050 to bring administrative practice into line with the ruling and to allow applications refused solely on this ground to be re-examined on request. A child born in Italy who became a U.S. citizen through a parent's naturalization is a different case and is still treated as having lost Italian citizenship. The reversal does not change the 2025 limit described at the start of this section.
- After **1 January 1948**, female Italian citizens could pass their citizenship on to their children. Children born before 1 January 1948 acquired citizenship from their fathers only. (Many applicants have been able to go through Italian courts to bypass this "1948 rule," but the application process is not traditional and is more costly and complicated. Court cases filed after 27 March 2025 are also subject to the 2025 limit.)

Out of Wedlock Births

Italian law does not discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate births for citizenship purposes. However, documentation issues may prevent applications from being approved.

Adoptions

Children adopted by Italian citizens, and children of Italian citizens adopted by non-Italian families, are eligible for citizenship by descent. Research and documentation challenges may arise due to sealed records and the inability to clearly document lineage.

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Terminology

- *Ascendant*: an applicant's ancestor
- *Italian-born ascendant*: the applicant's closest "ascendant" born in Italy
- *Intermediate ascendant(s)*: the applicant's ascendant(s) in the direct line between the applicant and their Italian-born ascendant

Supporting Documents

Needs vary greatly by consulate, and even within each consulate. All documents must be original, long-form, certified copies showing parents' names and birth, marriage and death locations (city level).

Apostille Seals

An Apostille Seal is issued by the Secretary of State to verify the authenticity of a document. Some consulates require Apostille seals, while others do not. It is advisable to check with the consulate prior to submitting the application.

Translations

As a general rule, all non-Italian documents must be translated into Italian. However, each consulate has a list of specific documents that they require to be translated. Some consulates require that only documents pertaining to the applicant, their spouse and children be translated, while others require full translation of all documents and application related correspondence. Check with each consulate prior to submitting the application.

Vital Record Corrections

Discrepancies in the applicant's vital records will need to be corrected. Major discrepancies in ascendants' vital records (varying birth dates, usage of middle names, etc.) may need to be corrected, depending on the preferences of the consulate. The policies and procedures for vital records corrections vary by issuing agency and may take anywhere from several weeks to two years for the process to be completed.

Divorce Records

Divorce decrees (not certificates or full case files) and certificates or certified letters of non-appeal must be submitted for any divorces in the applicant's family line.

Naturalization Records

For a certificate of naturalization that does not show identifying details about the Italian-born ascendant, such as the names of their children or other information identifying that individual as the applicant's ascendant, it is advisable to also obtain a Petition for Naturalization or other documentation properly identifying the individual.

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Under the 2025 law, the date of naturalization matters in a new way. The applicant must show that the qualifying parent or grandparent still held only Italian citizenship on the day the applicant was born, so a naturalization record dated after the applicant's birth, or proof that no naturalization took place, is essential.

*If the Italian-born ascendant is still living, they may be required to request naturalization records or searches of naturalization records, due to privacy restrictions.

Alien Ascendants

If the Italian-born ascendant was not naturalized, the applicant must provide ALL of the following:

- USCIS letter of non-existence of record
- County-level letter of non-existence of record
- NARA letter of non-existence of record
- U.S. Census after the birth of the Italian-born ascendant's child, showing naturalization status.

The following list can be used to request the above-mentioned documents:

- USCIS: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
    - Request naturalization records and include in the request the immigrant's identifying information, including his or her name and any aliases, date of birth, place of birth, spouses' names, children's names, residence and immigration data
    - If USCIS provides a naturalization record, keep the envelope, as it may be used as an informal verification of the record's origin.
    - If USCIS provides a letter stating that no record exists, request a Certificate of Nonexistence of Record from USCIS, Attn: Records Operations Branch, 1200 First Street NE, Washington D.C. 20529-2204.
- Local County Clerk or Courthouse
    - Request a search for naturalization records from:
        - the county where the Italian-born ascendant lived the longest AND
        - the county where the Italian-born ascendant's child (from whom the applicant descends) was born
    - Records must include the county seal and a signature
- NARA: National Archives and Records Administration
    - Request a full search under the Italian-born ascendant's name(s)
    - If no naturalization record is found as a result of the local and federal searches, a certified copy of the first U.S. census that the Italian-born ascendant's child (through whom the applicant descends) appears in must be obtained from NARA.

Necessary Documents

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Applicant

- Birth certificate
- Marriage certificate(s) – must show spouses' dates and places of birth
- Divorce *decree(s)* & divorce certificate(s) of non-appeal
- Birth certificate(s) of spouse(s) and minor children

Ascendants

- Birth, marriage & death certificate(s)
- Birth and death certificate(s) of spouses
- Marriage certificates for previous or subsequent marriage(s) of spouse(s)
- Divorce decree(s) & divorce certificate(s) of non-appeal

Italian-born Ascendant

- All of the above
- Naturalization record or proof of no naturalization

Substitute Records

Each consulate has jurisdiction over the substitute records that it will allow or not allow. Church records (baptismal and marriage records) are the most common, and can often be used to prove lineage when vital records are not available and when a "Certificate of No Record" or similar document has been obtained from the record issuing authority where the event took place. This applies for both Italian vital events as well as events in other countries. Consulates may also ask for adoption records, guardianship records, and other types of records based on the unique circumstances of an application.

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