SOCIO ECONOMIC DATA OF THE TERRITORY: Province of Cuneo

A. INTRODUCTION

Source: tuttitalia.it

The province of Cuneo is located in the South-west part of Piedmont region (Northwest Italy) and borders France to the west. With an area of 6,894.94 square kilometres, it is the third largest province in Italy and for this reason it is called "la Granda" ("the big one"). The territory is mainly composed by mountains (50.8%, half of which is low mountain), by 26.6% by hills and 22.6% by plain. The Alps embrace all the South-west side and to the east they degrade towards Langhe Roero and Monferrato landscape, which is Unesco World Heritage Site. The highest mountain is Monviso (3,841 m).

In terms of production, the entrepreneurial system is very dynamic and characterized by a strong vocation for agri-food sector, with several product specialisations of excellence, as well as a manufacturing sector wide and diversified and a growing service sector. Among the fastest growing sectors there is tourism, especially due to wine landscapes of Langhe and Roero and, increasingly, to the high quality of mountainous natural heritage, that is still "undamaged" by mass tourism. It should be noted a relatively recent development of new forms of tourism and hospitality, especially outdoor tourism.

The labour market is characterized by low unemployment rates (even for youngsters), if compared to regional and national figures. However, there is a relatively low education level of labour force and a new recent increase of early school leaving, after few years of relevant recovery.

The province of Cuneo stands out even for a good environmental quality, wide presence of historical and cultural resources, high quality of life, positive development perspectives for tourism. Instead, among the main weaknesses we can underline the geographic isolation, lack of infrastructures and weak transport system, dichotomy between urban centres and rural areas, depopulation risk in many mountain areas.

Some internal areas are facing a renovated social vitality through the recovery and repopulation of small villages, new forms of youth entrepreneurship, some interesting experimentation of community cooperatives.

The **Po Valley**, where Ostana and its case study are located, is the most Northern valley in the province of Cuneo and includes Monviso - the highest mountain of the province -, the source of the main Italian river Po, and several alpine lakes. Part of this area belongs to the Natural Park of Monviso; moreover, the territory is part of the transnational Reserve MaB (Man and Biosphere), approved by Unesco in 2014. The Po Valley counts 15 municipalities.

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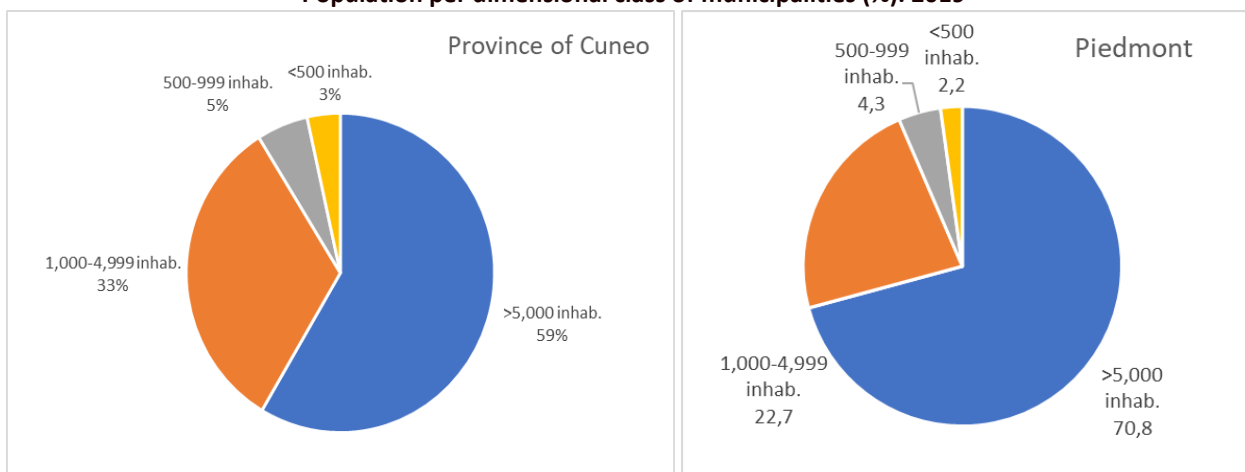of the European Union

B) POPULATION

The province of Cuneo has 586,568 inhabitants (Istat, 2019) and is characterized by a strong administrative fragmentation. It is composed by 247 Municipalities, most of them of small size: more than half (55%) has less than 1,000 inhabitants and only 7 cities have more than 15,000 inhabitants (Istat, 2020). More than 40% of the total population lives in municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants.

Municipalities by population. Province of Cuneo

Municipalities by population	v.a.	%
15,000+ inhabitants	7	3
5000-14,999 inhab.	18	7
1000-4999 inhab.	85	34
500-999 inhab.	44	18
<500 inhab.	93	38
Total	247	100

Source: own elaboration based on figures from Istat

Population per dimensional class of municipalities (%). 2019

Source: own elaboration based on figures from Istat

Population density, compared with country and EU

The province of Cuneo, with 84.6 inhabitants per square kilometre, has a population density lower than Piedmont (170,51), Italy (198,02) and EU-27 average (108.8).
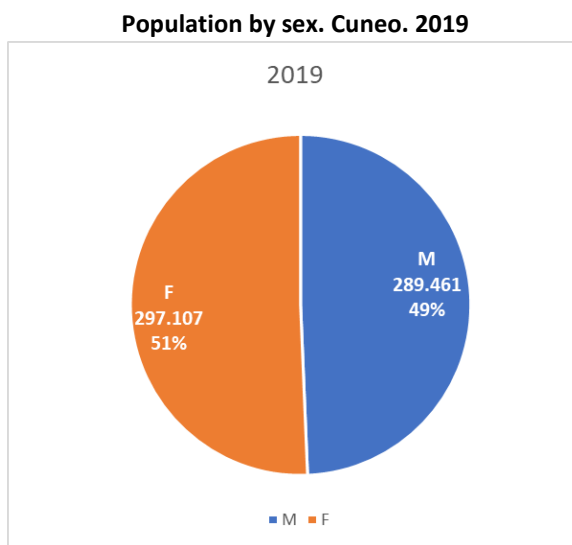
Population density. 2019

Area	Inhab. per km2
EU 27 (2018)	108.8
Italy	198.0
Piedmont	170.5
Province of Asti	141.2
Province of Cuneo	84.6
Province of Verbano Cusio Ossola	72.0

Sources: Eurostat; own preparation based on figures from Istat and Demos-Ires Piemonte

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Population by sex and age groups

The current population in the province of Cuneo is 586,568 inhabitants, of which 51% females and 49% males (on 31 December 2019).

Between 2018 and 2019 the population decreased by 2.3%, less than in Piedmont (-4.2%; Ires) and Italy (-3.2%; Istat). Since 2013 the population has been decreasing and an ageing process is ongoing, although it is less relevant than in other provinces of Piedmont, especially thanks to a birth rate that is higher than in the rest of the region.
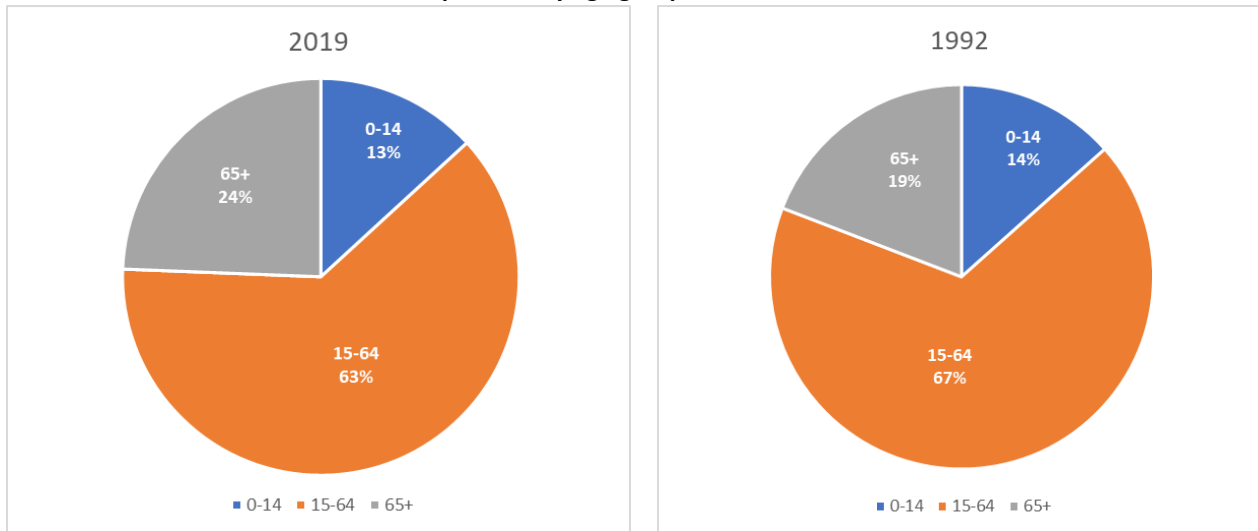
Population by sex. Cuneo. 2019

Source: Demos – Ires Piemonte, 31.12.2019

In 2019 in the province of Cuneo the median age of population is 46.1 years: this figure is the lowest among the 8 provinces in Piedmont (47.3 is the median age) and is even lower than Italian figure (46.7), while the median age in EU-27 is 43.7.

The population is mostly concentrated in the middle age class: in 2019 the share of population aged from 15 to 64 is 63%. The second group is represented by senior population: about one person in four (24%) is aged 65 and over; in EU-27 the share of this age class in 2019 is 20.3% (Eurostat). The youngster population (0-14 years old) represents 13% of the total.

If we compare this composition to 1992 figures, we can observe a significant increase of senior population: on one hand, the age group 65 years and over raised from 19% in 1992 to 24% in 2019; on the other hand, the middle age class – where it is concentrated the main part of workforce – lost 4 percentage points in the same period, passing from 67% to 63%. However, the youngest group aged 0-14 years – that is the forthcoming workforce – remains substantially unchanged.

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Population by age group. Cuneo. 2019 and 1992
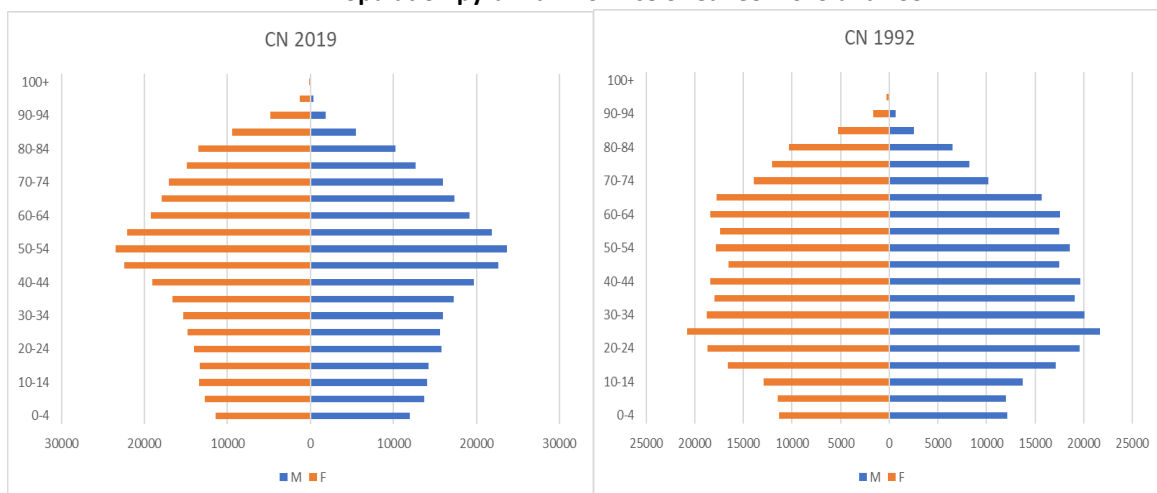

Source: Ires Piemonte, Osservatorio Demos

The population pyramid related to 2019 has the following characteristics:

- A loss of fertility in the last 10 years. This can be appreciated in the narrowness of the base.
- Most of the population is concentrated between the ages of 45 and 60, especially in 50-54 group.
- An unbalanced relationship among age groups, in favour of the older groups, especially from 60 to 79 years old.
- A greater number of women in the oldest age groups.

In 1992 the population pyramid had the following characteristics:

- A larger base (fertility rates were higher than today)
- Higher concentration of population between the ages 25 and 40
- Homogeneous distribution within the central age groups between 15 and 70
- A lower concentration of population within the oldest age classes, due to mortality rates higher than today, especially among men.
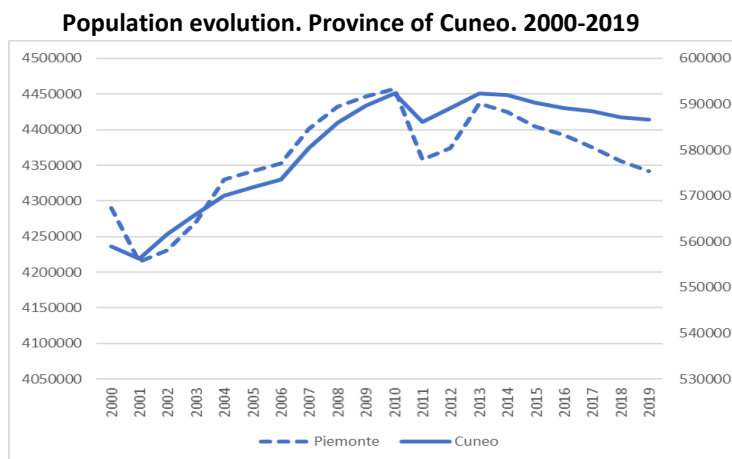
Population pyramid. Province of Cuneo. 2019 and 1992

Source: Demos – Ires Piemonte
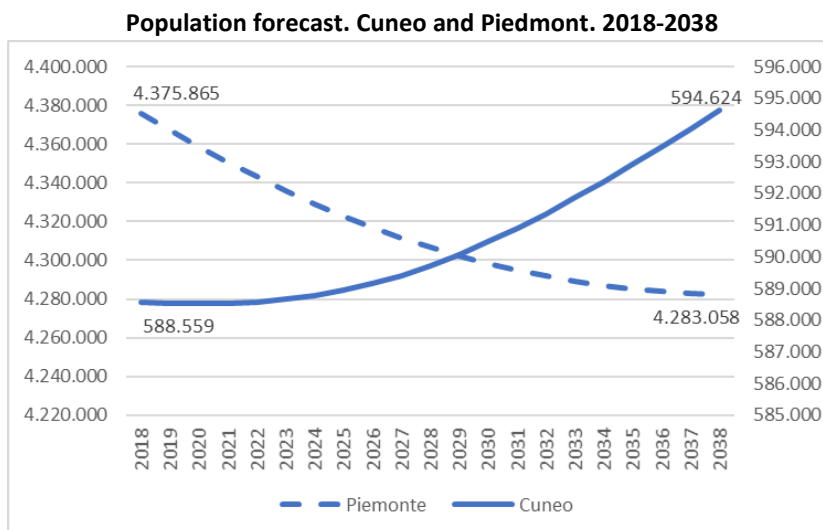
Population evolution along the last 10 years

The current demographic evolution in the province of Cuneo shows a downward trend since 2013. In comparison with the regional trend, the population decrease in the last years in Cuneo is relatively slighter than in the whole region.

Population evolution. Province of Cuneo. 2000-2019

Source: own preparation based on figures from Demos – Ires Piemonte

Population forecast (total, by sex and age group)

Ires Piemonte[1] elaborated a population forecast for Piedmont region and its 8 provinces to 2038, based on 2018 figure. According to this analysis, the population in Cuneo in the next 20 years should grow by 6,065 inhabitants, passing from 588,559 in 2018 to 594,624 in 2038, while the regional trend is supposed to be downward.

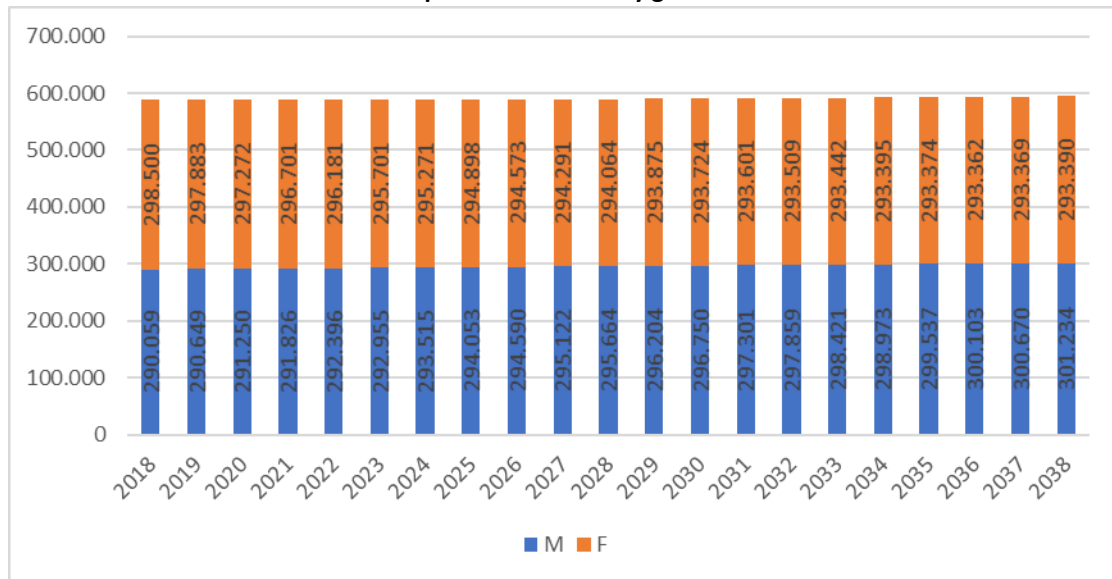**Population forecast. Cuneo and Piedmont. 2018-2038**

Source: Ires Piemonte

Between 2018 and 2038 it is expected a decrease of female population (-5,110 units) in the face of an increase of male population (+11,175 units). This phenomenon could be motivated especially by an increased life expectancy rate among men, due to genetic and social reasons, and a reduction of male mortality rate especially among the oldest age groups (Ires Piemonte, 2019).

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[1] Ires Piemonte is the Regional Institute for Economic and Social Research in Piedmont (www.ires.piemonte.it).
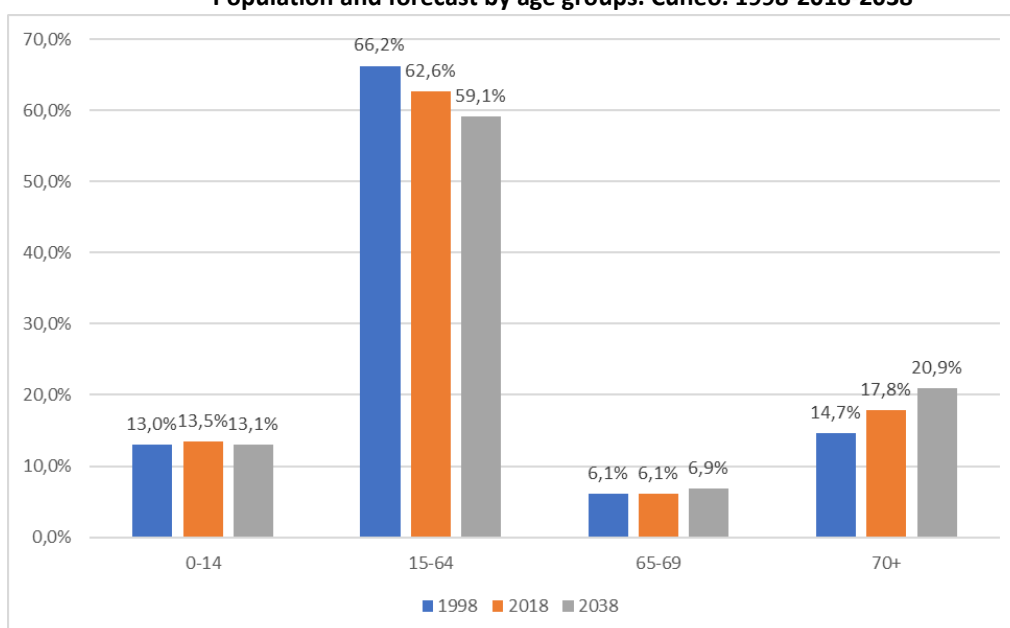
Population forecast by gender

Source: Ires Piemonte

The forecast analysis is useful also to compare the variation in the distribution of population by age groups over a period of 40 years (1998-2038). We decided to share the population in four age groups to observe the effects of ageing process. The most relevant figure is related to the loss of relative size of the traditionally so-called "working-age population" (15-64 years): in terms of percentage composition, the population in Cuneo should face a decrease of the working-age group (passing from 66.2% to 59.1% between 1998 and 2038) and an increase of the senior age groups (the potential retirees), especially of the class aged 70 years and over (from 14.7% to 20.9%). The percentage of the youngest age group 0-14 should remain unchanged around 13%.

Population and forecast by age groups. Cuneo. 1998-2018-2038

Source: own preparation based on figures from Istat and Demos-Ires Piemonte

C) EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Activity rate (by sex)

The activity rate of the province of Cuneo (73.1%) is higher than that of Piedmont (71,6). The male activity rate shows a higher value than the female one in both the considered areas.

Activity rate by sex (%). 2019

	Province of Asti	Province of Cuneo	Province of VCO	Piedmont
Total	71.9	73.1	67.7	71.6
Male	81.1	80.8	75.0	77.9
Female	62.6	65.3	60.3	65.3

Source: Piedmont Region – Regional Observatory on Labour Market

Employment by sex and age group

In 2019 employees in the province of Cuneo are 263,637 (Istat). Compared to 2018, the figure has increased by 1.1% (+3,000 units), while at regional level there is, in fact, stability (-0.1%) (ORML). Employees are mainly men (57% equal to 150,188 units), while women represent 43% (113,449 units).

In terms of employment rate Cuneo ranks first among the eight Piedmont provinces of (69,4%): in 2019 the employment rate is 69.4% in Cuneo and 66% in Piedmont. The difference with the Italian rate is more than 10 percentage points (59% in Italy).

The male employment rate is higher than the female one (77.3% versus 61.4%). If compared with Piedmont region, the male employment rate in Cuneo is higher than the regional one, as well as the female rate.
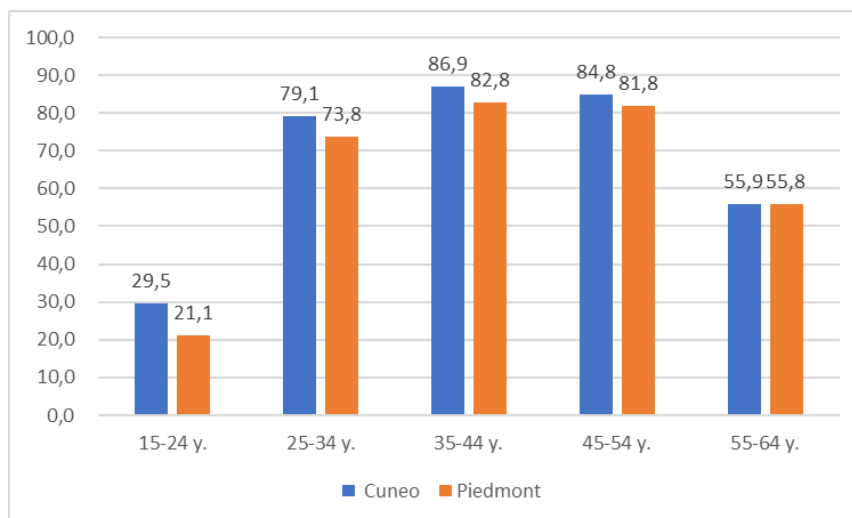
Employment rate (15-64 years old) by sex (%). 2019

	Province of Asti	Province of Cuneo	Province of VCO	Piedmont	Italy
Total	67.8	69.4	63.6	66.0	59.0
Male	77.4	77.3	71.4	72.8	68.0
Female	58.2	61.4	55.7	59.2	50.1

Source: Istat

In 2019 the highest employment rate is related to the age class 35-44 years (86.9%), followed by age groups 45-54 (84.8%) and 25-34 years (79.1%). If compared to Piedmont, the figures in the province of Cuneo are higher for each age class, especially for the youngest group 15-24 years, as well as for the central groups.

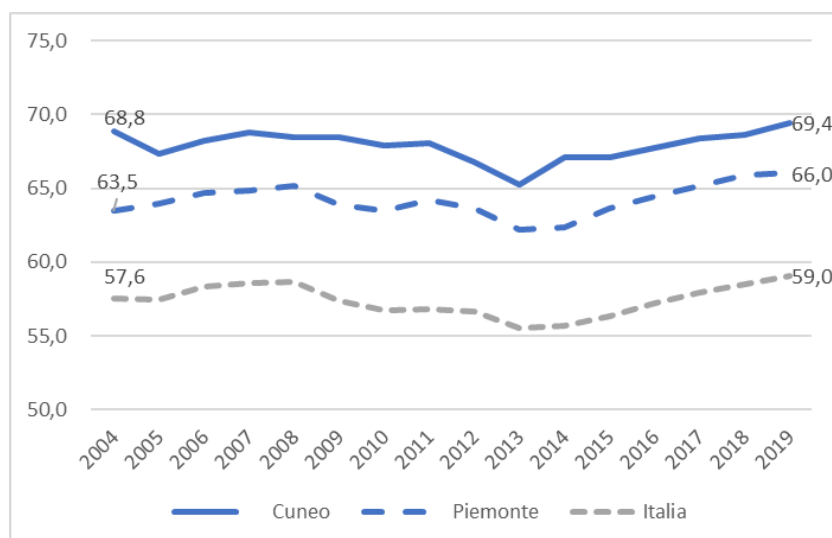**Employment rate by age (%). Cuneo and Piedmont. 2019**

Source: Piedmont Region – Regional Observatory on Labour Market

Evolution of employment rate

Between 2004 and 2019 the employment rate in the province of Cuneo has followed the economic and financial crisis' trend; nevertheless, it has always maintained figures higher than the regional and national levels. Since 2013 there has been a positive recovery until 2019.

Employment rate in province of Cuneo, Piedmont and Italy (%). 2008-2019
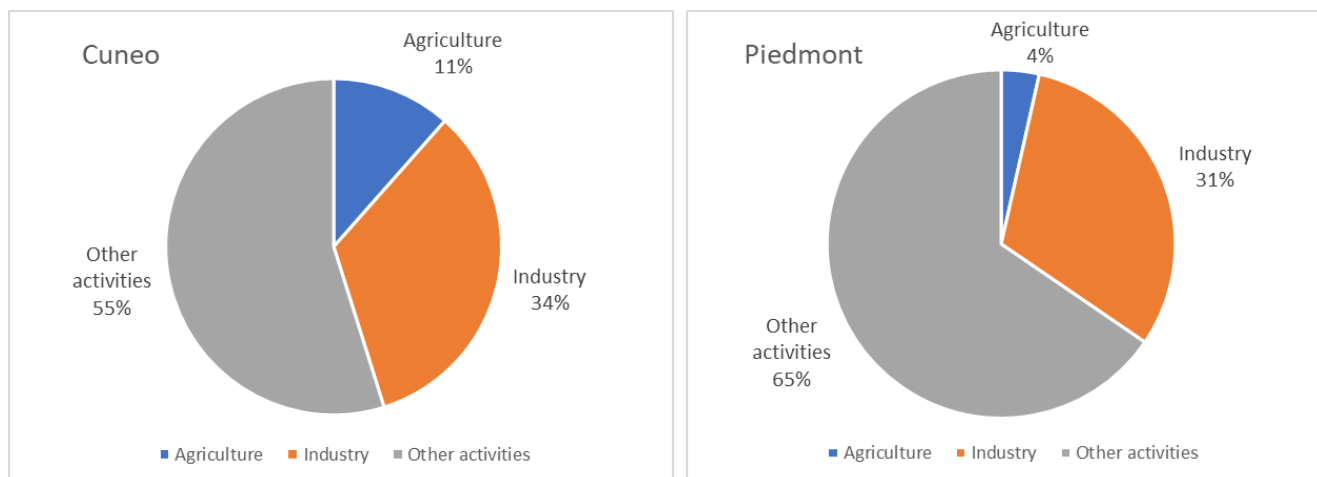

Source: Istat

Employment by sector

The main share of employees in the province of Cuneo, equal to 55%, in 2019 is employed in "Other activities", one out of three in manufacturing and 11% in agriculture. If compared with Piedmont, agriculture is more relevant in Cuneo (11% versus 4%), while Service sector and, with a smaller gap, Industry are less relevant than at the regional level.

The 70% is employed, the rest is self-employed.

Employment by sector in province of Cuneo and Piedmont (%).2019

Source: Piedmont Region – Regional Observatory on Labour Market

The ISTAT data related to the databank of enterprises with employees (ASIA) allows to observe the employment phenomenon from the point of view of activity sector and size. The following statistics are referred only to firms with employees (thus, individual companies are excluded) operating in the private sector, agriculture excluded.

According to ASIA databank, in 2018 the main portion of employees in the province of Cuneo, equal to 37.6%, is employed in manufacturing sector, followed by trade sector (23.7%) and services (23.6%). Construction is 9.1%. Compared to the regional level, Cuneo shows a lower level of employment especially in services sector, that in Piedmont is 34.5%, while trade is more relevant than in the region (15.6%). Manufacturing is in line with the regional figure (36%).
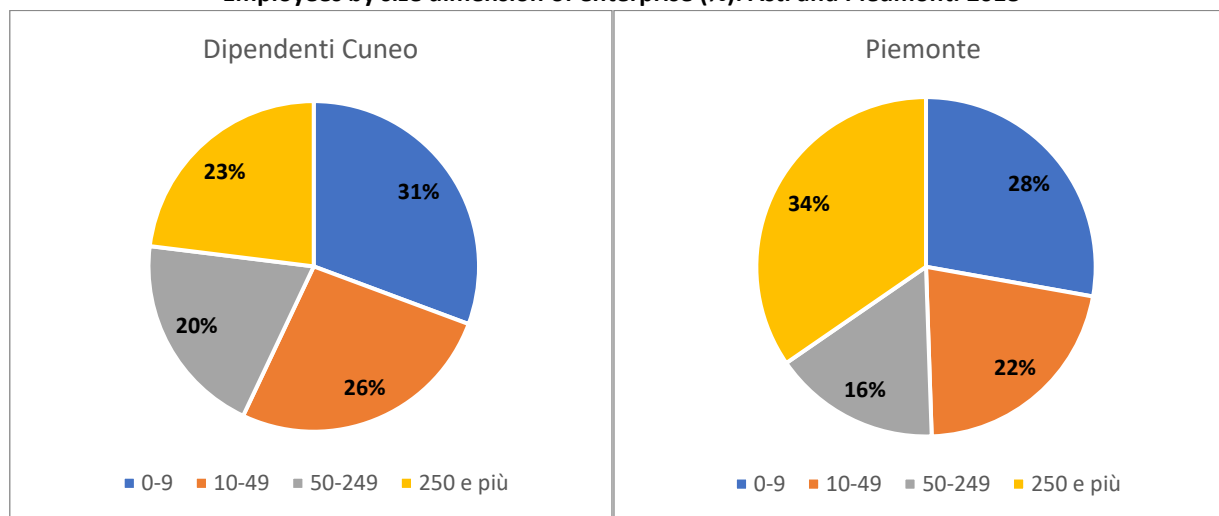
Employment by sector in the province of VCO (%) 2018

	VCO	Asti	Cuneo	Piedmont
Mining	0,5	0,1	0,1	0,1
Manufacturing	32,1	36,6	37,6	36,0
Energy, waste	2,5	2,3	1,4	2,1
Construction	13,0	10,2	9,1	6,5
Trade	21,3	21,7	23,7	15,6
Logistics	4,7	4,3	4,5	5,2
Services	25,9	24,7	23,6	34,5
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: ISTAT – Asia

The distribution of employees by size dimension of enterprises underlines some differences between entrepreneurial system of Cuneo and that of Piedmont. The 31% is employed in very small enterprises with less than 10 employees; overall, 57% employed in companies under 50 employees. The main difference is related to the portion of employees in big enterprises (with more than 250 employees): in Piedmont they are equal to 34%, in the province of Cuneo 23%.

Employees by size dimension of enterprise (%). Asti and Piedmont. 2018

Source: ISTAT – Asia

Recruitments (flow data by Agenzia Piemonte Lavoro - Employment Centres)
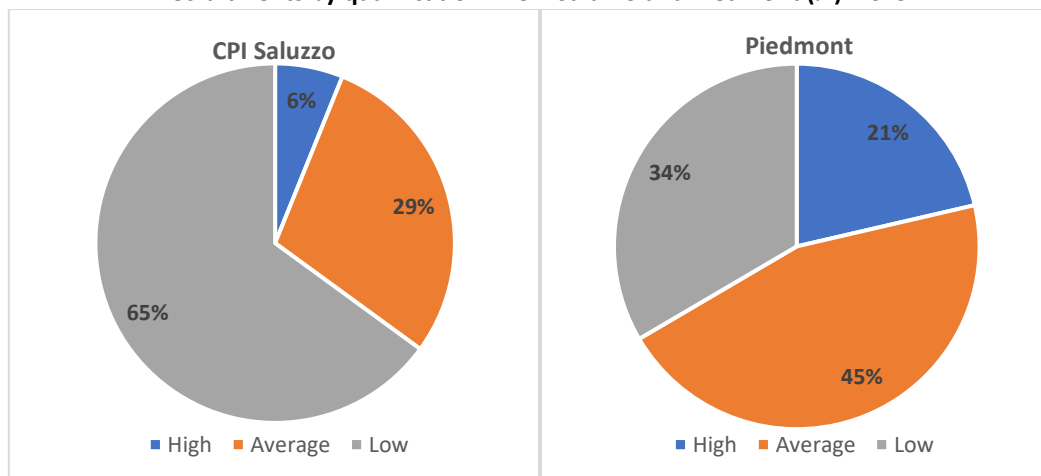
The 30 Employment Centres (CPI) of Piedmont Region collect a relevant quantity of data on employment flows referred to people recruited by companies in the private sector. Data are referred to the local basins/areas, one for each Employment Centre in Piedmont, and they mainly correspond to the local labour systems (LLS): every Employment Centre provides its services within a specific local area, which is composed by a variable number of municipalities.

In this analysis it is taken into consideration the number and the type of recruitments of individuals by companies with at least one employee in 2019.

The Employment Centre in Saluzzo is one of the five Centres located in the province of Cuneo and it includes Valley Po, where the municipality of Ostana and ours best practice are based. In 2019 the Employment Centre of Saluzzo registered 23,532 recruitments.
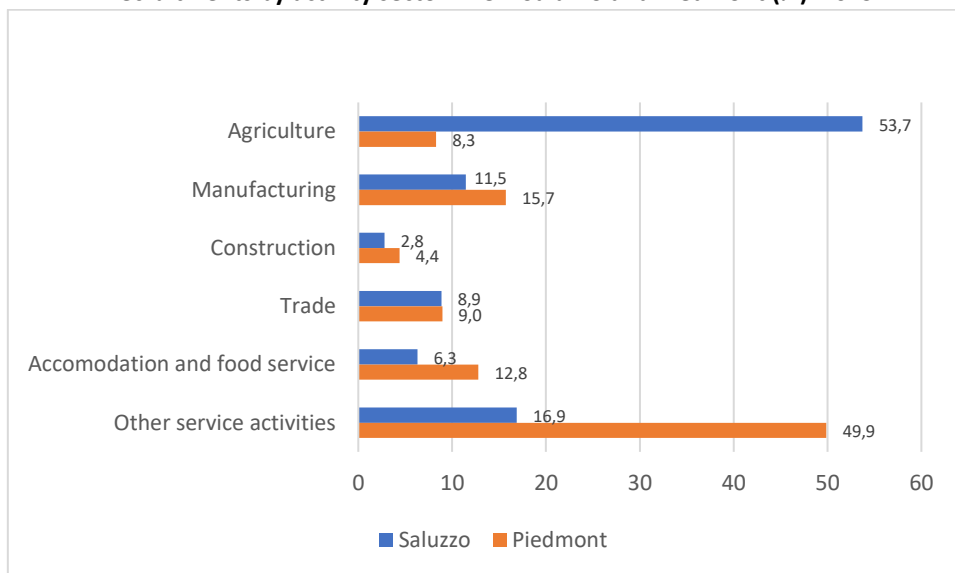
The 65% is referred to individuals with low skill levels, the 29% medium and 6% high. If compared with Piedmont figure, in Saluzzo there is a wide portion of low-skilled workers (it is 34% in Piedmont) and a very low share of high-skilled workers (21% in Piedmont).

Recruitments by qualification in CPI Saluzzo and Piedmont (%). 2019

Taking into consideration the activity field of recruiting companies, it seems clear the agricultural vocation of the province of Cuneo: those who were recruited in this sector are 53.7% in Saluzzo, while they are 12.8% in Piedmont. Tourism and Other services sectors show a delay in the comparison with the region (6.3% and 16.9% in Saluzzo versus 12.8% and 49.9% in Piedmont).
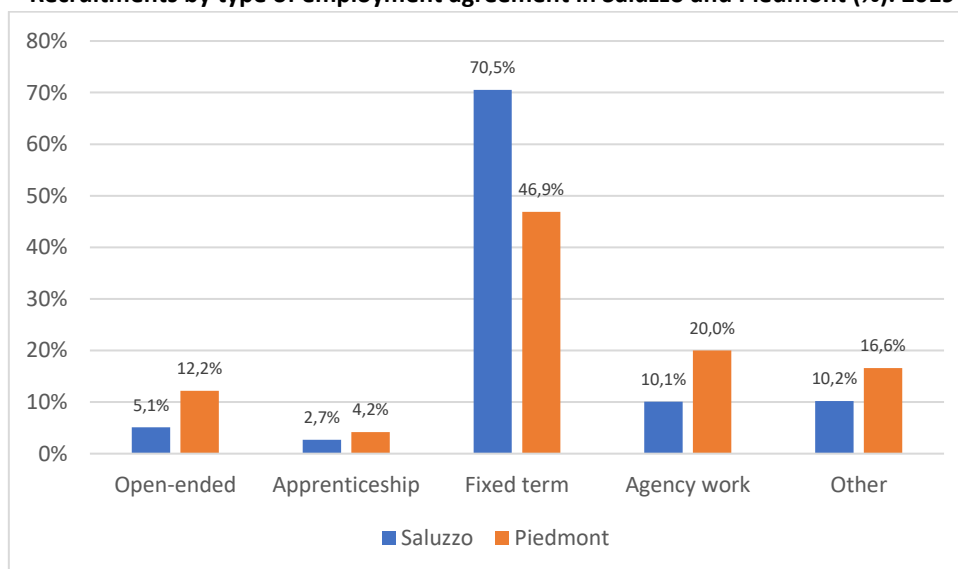
Recruitments by activity sector in CPI Saluzzo and Piedmont (%). 2019

Moreover, the data referred to the type of employment agreements is useful to describe the job stability during the year.

In 2019 the number of open-ended employment agreements is very low (5.1%), while fixed-term employment agreements are prevailing (70.5%), even if compared to the regional level (they are 46.9% in Piedmont). The share of recruitments by agency work, equal to 10.1%, is half of that in the whole Employment Centres in Piedmont (20%).

Recruitments by type of employment agreement in Saluzzo and Piedmont (%). 2019
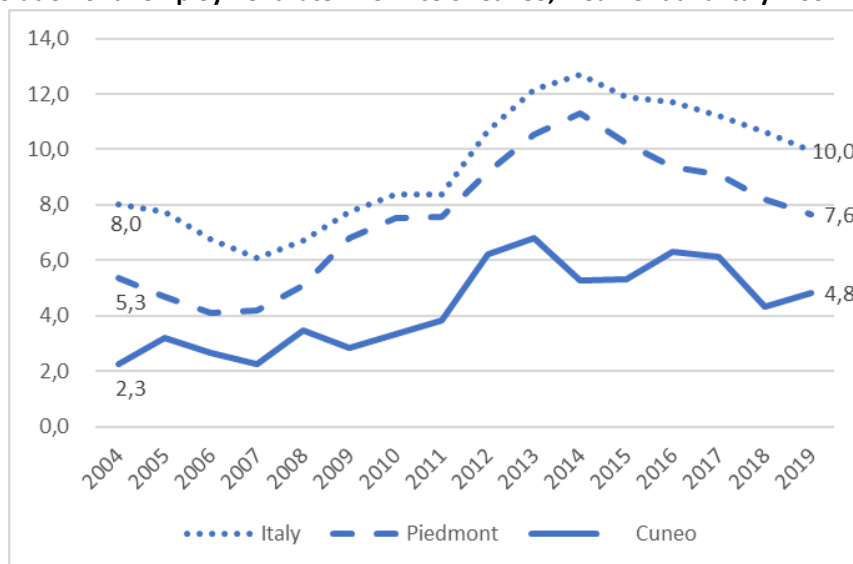
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D) UNEMPLOYMENT

Evolution of unemployment

In 2019 unemployed in the province of Cuneo are 13,397, mainly women (7,061, equal to 53%). The unemployment rate, equal to 4.8%, is one of the lowest in Italy, nevertheless it is still higher than the pre-crisis figure. If compared with Piedmont, it maintained relatively low levels, keeping always under 7% even during the most difficult years of the economic crisis.

Evolution of unemployment rate. Province of Cuneo, Piedmont and Italy. 2004-2019

Source: Istat

Compared unemployment rate

Between 2017 and 2018 the unemployment rate in the province of Cuneo registered a downward trend, but in 2019 it has increased by 0,5 percentage points. In 2019 unemployment rate in the province of Cuneo is 4.8%, lower than in Piedmont, Italy and Europe.

Unemployment rate: comparison (%)

	Province of Cuneo	Province of Asti	Province of VCO	Piedmont	Italy	EU-27
2019	4.8	5.6	5.9	7.6	10.0	6.7
2018	4.3	8.4	5.7	8.2	10.6	7.2
2017	6.1	9.2	6.8	9.1	11.2	8.1

Source: Istat; Eurostat

Unemployment by age group and sex

Overall, women are more involved in unemployment than men: in the province of Cuneo the unemployment rate for women is 5.9%, while for men is 4%.

Youth unemployment in Cuneo is lower than in other Piedmont provinces: in the age group 15-24 years 16.6% is unemployed, while the regional figure is 26.8%. The phenomenon of unemployment is more severe for girls than for boys (23% versus 12.9%). However, girls' unemployment in Cuneo is lower than in Piedmont (33.5%) and in other provinces considered in this analysis.

Unemployment rate by age group and sex. 2019

Area	TOTAL				MALE				FEMALE			
	15-24 years	25-34 years	35+ years	TOT	15-24 years	25-34 years	35+ years	TOT	15-24 years	25-34 years	35+ years	TOT
Asti	25,1	7,8	3,7	5,6	15,4	6,1	3,2	4,5	37,4	10,8	4,2	7,0
Cuneo	16,6	6,6	3,2	4,8	12,9	7,7	2,2	4,0	23,0	5,5	4,5	5,9
VCO	25,3	5,9	4,3	5,9	21,7	6,6	2,7	4,6	30,3	4,9	6,4	7,5
Piedmont	**26,8**	**10,0**	**5,7**	**7,6**	**21,5**	**9,4**	**4,5**	**6,3**	**33,5**	**10,7**	**7,1**	**9,2**

Source: Piedmont Region – Regional Observatory on Labour Market

E) COVID 19

How has the education system responded to the Covid-19 crisis?

The pandemic crisis has represented a big challenge for the educational system and this issue is still central to the public debate. Since March 2020 schools have been closed and distance teaching and learning has been activated. The academic year 2020/21 has started with in presence activities, but since November the school system has got back to a prevalent distance learning and teaching modality, except for educational services for children 0-6 years old, that have maintained presential activities in compliance with security protocols.

Vocational training system suffered also during these months and several activities (apprenticeship, traineeships, laboratorial activities, etc.) have been stopped. The situation is still in progress.

On one hand, the implementation of distance learning has accelerated the digitalization process of educational system; on the other hand, it has underlined several weaknesses, especially the digital divide.

Among the main factors that can impact on the results of distance teaching and learning, there are teachers' and students' digital skills and the availability of digital devices and connectivity among families and teachers. There is awareness about potential negative effects on learning, on youngsters' psychological and emotional conditions, on growing inequalities and on an increase of early school leaving.

Has the Covid-19 crisis caused population movements to rural areas?

The increase of smart working has generated a reduction of commuting towards urban centres. In summer, because of restrictions on mobility, many people discovered rural areas and a domestic and proximity tourism increased.

However, currently, there are no data available related to permanent movements of people towards rural areas. Certainly, the pandemic has contributed to focus the attention of public debate on some issues that are traditionally connected to rural areas: access to services, transport system, digitalization. In this sense, the pandemic could represent an opportunity not only to reconsider our own lifestyle, but also to bring at the centre of the debate the internal area issues.

MAIN SOURCES

- Agenzia Piemonte Lavoro, *Cronache del lavoro 2020,* www.agenziapiemontelavoro.it
- Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/
- Fondazione CRC, www.fondazionecrc.it
- Ires Piemonte, www.ires.piemonte.it
- Ires Piemonte, Demos - Regional Demographic Observatory
- Istat, www.istat.it
- Istat, ASIA Databank
- Regione Piemonte, Regional Observatory on Labour Market