



# WPI

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## Moving Into Venice: The Motivations to Move into Venice for Expats, Remote Workers, Returnees, and Retirees

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# Abstract

Venice has been facing severe depopulation since the end of World War II, prompting a need to understand factors encouraging settlement. This project addresses this concern, aiming to assist SerenDPT in its mission of repopulating the city. We achieved our goal by conducting semi-structured interviews with expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees with a focus on factors that attracted them, enabled them to stay, and challenged them. Work emerged as the primary attractive factor, while a human-paced lifestyle was the primary motivation for individuals to stay. Mass tourism and the associated challenges with housing surfaced as significant challenges. The report concludes with actionable recommendations for attracting new residents to contribute to sustainable repopulation efforts in Venice.

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# Executive Summary

Venice has been facing severe depopulation since the end of World War II, and now the city has less than 50,000 residents. One of the reasons people are moving out is because most of the jobs in the city revolve around tourism, and these tourist jobs do not pay enough for the cost of living in Venice. Additionally, finding a house is very difficult because there are so many short-term rentals to accommodate the many tourists coming into the city. Despite all that, there are still a number of people who find a way to move into the city and manage to stay, while many others are forced to leave. Our project focused on these individuals who, against all odds, immigrated from outside the old city or returned to it after a time away.

Our project was inspired by previous work in the context of the 3-year, multi-city EU Horizon SmartDest project, which looked at the **social exclusion of residents** from the historic city of Venice. In the summer of 2023, a different WPI team began to look at the flip side of what was studied in the SmartDest project, namely the **inclusionary forces** that attract some people to **move into the historic city**. Our team added to the body of research from the summer of 2023, which focused exclusively on expats, to also include temporary visitors who may choose to stay (**remote workers**), people who grew up in Venice and left in pursuit of a career but eventually returned to their hometown (**returnees**), while also exploring the role of **retirees** who choose to spend their retirement years in the historic city within all of these groups. In all, we conducted a total of 100 interviews with expats (73), remote workers (14), returnees (13), and retirees (12) to determine all of the factors affecting people's decisions to move in and what made it possible for them to stay in Venice.

We found there were **four main reasons why people came to Venice: work, study, relationship, or choice**. The primary factor was **work**, with individuals relocating to Venice after finding a permanent in-person job position. In addition to in-person jobs, remote work opportunities also served as an attractive factor. The second factor was **study**, specifically the pursuit of higher education. Interviewees frequently highlighted the esteemed universities in Venice, particularly noting their excellence in fields such as architecture and economics. The third factor was **relationships**. Individuals, especially returnees, were cited as coming back to Venice to rejoin their families, while others moved for love, opting to be closer to their significant other based in Venice rather than maintaining a long-distance relationship. The fourth

factor was **choice**. Venice’s beauty and its offering of a unique lifestyle attracted individuals who made a deliberate decision to move and experience the city. We observed among those who came by choice that they had a sentimental connection with the city. This sentiment was rooted in either a previous visit that led to a profound love for Venice or family ties.

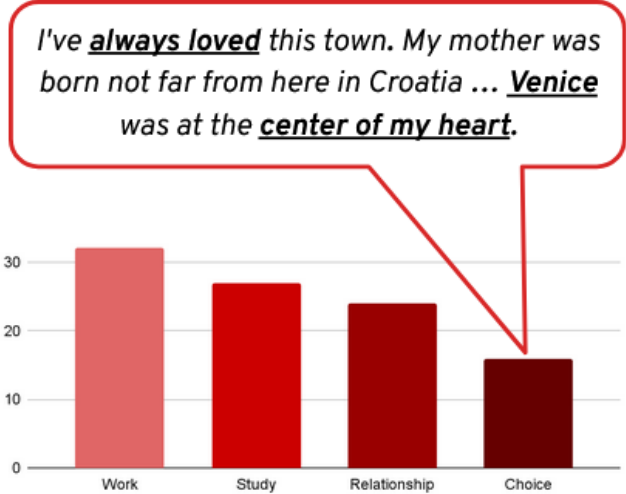


Figure A. Some individuals came to Venice by choice.

Having explored the reasons that brought people to Venice, we investigated the factors influencing people to **stay in Venice**. These included **lifestyle, community, work, relationships, beauty, culture, and safety**. People who live in Venice greatly appreciate the unique lifestyle that the city allows. There are no cars, so people mainly get around by walking, and as they are walking around, they tend to bump into people they know. This is exemplified by the quote, “*In Rome, you may be late because of a traffic jam, but in Venice, you may be late because you meet so many friends.*”

*You have a kind of relation, person to person, which **you don't have anywhere else.***

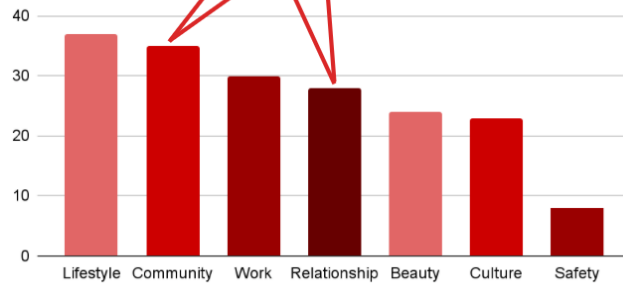


Figure B. Many individuals cited community and relationship as reasons why they stay in Venice.

These conversations bring us to our next category, which is that Venice has a **great community**. “Social life is a part of the city’s DNA.” These relationships, either with friends, family, or a romantic partner, keep people in the city. People who have emotional ties to a city are more likely to stay there.

*Everywhere [in Venice] is **like [an] open museum.** There's so much to discover.*

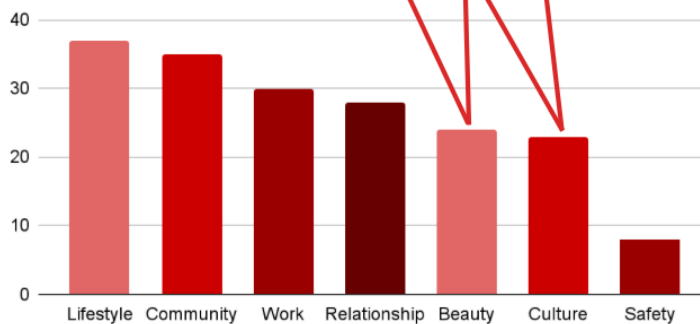


Figure C. Many Venetians cited the beauty of the city as why they wished to stay

The **beauty and culture** of the city are also big draws to staying in Venice. It is an undeniable fact that Venice is beautiful and full of lots of history and culture. “Venice is filled with amazing places and nooks and crannies.” One remote worker stayed in Venice for a year

and still felt they had more to explore. The **safety** of the city also attracts people to stay. Our interviewees felt safe walking around the city, even during the night. Parents let their children play in the campos and walk themselves to school without fear for their safety. People appreciate these traits about Venice so much that 73% of our interviewees said they plan on staying in Venice.

One individual stated, “*if Venice is still like [it is] today, I have no reason to leave.*” However, Venice has been changing. Particularly, there has been a large increase in the number of tourists visiting the historic city each year.

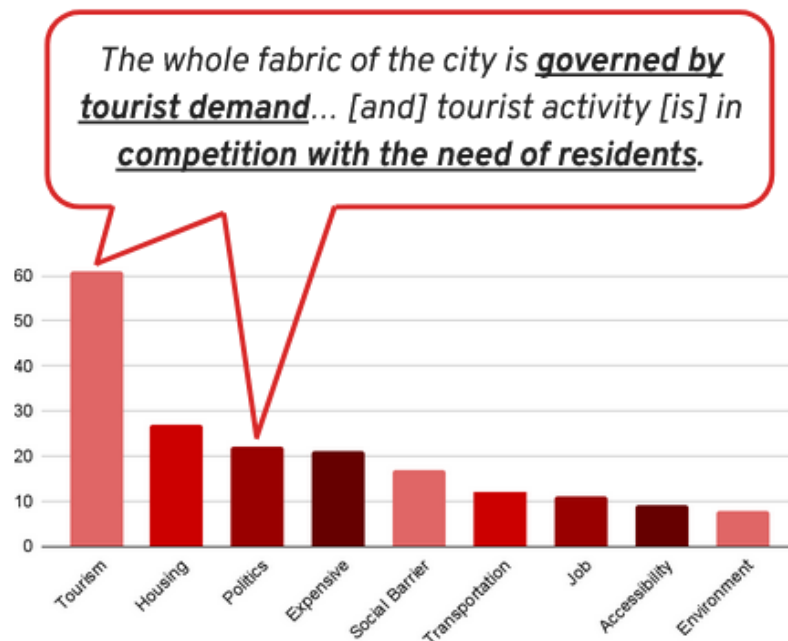


Figure D. Many interviewees took issue with how the city’s government was run

The biggest **challenge** Venetians face is mass **tourism**. Sixty-one percent of our participants stated that tourism poses a challenge to them. The large number of tourists makes it hard to walk around certain areas of the city. Also, shops are changing from shops for residents, like butchers and hardware stores, to shops for tourists, like restaurants, bars, and souvenir shops. This ties into the challenge with **politics** because multiple people cited that they felt the politicians should be doing more to help residents with these mass tourism issues.

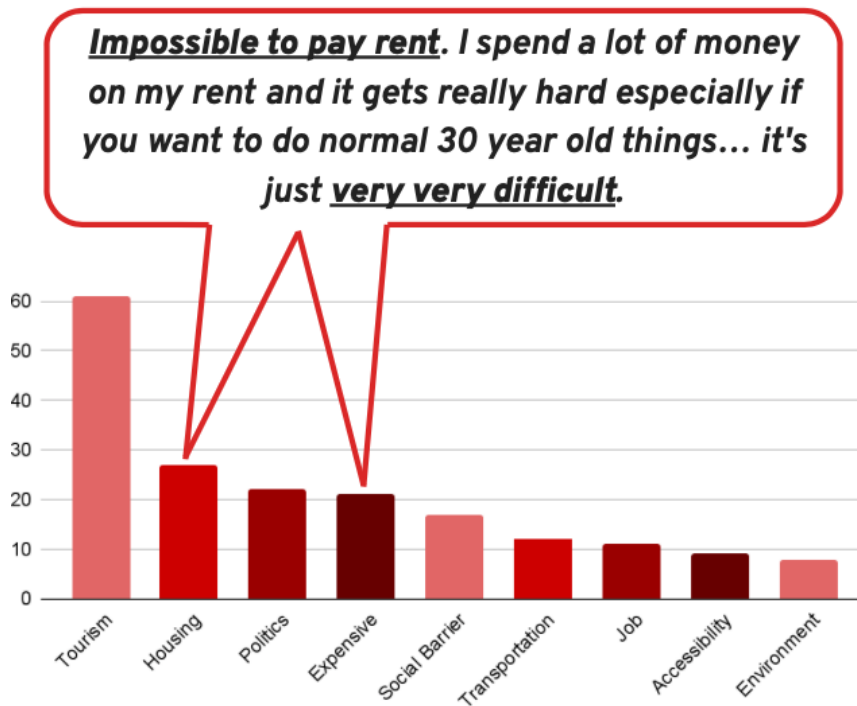


Figure E. The cost of living and of housing were major challenges for Venetians

**Housing** and the high **cost of living** also posed a significant struggle for people. This included issues with finding a house and paying the high cost of rent. Additionally, the cost of necessities like groceries was significantly higher in Venice than on the mainland. This issue is compounded by the **disparity between salaries and the cost of living** in the historic city. One individual noted that *“it’s too expensive for the salary that I get as a teacher because teachers in Italy are not very well paid.”* Finding a well-paying job was a challenge noted by many individuals. An interviewee in their 20s said that *“the biggest question about being in Venice is not about Venice; because I love Venice, I [would] like to live in Venice forever but... it’s a little bit harder to find a job.”* He had studied economics at a Venetian university but was struggling to find a job related to his field of study on the islands. They want to stay in Venice, but because of the lack of job opportunities, they may have to leave. In fact, this issue of finding a proper job is one of the main reasons 47% of people in their 20s do not know if they will be able to stay in Venice long-term.



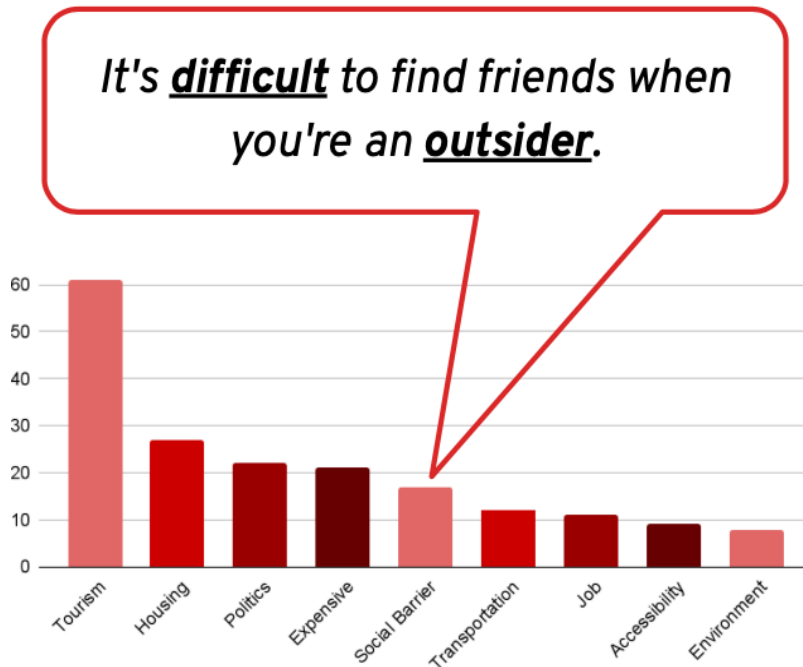


Figure F. Several Venetians cited social barriers as a challenge

Interviewees also claimed **social barriers** as a deterrent factor to life in Venice. When they moved here, many individuals explained how the nature of life in Venice is very social. The pedestrian-centered design of Venice leads to many more face-to-face interactions, and Venetian residents are always willing to talk. This leads to a large portion of interviewees stating that they felt accepted in Venice, but less than half would consider themselves Venetian. This is due to how native Venetians interact with non-native Venetians, as native Venetian culture is often referred to as ‘protective’. Many interviewees cited that it was hard to get to know native Venetians, as they were kind but not very open people. Expats also cited that native Venetians view them as foreigners, no matter how long they have lived in Venice.

Additionally, there were challenges regarding **transportation and accessibility**. Some people noted that trying to get around with large items, like furniture for a home, or trying to get around with some physical impairment, like a broken ankle, was extremely difficult. It is important to note that, other than these issues, people do enjoy walking and taking the boat to get around the city.

The last issue people discussed was the **environment**. They said that Venice gets very hot and humid in the summer. Also, because it is geographically positioned around the water, there is a prevalence of mosquitoes.

From our findings, we had several connections that stood out to us. **About half of the people in their twenties were unsure if they were staying in Venice.** There were only five interviewees who said they did not feel **accepted**, and they were all **women**. Only certain demographics thought that Venice was **expensive**, like Italians, people in their 20s, and teachers. There is no correlation between the amount of time spent here and whether people **feel Venetian**. We attributed this to the fact that individuals with different life experiences have different definitions of what a Venetian is. This contributes to the fact that almost all returnees considered themselves Venetian, while less than half of remote workers and expats considered themselves Venetian. Additionally, people who **rent feel less Venetian** than those who own (or live with their parents).

Our recommendations for the future are to contact politicians to collaborate on ways to help ease the stress of mass tourism on the residents. Also, to work to develop start-ups in Venice to provide more high-paying jobs in Venice, as is already being done by our sponsor **SerenDPT**, through the **MITdesignX Venice** program.

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2.2 Finding a House in Venice	Olivia Dunn
2.3 Factors Attracting People to Venice	John Mahoney
2.3.1 Working Remotely	Nithya Chockalingam
2.3.2 Mobilities	Nithya Chockalingam
2.3.3 Benefits for Returnees	Nithya Chockalingam
2.3.4 Safety	John Mahoney
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3.1 Interview Process	Joseph Berthiaume & Nithya Chockalingam
3.2 Factors that Attract Individuals	Joseph Berthiaume
3.3 Factors that Allow Individuals to Stay	Joseph Berthiaume
3.4 Challenges that Individuals Face	Joseph Berthiaume
3.5 Interviews Completed	Joseph Berthiaume & Olivia Dunn
<b>4.0 Findings</b>	<b>Joseph Berthiaume</b>
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4.2 Why People Stay in Venice	Nithya Chockalingam, Olivia Dunn, & Joseph Berthiaume
4.2.1 Retiring to Venice	Olivia Dunn
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5.5 Different Categories Feel Different Percentages of Venetian	Olivia Dunn
5.6 People Who Rent Feel Less Venetian	John Mahoney
<b>6.0 Final Remarks</b>	<b>Nithya Chockalingam</b>
Appendix A: Core Questions	All
Appendix B: Demographic Questions	All
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form	All
Appendix D: Informational Flier	Nithya Chockalingam & Olivia Dunn
Appendix E: Information Sheet	Olivia Dunn
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All sections were reviewed and edited by all members of the team.

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# 1. Introduction

Since the end of WWII, the historic city of Venice has faced drastic emigration and depopulation. Only a quarter of its population of 175,000 in 1951 remains in 2023 (Guedea, 2021). Depopulation has been exacerbated by a combination of factors. Overtourism, which has led to overcrowding and the erosion of the local way of life, plays a significant role. In addition, the low diversity of the Venetian job market, housing unaffordability, the limited availability of high-paying jobs, and difficulties with transportation have further driven residents away.

Despite the formidable challenges that the historic city faces, it has been consistently attracting various groups of people, including expatriates, remote workers, returnees, and retirees, with the intention of staying in the city permanently, suggesting that some people find the historic city a feasible and desirable place to live. This project explores how those specific categories of people are able to make a living in the historic city of Venice.

Our goal, through interviewing expatriates, remote workers, returnees, and retirees, is to determine how each of these factors is affecting people's decisions to move in and their ability to stay, and to provide suggestions on how to make Venice a more viable and fulfilling city to move to.

This project is sponsored by two organizations, SmartDest and SerenDPT. The goal of SerenDPT is to contribute to the repopulation of Venice by actively working towards job diversity, thus promoting social inclusion. SmartDest is a project funded by the EU Horizon 2020 grant. The goals of SmartDest are to (1) identify social exclusions and mobilities due to over-tourism by conducting research and gathering relevant data; (2) study the possible causes of exclusion and hypothesize possible solutions; and (3) propose shared corrective policies to mitigate the impact. SerenDPT leads SmartDest's Venice case study, focusing on resident exclusion. Their goal is to develop Venice through research, technology, and creating technology-related jobs.

This project team used interviews and provided useful interpretations of the obtained data to our sponsors. This data will assist SerenDPT and SmartDest in their efforts to mitigate and reverse the trend of Venice losing its long-term residents. The background details an analysis of Venice's long-standing problem with depopulation and modern-day practices that drive people both into and out of the city. The methods chapter shares the goals of our project and the means

we used to achieve them. The findings section details the data collected through our research period, followed by our conclusions and final remarks.

## 2. Background

Venice, Italy is currently experiencing depopulation. In 2023, Venice has only about a quarter of the population it had in 1945. Additionally, the average age of Venetians has been steadily increasing. Although retirees are less likely to leave the historic city than working age Venetians, they are still leaving in high enough numbers to be worth taking into consideration for this project. Of particular concern; intelligent and young residents are leaving Venice in a phenomenon known as “brain drain” (Kaplan, 2019). Due to the inefficient transportation services and slow commutes in Venice (Lilliquist 2023), many career-oriented Venetians end up seeking work elsewhere.

The shift away from a more standard economy (one in which a city relies on its own industries) has also led to an overemphasis on the tourism industry. The housing market in Venice increasingly caters to short-term tourist rentals, making it harder for people to find long-term housing in the city (Minoia, 2016). Researchers call what is happening in Venice “touristification of housing”. There has been a rapid increase in the past 25 years in the number of non-permanent residences in Venice, like hotels or AirBnb. For example, the number of beds in hotels increased from 11,000 to 16,650 between 1997 and 2003. The number of short-term rentals (such as AirBnb and other similar services) increased tenfold over an 8 year period (Salerno, 2020). The international customers who have decided to purchase a house in Venice make up approximately 70% of sales. Around 75 % of the market is made up of customers who buy second homes as investments to be used for tourist rentals (Salerno, 2020).

A confounding factor which could also be contributing to the higher cost of real estate in Venice is the fact that the city is sinking and experiences severe floods. The city itself has been gradually sinking by between 1 and 2 mm each year, and the city floods approximately 100 times per year (Barry, 2021). There are several different reasons for this sinking, one being the fact that the foundations of the city were once marshes which get slowly eroded by the ocean over time and the other being industries pulling from the aquifer. Although the sinking is relatively gradual, it also contributes to the city’s problem of flooding. The majority of floods occur in the autumn during a period known by Venetians as “acqua alta.” Although Venice has tried to limit the intensity of floods, and increased damage to iconic structures, by banning the passage of cruise ships near St. Mark’s Basin, floods still pose a major threat. The second-worst floods in the city’s

history occurred as recently as November of 2019. The number of so-called “exceptional floods” (floods which are 140 centimeters or greater) has been much higher in recent years, as this quantity, which has been recorded since 1872, has had two-thirds of its instances happen over the past 20 years (Barry, 2021). The city of Venice relies heavily on boats for its public transportation, so when the boats cannot go under bridges or are otherwise inhibited by the higher water levels, the speed of public transportation is greatly slowed. Tourists who visit will observe this and keep it in mind when they are deciding whether or not to stay here.

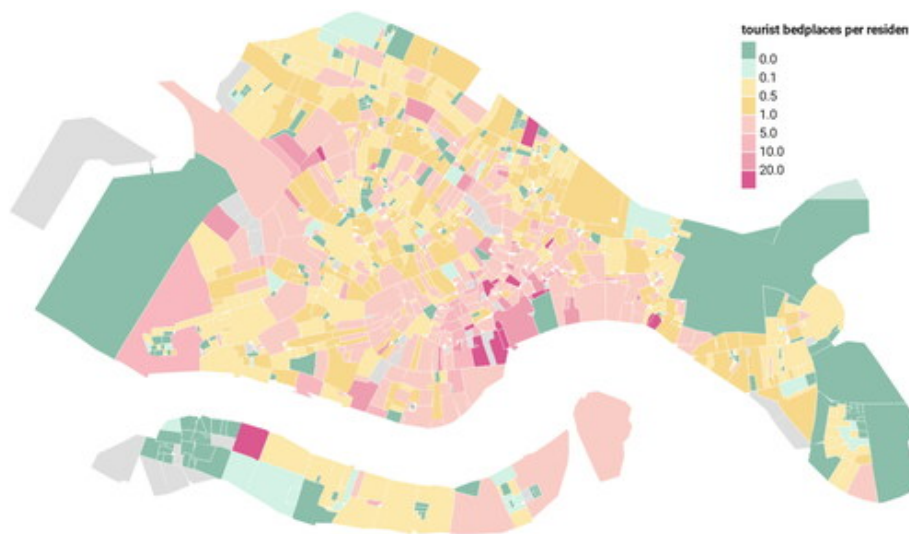


Figure 1. Density map of the number of tourist bedplaces per resident in the historic city

## 2.1 Jobs in Tourism

One of the major factors that influences if someone can live in a given area is their ability to afford to live there, which includes finding a well paying job. Unfortunately, because of the increase in tourism there has been a decrease in non-tourist sector jobs (Tourism Impacts, Tourism-Phobia and Gentrification in Historic Centers). In fact, since the 1990s Venice’s economy has relied almost entirely on tourism because of the possibility for big profits (Touristification in Venice (Italy)). **Figure 5** below shows average wages in Italy as a whole. Looking at the figure we can see that jobs linked to tourism like accommodation and food service activities are only making, on average, €10,45 an hour. In comparison, “financial and

insurance activities” is making €23,27 an hour, more than double the amount of those working in accommodation and food services (Istat 2023).

	Gender		
	males	females	total
<b>NACE 2007</b>			
TOTAL	12.04	11.27	11.70
TOTAL INDUSTRY (b to f)	12.79	12.12	12.63
TOTAL INDUSTRY EXCLUDING CONSTRUCTION (b to e)	13.68	12.17	13.22
mining and quarrying	16.06	23.27	17.12
manufacturing	13.48	12.05	13.02
electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	20.89	18.81	20.46
water supply sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	14.53	14.48	14.53
construction	11.47	11.63	11.47
services (g to s, except o)	11.56	11.11	11.33
wholesale and retail trade repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	11.74	11.93	11.84
transportation and storage	12.48	13.42	12.60
accommodation and food service activities	10.48	10.42	10.45
information and communication	16.12	13.84	15.07
financial and insurance activities	25.90	20.88	23.27
real estate activities	11.67	11.29	11.43
professional, scientific and technical activities	13.93	11.93	12.58
administrative and support service activities	10.29	10.04	10.18
education	11.94	11.29	11.46
human health and social work activities	11.15	10.70	10.77
arts, entertainment and recreation	10.73	10.56	10.65
other service activities	9.50	8.36	8.63

Figure 2. Average Wages in Italy

Additionally, almost 49% of current residents in Northern Venice (districts of Cannaregio and Castello) would list lack of jobs as a possible reason to leave the city. The percentages in the other neighborhoods, Central Venice (San Marco and San Polo) and Southern Venice (Santa Croce and Dorsoduro), were smaller but still substantial at about 20% and 31% respectively (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019).

District	Avg. Tourism Stress from 0 to 5	Residents that Have Thought about Moving out	Reason to Move: Too Many Tourists	Reason to move: Lack of Services for Residents (Shops, Groceries, Cinema, Hairdresser)	Reason to Move: Life Has Become too Expensive	Reason to Move: Venice Is Itself Inconvenient	Reason to Move: Lack of Jobs	Reason to Move: Personal Reasons	Reason to Move: Possibility to Rent out House
Centre Venice	4.4	8.40%	20.49%	20.51%	19.55%	18.93%	19.82%	17.44%	22.30%
South Venice	4.3	22.37%	27.44%	29.04%	28.55%	25.89%	31.35%	30.81%	29.05%
North Venice	4.2	12.77%	52.08%	50.45%	51.90%	55.18%	48.83%	51.74%	48.65%

Figure 3. Levels of Social Capacity of Residents by Venice Area

Unfortunately, even those who can find jobs are not happy with them. Venice is part of the Veneto region of Italy, which in 2022 reported the average job satisfaction level was only 49.8% (Statista).

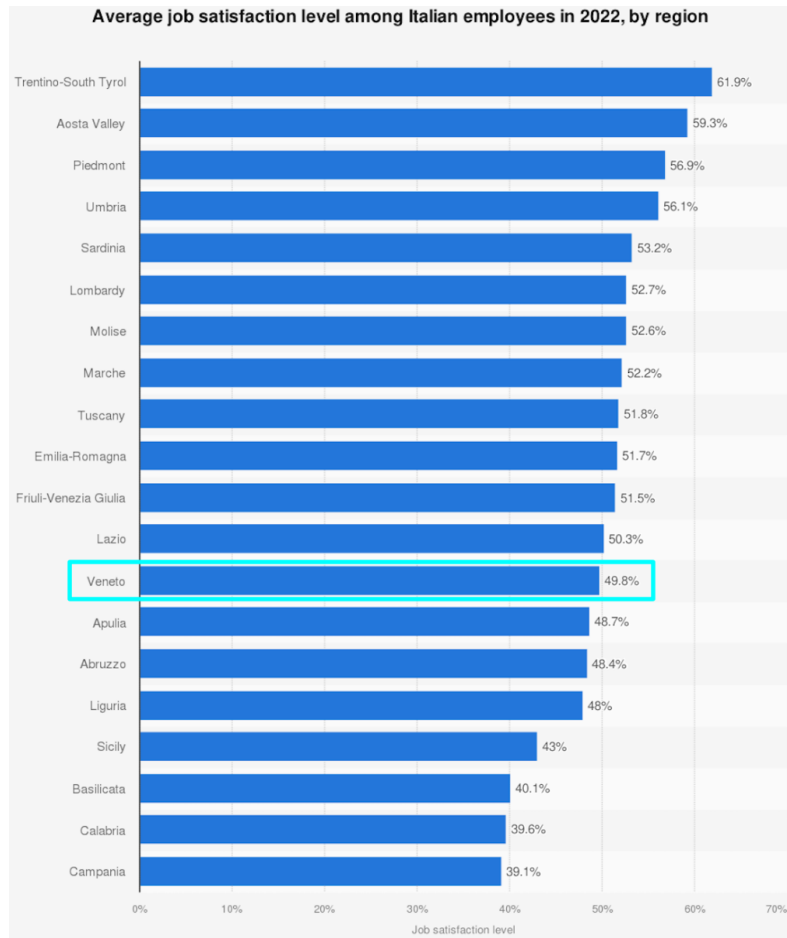


Figure 4. Average Job Satisfaction Level Among Italian Employees in 2022

## 2.2 Finding a House in Venice

Venice has a significant lack of housing for residents. From 2008 to 2019 there has been a 497% growth of beds in the historic city. However, during this same time span the population has decreased by 13%. In Dorsoduro, Venice’s university district, there are 0.64 beds for tourists for every one bed for residents. In San Marco, which is home to the more famous sights in Venice, there are 3 tourist beds for every one resident (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019).

In 2017 alone, the non-hotel bed places grew 57.4% in the historic city, while the hotel sector increased only 2% (Salerno, 2020). The growth of short-term vacation rentals in Venice has surged with the advent of online platforms such as Airbnb and Booking.com. These platforms have streamlined the process for homeowners to offer their residential properties for short-term rentals, effectively converting long-term residential units into accommodations for

tourists (Salerno, 2020). The total number of short term rentals available through Airbnb in the island areas of Venice is 6,527. Of these, 82% are the entire home or apartment as seen by the red dots on **Figure 5** below. Green dots represent the listings of a private room. Out of all the rentals, 99% are short term rentals, leaving only 0.7%, 46 listings for long-term rentals (Inside Airbnb). This shift has not only given rise to more hotels and guesthouses, but has also incentivized landlords to opt for short-term rentals, driven by the prospect of higher earnings from tourists willing to pay a premium for shorter stays. Consequently, the availability of long-term rental properties for local residents has decreased, intensifying competition for the limited remaining options This heightened competition has driven rental prices upwards (Salerno, 2020).

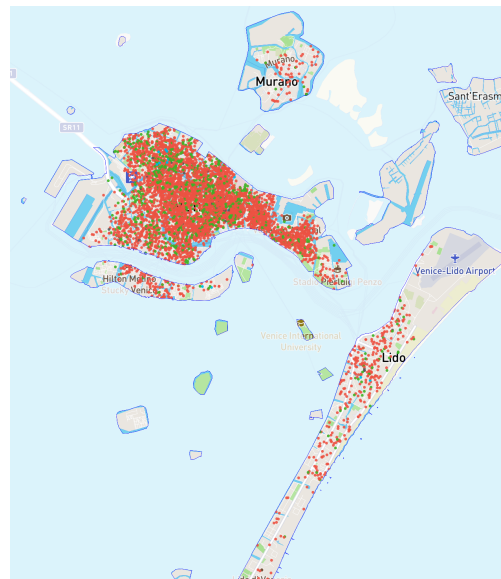


Figure 5. Map of Airbnbs in Venice

The average cost for buying a residential property in the municipality of Venezia, as of August 2023, is 3,014 €/m<sup>2</sup>. The average cost of renting is 14.27 €/m<sup>2</sup>, which is an increase of 8.19% from just a year prior. The rising rent makes it difficult for Venetians to afford their monthly rent payments and the high price of buying makes it difficult for them to own rather than rent. As you can see in Figure 5, these prices are much higher than those in the lagoons and mainland (*Immobiliare.It*, 2023). These rising rental costs are placing significant financial burdens on Venetians, particularly those with limited financial means. With more resources





residence in Venice. In addition to these, there are a multitude of other benefits which attract people to Venice.

### 2.3.1 Working Remotely

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote work on a global scale (Battisti et al, 2022). Companies worldwide have embraced flexible work arrangements, realizing the potential for increased productivity and the ability to tap into a global talent pool (Battisti et al, 2022). This shift has given rise to a surge in digital nomadism, where individuals are no longer tied to a specific location for work.

Italy's recently introduced digital nomad visa program is part of a broader trend where countries are recognizing the economic and cultural benefits of attracting remote workers. This initiative grants remote workers and freelancers the opportunity not just to reside in Italy, but also to engage in their work while immersing themselves in the country's rich culture and lifestyle (Angiello, 2022). Typically, this visa extends individuals' stays, often for up to one year, with the possibility of renewal (Angiello, 2022). Many European countries, such as Portugal and Spain, have also introduced similar visa programs to attract remote workers, offering them the chance to experience the local lifestyle while contributing to the economy.

Various regions in Italy have also been taking steps to promote digital nomadism. Santa Fiora in Tuscany and Rieti in Lazio are offering to subsidize up to 50% of the rent for those who decide to move and telecommute on a long-term basis (Marchetti, 2021). This agreement comes with the condition that applicants must have an "active" job, demonstrating that this is not just a paid vacation (Marchetti, 2021). Furthermore, in the tiny village of Ollolai situated in Sardinia, a pioneering initiative called "Work from Ollolai" has been recently implemented, aiming to transform the village into a thriving digital nomad hub (Wybrew, 2023). Approximately 20,000 Euros have been allocated to facilitate the program's success (Wybrew, 2023). The village will host remote workers one at a time for up to 3 months, which is the limit for non-European visitors without a visa (Wybrew, 2023). The municipality will cover rent, utilities, bills, and service taxes for the workers, with the exception of transport (Wybrew, 2023). In order to be eligible for the program, workers must have a proven background as a digital nomad (Wybrew, 2023). Moreover, at the end of their stay, nomads must provide a concrete piece of work; for

example, a conference presentation, an essay, a research paper or a documentary (Wybrew, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had several effects on working styles and workplaces, as there has been a drastic increase in coworking spaces around the world. In 2018, Italy hosted 549 coworking spaces which were mainly located in urban areas (Mariotti, 2023). In 2020, the number rose to 760 coworking spaces, approximately 1 for every 70,000 inhabitants (Mariotti, 2023). Furthermore, in comparison to the year 2018, during the pandemic, coworking spaces began investing in peripheral and rural areas, attracting more remote workers (Mariotti, 2023).

### 2.3.2 Mobilities

Italy abides by immigration policies outlined by the European Union, aligning with its EU counterparts' broader regulations (Guild, 2019). These policies have a primary goal: to facilitate the unrestricted movement of individuals across member countries, significantly impacting how people can migrate in and out of Venice (Guild, 2019). This framework has been thoughtfully designed to simplify travel for various purposes, such as employment, education, and tourism (Guild, 2019).

EU citizenship provides substantial advantages upon individuals residing in Venice and those returning to the city. EU citizens effortlessly become integrated into the broader EU community, affording them the freedom to live and work throughout all EU member countries (Guild, 2019). For the inhabitants of Venice, this translates into effortless mobility within the EU, granting them access to a wide range of employment opportunities, educational prospects, healthcare services, and other essential amenities wherever they opt to reside within the EU (Guild, 2019).

Furthermore, as a member of the European Economic Area (EEA), Italy employs the Euro as its official currency for all financial transactions (Haynes, 2015). This unified currency system significantly streamlines day-to-day financial matters for both residents and visitors in Venice, and all other parts of Italy. It eradicates the necessity for currency conversion when traveling among European countries that share the Euro as their common currency (Haynes, 2015).

### 2.3.3 Benefits for Returnees

The Italian government offers tax benefits to Italians who would like to make Italy their tax residence after years of working or studying abroad (“Tax incentives for attracting human capital in Italy”, n.d.). This is an attractive factor that would significantly motivate individuals to return to Venice. The tax benefits have been primarily implemented by authorities in support of “brain re-entry” (“Tax incentives for attracting human capital in Italy”, n.d.). Brain re-entry refers to the return of nationals who are in the academic field including academic staff, teachers, and researchers back into the Italian academic system (“Tax incentives for attracting human capital in Italy”, n.d.). In addition, Italians who return to live in Italy to work for Italian companies also benefit from tax incentives (“Tax incentives for attracting human capital in Italy”, n.d.). This group of people includes graduates who have worked abroad, students who have earned an academic degree abroad, and managers/workers with high qualifications and specializations (“Tax incentives for attracting human capital in Italy”, n.d.). For individuals in the academic field who move their tax residence back to Italy, they will have a 90% IRPEF (Italian income tax) exemption on earnings derived from teaching and research initiatives for 6 years (“Tax incentives for attracting human capital in Italy”, n.d.). For Italian workers who decide to return to Italy, they will receive a 70% IRPEF exemption on earnings from both employment and self-employment carried out in Italy (“Tax incentives for attracting human capital in Italy”, n.d.).

### 2.3.4 Safety

Venice is by and large considered to be a safe city with a very low crime rate. It has a crime index of 33.16 (Crime in Venice, Italy) which means that the general criminality in Venice is categorized as low. The only categories of crime which reach the level of moderate are property related crimes like theft, vandalism or bribery. The low crime rate (lower than other major European cities like London, Paris and Barcelona) makes Venice an attractive destination to live in.

## Leading provinces for theft rate in Italy in 2020

(number of cases per 100,000 inhabitants)

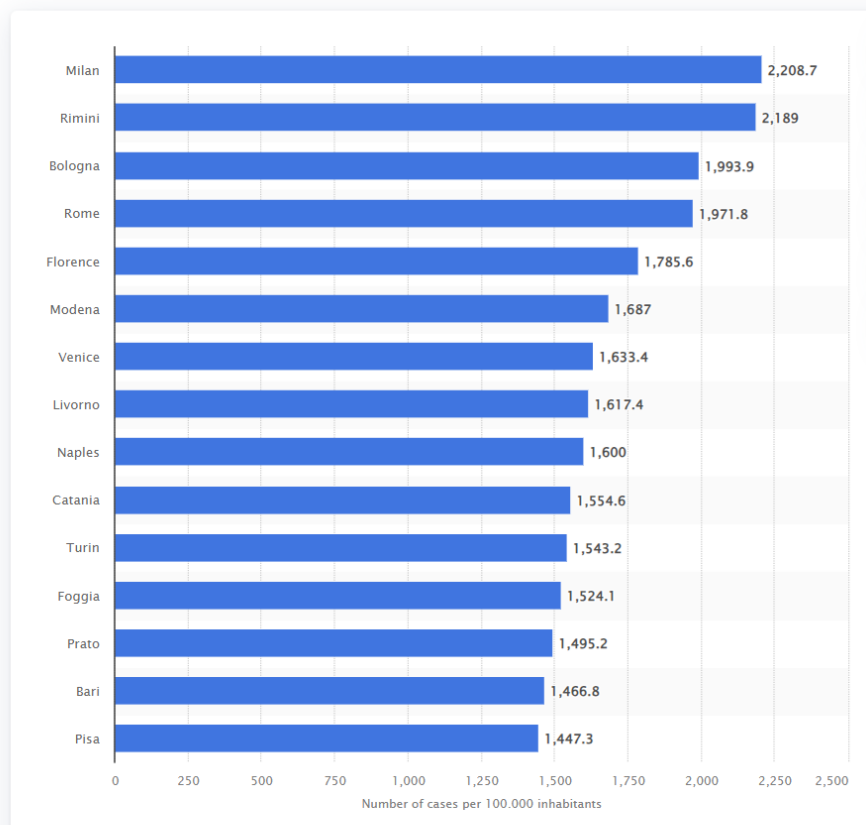


Figure 8: Leading provinces for theft rate in Italy in 2020, Venice is around the median but is significantly less than several of the major provinces

Despite the theft and vandalism rates being categorized as moderate (according to **Figure 9**), Venice has a lower theft rate than many other notable Italian cities like Milan, Rome and Florence (Crime in Venice, Italy). If newcomers to Venice make sure to not leave anything in their back pockets and are wary of pickpockets, the risk of being robbed can be greatly mitigated. One of our interviewees when asked what aspects of Venice make her want to stay said “Yeah, [there is] a sense of being protected, the fact that there's no criminality really.”

An additional factor that contributes to the safety of Venice is the small amount of nightlife activity in the city. While other places such as Florence have a more prominent nightlife and increased numbers of bars and clubs (Gilchrist, 2023), Venice is less affected by the alcohol-induced crimes that may result from such places. As a result of this, Venice would be a very suitable place for people, especially those on the older side, to live in.

While Venice offers its residents a wide array of benefits and beauty, it is also evident that living in Venice comes with some trade offs and inconveniences. Housing prices are so high, and availability so low, that groups are protesting tourism. Stable and well paying jobs are limited. However, to keep Venice vital, people must be able to live and work in the city.

Our project was dedicated to study the in-migration to Venice to understand what makes the historic city an attractive and economically feasible place to live. In essence, our research and interviews with expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees to learn about their experiences living in Venice, in conjunction with a deep exploration of topics including remote working, mobilities, and tax incentives emphasized the multifaceted aspects of the city's appeal and sustainability as a place to live, work, and settle.

### 3. Methodology

The goal of this project was to understand the factors that allow people to settle in Venice by exploring the experiences of expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees. In order to achieve this goal, we completed these objectives:

1. Explore the factors that attract expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees to the historic city of Venice.
2. Investigate the factors that influence expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees to stay in the historic city of Venice.
3. Identify the challenges that expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees experience while living in the historic city.

While Venice is a diverse city with many different communities spread across various islands and ports, for the purposes of this project, we restricted our research to include just the historic city as well as the surrounding islands, such as Giudecca and Lido as pictured in **Figure 9**.



Figure 9. Map of the Municipalities of Venice. Lido and Murano were also considered in this research, but the mainland city of Mestre was not.

Each group of people that we researched were carefully defined to avoid confusion while gathering data.

- **Expats** were defined as individuals who did not originate from the historic city but currently lived in the historic city with the intention of long-term settlement. Individuals who originated from other municipalities within the Veneto region and other parts of Italy were also considered expats. To be considered an expat, individuals had to live in the city for at least one year.
- **Remote workers** were defined as individuals who work remotely and have the option to work from anywhere but chose the historic city.
- **Returnees** were individuals who originated from the historic city, left the city with the intention of settling abroad, and then returned to the historic city for permanent residency. To be considered a returnee, an individual had to have lived outside of the historic city for a minimum of one year. Individuals who left the city for college were not included in this study.
- **Retirees** fell under any of the previously mentioned categories but were no longer working and did not have the intention to start working again.

In the summer of 2023, a research team composed of other students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute began researching this topic. This project was primarily focused on the experiences of only expatriates within Venice. This team gathered useful and meaningful data on the experiences of Venetian residents through the process of semi-structured interviews and created a detailed list of contacts for the use of future research teams. Our project intended on continuing and expanding their research by diversifying the types of individuals (expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees) studied and widening the scope of the previously established semi-structured interview process.

### 3.1 Interview Process

In order to effectively gather data on the experiences of expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees within the historic city, we conducted and recorded semi-structured interviews with members of each demographic. To obtain contacts for these interviews, we reached out to Mr. Diego Vianello, the president of the Venice Rotary Club; Prof. Fabio Carerra, the director of the Venice Project Center, and Ms. Irene Pinto, a PhD student studying tourism. These people were able to supply us with potential contacts that we could interview. Additionally, to find remote workers, we visited Venice Coworking, SerenDPT Coworking

Venice, Combo, and White Rabbit Cannery, all coworking spaces in Venice. As mentioned above, the summer research team maintained a detailed spreadsheet of contact information from individuals who both fit our research criteria and may be interested in being a part of the study. Using these contacts, we were able to reach out to these individuals and set up interviews. These interviews took place either virtually or in person, either at the SerenDPT offices or another location. We employed a snowball technique wherein, after interviewing individuals, we asked them if they knew anyone else who fits into one of the three main categories and would be interested in interviewing with us. During the interview process, one team member conducted the interview, and another recorded field notes in a spreadsheet. For individuals comfortable speaking English, we conducted face-to-face interviews with all communication in English. For those who were not comfortable and preferred speaking Italian, we had an Italian speaker with us to facilitate communication. This individual was typically either Ms. Pinto or a willing intern at the SerenDPT offices. Before all interviews were conducted, we asked each interviewee to either sign a consent form or to verbally consent on recording to partaking in the study. These individuals were also asked to consent to being audio-recorded during the interview and to being quoted, either directly or anonymously.

Each individual being interviewed, regardless of which demographic they fell into, was asked a set of core questions. These core questions, which can be found in Appendix A, included both open and closed questions. We started with the open-form questions, asking about what brought them to Venice and what they enjoyed about the city. Then, we had closed questions at the end, which we only asked if they had not already been answered during the more conversational part of the interview. These questions were more demographic, like age, marital status, and whether they own or rent their residence. After these core questions were asked, the interviewer delved into demographic-specific questions. From the gathered qualitative data, we used a method of coding in order to better analyze and quantify the gathered data. We continued and expanded on the coding index used by the summer research team. This was done in order to ensure that our data aligned with the data that had already been collected to increase our sample size for the project. To avoid bias within data collection, we interviewed individuals across all genders and a wide range of ages and economic backgrounds.

After all of the data was collected, we used the coding system to organize all our information and created infographics to easily illustrate our findings.



### 3.2 Factors that Attract Individuals

To determine the factors that attract individuals to the historic city of Venice, a variety of questions were asked of the interviewees regarding their arrival in the city. Participants in the study were asked questions about their motives for moving to Venice and if they had ever visited Venice before they decided to move. Participants were also asked to identify any differences between Venice and the place where they grew up.

These questions allow us to gain a strong understanding of where the interviewee grew up and their reasons for moving to Venice. These questions also allow us to gain an understanding of the differences between Venice and other European cities. This better reinforces and explains the reasons why the individuals decided to move.

### 3.3 Factors that Allow Individuals to Stay

Individuals in the study were asked questions relating to what factors allow them to live and stay in Venice. These questions involved conversations about the occupation of the interviewee as well as their social life and their impressions of the cost of living in Venice. We also asked interviewees if they intend to stay in Venice long-term and if they see that as a possibility for themselves.

These questions were asked to gain an understanding of daily life for Venetian residents, as well as the kinds of social connections our interviewees developed during their time in the city. These questions also gave us an idea of how livable and sustainable life in Venice is for its residents.

### 3.4 Challenges that Individuals Face

During another part of the interview process, interviewees were asked to identify some of the challenges that they faced when moving into the city as well as other difficulties they continue to face on a regular basis. The interviewees were asked questions relating to social acceptance by local Venetians and whether it was easy to make friends when they first moved here. Interviewees were also asked if they felt accepted within the city and if they would consider themselves Venetian. Questions were also asked regarding mobility around Venice and other daily challenges that residents may face.

These questions allow us to understand daily life for Venetian residents similarly to the questions previously stated. However, while those questions are primarily used to gather positive notions about life in Venice, these questions are meant to draw negative responses. These negative responses help to paint a realistic picture of life in Venice and better understand the Venetian lifestyle. This information also allows us to learn about the social acclimation process that all immigrants go through when they move permanently to the city. These questions assist in understanding the more difficult aspects of a Venetian residency and why individuals may want to leave the city.

### 3.5 Interviews Completed

By the conclusion of our research period, we had interviewed 42 expats, 9 remote workers, and 11 returnees, as shown in **Figure 10**. Of those interviewed, seven were retirees. In total, 62 interviews were conducted. We attempted to interview an equal number of male-identifying and female-identifying individuals in order to avoid bias. At the conclusion of the research period, 28 male-identifying and 34 female-identifying individuals were interviewed.

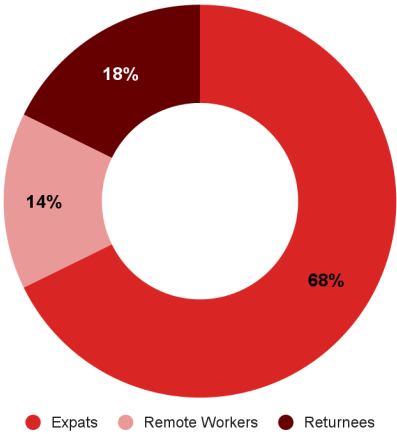


Figure 10. Demographics of Interviewees. Roughly two-thirds of our interviewees were expats, while one-third was a combination of returnees and remote workers.

Interviewees were also categorized into six age ranges to better understand the unique experiences and points of view that each generation possesses. This was also done to avoid potential bias in the results. As shown in **Figure 11**, these age ranges are as follows: 0-19; 20-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-59; and 60+.

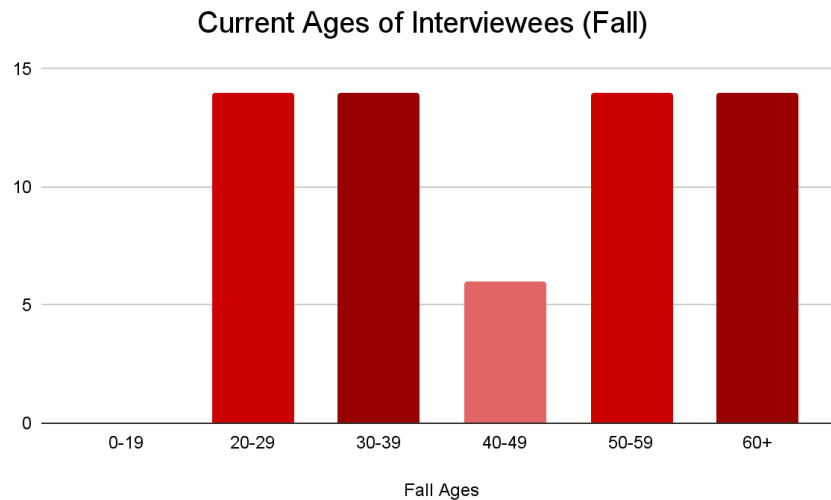


Figure 11. Current Ages of Interviewees (Fall). An even distribution of interviewee ages was achieved, eliminating bias.

As mentioned previously, this research is a continuation of a previous project completed during the summer of 2023. The previous project was focused on the experiences of expats only. The data collected during the previous project was reevaluated under the guidance of our current definitions of expats, digital nomads, returnees, and retirees. This data will also be considered in our results as we seek to expand and build upon their foundation. The previous team conducted 38 interviews total, consisting of 23 female-identifying and 15 male-identifying individuals, as shown in **Figure 12**. With the addition of the previously collected data, the total number of interviews being considered in this study is 100, with 43 male-identifying and 57 female-identifying participants. In total, 73 expats, 14 remote workers, and 13 returnees were interviewed, with 12 of them being considered retirees, as shown in **Figure 13**.

### Gender Identities of Interviewees

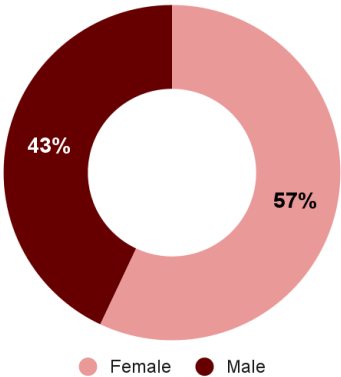


Figure 12. Gender Identities of Interviewees for both Summer and Fall data. There was almost an even split between male and female interviewees, which helps to remove bias from the results.

### Demographics of Interviewees (Summer & Fall)

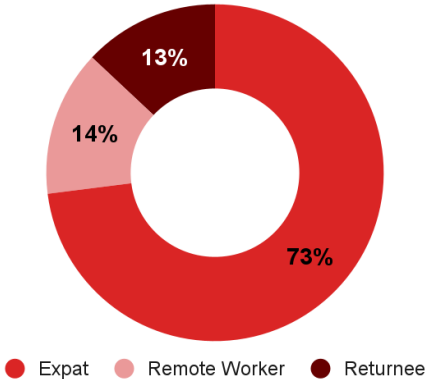


Figure 13. Demographics of Interviewees (Summer & Fall). Most interviewees were expats due to previous research being solely dedicated to expats.

As this project is a continuation of the work put in by the previous team, we attempted to build upon and expand the topics of research done by the previous team. This was done in order to ensure that all data obtained by the previous team and the current team would be usable for final analysis. Due to gaps within previously acquired data, certain aspects of the established data will not be able to be considered in this report. For example, as shown in **Figure 13**, of the 36 interviews conducted, only 21 of the interviewee’s ages were recorded.

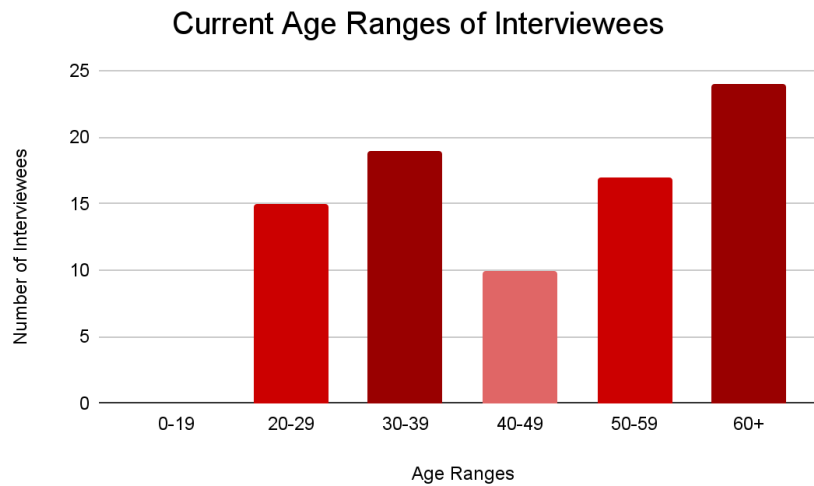


Figure 14. Current Age Ranges of Considered Interviews (Summer & Fall). A variety of age ranges was achieved, but interviewees tended to skew older.

Our primary objective was to understand the influences that lead individuals to choose and thrive in the historic city of Venice. Through targeted interviews with expats, remote workers, returnees, and retirees, we gained valuable insights into the factors enabling a fulfilling life in this unique part of Venice. This allowed us to better navigate our research and ultimately deliver better findings to SerenDPT and SmartDest.

## 4. Findings

The data collected from the interviews has been organized and quantified via a coding system. This allows for fast and reliable categorizing of qualitative data. In order to complete each objective, a new list of codes had to be created for each objective. The coded interview data was then compiled and analyzed. The results below have been organized by the following categories: What brought people into Venice; Why are people staying; and challenges that people face while living in Venice.

### 4.1 What Brought People to Venice

There are four main categories of reasons that people move to Venice: **work**, **choice**, **relationship**, and **study**.

**Work** was the primary factor motivating people to move into the historic city. The **work** category is defined as anyone who relocated to the city for reasons related to their occupation, such as traveling for an internship or beginning a new education career at a local school. Had these parties found **work** in other parts of Italy or beyond, they would not have moved to Venice. As shown in **Figure 15**, most of our interviewees (21%) were teachers. Many of our interviewees (15%) were employed in the service industry, and almost as many worked in the art world (14%).

What Brought Individuals to Venice?

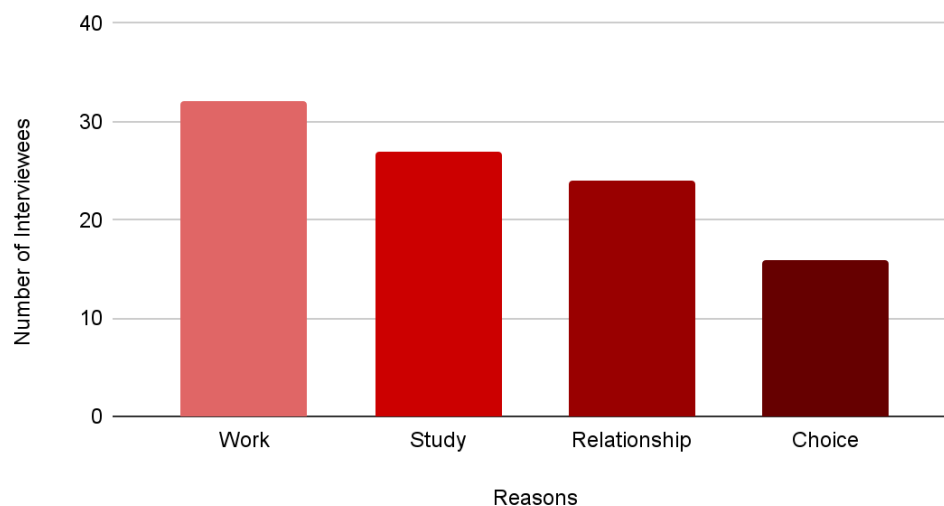


Figure 15. Interview Data on what Factors Brought Individuals to Venice. Work is cited as the main reasons why interviewees moved into the city.

It is also important to note that some interviewees also moved to Venice because of the **remote work** opportunities. The top job categories for these were business (29%), art (21%), and technology (14%), as seen in **Figure 17**. A notable example is an interviewee from Paris who was selected for a specialized program, initiated by Venywhere, that helped her successfully transition into a digital nomad lifestyle in Venice, marking a significant turning point in her life.

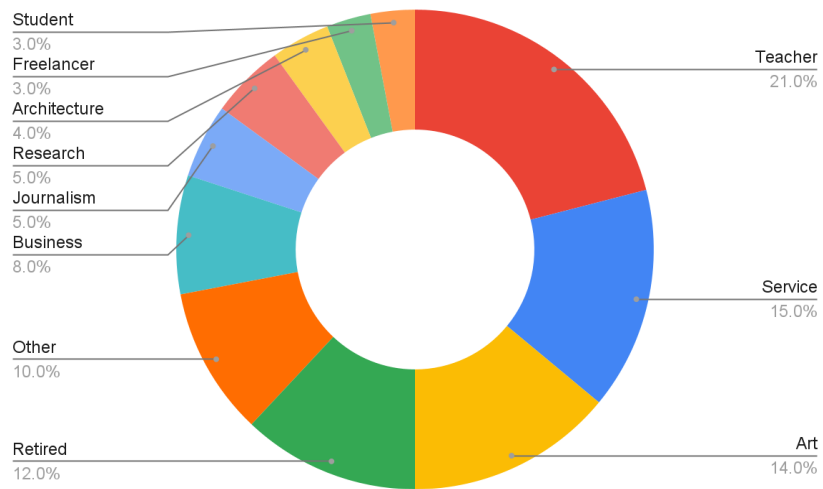


Figure 16. Occupations of Interviewees

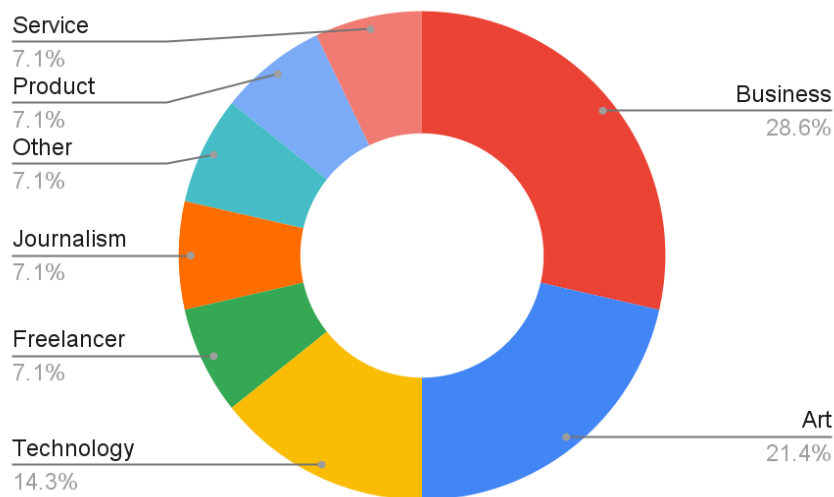


Figure 17. Jobs of Remote Workers

**Study** was the second significant factor motivating people to move into the historic city. The **study** category was given to interviewees who moved to Venice to pursue higher education in their field of interest at one of the many universities in the historic city. Several interviewees particularly recognized the universities' excellence in certain fields, which served as an additional motivating factor. An expat from Mantova, Italy, stated, "[I moved to Venice] for the university, because at that time, it was the best university in Italy for architecture." Similarly, another expat from Iran who moved to Venice in 2020 to pursue a degree in economics from Università Ca' Foscari Venezia mentioned that the university "has a very good campus [for] economics."

**Relationships** served as the tertiary factor attracting individuals to move to the historic city of Venice. The **relationship** category was used for any interviewee who moved to Venice due to any kind of familial or romantic connection with current residents of the city. The individual may have already had family living in the city or began dating a Venetian or Venice resident and moved in with them. They would not have moved to Venice if they did not have family or a significant other in the city.

**Choice** was the fourth factor in motivation. The **choice** category was given to anyone who made a personal decision to move to the city. This includes a personal need for a change of environment or a desire to live on the coast rather than in a landlocked region. These individuals may also have had other motives, such as the need for a lifestyle change or an appreciation of Venetian art and culture. The data shown in **Figure 15** details the primary reasons why individuals move to Venice. Most of the interviewees who came to Venice by **choice** had at least visited Venice once before moving in, ended up falling in love with the city, and were motivated to live in Venice. An expat from Australia who moved to Venice at age 35 stated, "I'd decided at age 14, when I first visited the city with my school, that one day I would live in Venice."

Expats mostly came to Venice because of **work** or **study**; remote workers mostly came by **choice**; and returnees mostly came for **relationships**. **Work** and **study** are logical reasons expats come to Venice: they need a job in order to move somewhere new. Remote workers have a job and can **work** anywhere, so they get to choose where they work. Therefore, **choice** is also logical. Returnees mostly come back because of **relationships**, which makes sense because their familial roots are in Venice.



From the gathered data, the most prominent reason for people moving to Venice is for purposes related to their work. It is also important to note the age at which people moved. Fifty-two percent of the people we interviewed moved in when they were in their 20s. This is to be expected, as it is common for students to find internships in the city after graduating. “It was my decision to do the internship here because I simply preferred Venice over other cities.”

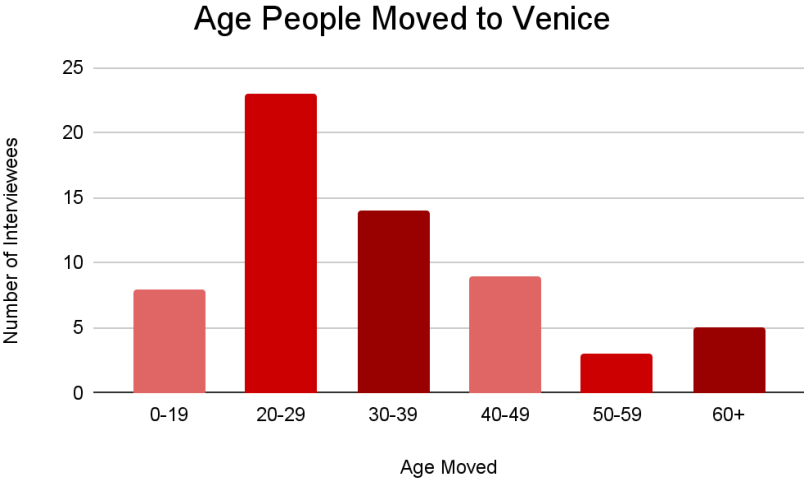


Figure 18. Ages of Interviewees When They Moved to Venice. Most interviewees moved into Venice in their 20’s and 30’s

### 4.2 Why People Stay in Venice

We have categorized the factors influencing why individuals choose to stay in the historical city into seven main components: lifestyle, community, work, **relationship**, beauty, culture, and safety.

The primary factor contributing to the residents’ stay in the historic city of Venice is the **distinctive lifestyle**. This sentiment was consistently expressed in interviews, with interviewees noting the unique aspects of Venetian living, such as the absence of cars leading to reduced noise pollution. Among our interviewees, 11 individuals highlighted the serenity of the historic city, with an expat emphasizing, “The city calms me down and makes me feel like I am in a special place.” Notably, a returnee who relocated from Milan after the birth of his child underscored a deliberate **choice** for a calmer and slower lifestyle. The prevalent mode of walking as the primary means of transportation further contributes to a pedestrian-centric lifestyle, as

exemplified by the observations of Guido, a 74-year-old returnee who notes, “In Rome, you may be late because of a traffic jam, but in Venice, you may be late because you meet so many friends.” In addition, another interviewee highlighted, “[Venice is] beautiful, and that’s the fact. I appreciate the fact that here we don’t have cars because I don’t like to drive.” This highlights how Venetian residents appreciate the lack of cars and how the prevalence of walking in the historic city creates more face-to-face interactions, helping to form strong bonds within the community.

Subsequently, 30 interviewees cited community as one of their reasons for staying. A returnee, who is also a retiree and moved from Paris 15 years ago, cited the human relations in Venice as strong, highlighting the strong sense of community. He stated, “You have a kind of **[relationship]**, person to person, [that] you don't have anywhere else.” This sentiment reflects a profound sense of community that goes beyond mere acquaintanceship, forming the foundation for a fulfilling social life in Venice. Another expat stated that in Venice, she feels like she is not alone, even though her family is in Sardinia. This suggests that the community in Venice provides a strong support network, fostering a sense of belonging. Furthermore, a retiree who spent his professional years working as a doctor mentioned how the bonds formed through his work influenced his decision to stay: “I [liked] my job, my profession, the place where I was working, [and the] people I was working with. That’s why I decided to stay.” This highlights the multifaceted nature of the community ties that enable individuals to stay in Venice, encompassing both social interactions and professional networks.

Work emerged as the second major influence that is enabling 24 interviewees to stay. They have a permanent job position and a stable source of income in the city to support their families and/or themselves. According to Figure 17, the job industry in which most of the interviewees were a part was the academic industry, primarily consisting of high school teachers and college professors. Language was the most common subject taught by the interviewees, including Italian, English, French, and German. Two industries tied for the second highest industry in which interviewees were a part, which include service and art. A few interviewees cited that Venice was a great place to be for people involved in the art and architecture industries. An expat from Korea, working as a freelance architect in Venice, stated that she has a strong affinity for being in or near places characterized by 'developing art and architecture.'

The third substantial rationale that 18 interviewees cited for staying in Venice was **relationships**. Interviewees, particularly returnees, frequently cited familial and social connections rooted in their upbringing in the historic city. An interviewee, a retiree who moved from Paris 15 years ago to be near his family, cited that he continues to stay for the same reason. Expatriates, including those who settled with families at a young age or established families after moving to the historic city, also endorsed this factor. An interviewee, who moved to Venice from Moldova with her mother at the age of 12, continues to stay in Venice to be with her mother. Furthermore, another interviewee, originally from Spain, initially arrived in Venice as part of a study-abroad program. Over time, she not only found employment but also established a family, having a son who is now attending school in Venice. Her decision to continue residing in the city is influenced by both her work and her son's education.

**Beauty** and the love for Italian/Venetian culture were tied for fourth place. Most interviewees, namely expats and remote workers, especially in the younger demographics, appreciated the beauty of Venice and cited it as one of their reasons for staying. One remote worker, aged 34, originally from England, stated, "Venice is the most beautiful city in the whole world." Similarly, an expat from Iran aged 26 who moved to the city initially for university and currently works as a waiter in a restaurant stated that he fell in love with the historic city and would ideally like to live in the city forever, contingent upon suitable employment that matches his qualifications. In addition, an expat aged 28, originally from Marghera, which is in the mainland part of Venice, moved to the historic city and continues to stay primarily because of its beauty. She stated that she is very sensitive about the beauty of the place she lives in, and there is no other place in the world like Venice where she can wake up and walk across a beautiful city. Love for Italian/Venetian culture was defined as an appreciation for the shared values, beliefs, and customs that contribute to the unique identity of Venice and Italy as a whole. While beauty was primarily appreciated by the younger demographics, culture was appreciated by the older demographics, primarily among expats. One interviewee, a returnee from Germany, encapsulated this sentiment by expressing his fondness for the "Italian way of being together," emphasizing the importance of social bonds and community in the cultural fabric of Venice. Another expat, originally from Bologna, conveyed a passion for theaters and concert halls, rooted in her background as a musician. She found Venice to be the perfect place to indulge in her artistic and cultural interests, emphasizing the abundance of cultural activities available in the city. Similarly,

an expat from France shared his perspective, emphasizing the importance of nature in his life. He found the perfect blend of nature and cultural richness in Venice, describing it as a city of art that offers a plethora of options, whether it be music, art, or literature.

The sixth factor that is making 8 interviewees stay, primarily expats, returnees, and retirees in the middle to older age demographic with children, is safety. A returnee, aged 47, who moved from Milan and has a son, stated, “Venice is a very good city for growing children; it is very safe.” This sentiment was echoed by an expat from Japan, also a parent, who highlighted the unique advantage of a car-free environment in Venice. “The children...can run around the city because there [are] no cars... [You] could send them off to school, and then they would just play and come back. It’s a very safe city to raise a child.” A female digital nomad originating from Paris shared her perspective on safety, noting that she has not encountered any security issues in Venice, even when being outdoors past midnight—a contrast to her experiences in Paris. This positive safety perception extends beyond physical well-being, as one interviewee emphasized feeling entirely safe to express oneself and embrace personal **choices**. As articulated by this interviewee, “All I know is I feel completely one hundred percent safe wearing what I want to wear, being who I want to be, and loving who I want to love. And it’s perfectly cool in Venice to do all of those things.” This highlights the importance of safety as a pivotal factor for residents with families or those valuing personal freedom and expression.

The biggest reason that people who came for work or **study** stay is for work. When people have a secure job, they tend to stay in that location. The second biggest staying factor is lifestyle, which shows that they enjoy living here and do not see it as necessary to move. People who came for a **relationship** mostly stay for a **relationship**, and people who came by **choice** mostly stay for the **community** and **culture**.

## What's Influencing Individuals to Stay in Venice?

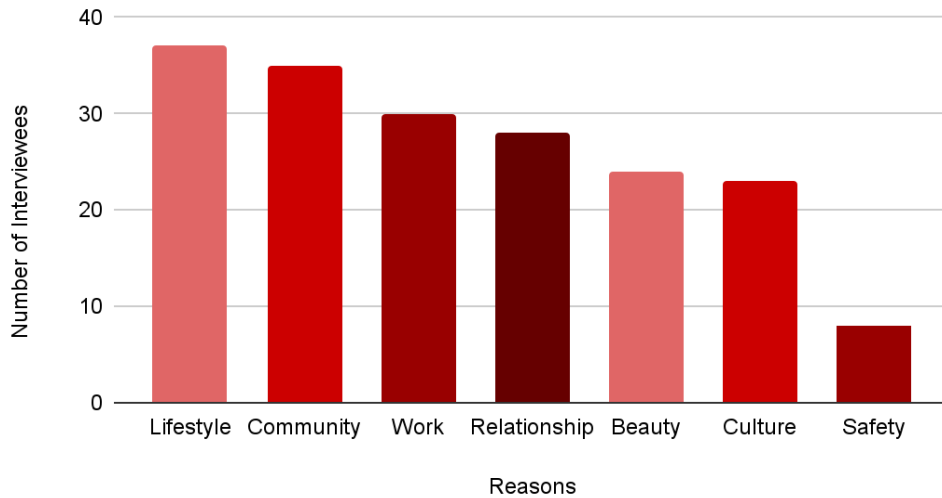


Figure 19. What's Influencing Individuals to Stay in Venice?

### 4.2.1 Retiring to Venice

We interviewed 12 retirees and all of them feel accepted in Venice. Only 1 of the 12 said that he was not planning on staying in Venice. He said that he was “really very angry with the administration here to see the public administration, to see how they have treated this city for the sake of the culture”. He said that if the situation changed he would stay but he does not think that Venice can go back to what it used to be for. When thinking of the retired category we have to consider mobility issues as people are getting older because the transportation in Venice is so unique, no cars, only walking and boats. And even though there are boats it seems Venetian much prefer to walk around the city. Only one of the retirees stated that transportation was one of the challenges of living in Venice and that was in reference to traveling outside of Venice, which multiple younger people also cited as an issue. Overall Venice is a good place for retired people which can be summed up in this quote from one retiree, “I like to live in Venice. It’s [a] quiet place [which is good] for [older] people”.

### 4.3 Challenges People Face in Venice

Our interviewees cited facing several problems that have an impact on their day-to-day lives. These challenges, ranked from the most frequently cited to the least, include tourism, housing, politics, expenses, social barriers, transportation, job opportunities, accessibility, and environment. The omnipresence of tourism, with its annual influx of millions, creates congestion, restricts movement, and fosters a cityscape that increasingly caters to the transient visitor rather than its permanent residents. Escalating housing costs, exacerbated by the surge in short-term tourist rentals, have led to a scarcity of long-term housing options for locals, prompting concerns about the city's affordability and its transformation into a tourist-oriented enclave. Navigating bureaucratic complexities and a lack of regulations, residents grapple with a political landscape that appears to prioritize the interests of Mestre over the historic city. The general high cost of living, coupled with the increased prices in supermarkets due to Venice's geographical location as an island, poses a financial strain, dissuading potential permanent residents and forcing them to commute from more affordable areas. The unique, closed social culture in Venice presents challenges for newcomers to integrate, despite the pedestrian-oriented architecture fostering face-to-face interactions. Reconnecting with old friends also proves challenging as most interviewees cited their old friends to have moved out of Venice and dispersed throughout various locations within Italy or abroad, contributing to a sense of exclusion for some. Navigating the city's narrow roads, numerous bridges, and waterways presents accessibility challenges, particularly for the elderly or those with physical disabilities. In addition, they also impact the ease of moving large items and undertaking home renovation projects. The limited job opportunities outside the tourism sector, coupled with slow professional growth, prompt residents to consider relocating for better career prospects.

## Challenges that Venetian Residents Face

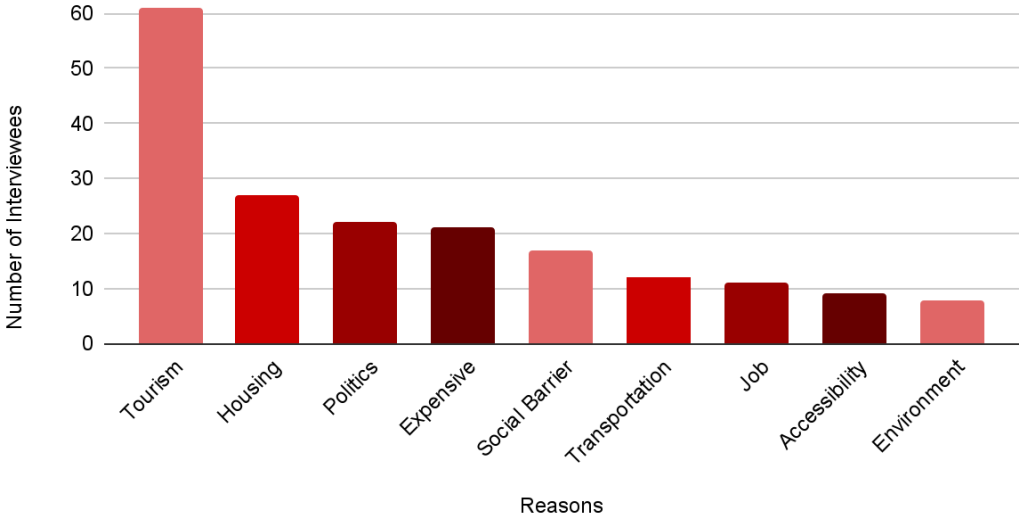


Figure 20: Challenges Interviewees Face in Venice. Tourism is cited as a challenge by an overwhelming majority of interviewees.

### 4.3.1 Tourism Challenges

According to **Figure 20**, Venetian residents cite **tourism** as the largest challenge that they face while living in Venice. 61% of our interviewees cited tourism to be a hardship in some way. According to the New York Times, Venice saw between 10.2 and 20 million people annually before the COVID-19 pandemic (Momigliano, 2021). The large number of tourists causes crowding in the city, making it difficult for Venetian citizens to move around in high-traffic areas such as Rialto and Piazza San Marco. It can be incredibly difficult to walk down some of the more narrow roads during peak tourist seasons. One story recounted to us by one of our interviewees was that she used to stop for tourists taking pictures in the street but that she no longer does so because she is sick of tourists taking up so much space in the streets. High rates of tourism also lead to crowding on public transit. According to one of our interviewees, "The whole fabric of the city is governed by tourist demand" and "tourist activity is in competition with the needs of residents." This is something that we see reflected in the rising costs of housing in the city.

Two returnees, who spent a few years abroad in Europe before returning to Venice, compared Venice to Disneyland, saying that there has been a “transformation of the city into a Disneyland for tourists,” but what was interesting is that both of them had different reasons for drawing the parallel. One interviewee expressed concern over the shifting commercial landscape in Venice, highlighting the growing trend of replacing local shops catering to residents with an influx of tourist-oriented stores, such as souvenir shops. This individual sees the transformation as a threat to the fabric of the community, as it diminishes the availability of necessary shops and day-to-day convenience for residents. This sentiment was repeatedly expressed among our interviewees. Another interviewee further emphasized the negative effects of this commercial transformation by stating, “If you lose the functional purpose of shops [which is the provision of] goods and services, it becomes a problem, especially for older people with limited mobility.”

The second interviewee, who compared Venice to Disneyland, pointed to a deeper societal shift in the dynamics between tourists and Venetians. According to this perspective, there is a noticeable change in the way tourists engage with the city and its residents. The concern here is not just about the commercial aspect but about the cultural exchange between visitors and locals. The interviewee stated that tourists seem increasingly disinterested in acknowledging Venice as a living, breathing city with a rich history and vibrant culture. Instead, they are perceived as more rude and indifferent, treating Venice as a mere attraction similar to Disneyland.



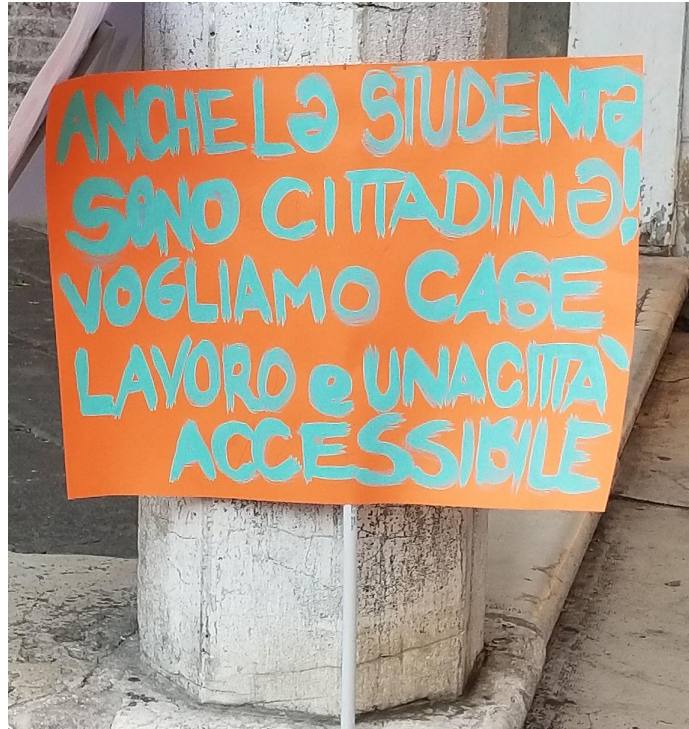


Figure 21: Political protest sign, one of many which calls for greater access to housing

This political poster (shown in **Figure 21**) translates to “The student is also a citizen! We want work, homes and affordable housing”. This echoes a common sentiment among Venetians that there is a dearth of viable long term housing and jobs that would sustain said housing. Two of our interviewees have said that they are glad they bought their apartment/house years ago because the current housing market is not only more expensive but also the number of opportunities for rentals has significantly decreased. Another one of the people we interviewed mentioned that she saw a sign that said that a certain apartment was renting only to tourists for short term rentals. She saw this as representative of Venice’s problems with housing as a whole.

#### 4.3.2 Changes in Venice

Asking interviewees about changes that they noticed over their time in Venice is a new question added for the fall interviewees. The data in this section refers to the 62 interviews conducted by our team.

As seen in **Figure 22**, the biggest change that people noticed was the increase in the number of tourists. They noted that the tourism went from mostly seasonal in the summer to year round, and that the tourists are spreading from just the tourist hot spots to the majority of the

island. This increase has made it more difficult for people to get around the city because the streets and vaporettos are crowded.

Twenty seven percent of the interviewees made remarks about changes in retail shops. It was said that it is “very sad when a famous shop closes and then they open bags [shops] or something else more for tourists”. Our interviewees noted that shops useful for residence, like butchers and hardware stores, are closing and in their spot shops for tourists, like souvenir and trinket shops, are taking their place. One interviewee noted that she needed a button and had to either go to the mainland or order it online because she was unable to find one on the island. “If you lose the functional purpose of shops [which is the provision of] goods and services, it becomes a problem, especially for older people with limited mobility.”

A large group of interviewees noticed less residents in Venice. People noted that they saw their friends and family having to leave the city because they could not afford to stay in Venice.

Eleven percent of our interviewees noted that the housing problems had worsened. As mentioned in 2.1.2 Finding a House in Venice it is very difficult for people to find and afford a house in Venice. One interviewee said “the problem was finding a house... [and] the cost of the house...is very, very high”. People noted that these issues of finding a house and the rising prices have continued to worsen over the years.

Finally, 5% of our interviewees said they felt that Venice was becoming less safe. This is a small percentage but important to note because safety was one of the reasons people stay. One returnee noted that when she was growing up in Venice she was not afraid to walk alone at night. Now that she has returned and had children she would not let them out nearly as late because she is afraid of what might happen.

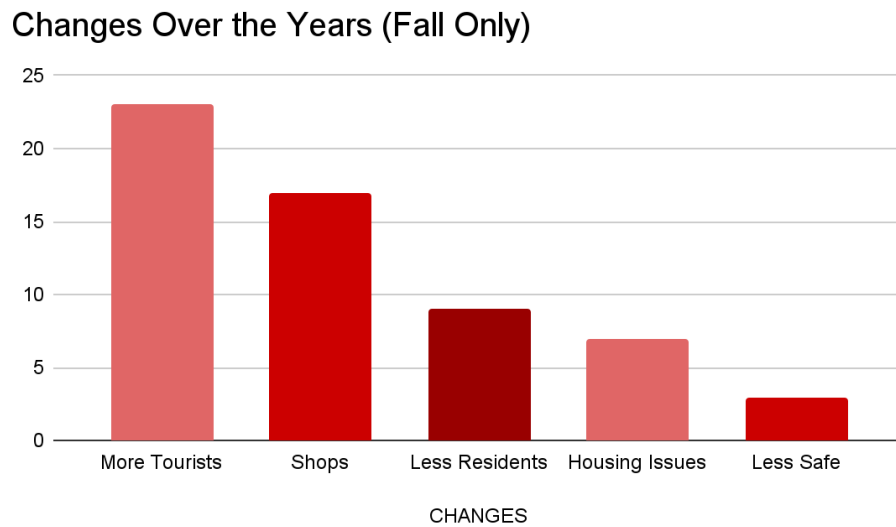


Figure 22: Changes in Venice Over the Years, the increase in tourists being the greatest change noticed.

### 4.3.3 Housing Challenges

The influx of tourists has also led to an increase in the cost of housing and an increased focus on providing short term housing for the tourists instead of long term housing for locals (Cristiano; Gonella, 2020). According to one protester “what needs to change, and fast, are the objectives of the local leadership which seem to be aiming only at exploiting Venice rather than building a sustainable, livable city for the Venetians and visitors to enjoy. Policies and countermeasures aiming at helping Venetians to find a house, keep their job, access services in their city are essential but sadly not a given in Venice” (Edwards, 2017) An example of this significant increase in housing prices is the average sale price of a residential property in San Marco, Rialto which costs 5,775 Euros per square meter as of October 2023. The average rental price in this same area was 19.02 Euros monthly per square meter. For comparison, the average cost to rent an apartment in Italy as a whole is 12.7 Euros per month per square meter (Average monthly rental price for residential properties in Italy in October 2023, by region). This high cost of housing was commented on by one of our interviewees who, when asked about the challenges of living in Venice, said “Housing is also a problem as it is difficult to find a place to stay in terms of both buying and renting.”



Figure 23: Graph of Rental Prices in Venice, they have risen steeply in recent years.

**Figure 23** shows that in November of 2023, the average cost per month per square meter for a residential property for rent was 14.82 Euros which represents an increase of 9.13% compared to its price 12 months prior. (Real Estate Prices in the Municipality of Venice, 2023)

The following poster (**Figure 24**) is from a recent political demonstration in Venice. The poster encapsulates many of our findings from this term. Rental prices have been increasing and, as has been seen through some of the quotes from interviewees, people feel that the government cares more about short term housing for tourists than it does for providing long term housing to locals. The creators of the poster use it as a call to action on the common sentiment that the local government does not have the best interest of Venice at heart. The poster lays out a series of demands aimed at reducing the cost and improving the availability of housing for locals. In English it says that over the past 6 years, municipally owned vacant houses grew from 796 to 1024 and only 140 houses will be assigned thanks to the latest ERP notice. Tourist rents continue to rise, rents are skyrocketing and more people are becoming homeless. The author says “What does Brugnaro (the mayor of Venice) do? He says Venezia is depopulating because residents are dying! We can no longer stand by and watch the transformation of our city into a Disneyland for tourists, we want city policies that put housing and residents first.” It says that on November 18th they will take to the streets bringing simple and clear demands. These demands are: immediate restoration and allocation of the 2000 empty and abandoned public houses; to stop Airbnb

through the regulation of tourist rentals; to implement controls on rents for students, workers and residents; and to remove the entrance fee because it makes it seem as though Venice is a museum. The final part of the poster reiterates that they want to put a stop to depopulation, reduce touristification and calls on other Venetians to join them in order to build their future there.

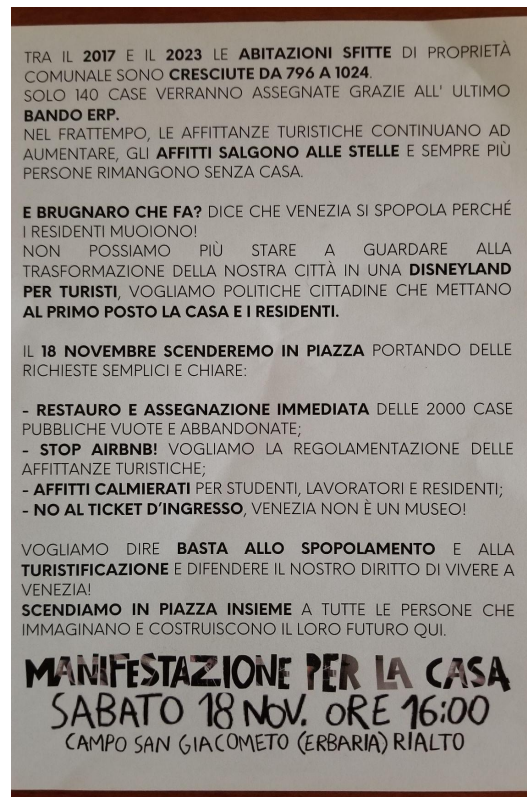


Figure 24: Political poster regarding housing, it makes a series of demands to the local government

The fact that these posters were made and the rallies they were a part of had so many participants is evidence that the negative sentiment towards the way the city has dealt with the cost of housing and the factors that affect it is commonly held throughout Venice and must be addressed as an urgent concern.

The complaints of this specific poster reflect many of the struggles we discovered in our research; an increase in the number of short term tourist rentals, an increase in rent, depopulation, the negative ramifications of Airbnbs in the city and rent controls for residents.

With regards to the number of short term tourist rentals, one article has stated that the hoteliers are also involved with tourism, as they supply 19,000 beds in the city in addition to the

21,000 available in tourist rentals. Claudio Scarpa, the director of AVA (Venice Hoteliers Association) was quoted as saying “Yes, putting limits on the rentals is necessary because the situation in Venice is overflowing, and people who are looking for an apartment to live in the city find the doors shut by homes destined to become tourist rentals”. (Pendonlini, 2022) This shows that the protesters were not an outlier and that the problem is being recognized by many different members of Venetian society.

#### 4.3.4 Transportation and Accessibility Challenges

Transportation and the ability to get around the city are major barriers to those who wish to live in the historic city long-term, especially for those who are elderly or have a physical disability. 12% of interviewees reported that moving large items, such as luggage or furniture, is especially difficult. One of our interviewees has stated: This is due to the narrow roads and large number of bridges that span the canals. It is difficult to maneuver large items through these narrow corridors. Home renovation projects are also difficult to accomplish, as transporting wood, tile, and other materials around Venice is strenuous. One of our interviewees, Michaela, said the following when asked about any of the challenges she faced in Venice: "Yes it is difficult moving yourself and moving things you [own], for example, my husband, [and I] worked a lot [on] our apartment, so just transporting the cement, wood, metal, all those things to the house is difficult.”

Among our interviewees, there was one individual, Robert, who was disabled. He had an interesting perspective on getting around Venice. He said, “To be honest, if I’ve got no mobility, I would rather have no mobility in Venice than no mobility in England... I would feel trapped in England, and I don’t feel trapped in Venice”. Walking is a big part of Venetian culture, and he said, “I would rather walk, and I’d rather take five times as long walking than I would do taking the vaporetto.” He informed us that he had a compromised immune system, and that is part of the reason he disliked the vaporetto. Also, he noted that because Venice has a slower pace of life, he can go at his own pace without issue. In his opinion, “Venice is so disabled-friendly”.

#### 4.3.5 Political Issues

The decisions that Venice's current mayor has made, along with the bureaucracy of the local government, are difficult for those hoping to live in Venice. One of our interviewees said that the governmental documents and tax forms that you need to fill out are extremely difficult to deal with for those who are not fluent in Italian. This individual also went on to say that the local government stifles those with innovative ideas on how to change the city. This interviewee said that overtourism is not the problem but rather a symptom of a local government that does not put regulations on short-term rentals. As a result of this lack of regulations, many houses or apartments that would have been purchased by permanent residents end up being rented out on short term-leases to tourists. In the words of one of our interviewees, "The mayor was not really helping because, you know, they don't really care to bring an apartment to students, to people like me, or to Venetians too." Many Venetians feel that the current government favors Mestre over the historic city of Venice and tries to put their needs first. When asked about the politics of the city, one interviewee said, "All the city is not just Venice, it's Mestre, and so he [the mayor] was elected by the other people because they are more than Venetians. And so then he's taking all the money [from] Venice with tourists, and he can make things better in Mestre. So everyone is happy, but not the Venetians." Many Venetians want a new mayor and a different local government that recognizes that Mestre and the historical city of Venice have very different needs based on their geography and who governs accordingly.

#### 4.3.6 Cost of Living Challenges

A common complaint amongst interviewees was both the high cost of housing and the general high cost of living. One interviewee said, "The supermarkets, I think, are more expensive because everything has to be brought in," which is a problem more common in Venice due to the fact that it is an island. If an expat were planning on moving to Italy permanently, they may be dissuaded from moving to Venice and choose instead to live in Mestre or elsewhere on the mainland. This is actually the case for several expats from Bangladesh who we interviewed in the Cannaregio district. Even though they have their souvenir shops in the historic city, they commute to work every day from Mestre, as they mentioned that the historic city was unaffordable to live in. Since those expats lived outside the historic city, they did not fit in the scope of our project, and we did not incorporate their information into our data for analysis.

### Expensive? (Summer & Fall)

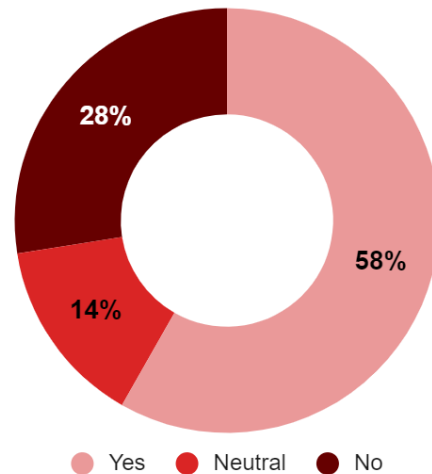


Figure 25. Chart Showing Interviewees' Thoughts On If Venice is Expensive (Summer & Fall). The majority of interviewees view Venice as an expensive city to live in.

According to the interviewees from the summer and fall projects (shown in **Figure 25**), the majority of Venetians consider it to be an expensive place to live. This team found that those who had moved to Venice from the United States were more likely to perceive Venice as being expensive compared to those who were outside of Venice but still from Europe. We believe that this is most likely due to the fact that these European expatriates often come from highly expensive cities like London or Paris. Due to this, the cost of living in Venice may actually be more difficult to deal with than the graphs portray it as being.

#### 4.3.7 Social Barriers

Another one of the primary challenges that interviewees face while living in Venice is a variety of social barriers. The social barrier is defined as how individuals were able to acclimate to the social life in Venice. This includes topics such as if interviewees were able to make friends easily, if they felt accepted within the city, and if they would consider themselves Venetian.

As shown in **Figure 26**, 90% of the individuals interviewed claimed that they felt accepted while living in Venice. These interviewees claimed that because of the pedestrian-oriented architecture of Venice, it is very easy to run into and meet new people. There are many face-to-face interactions in the daily life of a Venetian resident, making Venetian



culture, by extension, very social. One of our interviewees explained that Venice's social life “is part of the city's DNA.” Many interviewees repeated the sentiment that it was “dangerous” to schedule things like trains and boats because it was very likely that you would find friends on the way and would have to stop and talk, causing you to miss your scheduled transit. Individuals also cited that one of the best ways to meet new people was through things such as their child’s daycare service or through their kid’s sporting events. Many individuals felt accepted for this reason, saying that Venetian residents were very kind and accepting. One of our interviewees explained the accepting and social life of Venice by saying, “I absolutely feel accepted. [Venetians] have this nice way of calling you and calling each other like ‘amore’ [and] ‘stella’ which [means] love and star.”

Do You Feel Accepted in Venice?

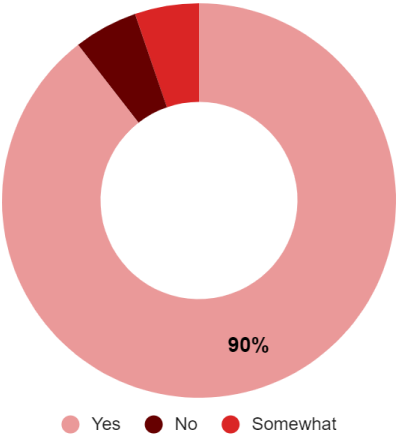


Figure 26: Chart of Interviewees Rate of Acceptance. Almost all interviewees feel accepted or somewhat accepted in Venice.

Despite the accepting nature of Venetian residents, only half of our interviewees would consider themselves Venetian, as shown in **Figure 27**. This phenomenon is due to several factors, particularly the way native Venetians interact with non-native Venetians. While being interviewed, many expats explained how a majority of their friends also moved from outside of Venice and that very few of their closest friends were native Venetians. When asked about this, they cited how it can be difficult to get to know native Venetians, as Venetian culture is often seen as closed and protective. One of our interviewees, a German man who has lived in Venice for 40 years, explained, “It's hard to get to know Venetians. Even after 40 years... it's very

seldom that [a Venetian] invites me to their home or [out to] dinner.” Another interviewee, a woman who moved from the United Kingdom, explained native Venetian acceptance by saying, “You’re never fully integrated into that community.” According to the collected interview data, native Venetians are very kind and willing to talk, but are often very private, with details relating to their personal lives.

Do You Consider Yourself Venetian?

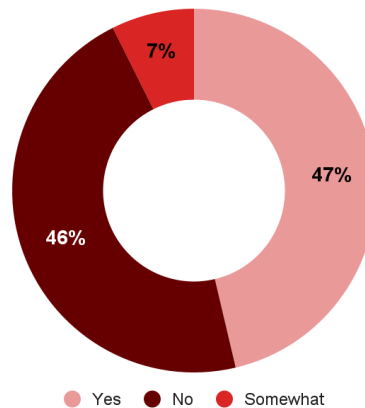


Figure 27: Chart of Interviewees Considering Themselves Venetian. Only half of interviewees consider themselves Venetian.

These social barriers proved especially true for expats, as many of them explained how their first few months in the city were difficult due to a lack of social acceptance. Expats who were born in other countries outside of Italy detailed how, no matter how long they may have lived in the city, Venetians will only view themselves as true Venetians. “I’m always a foreigner,” said one of our interviewees, who moved from the United States to Venice in 2002. Another interviewee, a gentleman who moved from Paris, explained how native Venetian residents view him by saying, “Even if I were to do amazing things, do this, do that, I will always be a French guy, and that’s okay.” An interviewee from the United Kingdom recited a similar sentiment after explaining a situation where someone asked if she ever planned on returning to the United Kingdom. She explained, “They, in their minds, take me as English... Whereas in my mind, that’s not important.” Even those who were born in Italy have faced a similar issue, where native Venetians were able to differentiate native and non-native Venetians by their accent, thus leading to further exclusion. Many interviewees who were born in Italy cited how native Venetians frequently mistook them and treated them as tourists due to their accent. Because our

interviewees did not speak or understand the Venetian dialect, they were immediately deemed tourists, even in cases where they had been living in Venice for many months. This misunderstanding led to some interviewees being treated differently by Venetian residents, such as being charged higher prices at shops or having an overall ruder demeanor. One interviewee explained a situation where she was cut in line by a native Venetian. The native Venetian claimed that the interviewee was not a resident of the city due to her Bolognian accent and that she had a right to cut in line.

Returnees faced a unique social barrier, unlike other groups considered in this study. Returnees were often unable to reconnect with their old friends in Venice due to most of their friends moving away. It was common to have a few friends who stayed, but most had left Venice. However, due to the tight-knit community of Venetian culture, they were typically able to connect with other Venetian residents.

These social differences make settling in Venice difficult, particularly for outsiders. Despite this, it is clear that individuals who move to Venice eventually make connections within the city, leading them to feel accepted, as shown above. Once people establish themselves in the city, they are able to make friends and thrive on the Venetian lifestyle. “If you want to live here, you need to find an entry point... and that can be a challenge,” explained one of our interviewees, who later went on to say, “If I had to live anywhere else, I couldn’t imagine where that would be.”

#### 4.3.8 Employment Challenges

The final challenge that individuals face while living in Venice is finding a suitable and sustainable job. As shown in **Figure 20**, a large number of individuals come to Venice for work-related purposes as well as to study at one of Venice’s many universities. Many of these individuals move to Venice when they are in their 20’s and 30’s, as shown in **Figure 18**. This age range of people makes up the very beginning of the working class and is vital to the growth of any city. However, with the Venetian job market oversaturated with tourism-based jobs, many of the interviewees, who comprise the working class, seek employment in other cities. This is because of the consistently low salaries offered by these jobs. These jobs are often unrelated to the major of study for these individuals, as well. This combination of factors act as a large driving force for young people to leave the city in search of more profitable and fulfilling

careers. One of our interviewees, a 26 year old who works as a waiter, stated, “If I [find] a proper job related to my studies, yes of course I will stay [in] Venice. If not, I need to move to another city.” This individual also further emphasized the fact that it is difficult to find a job outside of tourism. This is a sentiment that was also agreed upon by others.

A remote worker from Paris mentioned that during her 6-month stay in Venice as a digital nomad, she only met one person who did not work in the tourism industry. Several expatriates also repeatedly emphasized the difficulty of finding a qualified job. Furthermore, Carlo Santaguistina, a 35-year-old economics professor at Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, highlighted the challenging and gradual nature of professional growth in Venice, expressing uncertainty about his continued residence in the city. In his words, “It's not so easy to progress rapidly in your career. So it depends on the opportunity and one has to see the pros and cons. I like the city. If the city allows me to grow professionally, I would like to stay. If it's not possible, I would be happy to go abroad and discover other places.” A recurring theme identified among our interviewees who noted employment conditions in Venice as a challenge was their willingness to depart from Venice in pursuit of better professional opportunities abroad.

## 5. Conclusions

From our findings, we identified several themes that stood out to us:

1. About half of the people in their twenties were unsure if they were staying in Venice.
2. There were only five interviewees who said they did not feel accepted, and they were all women.
3. People born in Italy, teachers, people in the 20-29 age category, and people with one roommate thought that Venice was expensive.
4. There is no apparent correlation between the amount of time spent here and whether people feel Venetian.
5. People who rent feel less Venetian than those who live with their parents or own a home.

### 5.1 Younger People Find it Harder To Stay in Venice

One of the most interesting connections was that about half of the people in their 20s were unsure if they were staying. Fortunately, most of them say that they would like to stay in Venice. “The biggest question about being in Venice is not about Venice, because I love Venice, I [would] like to live in Venice forever but... it’s a little bit harder to find a job.” This interviewee currently works as a waiter but has a degree in economics. He would like to find a job related to his degree but is having difficulty. This is the same case for Emma, who said, “I am fine right now [being a] tour guide, but I don’t know if I want to do it for my entire future.” Emma similarly works in the tourism industry and is struggling to find a different job more related to her studies and interests. On the other hand, people like Anita felt that she could not stay because of how tourist-centric the city has become. She said, “That might mean that I have to leave Venice because there's no way that I can live in a place that is built more for shops than it is for people.” The last major reason people in their twenties might move was because of the possibility of new experiences. Our interviewee, Niccola, said he did not know if he was staying yet because “I want to discover other places.” Solutions can be implemented to improve the diversity of Venetian jobs, but unfortunately, younger people are going to want to explore other places, and that cannot really be prevented.

Another challenge that most 20-year-olds stated was the lack of a good social life and nightlife in Venice. A 26 year-old interviewee stated, “Venice doesn’t have a good nightlife for

young people. Sometimes we have some problems [organizing] something to go out with friends.” In addition, Niccola further emphasized, “[The social life] is not so easy. There's a big difference between Venice...and the other cities in Italy... . The social life [is very bad] here in Venice. It's really a problem.” Collectively, these statements highlight a critical aspect of the quality of life for young adults in Venice. The dissatisfaction with the social and nightlife scene may have implications for the overall appeal of the city to this demographic.

Furthermore, a concern that the younger demographics repeatedly mentioned during the interviews was that they observed people their age leaving the city. Alessia, a 27 year-old expat expressed her observation, stating, “There are very few people...who decide to stay here, or who can afford to stay here. It's not that easy to make friends...who are going to stay.” This sentiment highlights the challenges faced by the younger population in establishing a lasting connection with the city, both socially and economically. Another 28 year-old returnee, Giacomo, further emphasized, “I wanted to go outside Venice because all my friends wanted to go outside.” Giacomo's perspective reflects a broader trend of peer influence and the desire for connectivity beyond the confines of Venice. The pull of opportunities elsewhere, driven by economic considerations or perceived limitations within the city, contributes to a collective mindset among the younger demographic to seek prospects outside Venice.

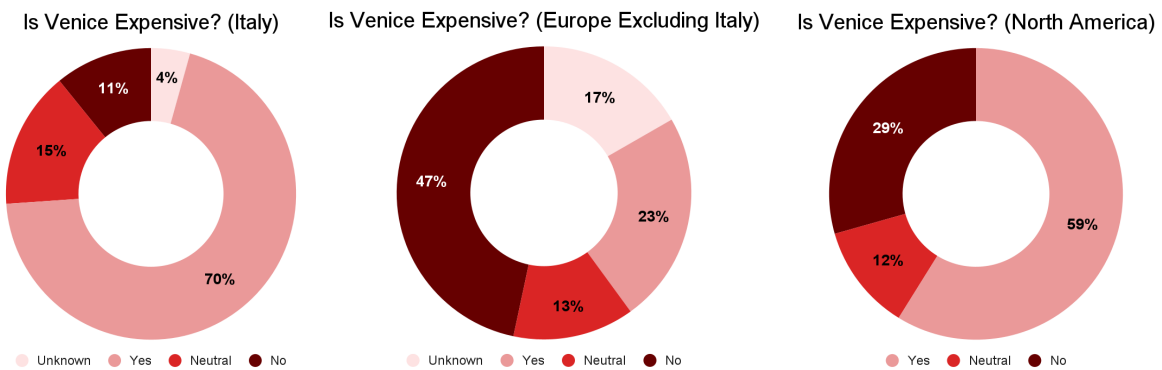
## 5.2 Women Had More Challenges Than The Men In Our Study

There were only 5 people out of our 100 interviewees who said that they did not feel accepted in Venice, and all 5 of them were female. Four of five of these women said they were maybe staying. Notably, the fifth woman said she was planning on staying in Venice, and she was the only one who was married to a Venetian and the only one in the 60+ age category.

## 5.3 Perceptions of Affordability Differ

People who were born in Italy find Venice to be very expensive. Of the Italians we interviewed, 70% said that Venice was expensive. “Venice is probably the most expensive city in Italy to live in.” “It's absolutely absurd the amount of money that is being asked [for rent], and then combine it with the cost of buying groceries here, which is very expensive compared to the land.” This makes sense because Venice, on average, is one of the more expensive cities in Italy.

Of the interviewees from other European countries, only 23% of them thought that Venice was expensive. This is not surprising because most interviewees who were from other European countries were from England and France, where the cost of living is much higher. In fact, one of our interviewees, Charles, was a remote worker who moved from Paris to Venice because of its affordability. “It’s affordable, I would say... it’s 20% cheaper than Paris.” People who were born in North America are more split, with 59% of people thinking that Venice is expensive.

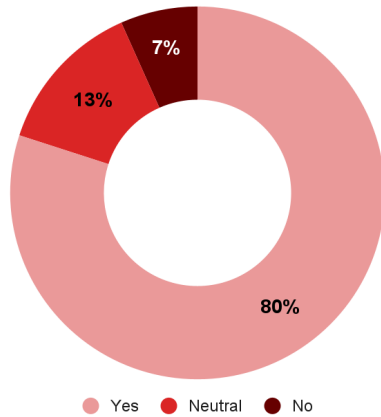


Figures 28, 29, and 30. Graphs Detailing Interviewees Opinion on the Cost of Living in Venice which show that Italians were More Likely to Find Venice Expensive

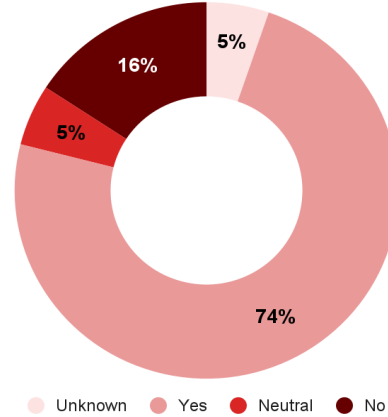
Our biggest pool of workers were teachers (21%), and they found Venice to be expensive. Of these teachers, 74% found Venice to be expensive. “It’s too expensive for the salary that she gets as a teacher because teachers in Italy are not very well paid,” said Natalina, a teacher at a secondary school.

Additionally, 80% of people in their 20s found Venice to be expensive, as shown in **Figure 31**. This ties into the idea from section 5.1 that younger people find it hard to find a proper job in Venice.

Is Venice Expensive? (20-29 Year Olds)



Is Venice Expensive? (Teachers)



Figures 31 and 32. Charts Detailing 20-29 Year Olds and Teachers Opinion on the Cost of Living in Venice

In addition, there was a correlation between the number of roommates an individual had and their perception of affordability in Venice. Illustrated in the graph below, 75% of the individuals renting with one roommate considered Venice expensive, contrasting with 67% of those without roommates expressing a similar sentiment. Intriguingly, none of the respondents with two roommates deemed Venice expensive, often expressing a neutral stance or describing it as inexpensive. This trend aligns logically with the financial dynamics of shared living situations. Those without roommates bear the full burden of rent, potentially influencing their perception of Venice as expensive. Conversely, individuals with two roommates, benefiting from shared financial responsibility, tended not to view the city as expensive. The subset with one roommate, likely facing financial constraints that led to shared living and having fewer roommates to share the financial responsibility, tended to perceive Venice as expensive.



Number of Roommates vs. Perceived Affordability

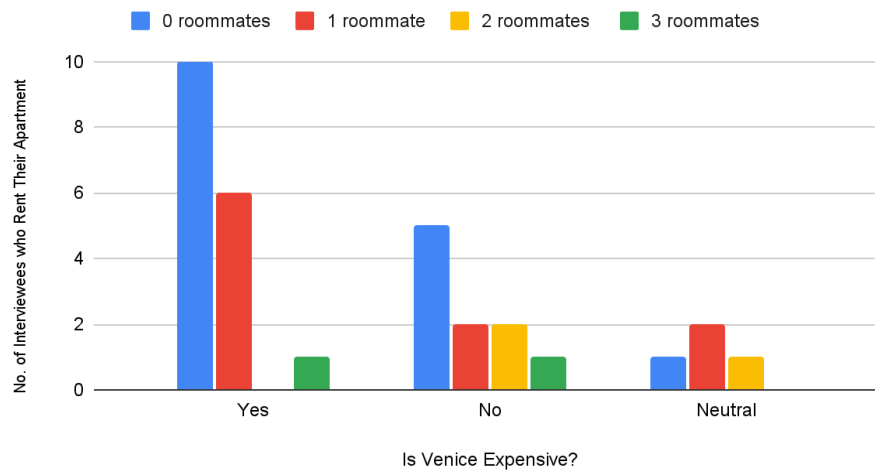


Figure 33. Individuals with one roommate were More Likely to Perceive Venice as Expensive

#### 5.4 No Correlation Between Time In Venice and Feeling Venetian

Contrary to what we expected, we found that there was no correlation between time spent in Venice and whether or not a person considers themselves Venetian. We had interviewees who had been here over 40 years and did not consider themselves Venetian, and interviewees who had been here for only a year and would consider themselves Venetian. We attribute this finding to the different definitions people have of what it means to be a Venetian.

One expatriate from Germany thought a Venetian was someone who “give[s] their contribution to the town by living, working, [and] loving the city. [Those are] in Venetians in my head”. In this way, they thought anyone meaningfully contributing to the city could be [a] Venetian. However, there was another expat from another area in Italy who said, “In Venice, there are few... real Venetian people. And there are a lot of people, like me, who live here but [aren’t] from Venice.” Many interviewees noted that Venetians, people originally from Venice, can be exclusive because they have had to protect their culture from the mass tourism in their city. This is exemplified by this interviewee who said, “You are treated completely [differently] when you live there [than] when you’re a tourist.” They told a story about how once shop owners and waiters realized they were staying in the city long-term they were much more welcoming and friendly.

## Do You Consider Yourself Venetian vs Time Spent in Venice

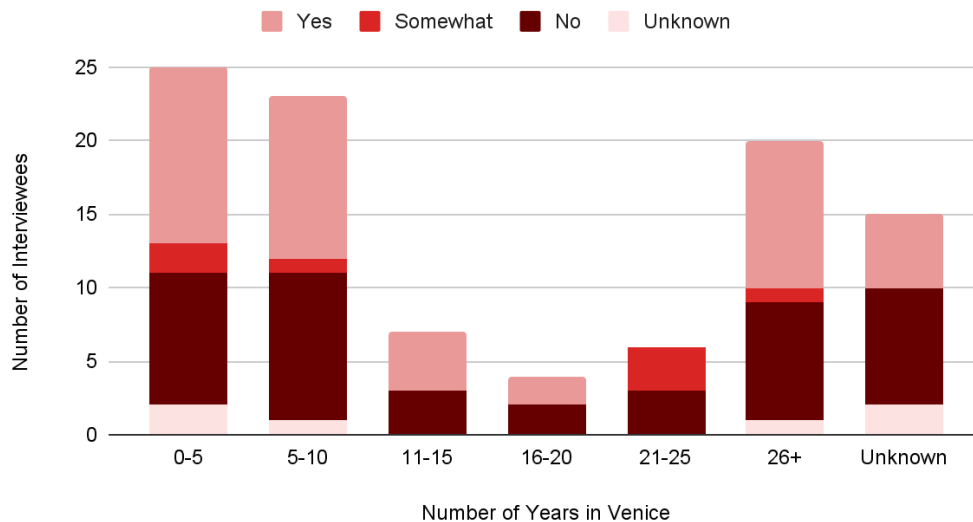


Figure 34. No correlation between the number of years lived in Venice and Venetian identity

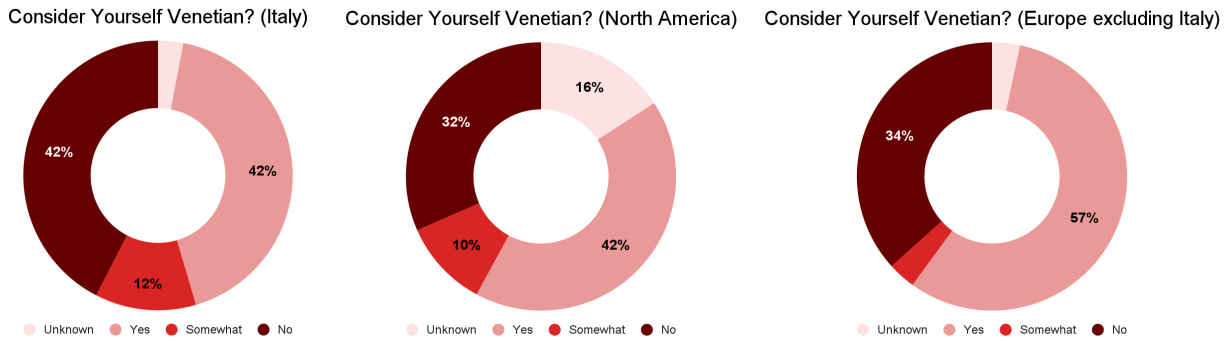
### 5.5 European Expats From Outside of Italy Consider Themselves Venetian

Expatriates, remote workers, and returnees had varying levels of feeling Venetian. It was expected that all of the returnees would feel Venetian because they grew up in Venice. However, this was not the case, as one of our 12 returnees did not consider themselves Venetian. When asked if they felt Venetian, they said, “No, I never did. No, I feel particularly at home here. I grew up here, but... I don’t feel entirely comfortable all the time in the city.” This is in stark contrast to another returnee who said, “I’m proud of this city. I think it’s an amazing city. I am proud to be Venetian.”

Only 29% of remote workers felt Venetian, which makes sense because most of the remote workers that were interviewed were only in Venice temporarily. When you are only staying in a place for a short time, it is hard to consider yourself a member of that community.

Expats felt a little more Venetian (38%). This split between Venetian and not only varied slightly between different places of origin. Italian expats were pretty evenly split on whether they considered themselves Venetian. European expats as a whole, excluding Italians, actually leaned more towards considering themselves Venetian (57%). It is worth noting that there are four

interviewees that are not represented in these graphs. They were not included in these models because there was not enough data on these locations to make an overall judgment. We had one individual from Australia, one from Korea, one from Japan, one from Iran, and one from Russia. The individual from Russia considered themselves Venetian, while all the others did not.



Figures 35, 36, and 37. Charts Detailing Interviewees Opinion on Self-Identification as Venetian based on Location, which proves that Europeans, who were not Italians, were more likely to consider themselves Venetian.

### Do You Consider Yourself Venetian vs Category

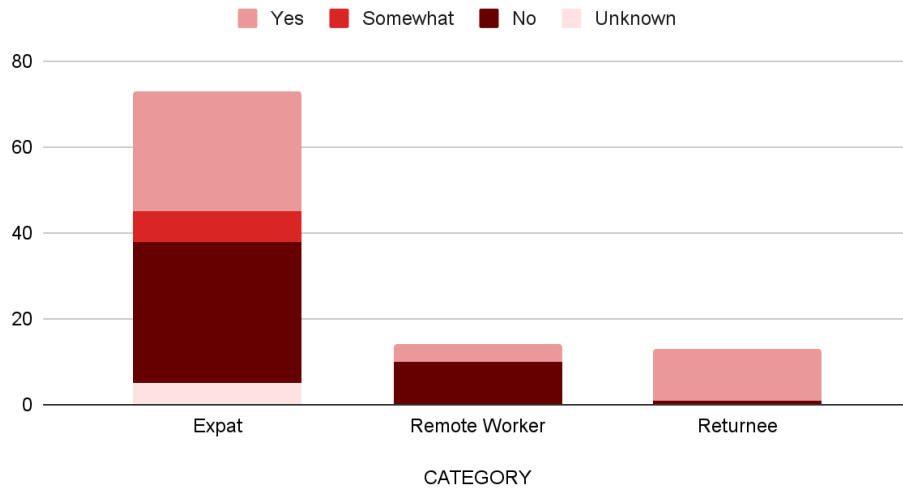


Figure 38. Graph depicting categories of people and whether they consider themselves Venetian, which shows that expats and returnees are more likely to consider themselves Venetian

### 5.6 People Who Rent Feel Less Venetian Than Those Who Own Their Home.

Buying a permanent residence in a location is a strong sign that you intend to stay there for the foreseeable future. Those who choose to rent instead may only intend to stay in the city for a shorter period, or perhaps they would like to stay long-term but are unable to because they cannot afford to do so. One of our interviewees told us that she was glad that she bought her apartment in the 2000s because the current rent prices are quite expensive. If she currently had to rent, she might not be able to live in the city and would therefore be less likely to consider herself a permanent Venetian. Additionally, since many Venetians say that the only true Venetian is one who was born here, it makes sense that those with family living in the city who they themselves also live with are more likely to consider themselves to be Venetians. According to one of our interviewees, “But they hear from my intonation that I’m not a Venetian. So they understand. They know I’m Venetian, like from the Veneto, but I’m not a Venetian.” A possible reason for those who live with their parents feeling more Venetian is that they were able to pick up the Venetian dialect from them and were able to avoid being considered an outsider based on how they speak, as this interviewee was.

Do You Consider Yourself Venetian vs Living Arrangements

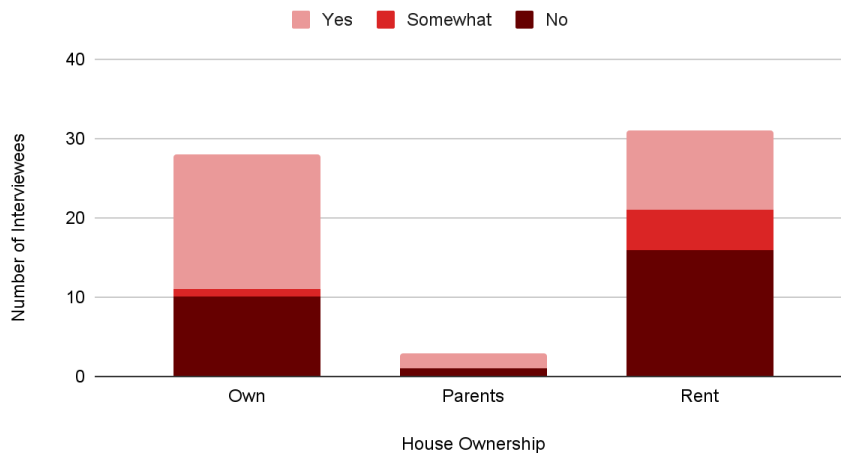


Figure 39. Graph of owners, those who live with parents and those who rent which shows that those who own their home are more likely to consider themselves Venetians

## 6. Final Remarks

Through our qualitative research, we determined that Venice attracts individuals for a multitude of reasons. The primary drivers for relocation encompass work, choice, relationships, and study. Work-related opportunities stand out, drawing individuals seeking permanent job positions and stable income. Returnees, echoing sentiments of Venice's unparalleled uniqueness, emphasize the city's magnetic pull. Once in Venice, residents find compelling reasons to stay. Beyond the professional sphere, the distinctive lifestyle, marked by the absence of cars and reduced noise pollution, becomes a major influence. Strong familial and social bonds, the city's aesthetic allure, safety, and deep appreciation for Venetian culture solidify residents' commitment, fostering a sense of belonging.

However, amidst these attractive factors, residents face challenges, notably stemming from the impact of mass tourism. High tourist numbers lead to congestion, hindering daily activities, and elevating housing costs, with an increasing focus on short-term rentals. Furthermore, there is a severe lack of jobs outside of the tourism industry, making it difficult for individuals to find qualified jobs, forcing several to consider moving elsewhere with better work opportunities. Additionally, the city's unique geography and infrastructure pose challenges in transportation and accessibility.

Despite these challenges, 73% of our interviewees stated that they planned on staying in Venice. One of our interviewees perfectly captured this sentiment by stating, “[One has] to make some compromises, but living in Venice is rewarding.” This perspective suggests a positive and resilient outlook among those who have chosen Venice as their home, acknowledging the difficulties but finding a deeper sense of fulfillment that outweighs the challenges.

To facilitate the process of reversing the depopulating trend in Venice and repopulating the city, there are two main components: retaining current residents and attracting more expatriates, remote workers, and returnees. According to the Venice Case Study conducted by SmartDest, in which they analyzed the depopulation of the historic city, their proposed framework to repopulate Venice focused on enhancing job-related factors. Our project findings also corroborated this, as work emerged as the primary motivator for our interviewees to relocate to the historic city. Therefore, the most effective solution to attract more individuals to the city is

to enhance work opportunities and conditions related to employment. This would include encouraging the development of startups. SerenDPT is currently committed to supporting the creation of startups that will produce high-quality jobs in the historic city. Other methods to further improve the work infrastructure, as highlighted by SmartDest, include expanding the diversity of non-extractive jobs. While promoting startups, SerenDPT could also promote job diversity by emphasizing startups that are innovative, knowledge-based, and creative, with a focus on digital products and services that are inspired by tradition.

It is important to highlight that one of the findings from the Venice Case Study was the fact that “repopulating Venice by jump-starting a new economy that is alternative to tourism will take decades.” Hence, they proposed focusing efforts on attracting remote workers. This would include providing more remote work opportunities, developing and promoting coworking spaces, and bringing mainland jobs ‘closer’ to the residents of the historic city with faster transportation and proper parking facilities. SerenDPT could contribute to this vision by promoting startups that offer remote jobs and coworking spaces to attract remote workers.

By combining these strategies and leading initiatives that help repopulate the city, SerenDPT can assist the historic city of Venice with navigating its challenges while preserving the qualities that make it an exceptional place to live. In the future, after the implementation of these solutions, we hope that the saying “Venice is beautiful, but I’d never live there” will be replaced by “Venice is beautiful, and I live here.”

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix A: Core Questions

1. Can you tell me about what brought you to Venice?
  - a. Why did you choose Venice?
  - b. Where did you grow up?
    - i. (if unsure) Where did you graduate from high school?
  - c. Where in Venice do you live?
  - d. Are you planning on staying in Venice?
    - i. (If yes) What do you like about Venice that has made you want to stay?
    - ii. (If no) Where are you considering moving?
  - e. Have you visited Venice at all before you moved here?
2. What do you do for work?
3. What is your impression on the cost of living in Venice?
  - a. Do you think Venice is expensive?
4. What is your social life like here?
  - a. Easy to make friends?
  - b. Enough things to do around the city?
5. How has Venice changed since you've moved here?
6. What are some of the challenges you face?
7. Do you feel accepted here in Venice?
8. Do you consider yourself a Venetian?
9. Did others that you know follow a similar journey?
  - a. (If yes) Could you please provide us with their name and contact information?

### Appendix B: Demographic Questions

- Age?
- Marital Status?
- Children?

- Rent or Own?
  - Roommates?
- Do you have residency in Venice?
- Do you have Italian citizenship?
- What languages do you speak?
- When did you move to Venice (year and age)?

## Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

### **Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in a Research Study**

**Investigator:** Fabio Carrera

**Contact Information:**

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**Title of Research Study:**

**Sponsor:** SerenDPT, SmartDest

**Introduction**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree, however, you must be fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and any benefits, risks, or discomfort that you may experience as a result of your participation. This form presents information about the study so that you may make a fully informed decision regarding your participation.

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this study is to understand the reasoning behind why expatriates, nomads, returnees, and retirees moved into the historical center of Venice and other reasons that may have caused residents to leave from this area. We will also attempt to understand the reasoning of why people who have emigrated from Venice left and moved elsewhere.

**Procedures to be followed:** This study will contain a 30-45 minute interview that may be recorded. During this interview, the interviewer will be taking notes during the conversation.

**Risks to study participants:** Some potential risks of participating in this study are:

- discomfort from answering certain questions about job status or income
- discomfort from having a conversation being recorded

**Benefits to research participants and others:**

It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by allowing the SerenDPT and related projects to understand the desirable features of Venice. Understanding these features is integral to preventing the migration away from Venice and hopefully attract more people to increase the population of the city.

You are not expected to benefit directly from participating in this study.

**Record keeping and confidentiality:** Each interview will be recorded in a method indicated by the interviewee. The options for method of record keeping are as follows: video recording, audio recording, and note-taking.

Please indicate all methods of record-keeping you are comfortable with:

- Audio recording
- Note-taking

Please indicate if you are comfortable with having your exact words quoted:

- Yes, I am comfortable with being quoted
- No, I would not like to be quoted

If you responded yes to the previous question, please indicate the name under which you would prefer to be quoted:

- I would prefer to be quoted using my name as indicated on this document
- I would prefer to be quoted anonymously

Any recordings and notes will be kept privately in a Google Drive folder. The members of this group, Joseph, Nithya, Olivia, and John, as well as professors Melissa Belz and Fabio Carrera will have access to this folder. This folder will be kept until the overarching project has been completed. Along with this, the information will be posted in the form of an IQP where specific names, identifiers, and positions will be excluded. The information extracted will be used in a nondescript way to describe features of Venice that are attractive to potential expatriates and will be applied in programs to work to reduce the population deflux of the Historical Center of Venice. Our research is in compliance with GDPR regulations.

**For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, or in case of research-related injury, contact:**

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John Mahoney, [jmahoney@wpi.edu](mailto:jmahoney@wpi.edu), (508) 523-4341  
Fabio Carrera, [carrera.fabio@gmail.com](mailto:carrera.fabio@gmail.com), +1 508-615-5333  
Melissa Belz, [mbelz@wpi.edu](mailto:mbelz@wpi.edu)  
IRB Manager (Ruth McKeogh, Tel. 508 831- 6699, Email: [irb@wpi.edu](mailto:irb@wpi.edu)) and the Human  
Protection Administrator (Gabriel Johnson, Tel. 508-831-4989, Email: [gjohnson@wpi.edu](mailto:gjohnson@wpi.edu) ).

**Your participation in this research is voluntary.** Your refusal to participate will not result in any penalty to you or any loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You may decide to stop participating in the research at any time without penalty or loss of other benefits. The project investigators retain the right to cancel or postpone the experimental procedures at any time they see fit.

**By signing below,** you acknowledge that you have been informed about and consent to be a participant in the study described above. Make sure that your questions are answered to your satisfaction before signing. You are entitled to retain a copy of this consent agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Study Participant  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Study Participant Name (Please print)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of  
Person who explained this study

## Appendix D: Informational Flier

# WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORY



## Did you move into Venice?

- Grew up here, moved away and came back?
- Moved here from another country, or even another part of Italy?
- Came here to do remote work?

### About the Team

We are a group of 4 students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (a university in the United States) doing research on the Venetian lifestyle.

### What Are We Doing

We are conducting interviews with people who have moved to Venice, permanently or temporarily to under their experiences living here. There interviews take about 20 minutes and we are flexible with location, including virtual.

### Interview Topics

- Life in Venice
- Childhood
- Work
- Family
- Culture
- Challenges

Contact us to arrange an interview:



[v23b.in@gmail.com](mailto:v23b.in@gmail.com)

Visit our website for more information:



<https://sites.google.com/view/in-migration/home>

## Appendix E: Information Sheet

# INFORMATION SHEET

### WHO ARE WE?

We are a group of university students from the US conducting research for a project towards our degree.

### WHO ARE OUR SPONSORS?

SerenDPT, an EU funded non-profit, whose goal is to help repopulate Venice by supporting the creation of startups.

### WHAT ARE WE DOING?

Conducting interviews with people moving into Venice to see what factors allow them to live in the city.

### WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THE DATA?

We will be publishing a paper in December for our degree. Your information can be kept anonymous.

### WHAT DO WE WANT FROM YOU?

We are looking to interview you on your experiences living in Venice. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

### WHY DID WE CHOOSE YOU?

You have moved into Venice either short or long term, or are returning to the city after at least a year away.

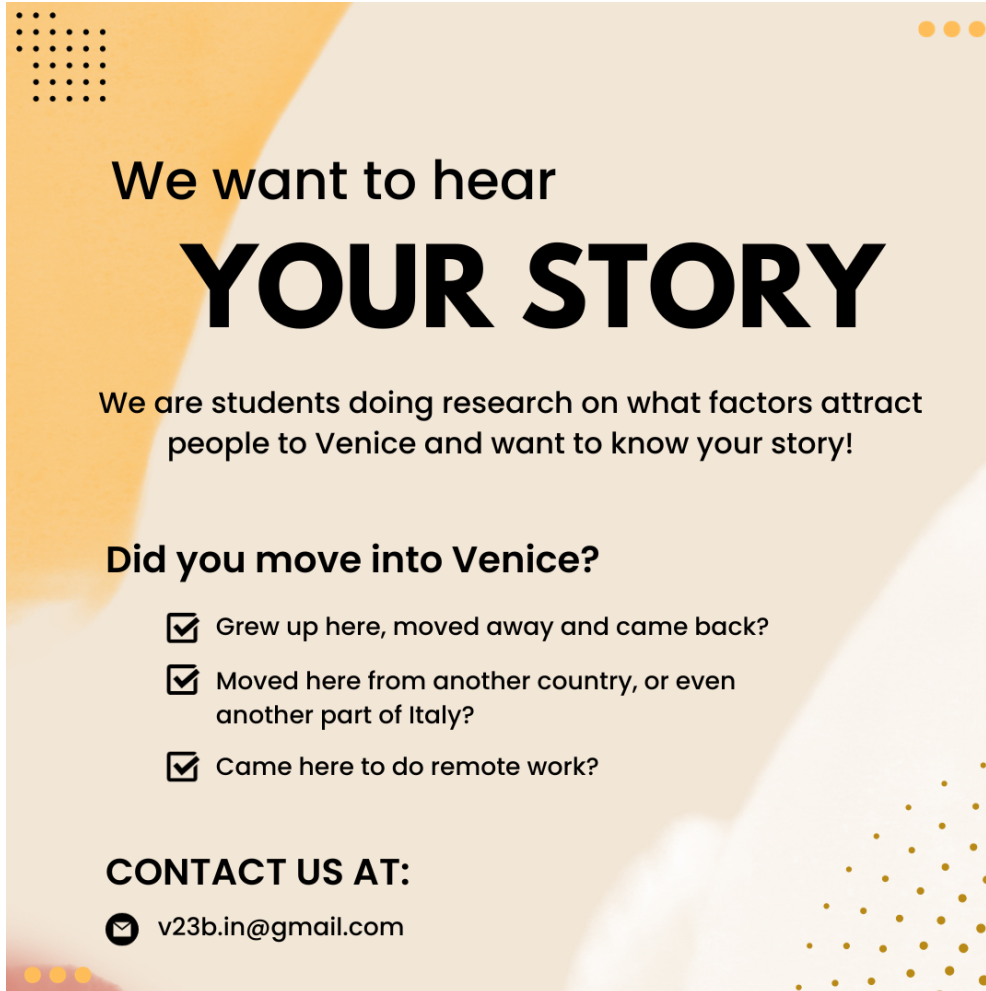
### GENERAL TOPICS OF INTERVIEWS

- Life in Venice
- Childhood
- Work
- Family
- Culture
- Challenges Faced

### QUESTIONS?

Look at our website <https://sites.google.com/view/in-migration/home> or reach out by email [v23b.in@gmail.com](mailto:v23b.in@gmail.com)

## Appendix F: Social Media Post




We want to hear  
**YOUR STORY**

We are students doing research on what factors attract people to Venice and want to know your story!

**Did you move into Venice?**

- Grew up here, moved away and came back?
- Moved here from another country, or even another part of Italy?
- Came here to do remote work?

**CONTACT US AT:**

 [v23b.in@gmail.com](mailto:v23b.in@gmail.com)

## Appendix G: Interviewer Information

Name	Interviewer	Note Taker	Total Interviews
Joseph Berthiaume	9	27	36
Nithya Chockalingam	13	23	36
Olivia Dunn	24	11	35
John Mahoney	17	16	33