

# The non-EU Migration Process in Spain and its Impact on the Current Demographics of the Country

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**Abstract:** In the last 30 years, the migration process in Spain has significantly intensified and has become one of the most important and widespread events in Spanish society. Based on the population data of the Spanish National Database from 2000 to 2020, this paper attempts to link the population structure and population dynamics, and is committed to analyzing the evolution of international immigration in Spain in recent years, so as to analyze its impact on Spain's current population structure and labor market. influences.

## 1 Introduction

The influx of immigrants is a relatively short-lived but hugely influential phenomenon for Spanish society as a whole. Spanish scholars such as Cebrián, Bodega and López Trigal pointed out that it dates back to 1973 <sup>[1]</sup>. This phenomenon is another result of a major economic, social and political transformation during the transition from industry to post-industrial stage. The timing of the arrival of the first foreigners on the Spanish Mediterranean coast, in parallel with the change in tourism patterns (from Fordist to post-Fordist), is a good proof of this <sup>[2]</sup>. Based on the importance of its social and economic impact on Spain, it can be said that it is difficult to understand the changes in its demographics in recent years without taking into account the flow of foreign migrants into the country. Of course, similar demographic transitions are taking place across Western societies at the same time.

One of the phenomena caused by demographic change is undoubtedly the growth and/or concentration of population in large cities and metropolitan areas. Urban areas currently constitute the most dynamic regions of a country, both from an economic point of view, as well as from a demographic and social point of view. In fact, it can be said that although the dynamism of urban areas has been evident since the mid-20th century, the phenomenon has now reached an unprecedented dimension. Changes in traditional residential systems brought about by demographic changes, as well as the continuous expansion of large urban spaces, have greatly altered the composition of traditional occupational systems in many regions of the planet <sup>[3]</sup>.

Finally, another topic covered in demographic change, and one that has drawn great attention from the international community, is international migration. Migration may be the result of demographic change, but it is also demographic change in itself, as it may be caused by low fertility rates and changes in age structure in the

process of population aging; in addition, migration itself has economic and social impacts. So far, this article has outlined a series of phenomena that accompany demographic changes. In the case of Spain, it is certain that one of the most significant changes that have taken place and will continue to take place in Spanish society during the two decades of the new century is the dramatic increase in foreign immigration <sup>[4]</sup>.

## 2 Evolution, spatial distribution and origin of non-EU migrants

In Spain, from a demographic point of view, the underlying trend over the past decade has been a significant and continuous increase in the number of immigrants in a dynamic of low birth rates and a progressive aging of the population. Based on a longitudinal comparison of the Spanish population, it is found that in 2000 immigrants represented only 2.28% of the total population, but in 2020 they already represent 11%; and among all foreign immigrants, the share of non-EU immigrants has exceeded 60% over the last 20 years.

The existing migration pattern in Spain, which began at the end of the 20th century <sup>[5]</sup>, (different from that of the most advanced European countries in the 1950s and 1960s) is very much in line with the social and economic changes that occurred in the European countries of the Mediterranean coast. In particular, due to the expansion of economic globalization, the social welfare which is related to the economic development of the southern European countries, has also undergone significant changes. These facts have led to the transformation of countries that were originally countries of emigration (e.g., Spain, Italy, and Greece in the 1960s) into countries of immigration. In this regard, Spanish expert Sanchez believes that the characteristics of this recent immigration pattern from southern Europe are:

- The heterogeneity of immigration locations (especially in Spain and Italy);

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- The development of the informal economy as one of the main attraction factors;
- The high concentration of immigrant populations in very specific sectors, such as agriculture, construction, tertiary industries or services, which are well reflected in their location and geographical distribution patterns;
- Significant increase in the proportion of female immigrants;
- Divergence in the structure of labor demand by gender and ethnicity.

The immigrant population is concentrated in the most dynamic regions of the Spanish economy, following the principle of geographical attractiveness, as it has the greatest demand for labor. In Spain, these most attractive for non-EU immigrant areas are mainly Madrid and Barcelona, where the service sector is well developed, the Mediterranean coast and its islands, where tourism is strong, and Murcia and Almeria, where agriculture is predominant. Almost half of the officially registered immigrants in Spain are located in the four large autonomous regions (Madrid, Barcelona, Murcia and Valencia), which together account for 35% of the country's total population.

### **3 The impact of non-EU immigration on the demographic structure of Spain**

In fact, since the mid-1970s, the situation of Spain's population pyramid has begun to change, from a "population expansion" model with a top point and a wide bottom to a "population shrinkage" population status quo, which is mainly characterized by a long-term decline in the birth rate and the maintenance of the death rate. The Spanish population is part of a global process of population aging that is taking place.

It should be noted that between 1960 and 1970, Spain was a country dominated by immigration, and from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, the immigration flow began to reverse, and since then it has become a country dominated by immigration<sup>[6]</sup>. Since 2000, this quantitative increase in the admission of foreign populations has been linked, among other reasons, to Spain's accession to the European Union. Being a member of the European Union has increased the country's economic growth and social welfare. The demand for foreign labor has also increased accordingly.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2020 the top ten countries with the largest number of foreign immigrants in Spain are Morocco, Romania, the United Kingdom, Colombia, Italy, Venezuela, China, Germany, Ecuador and Honduras, of which six are non-EU countries, and these six countries account for 76.3% of the total population of the top ten immigrants in Spain, which means that more than two thirds of the immigrants are non-EU, and 11% of the population living in the country are foreign nationality. Therefore, the impact of non-EU immigration on Spain's demographics is evident. It is worth mentioning that the number of Chinese immigrants also accounted for the sixth place in the total immigrants. This also indirectly illustrates the enthusiasm of the Chinese immigrants to Spanish.

According to the age structure of foreigners living in Spain in 2020, the age composition of non-EU immigrants in Spain is mainly between 15 and 39 years old.

Although there are some differences in the number and types of foreign immigrants received by different provinces, and the impact of foreign immigrants on the population structure of different provinces also shows different trends, the rejuvenation of foreign immigrants, especially non-EU immigrants, in a national perspective, has contributed to the revitalization of the Spanish demographic structure. It is worth noting that the arrival of young foreign immigrants, especially a large proportion of immigrant women of childbearing age, is particularly important for the rejuvenation of the population, because they are very important in increasing the birth rate and expanding the base of the entire Spanish population pyramid.

### **4 Immigration and the labor market**

In order to analyze the weight of foreign immigrants in the national production system, it is necessary to know the statistics of the number of foreign workers enrolled in social security. In Spain, all workers in legal jobs must be registered in this system and their employers pay social insurance for them. Although the underground economy still represents a large percentage in Spain and is not registered in this data, the size of the market for this type of economy has been shrinking due to the increase in penalties for employing illegal workers. In 2018, foreign immigrants registered for social security in Spain mainly came from Romanian, Moroccan and Chinese immigrants, accounting for 17, 35%, 12, 5% and 5, 3% of all foreign immigrants, respectively.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the number of employed foreign migrants has continued to increase, although during this period it has been affected by the economic crisis that began in 2008, and its growth rate has slowed down. One of the characteristics of the Spanish economy is its weakness in the face of the crisis. Throughout recent history, the international economic crisis has affected Spain longer than other neighboring countries, but its impact has been more destructive. The unemployment rate in Spain has increased rapidly, which has led to the return of some immigrants. However, since 2013, the growth of immigration has stabilized, but it still has not reached the state it was in before the crisis experienced in 2008.

The non-EU immigrant population is employed in several very specific sectors in Spain, and the industries employed by different immigrant groups vary:

#### **a) Agriculture.**

In Spain, it is more inclined to divide agriculture into two different word sectors, one is traditional agriculture and the other is intensive agriculture. Traditional agriculture has a low level of productivity throughout Spain, which has led many local young people to abandon the industry and emigrate to urban areas to live and work. Currently, this type of agriculture is dominant in most rural areas. The aging of the agricultural population, coupled with the low wages and relatively poor working conditions

of such jobs, makes Spain need to hire foreign immigrants to engage in these agricultural activities, and the arrival of immigrants can help fill the labor gap for this type of work.

b) Construction industry.

As we said before, Spain experienced a real estate boom before 2008, which caused an exponential increase in the workforce working in this industry. Although there were many Spaniards working in the industry at the time, its demand had outstripped the supply of native workers, and many immigrants came to Spain to work in construction. So when the economic crisis bursts the "real estate bubble", immigration bore the brunt. Their strong presence in a volatile industry has seriously affected their employment prospects in Spain. In recent years, with the slow recovery of the Spanish economy, the construction sector has been gradually recovering and now seems to be one of the main sectors that accommodate immigrants to Spain.

c) Tourism.

The economic expansion at the global and national levels has enabled the growth of tourism at the global level. In 2017, Spain overtook the United States to become the second largest tourist destination in the world. The Spanish tourism industry has been growing continuously over the last 30 to 40 years, especially in cosmopolitan cities like Madrid, Barcelona, and the coastal areas. The growth of the tourism industry has led to the existence of a continuous labor gap in Spain. Therefore, before the new crown epidemic, the industry provided many employment opportunities for a large number of foreign immigrants who did not understand the language or even had a low level of education.

d) Service industries such as domestic work.

Spanish society has changed dramatically in recent decades. The influx of women into the labor force presents new challenges for those who need to balance work and family life. The increased purchasing power of the middle class has allowed the provision of personal and household services that were previously only available to the wealthier class to a wider social class.

The above industries account for most of the foreign labor force. It is worth noting that there are very few non-EU migrants present in higher-wage industries or other industries that require higher levels of qualifications. Perhaps we'll have to wait a few more years to see if this changes so that it can be seen in all areas of the labor market.

## 5 Conclusion

Demographic changes in Spain are similar to those in the rest of the European Union and will have important implications for the Spanish economy, demographics and social organization itself.

First, immigration can improve the overall age structure of the Spanish population and delay the rapid deepening of Spain's aging to a certain extent. As far as the impact of non-EU immigration on Spain's demographic structure is concerned, the phenomenon of non-EU immigration, which is dominated by young laborers, has alleviated the process of Spain's population aging to a

certain extent, but this effect is limited.

Secondly, the geographical distribution of non-EU immigrants in Spain is also different. They are more concentrated in large cities with large labor markets such as Madrid and Barcelona, and cities along the Mediterranean coast where tourism is an important economic pillar. The impact of regional demographics also varies, as does the positioning of different immigrant groups in the labor market.

Finally, migration as a fundamental component of demographic change is, in turn, an important factor contributing to demographic change. In this sense, the relatively short migration history of non-EU immigrants in Spain makes it necessary to pay great attention to their future evolution. It is necessary to gradually and objectively assess their impact and characteristics on the demographic structure of Spain.

The four predicted outcomes for China's future population are a population peak around 2032, a doubling of the ageing population, a shift in the centre of gravity of the population structure and an increase in the number of people aged over 55 almost exclusively.

Firstly, in terms of peak population, the paper predicts that the peak population is likely to be reached around 2032, with the peak value likely to be around 1.462 billion. Due to the slow nature of the effects of population policies, the difference between the optimistic, medium and pessimistic expected outcomes is not significant and a neutral outcome is considered the most likely scenario.

Secondly, the level of ageing is likely to double, with 158 million people over 65 years of age in China today, an ageing level of 10.6%, and an expected population of 349 million people over 65 years of age in 2035, an ageing level of 23.6% and an ageing dependency ratio of 37.8%, with the total dependency ratio rising to 60.1%.

Thirdly, the centre of gravity of the population structure is shifting upwards. The second and third waves of the baby boom of our population are the most populous age group, which is located at 25-29 and 45-49 years old in 2015, and will be located at 45-49 and 65-69 years old when 2035 comes, while the relatively low number of new births due to the low fertility rate will cause the overall population structure to show "Fourthly, in terms of the change in population size, the population structure will be more or less the same.

Fourthly, in terms of changes in population numbers, compared to 2015, only the 35-39 year old population group is likely to increase by 31.3 million by 2025, with other population growth mainly concentrated in the 55+ age group, and the group with the largest decrease in population numbers is the 25-29 year old age group, with a decrease of over 50 million, and the population aged 55+ is expected to increase by This new elderly population will have a significant impact on our economy. Policy recommendations

First, actively change the concept of population. Firstly, the central government needs to change the concept of population. At present, China's family planning policy is to fully implement the two-child policy, but the three-child or multi-child policy has not been liberalised, which makes it difficult to promote the "last mile" of the fertility policy. Secondly, the local government needs to change its

concept of population. Several major megacities in China are still aiming to control their population when formulating urban plans, and their views on population are still "burden theory" rather than "dividend theory". The pay-as-you-go pension system is only a secondary distribution between generations and is not created out of thin air. The future retirement pensions of current workers will be paid for by the future work of their newborn children. Finally, individuals need to change their perception of population, as late marriage and late childbearing are common in large cities, and the phenomenon of dinks also occurs from time to time [9].

Secondly, the reform should be further deepened. The relatively low urbanisation rate provides room for potential labour supply. There is a need to step up relevant policy reforms to lower the entry barrier to cities so as to provide more labour for economic growth. Secondly, there is still room to improve the efficiency of investment in China, and further innovation in financial products for the elderly can increase investment and savings rates. Once again, attention should be paid to total factor productivity, including barriers to factor mobility and technological innovation, to improve our country's productivity. Finally, the three aspects of labour, investment and total factor productivity will increase our potential economic growth rate across the board and provide impetus for our high-quality economic growth [10].

Thirdly, we should increase the strength of the policy to encourage childbirth. First, the central government needs to come out with a policy to encourage fertility. At present, there is no national policy to encourage fertility in China, and fertility policies are mainly formulated by local governments, and the corresponding funding mainly comes from local government support, which has relatively limited financial power and insufficient influence on national public opinion. The local government's efforts to encourage fertility are too weak to be effective. Kenichi Ohmae, based on Japanese experience, believes that 3% of GDP is the watershed for the effectiveness of incentives. As social responsibility includes childbirth and child rearing, it is also the responsibility of companies to take on social responsibility, but the current situation is that there is a certain amount of adverse selection. However, in the overall national environment, this is detrimental to the country, so companies need to step up their policies to encourage childbirth and take up their social responsibility [11].

Fourthly, we need to increase investment in childcare facilities. Firstly, in addition to the cost of medical services associated with the birth of a child, there is also the burden of raising a child, and the cost of raising a child is actually much higher than the cost of giving birth, so investment in childcare facilities is very important. Once again, the government does a better job than social capital in providing childcare facilities. The recent news about kindergartens shows that there are indeed many problems with private kindergartens. Finally, social capital can play a more complementary role in the provision of childcare facilities, providing higher quality, high-end childcare services outside the public system [12].

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