

Demographic stagnation and decline in Spain: A cause for concern?

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Abstract. For years, the Spanish population has been rapidly ageing, showing signs of atony and stagnation. Between 1996 and 2007, in a phase of economic growth, the entry of foreign immigrants drove a global increase in population. But after the economic recession migratory flows show negative net balances. Our objective is to explain and confirm the demographic regression suffered by Spain. We are also interested in showing how the recent and intense immigration process has failed to generate significant changes in natural demographic characteristics and trends. National censuses, published by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), are our main source of demographic data. The analysis of the most recent relevant scientific literature has allowed us to compare opinions and discuss results. The data confirm an uncertain and worrying future for the Spanish population.

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1. Introduction, approach and state of affairs

According to a classical interpretation, Spain began its demographic transition late with respect to neighbouring European Union countries. In Spain, the different phases that will be further explained below occurred between the 1970s and 1990s. Towards the end of this period (second half of the 1990s), the natural growth rate was extremely weak. At the same time, however, Spain received a large number of foreign immigrants who went from representing 0.3% to 12% of the population. This resulted in substantial net population growth and also improved natural growth rates to some extent. Nevertheless, the economic crisis that has pounded Spain since 2007 has completely altered the migratory dynamics in the country. Once again, there is an increasingly ageing population, minimum population growth and a negative net migration rate. The problem is so severe that it must be brought to people's attention, and attempts need to be made to remedy the structural aspects that are causing it. Otherwise, the negative trend is likely to continue.

The population is intimately linked to the economy (World Bank, 2005), and experts debate which of the two variables influences the other more (Coppel et al., 2001). Nevertheless, it is clear that significant changes in one of these variables produce significant alterations in the other, triggering a process of adjustments and disequilibrium. A host of other social and sociological factors add nuances to this process (Vinueza, 1982; Reques, 2006).

In recent years in Spain, economic weakness has undermined population growth and is leading towards a negative net migration rate (a decrease in immigration and an increase in emigration) (Djadid, 2001). Demographic stagnation and near decline, in turn, have further contributed to weakness in the productive system (Brettell, Hollifield, 2000). Furthermore, we must add a progressively ageing population to the equation (Borjas, 1994). Given this situation, it will not be easy to bring about change in demographic behaviour or to stimulate economic growth (Chesnais, 1992). Such a negative evolution of population trends can be seen throughout Europe, but is particularly acute in Spain (Thumerelle, 1999). Interestingly, these processes of demograph-

ic and economic change are occurring in a period of significant overall global increases in migration flows (Castles, Miller, 2003) and increasing globalisation (Dehesa, 2007). Given this global picture, the declines in Spain, and Europe in general, are particularly troubling.

Our hypothesis is that the last stage of demographic transition in Spain, which started more than a decade ago and is marked by decline, became more vigorous once the temporary period of intense immigration ended (Serrano, García, 2014). It is true that this period of immigration produced shifts in the traditional migration maps in Europe, as Massey et al. (1998), Salt (2001) and King (2002) have correctly indicated. Nevertheless, the immigration that occurred in Spain (for not having continuity) hardly affected the overall weak demographic trends. To counter this weakness, leaders should create a population policy that is in tune with the reality, including the short- and medium-term goals necessary to better sustain the evolution of the Spanish population. The trends present in Spain are common in Europe (Lesthaegue, Willems, 1999) and are largely due to similar causes (Pinelli et al., 2001). Addressing this serious problem will be difficult and requires global consensus on national interests at the demographic, social, and economic levels.

2. Objectives and methodology

The overall objective of this research project, based on the hypothesis stated above, is to use routine demographic analysis to explain and confirm the demographic regression that has been occurring in Spain since the effects of the economic crisis on social and labour conditions have become more evident. Furthermore, we are also interested in using data to show how the recent intense (yet temporary) immigration process has failed to generate significant changes in the natural demographic characteristics and trends in Spain. The period of analysis covers the last two decades (1995–2015), although there are references to previous years for the sake of comparison.

From a geographical point of view, demographic analysis is a means to investigate the components of population change and any shifts in the size, struc-

ture, evolution and general characteristics of the population on a given spatial and temporal scale. Fertility, mortality and migration are key aspects of our investigation. We must understand these aspects in order to determine the problems and needs to be addressed at some point in the future.

National censuses, published by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE), are our main source of demographic data. These sources provide the base materials for investigating the causes and consequences of population change. The resource we used most frequently was the population census, which counts everyone in a given area at a given point in time and includes personal data and specific social and economic characteristics. We have also used data provided by the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security, in order to better understand migration processes, and other data such as activity and unemployment rates. We also extensively consulted literature in the field, especially to explain the demographic aspects leading to the current situation. The analysis of the most recent relevant scientific literature has enabled us to compare opinions, confirming some and refuting others.

3. The logic of demographic processes

All demographic processes continually evolve over time, albeit at different rhythms. This rhythm depends on various factors, including social, economic, political, cultural, and religious elements, among others. For a number of reasons, the population in Spain in 1970 had a series of structural features that justify situating it in the intermediate stage of the so-called “demographic transition” (Almoguera, 2003). Some representative data give us a general picture

of the situation. In 1970, there were 34.01 million people in the country, and 99.56% were natives. It is estimated that at this time, around 2 million Spaniards were legally residing abroad. Per one thousand inhabitants, the birth rate was 20.10, and the mortality rate was 8.38, resulting in a natural growth rate of 11.72‰. The total number of births in 1970 was over 676,700, and, in absolute figures, the population grew this year by more than 422,000 inhabitants. In terms of age, young people (0–14 years) represented 27.82% of the Spanish population in 1970; the mature population (15–64 years) made up for 62.70%; and seniors accounted for the remaining 9.48%. Compared to most other north-western European countries (European Commission, 2015), the Spanish population had the lowest senior population percentage and the most vigorous natural growth rate. Causes of different natures (referred to above) had encouraged this gap.

3.1. Rapid demographic transition, from the intermediate to the final stage

In this period, the demographics in Spain rapidly evolved, as can be seen in Table 1 below.

The numbers confirm a significant drop in the birth rate between 1970 and 2001 (10.12‰). This, together with a sustained mortality rate (showing a 0.46‰ increase), produced a sharp drop in the natural growth rate (-10.58‰), which fell to a mere 1.14‰. The corresponding absolute figures confirm a similar decline. The decrease in natural population growth in this 30-year period is striking. Indeed, between 1970 and 2001, the total natural growth figures dropped from 422,050 to a modest 47,730 individuals. Furthermore, there was an increasingly ageing population, with fewer young people (a drop

Table 1. The evolution of basic demographic values

	1970	2001	Changes 1970/2001	2015	Changes 2001/2015
Birth rate	20.10‰	9.98‰	-10.12‰	9.01‰	-0.97‰
Mortality rate	8.38‰	8.84‰	+0.46‰	9.05‰	-0.21‰
Natural growth	11.72‰	1.14‰	-10.58‰	-0.04‰	-1.10‰
0–14	27.82%	14.89%	-12.93%	15.14%	+0.25%
15–64	62.70%	68.36%	+5.66%	66.26%	-2.10%
65 and over	9.48%	16.75%	+7.27%	18.60%	+1.85%

Source: Authors' calculations based on INE data (Population Census, 2016)

by nearly 13%) and more seniors (7.2%) and intermediate groups (5.6%).

The external migratory cycle, which had remained steady for years, changed course in this period (Serrano, 1999). After years of heavy external flows towards different Western European countries, the outward flows decreased, and more and more Spaniards returned home. As a result, the usual negative net migration rates were now positive (Arango, 2002). Many different causes produced these changes. A brief summary of the most important aspects is presented below:

The heavy internal migration flows of the preceding decades now slowed down. Nonetheless, the consequences of the rural exodus that had played a key role in these flows became evident. The urban population multiplied as a result and quickly began to adopt new ways of life (reflected in the sharp drop seen in the birth rate), adapting to urban constraints like smaller homes (Bielza, 1989).

Economic and political elements also underwent significant changes that influenced the demographic development in Spain. Among other changes in this period, Spain experienced the end of authoritarian rule, the establishment of a democratic system and entry into the European Union (EU). Economic progress was more complex. After years of strong growth, other crises and adjustments occurred (1974–1980). In 1976, for example, GDP grew by 3.2%, yet the rate of growth decreased in the following years up until 1979, when it was actually negative (-0.1%). After fleeting growth in 1980, GDP continued to decline in 1981 (-0.1%). Favourable economic growth rates did not return until the mid-1980s (1985–1991) (Harrison, 1993). During these years, GDP grew, reaching a peak of 5.5% in 1987. After this, the figure dropped progressively, reaching 0.9% in 1992 (Fuentes, 1988). By 1993, the GDP growth rate was once again negative (-1.0%). This reduction was accompanied by adjustments throughout the industrial production system that continued through to the mid-90s (Salmon, 1995). At this time, driven mainly by construction activity and building in general, the economy began to grow more rapidly, finishing the millennium with a positive trend.

3.2. A mirage in demographic evolution in Spain: population growth due to significant foreign immigration

In the 1990s, Spain experienced a sudden change in the evolution of its population. The number of residents sharply increased, mainly due to the arrival of foreigners (Gozálvez, 2010), bringing about changes in the population structure (Pérez et al., 2001). These changes are detailed below in Table 2.

Table 2. Net changes in resident population in Spain

Period	Absolute data		
	Foreigners	Spaniards	Total new residents
1982–1991	162,713	580,611	743,324
1992–1996	195,081	729,042	924,122
1997–2001	828,343	619,106	1,447,450
2002–2010	3,769,788	1,413,349	5,183,137
2015–2016	-259,542	187,442	-72,100
2011–2016	-1,213,150	602,430	-638,620

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from INE (Population Census, 2016)

The total resident population in Spain between 1982 and 2010 increased by 8,298,033 inhabitants (22.02%). Of these new inhabitants, 4,955,925 were foreigners (59.72%). Experts touted the advantages such a demographic increase would have on the population structure (Moreno, Bruguetas, 2011). It is important to note that some foreigners became naturalised Spanish citizens during this time period and thus boosted the number of Spanish nationals. Starting in 2011, however, both the foreign and national figures decreased dramatically, as shown in Table 2.

Until the mid-1990s, the foreign population in Spain was minimal, although there was some foreign immigration (Izquierdo, 1996). Between 1982 and 1996, foreigners only accounted for around 20% of the total population increase in Spain. Halfway through the 1990s, the total foreign population was less than half a million people. Between 1996 and 2010, however, the contribution of foreigners to population growth in Spain skyrocketed. Between 2001 and 2010, foreigners accounted for 72.73% of the Spanish population increase (Izquierdo, 2006).

The largest number of foreign residents in Spain (5.74 million) was reached in 2010 (Módenes et al., 2013).

Foreign residents in Spain can largely be divided into three major origin-based groups: Europeans (particularly from the Eastern European countries); Latin Americans (with a striking number of Ecuadorians, Colombians and Argentines); and Africans (particularly from Morocco). As a general rule, the movements of these immigrant groups fall within the category of “economic immigration” (Dehesa, 2008). In other words, these immigrants were often individuals (usually low-skilled) who had come to Spain to find work (Carrasco, 1999) with better pay and better social and working conditions than in their countries of origin. The size and significance of the phenomenon has been the subject of extensive scientific studies that analyse the trend from different perspectives (Díez, Ramirez, 2001). These studies highlight not only the volume of immigration (Gozálvez, 2008), but also the speed and suddenness of the immigrants’ arrival (Dumont, 2006); the lack of foresight and planning (Lopez, 2000); and the lack of a stable labour market, which would make it possible to adequately accommodate the immigrants and help them integrate. Also the settlement of immigrants in different areas has been analysed (Collantes et al., 2014; Gil-Alonso, Vidal-Coso, 2015).

For the most part, the labour niches occupied by immigrants are characterised by low skill jobs that offer low wages and minimal stability. Many of these jobs are connected to the following fields: construction (particularly housing construction) (Serrano, 2010); agriculture (Martínez, 1998); and the hospitality industry in the broadest sense, with

its wide range of non-specialist services (Trinidad, 2003). Many immigrants are also involved in informal economic activities (Baldwin, Arango, 1999). It is important to keep in mind that these immigrants arrived in an advantageous moment in the Spanish economy, favoured by abundant aid from the European Union (González, Benedicto, 2006).

The dimensions and vigour of foreign immigration in Spain helped drive a virtuous cycle of growth in the productive system. Indeed, immigration itself became the central cause of economic growth (Dolado, Vázquez, 2007). The consumption and demands of immigrant groups (which in a few years grew from 1% of the population to more than 12%) drove demand for all kinds of goods and services. As a result, between 1997 and 2007, Spanish GDP experienced annual growth rates of over 3% (the highest peak of 5% was reached in 2000). At the same time, the unemployment rate fell from 20.8% in 1997 to 8.3% in 2007.

The overall demographic context prior to this immigrant explosion had been characterised by demographic stagnation, weak evolution and sluggishness. The sharp increase in foreign immigration brought about a drastic change. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis of this process reveals that it ultimately produced minimal structural changes in population indicators, and that its impact was altogether insufficient to modify the weak evolution of the Spanish population (Table 3).

In the period shown in the table, the birth rate, which reached its lowest value in 1995 (9.23), only increased by 2.14 points (taking 2008 as reference, the most favourable year). The mortality rate remained nearly the same (with a decline of 0.27), whereas the crude fertility rate rose slightly. The

Table 3. Key indicators of birth, fertility and mortality

Year	Birth rate	Mortality rate	Natural growth rate	Fertility rate	Average age of motherhood	Births	Deaths	Natural growth
1990	10.32	8.57	1.75	1.36	28.86	401,073	331,807	69,266
1995	9.23	8.74	0.49	1.17	29.96	363,467	343,943	19,524
2000	9.85	8.95	0.93	1.23	30.72	396,626	357,788	38,838
2005	10.71	8.93	1.82	1.34	30.91	464,811	385,056	79,755
2010	10.45	8.24	2.21	1.37	31.20	486,575	382,047	104,528
2015	9.04	9.16	- 0.12	1.33	31.90	420,290	422,568	- 2,278

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (Natural Population Movement, Basic Demographic Indicators)

average age of motherhood continued to climb, although some differences can be seen between Spanish women and foreign immigrants in the reference year (2008). In this year, immigrant women were recorded as having their first child at a younger average age (28.2 years) than Spanish women (31.5 years). The average number of children immigrant women had was also higher: 1.83 versus 1.36 for Spanish women. As a result, the natural growth rate increased. Nevertheless, the 2008 figure (134,305 individuals) is the same as that recorded in 1986 and remains far below the corresponding numbers recorded in the decades between 1950 and 1980.

It is also worth noting that this slight demographic recovery was not only due to the arrival of large numbers of foreigners. During these “prodigious years” (1996–2007) in Spain, the economy grew at a continuous rate. As a result, it was possible to balance the public budget, and there was even surplus in some cases, which made it possible for the government to provide social assistance aimed at improving the birth rate (Velarde, Serrano, 2008).

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the arrival of so many immigrants (mostly young) produced the greatest overall increase in residents in recent centuries, it did not produce enough natural growth to clearly ensure the replacement of the population. At the same time, imbalances in the age structure of the Spanish population continued to grow, and the dependent population increased. In 2010, only 15.63% of the population was under 16, where-

as 67.49% was mature (between 16 and 65) and 16.88% senior (over 65). With respect to the numbers 20 years earlier, these values represent changes of -5.66%, +2.41% and +3.25%, respectively. Although these proportions are lower than the European Union averages (which shift more to the older population), if the current trend continues, the Spanish figures will soon match the EU figures, perhaps even surpassing them in terms of the number of the elderly and falling behind in the number of youths (European Commission, 2011).

3.3. Progressive ageing of the population structure by age group

The continuous ageing of the Spanish population has been evident since 1970. Steadily and progressively, the proportion of the population in the first age group (0–15 years old) has declined, while the proportion in the highest age group (over 65 years) has increased (Fig. 1).

Despite the arrival of a significant number of foreign immigrants and the corresponding changes in the natural growth of the population, the proportion of young people hardly evolved. The downward trend only ceased between 2000 and 2009. Something similar occurred in the population over 65 years of age: between 2000 and 2009, the upward trend came to a halt. After this date, coinciding with the economic crisis and its effects on demograph-

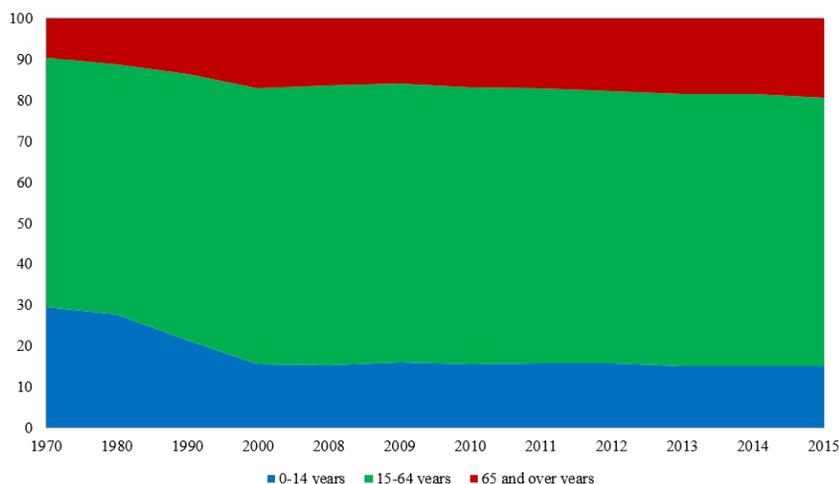


Fig. 1. Resident population by age, percentage values
Source: INE (Population Census, 2016). Authors' calculations

ics, the weak ageing trend seen in previous years quickly returned.

It can thus be seen that the increase in the number of residents in Spain recorded in recent years, driven primarily (between 1996–2008) by the spectacular increase in foreign immigrants, only produced a slight break in the general trend of weakness and stagnation in Spanish population demographics. The changes to the aggregate numbers caused by immigration were incidental among other key elements influencing the evolution, structure and natural movements of the population. The potential of the immigration-based increase in the birth rate to rejuvenate the population (Abellán, 1993) has not been fulfilled (Macarrón, 2011).

4. Recent years: trend reversal and accelerated demographic decline

The productive sector in Spain expanded for over a decade, largely thanks to low-productivity activities and intensive use of manpower. For a large segment of the Spanish society, this growth led to an increase in wealth, welfare and the associated feelings of ease and prosperity. Such conditions favoured a flood of foreign immigrants. Soon, however, a series of negative economic events occurred that created a very different scenario within a short period of time. The extent of changes and the intensity of the consequences were astonishing. Initial disbelief turned to perplexity in the face of the new, stubborn reality (economic and financial crisis, increased unemployment, etc.). The national authorities in charge of the economy acknowledged their astonishment and refused to accept the situation that loomed overhead (Solbes, 2013). Ultimately, the authorities were behind the curve, and in the end could prevent nothing (Rodríguez, 2013). A lack of foresight compounded the negative economic and social consequences of the crisis - perhaps it was difficult to gauge the nature and extent of the changes underway. It did not take long for the crisis to be felt in the demographic components of Spanish society.

After a decade of continuous, appreciable growth, GDP fell to 0.9% in 2008. Negative annual GDP growth was recorded between 2009 and 2014, when it rose to a modest +1.4%, which increased

further to 3.2% in 2015. The unemployment rate, which had dropped to 8.30% in 2007, rose non-stop up until 2013, when it reached 26.4%. In 2014 and 2015 the unemployment rate decreased, although in 2016 it remained above 20%. These significant negative changes at the macroeconomic level affected Spanish demographics at various levels.

4.1. The decrease in the natural population growth rate

The crude birth rate in Spain, which had progressively risen between 1995 (9.23‰) and 2008 (11.37‰), soon began a progressive decline. After dropping for several consecutive years, the rate finally reached 9.14‰ in 2014. In other words, the rate dropped by 2.23, reaching an even lower value than that recorded 18 years prior. The amount that had been gained over 12 years was thus rapidly lost over the course of six years.

The absolute data for these indicators further elucidate the changes described above. While the absolute number of births in 2008 was over 518,000, after six years of progressive decline it reached just over 426,000, similar to the number recorded at the beginning of the century (2001 and 2002). The Spanish birth rate is among the lowest in the European Union and developed countries as a whole (European Commission, 2015). At the same time, we must look at the different results between Spanish nationals and foreigners residing in Spain (Table 4).

The decline in the fertility rate since 2008 is striking. The downward trend is common to both groups of women (Spaniards and foreigners). Such convergence is to be expected in accordance with what usually occurs in similar situations (progressive adaptation of the family patterns of immigrant groups to the typical patterns in the host country) (Thumerelle, 1999; Toulemon, 2004). Nevertheless, there are slight differences between these two groups of women. While the average number of children per Spanish woman dropped by 0.08 points, the number per foreign woman fell by 0.17 points. The different values recorded in 2008 help explain why there was still a difference of 0.38 points in 2015 in favour of foreign women. This downward trend is

Table 4. Recent demographic indicators

	Average age of motherhood			Average number of children per woman		
	Spanish women	Foreign women	Total	Spanish women	Foreign women	Total
2008	31.5	28.2	31.8	1.36	1.83	1.44
2009	31.7	28.5	31.0	1.31	1.68	1.38
2010	31.8	28.7	31.2	1.30	1.68	1.37
2011	32.0	28.9	31.4	1.29	1.58	1.34
2012	32.2	28.9	31.6	1.27	1.56	1.32
2013	32.2	29.1	31.7	1.23	1.53	1.27
2014	32.4	29.6	31.8	1.27	1.61	1.32
2015	32.6	29.7	31.9	1.28	1.66	1.33

Source: INE (Natural Population Movement, Basic Demographic Indicators)

similar in the wider European context (Billari, Wilson, 2001).

We can see a similar demographic situation when analysing the average age of motherhood. Among Spanish women, this age increased by 1.1 years between 2008 and 2015, while among foreign women it increased by 1.5 years. Once again, we see the previously described trend towards convergence.

For its part, the mortality rate hardly changed. After declining by a few hundredths of a point from its 2008 rate of 8.47‰, it again climbed to very similar values by 2015. These results are logical given the complex combination of the global ageing trend of the entire Spanish population with the significant contributions of the recently-arrived immigrant population. In any case, the overall increase in the population numbers accounts for the large number of deaths (higher than 400,000).

If we look at the values that assess the differences between birth and death rates, i.e., the crude natural growth rate, the variation recorded in just five years is striking. Indeed, this rate fell from 2.21‰ in 2010 to -0.12‰ in 2015, a drop of 2.33‰. The numbers confirm that the cycle of favourable evolution of natural growth rates, to which foreign immigrants had made a significant contribution (demographic renewal), has come to an end. The corresponding graph (Fig. 2) helps us understand more clearly what has happened.

The absolute numbers are even more telling. In 2010, the resident population in Spain experienced a natural increase of 104,528 people, whereas by 2015 the number had fallen to -2,278 people. The steep decline began after 2010 (see data in Table 3).

These are very weak figures for a combined population of over 46 million people. The numbers are below the historical lows reached in 1995, when there was great concern about that demographic weakness. Now, the situation is even worse, as the trend towards a general ageing of the Spanish population increases.

These data confirm that the arrival of more than five million foreigners has ultimately contributed little to changing the natural population growth rate in Spain. Indeed, all signs indicate that this rate is receding.

4.2. The reversal of migratory movements

Population movements are the other major component that must be taken into account together with natural shifts to evaluate population trends. Population movements tend to respond relatively quickly to economic changes. When there is a recession and crisis in much of the productive sector accompanied by an alarming increase in unemployment, the youngest population groups, which are more intensely affected, tend to seek more promising settings to achieve their life goals (Elias, 2011). In such situations, Spanish nationals and foreigners often take different paths. The results are even more drastic when the exoduses converge, as is now occurring in Spain: the net migration figures are negative for both Spanish nationals and foreign residents (Table 5).

The extent and speed of the changes are striking. In a few short years, the trend shifted from posi-

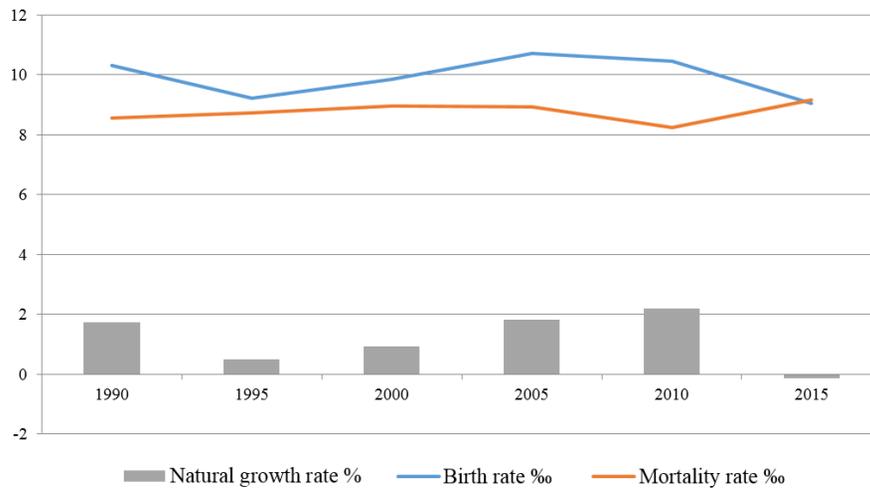


Fig. 2. Evolution of the natural growth rate of the Spanish population

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (Natural Population Movement, Basic Demographic Indicators)

tive numbers (which were nevertheless lower than the previous figures), to negative numbers that continue to swell.

4.2.1. Migration flows of foreigners

After 2008, the migration flow numbers for foreigners decreased and eventually changed course. Foreign arrivals first slowed down (2009–2011) and then sharply dropped. Recent data (2015) indicate the existence of a certain balance between inputs and outputs. Thus, the external migratory balance ceases to be positive and tends to be neutral.

This evolution stems from the logic described above (the fact that a substantial number of the

foreigners settled in Spain have come for economic and employment reasons). Consequently, the sharp drop in available jobs caused by the economic crisis also entailed the disappearance of the main incentive for which many immigrants had come in the first place (López, Pérez-Caramés, 2015). The unemployment rates for foreigners climbed to an average of six points higher than the numbers for Spaniards, which meant there were fewer reasons to come to Spain and more reasons to leave (La Cuesta, Puente, 2010). To this general statement, however, we must add the following considerations:

Given that these immigrants have only recently settled in Spain, they have limited family ties in the country. Many live alone and have not been in

Table 5. Migratory movements in recent years

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Foreigners							
Departures	398,310	366,345	447,130	419,481	468,584	330,559	249,230
Arrivals	449,812	430,369	415,523	282,793	257,648	265,757	290,005
Net migration	51,502	64,024	-31,607	-136,688	-210,936	-64,802	40,775
Spaniards							
Departures	35,305	36,968	62,561	57,267	52,160	78,785	52,109
Arrivals	31,159	34,801	42,128	31,565	16,172	41,278	94,645
Net migration	-4,146	-2,167	-20,435	-25,702	-35,988	-37,507	-42,536
Total external migration							
Departures	433,615	403,313	509,691	476,748	520,744	409,343	301,339
Arrivals	480,971	465,170	457,651	314,358	273,820	307,035	384,650
Net migration	47,356	61,857	-52,040	-162,390	-246,924	-102,308	-1,761

Source: INE (Population Census). Authors’ calculations

Spain for long, and if they do live with their families, the families have only very recently arrived, and their ties with the social surroundings are thus minimal (Pajares, 2010). This fact makes it easier for them to pick up and leave when the circumstances so warrant.

Given the situation described above, the fact that the immigrants' ties with family and the immediate environment are often weak (Sandell, 2008), it is not easy for them to find help or support when needed, which is a major obstacle to coping with and enduring adverse situations.

It should also be noted that the level of social assistance offered by the Spanish government does not cover the many needs that arise in situations of prolonged unemployment and economic hardship. The serious problems in the Spanish economy and the high public budget deficits are not exactly favourable in terms of increasing "social state" aid (Pumares et al., 2006).

A significant proportion of foreigners entering Spain are doing so to re-unite with their families (López-Sala, Oso, 2015). Many immigrants who have been in Spain for years have earned and are now exercising the right to bring other family members to live with them. Nevertheless, the unfavourable economic situation acts as a deterrent against potential new immigrants. We must also mention the significant role stricter border controls have played in decreasing immigration in addition to all of the filtering mechanisms employed by the Spanish government within the basic laws of the European Union.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, among others, in less than a decade the foreign resident population trends in Spain shifted from vigorous growth to sharp decline. The change has been drastic. The number of immigrants dropped from 5.74 million in 2010 to 4.45 million in January 2015. In this short period of time, the total thus dropped by 1.29 million people, representing a 22.48% decline. The proportion of immigrants in the total Spanish population went from 12.22% to 9.58%, dropping by 2.64 points in only five years.

We must also take into consideration that some foreigners have acquired Spanish nationality and therefore no longer count as foreigners, thereby reducing the number of foreigners and increasing the group of Spanish residents. The number of such im-

migrants is increasing given the progressive consolidation of the immigration process. In 2014 the number rose to 205,880, including mostly Moroccans (16.9% of the total), Ecuadorians (15.9%), Colombians (12.1%) and Peruvians (8.0%). These four groups make up for more than half of the total. It is important to recall that these are the largest groups of foreigners settled in Spain. For Latin Americans, the possibility of obtaining double nationality provides advantages in the settling process.

So, who is leaving? And where are they going? There are major differences between the main groups of foreign residents in Spain. Looking at data from between 1 January 2010 and 1 January 2015, we can see the following drops among the three main immigrant groups in Spain: Romanians (-121,325); Moroccans (-58,067); and Ecuadorians (-220,697). Flows from China, on the other hand, increased (156,607 in 2010 versus 167,539 in 2015).

Given how recent and complex these movements are (Larramona, 2013), there is not yet sufficient information available to clearly discern the new destinations of the immigrants who have left (Viruela, Marcu, 2015). It is known that some return to their countries of origin, while others look to settle in other countries in the European Union or farther afield, in places with a better economic outlook that have more job prospects and are better equipped to receive immigrants.

4.2.2. External migration of Spanish citizens

We must begin by saying that the total numbers for the movements of Spaniards are not very high (they are lower than the entry and exit numbers for foreigners) (Table 6). The figures are also low compared to those recorded in past decades (1955–1975), when the last great cycle of Spanish emigration took place towards other Western European countries (García Fernández, 1965). Nevertheless, we would like to highlight the following considerations:

The number of departures grew non-stop between 2009 and 2014, increasing by 50% during this period.

The numbers were more modest for arrivals, with more irregular changes.

As a result, the negative net migration balance grew each year. The modest number of losses in

Table 6. Spaniards living abroad

	1996	2000	2007	2012	2013	2014	2015
Europe	832,496	672,420	560,408	628,400	656,841	691,593	730,839
Africa	13,930	12,937	12,834	15,707	16,618	17,273	18,274
The Americas	1,369,822	863,465	868,564	1,133,228	1,214,985	1,302,596	1,383,626
Asia	9,250	8,911	15,005	21,940	24,484	27,485	30,441
Oceania	36,831	14,208	14,880	17,560	18,320	19,101	19,863
Total	2,262,329	1,571,941	1,471,691	1,816,835	1,931,248	2,058,048	2,183,043

Source: INE (Census of Spaniards living abroad)

2009 increased 9-fold by 2014, reaching a total of over 37,000 people. The provisional data for the first half of 2015 indicate an even greater negative balance for the same time span with respect to the previous year (-27,766).

According to National Statistics Institute (INE) data, the Spaniards who emigrated in 2014 included a high proportion (64.08%) of working age individuals (16–64 years) and, in contrast, a low proportion (5.56%) of seniors (65+ years) and individuals under 16 (30.26%). The latest data concerning settlements abroad in 2014 indicate that the majority of emigrating Spaniards headed towards America (61.63%) and Europe (32.77%). The other destinations are of little significance due to their small volume, despite showing some dynamism (Table 6). The negative net migration balance for Spanish nationals reflects the steadily increasing number of Spaniards living abroad throughout the most recent economic crisis.

The number of Spaniards residing abroad remained stable at around 2 million for decades, but as we can see in the table above, it decreased to less than 1.5 million in 2007. These were favourable times in the Spanish economy, with the lowest unemployment rates recorded in recent years. Nevertheless, when the economic crisis hit, the number of Spaniards living abroad soon began to increase again. By 2015, the number climbed to levels similar to those recorded prior to the favourable cycle.

The increased emigration among Spaniards is clearly linked to the decrease in productive activities in the country and the resulting rise in unemployment. In this same context, however, we can see differences between native Spaniards and the various immigrant groups in the country. For example, many immigrants have become Spanish citizens, which has made it easier for them to move to other countries in the European Union where the la-

bour markets are more favourable. Furthermore, once such immigrants become Spanish citizens, if they return to their home countries it is always possible for them to emigrate again in the future, either to Spain or to other European countries. For most native Spaniards, emigration is a way to either temporarily or permanently escape the difficult economic conditions at home marked by high levels of unemployment. This is particularly true for young people, with youth unemployment rates in Spain hovering around 50%. Furthermore, for many Spanish youths, there is often a gap between their level of training (even university level) and that which is required on the demanding and specialised labour market. We cannot oversimplify this population as “a highly educated generation destined to emigrate”. The reality is far more complex, and to improve the youth labour situation, the labour supply must match the demand.

After more than a decade of successive gains, the net migration balance in Spain has been negative since 2011 and continues to decline. Together with the previously analysed population data, these numbers reflect the disturbing reality in Spanish demographics (Serrano, García, 2013). Furthermore, immigration has hardly contributed to slowing the process of population ageing and decline (United Nations, 2001; Orzechowska, 2002).

5. Reflections, conclusions and final recommendations

For years, the Spanish population has been rapidly ageing (not registering natural growth) and is showing signs of stagnation and even recession. This situation is similar in other neighbouring Western European countries. It is thus logical to group such countries together, even though in Spain the unfavourable aspects are more pronounced, especially the weak birth rate and the reduction of net migration rates. The Spanish case is also unique in that the demographic evolution here occurred more quickly and drastically.

To sum up, relatively recently (1996–2007), in a period of strong economic growth, the arrival of nearly 5 million foreign immigrants drove an overall increase in the Spanish population. It seemed as though the previous negative population trend had been reversed. But the economic downturn, with its unprecedented rise in unemployment rates, completely altered migration trends, producing increasingly negative net migration balances between 2011 and 2015. The natural growth rate also took a hit. As a result, Spanish demographics face an uncertain and worrying future. According to Gutiérrez-Domènech, such “demographic trends pose a major challenge for the economy, since they have put downward pressure on the working age population” (2015: 39). In such a situation, “an increase in productivity becomes crucial... and recent developments are not grounds for optimism, because between 2000 and 2014, the total productivity of the [productivity sectors] was 0.7%” (Gutiérrez-Domènech, 2015: 39). This negative value is most palpable in the services sector, a key sector in the Spanish economy (Maroto-Sánchez, 2011).

It is strange that an issue of such magnitude is not the focus of concern, analysis and action among different social and political groups. All sides, focused on the short term in their decision-making and entangled in immediate strategies, appear to dodge this essential issue. There are no miraculous or immediate solutions to such population-related issues (Hantrais, 1995; Reques, 2011). Any society with a population crisis must face the future with realism and common sense, either at the national level as is the case here or on a larger scale, at the

European level. This is not the time for improvisation and short-term answers. A sound and balanced population policy together with a productive system that can sustain the extensive and complex “welfare state” should be a key priority for European leaders.

Within the greater context of the European Union, Spain’s outlook is hardly promising, despite the fact that there is marked contrast between the Spanish regions (Reig, 2007). In this sense, and as a synthetic summary, we add two maps that show these regional contrasts: a) Natural growth rates according to Autonomous Communities (Fig. 3), and b) Immigrant population over the total population according to Autonomous Communities (Fig. 4).

Nevertheless, the overall trend toward demographic decline is worrisome. Such a downwards spiral of population decline is likely to have serious negative consequences. Given the extent of the economic and productive issues that are behind the trends, however, there is no quick fix. In the adverse economic reality it will not be easy to generate social optimism and confidence in the future, without which it will be difficult to drive even the slightest demographic renewal.

At both the socio-demographic and economic level, Spain faces bleak prospects. Corporate, political and academic elites, among others, are ensconced in their “ivory towers” and seem unwilling to give up their privileges. They prefer to peddle demagoguery and populism, considered as a placebo for a slumbering society that only thinks in terms of immediacy. In light of such pressing population issues, however, this is no time for partisan or partial solutions.

Maintenance of the “public” services offered through the so-called “social state”, i.e., the current “welfare” system, is presented bombastically as an absolute priority. But the current system cannot be maintained for long without a strong and effective productive and demographic base, what has been known for years (Herce, 2002). To give an example, we can mention the pay-as-you-go pension system, which is nearly exclusive to Spain. Under this system, the pensions received by retirees in a given period are financed by contributions from workers in the same period. In recent years, to continue paying the pensions, the government has had to tap into its reserve funds (which decreased by 29,887 million Euros between 2011 and 2015, in other words, by

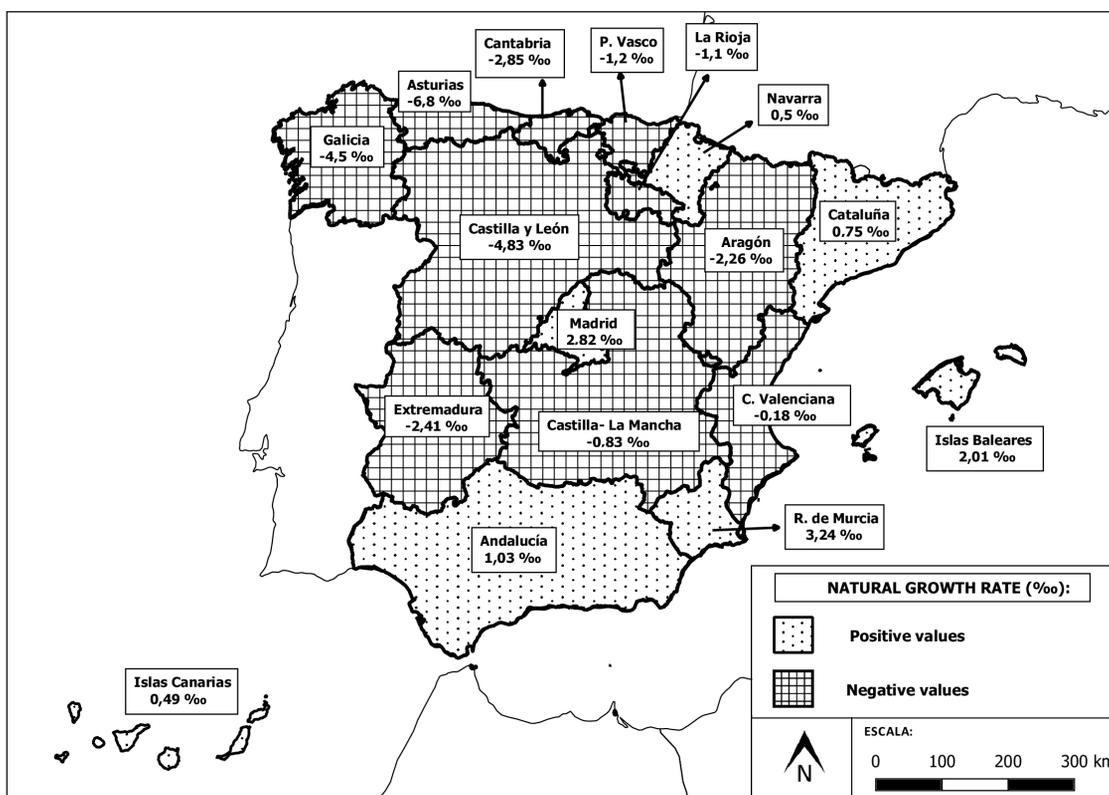


Fig. 3. Natural growth rates according to Autonomous Communities. Regional contrasts
 Source: INE (Natural Population Movement, Basic Demographic Indicators). Authors' calculations

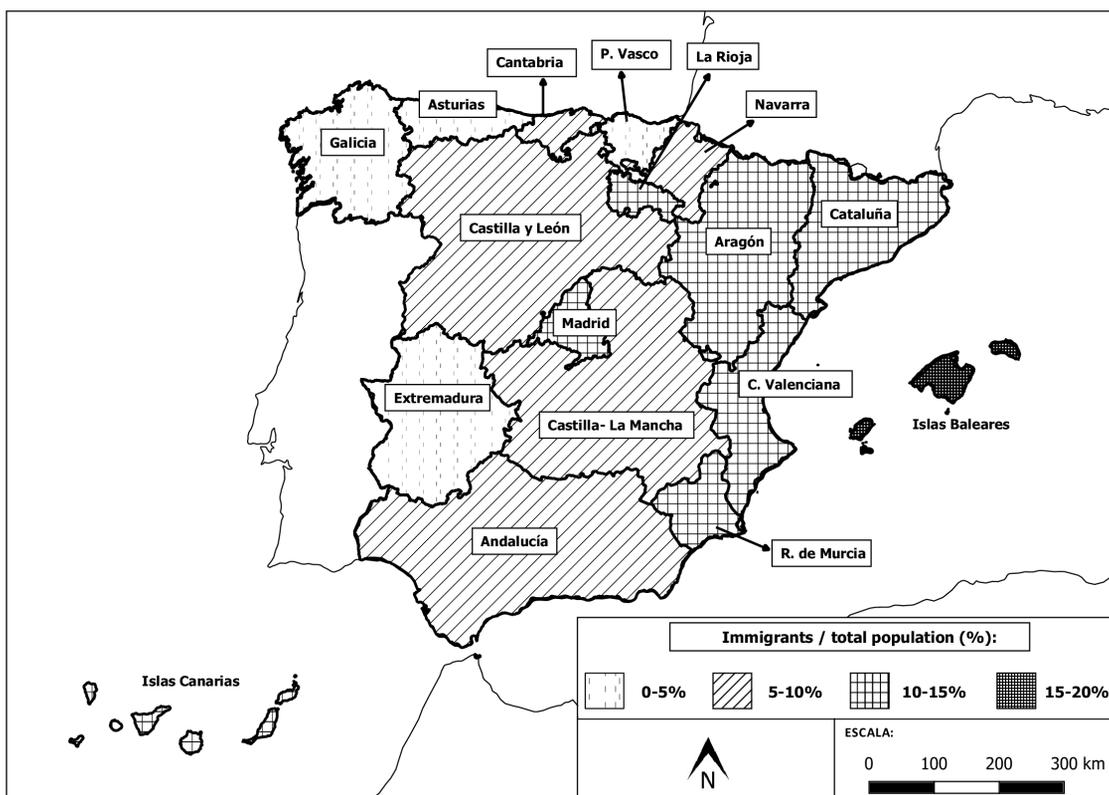


Fig. 4. Immigrant population over the total population according to Autonomous Communities. Regional contrasts
 Source: INE (Population Census). Authors' calculations

44.74%). If this trend continues, the reserve funds will be exhausted within a few years.

With no sustainable solution in sight, following the evolution of the Spanish population is like watching a slowly ticking time-bomb with a foreseeable and worrisome prognosis.

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