

Original Paper

Migration Flows in Spain. A Push-pull Factors View

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Abstract

The paper studies changes in migration flows from a push-pull approach. It analyses the most relevant multidisciplinary theoretical approaches and the statistical information available since the great recession on those factors that determine economic progress and well-being used by Eurostat based on the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report. Both local and foreign workers are studied. It was observed that after the great economic recession, foreign workers are one of the most vulnerable groups, for whom wages and employment have not yet recovered. This leads to a precarious living condition and a marginal impact on the economy, and also to greater pressure from this group to migrate.

Keywords

emigration, immigration, push pull factors, quality of life indicators, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), wages, the labor market, risk of poverty and social exclusion.

1. Introduction

Unlike in previous times, today the natural development of the population has a limited impact on population changes (United Nations, 2020). Nowadays, the most important reason for population growth in developed countries is due to migratory flows, as shown in Figure 1 for the case of Spain, where the natural population rate has evolved without major changes, around 2%, and is even expected to be negative in the coming years.

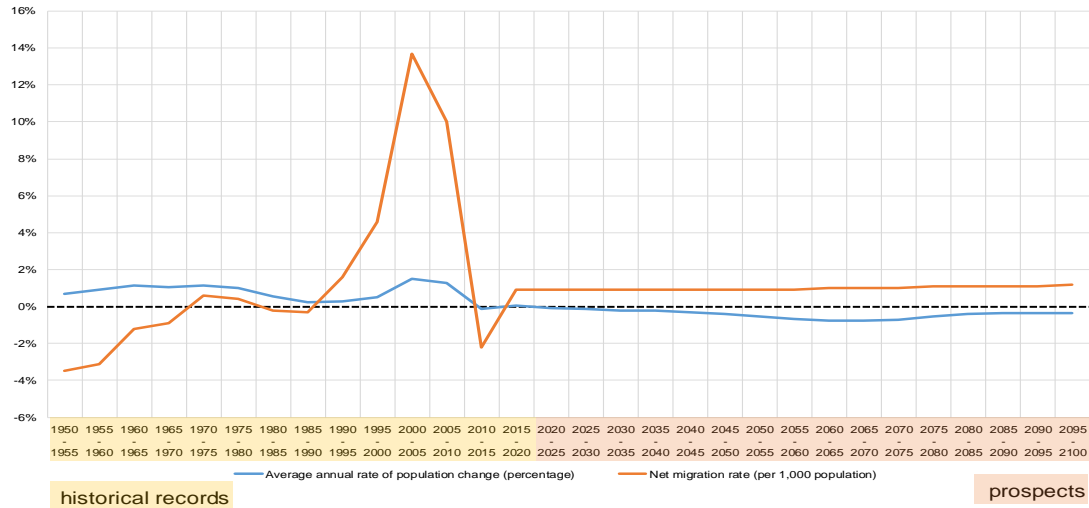


Figure 1. Net Migration (Note 1) and Population Growth Rate, per 1000 Inhabitants in Spain. Adapted from United Nations (2020)

Furthermore, there is certainly no doubt that the lack of migratory flows would have very pernicious effects on the population of countries like Spain. This is clearly shown in Figure 2, which displays the estimated population growth in a scenario without immigration (United Nations, 2020).

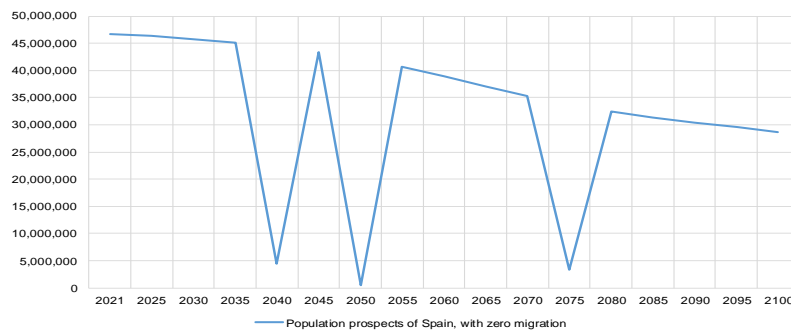


Figure 2. Population Prospects of Spain, without Migration. Adapted from United Nations, 2019

However, understanding the impact of migratory flows is a complex issue. There is no single theory of migration, but various approaches are used to deal with this topic, including sociology, geography, economics, history, political science, etc. (Bonfanti, 2015). In any case, numerous studies have been carried out using the push-pull approach, which takes into account the importance of socio-economic factors as determining factors in migratory flows (Jennissen, 2004; Miranda-Martel et al., 2017; Ojeda-Gonzalez et al., 2018).

There are many initiatives from the scientific and academic field, as well as from international and European institutions (United Nations, OECD, European Commission, European Statistical Office) that aim to measure the state of the economy and welfare, but the work that has attracted the most attention is the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report, published in 2009 on behalf of the French government (Stiglitz, Sen,

& Fitoussi, 2009). This report proposes a multidimensional approach to measuring the progress of societies, which has finally led to a selection of Quality of Life indicators, that are available in the specific section of the Eurostat about population and social conditions.

Accordingly, this research analyses the socio-economic push pull factors that determine migratory flows according to the scientific literature and following the indicators scheme defined by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report, which comprises four dimensions:

- Economic conditions: it includes those factors that are a reference of the economic situation: Gross Domestic Product (GDP), wages, the labor market.
- Living conditions. As a reference, it includes the income of households based on the Financial Survey of Families published by the Bank of Spain, which determines the level of purchasing power of foreign workers and their capacity for private consumption.
- Material conditions: this refers to the deprivation or material deficiencies that persons may suffer and to material conditions. We include the risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- Economic security: this includes objective indicators: delays in payment, and also subjective indicators: inability to cope with unforeseen economic expenditures. It reflects the economic risks and vulnerability of households and individuals, as well as their responsiveness and resilience to adverse economic situations.

Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that not all labor markets are the same and that the skills, knowledge and mobility of workers vary according to industry, sector of activity and economic situation (Borjas & Cassidy, 2019; Mihi-Ramirez et al., 2020).

This is the case of Spain (Figure 1), where in the last few years the country went from a strong economic expansion (in which there was a massive reception of immigrant workers), to a serious recession (especially since 2008), which meant a great decrease in the number of immigrants received and, at the same time, the beginning of a growing emigration from Spain to other countries, something that had not happened with such intensity since the 1980s (Mihi-Ramírez, 2013).

This situation implies high-impact changes; therefore, this research aims to analyze the migration in Spain, taking into account the effects of the most relevant push pull factors from a socio-economic perspective.

2. Economic Conditions in Spain

2.1. Migratory Flows and Gross Domestic Product

From the perspective of the neoclassical macroeconomic theory of migration, immigration varies with economic growth (Borjas, 2013).

The migration phenomenon is not new in Spain. As Figure 3 shows, one of the main characteristics is the influence of economic cycles on migratory flows. Figure 3 represents the number of emigrants and immigrants on the left axis, and the percentage of variation of the Gross Domestic Product on the right axis, emigration and immigration.

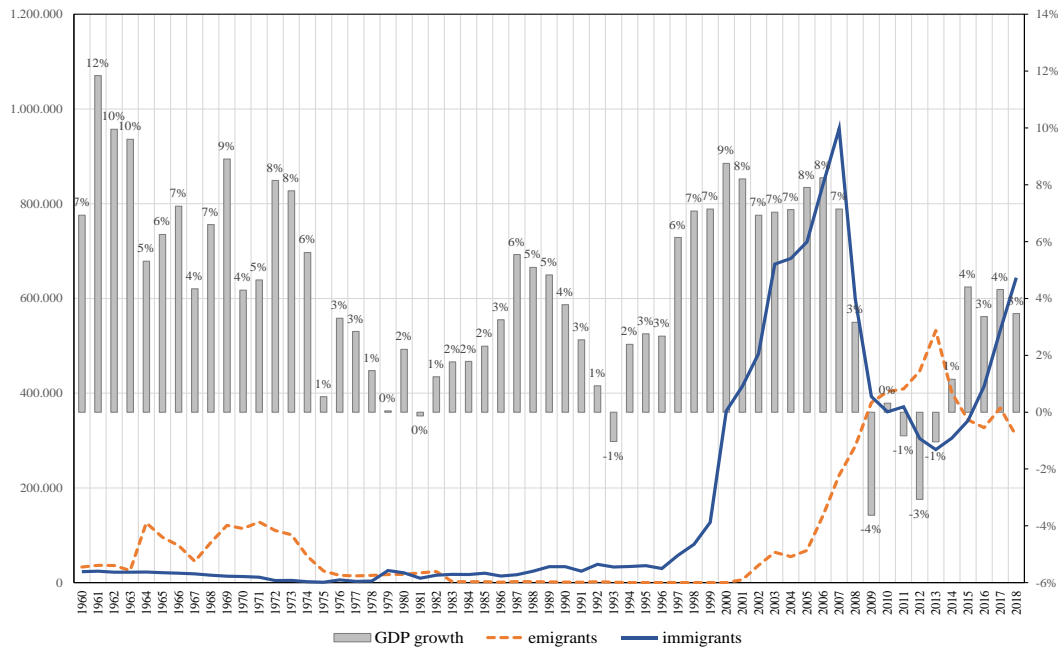


Figure 3. Number of Migrants, Immigrants and GDP Growth Rate in Spain, 1960-2018. Adapted from Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2020)

Accordingly, emigration in Spain grew until the mid-80s. From this point on, greater stability and growth in the economy virtually ends emigration. From that moment on, immigration to Spain began to grow, and became massive, especially in the 1990s in a context of European integration, economic liberalization and large foreign investment. In the mid-2000s, emigration started to grow slightly again, and after the onset of the economic crisis, it experienced the strongest growth in the whole period observed after several decades in which its value remained residual. According to Bartolini et al. (2017) and Gropas and Triandafyllidou (2015) during the great recession the emigration of the Spanish began later than in the rest of the countries of southern Europe due to their greater rejection of geographical mobility. The great intensity of changes in migratory flows in recent years also highlights the greater interconnectedness and the influence of the economy than in previous periods. Therefore, in this chapter, we focus on the analysis since the economic crisis of 2008.

Largely, the decision to emigrate has been motivated by the lack of job expectations in Spain rather than by training and professional improvement strategies (González Enríquez & Martínez Romera, 2015). This situation implies leaving the country in conditions of low skills and vulnerability. In fact, Spanish emigrants once in the destination country have had to face situations of unemployment and low income, which together with a not very high proficiency in the language of the destination country, leads to that integration is also usually less successful (Bartolini et al., 2017; Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2015). This explains why, in view of the first signs of economic recovery, emigration, although still high, has slowed down.

Similarly, the economic crisis led to a sharp reduction in the number of immigrants (Spanish National

Institute of Statistics, 2020; Mihi-Ramirez, 2013). However, compared to previous movements, this situation has been of short duration and intensity. The immigration drop was as low as -2.2% and was just limited to the years 2012 to 2016 (Figures 1 and 3).

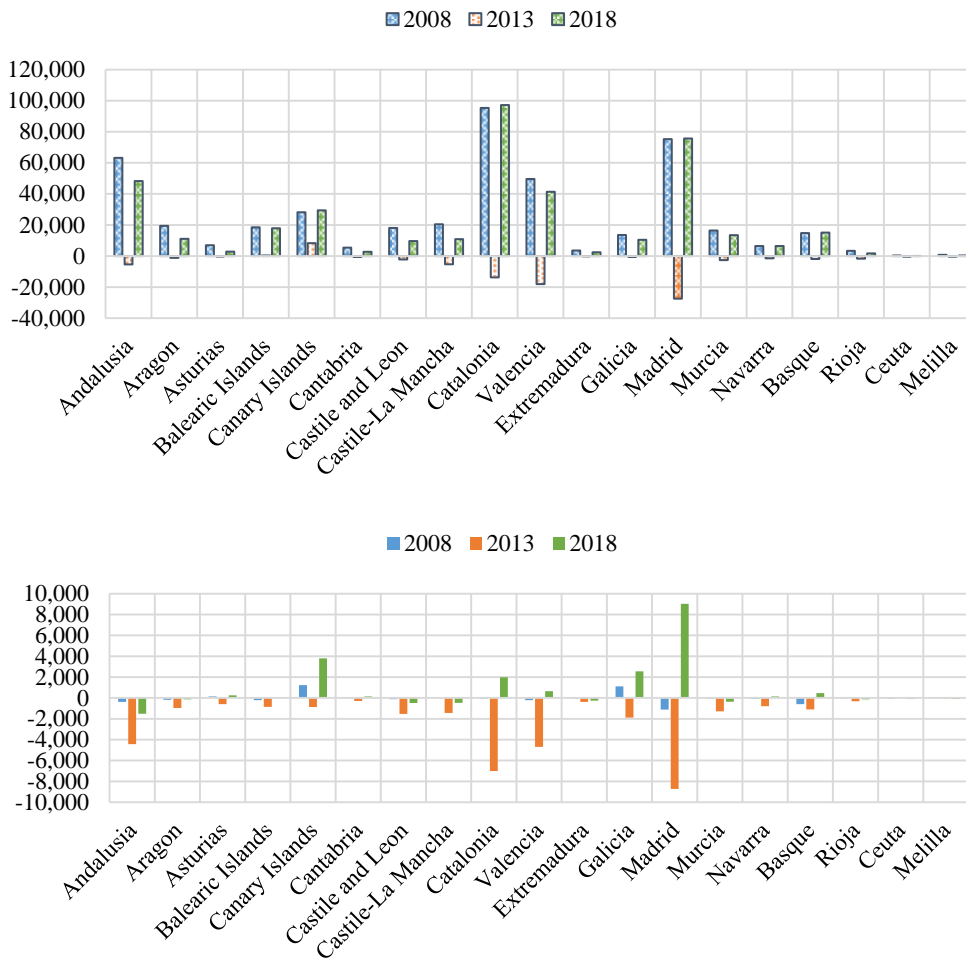


Figure 4. Balance of Emigrants in Spain by Region 2008, 2013, 2018. Adapted from Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2020)

Since 2017 Spain has recovered positive migratory balances, in a process that is undoubtedly linked to economic recovery, especially job creation (Ojeda-Gonzalez et al., 2018). In relation to this, Figure 4 shows the migratory balance broken down by regions of Spain in 2008, 2013 and 2018. It shows in greater detail the evolution in all regions of Spain of the migratory balance since the beginning of the last major recession (2008), the generalised increase in the number of emigrants during the crisis (2013) and the recovery (2018).

According to the literature about migration, migratory flows tend to be more concentrated in those regions where economic activity is more intense or there is a larger stock of immigrants, since the previous existence of networks implies more facilities and greater support for new immigrants

(Nordregio, 2013; Massey, 1988). In this sense, in Spain the regions with the largest populations, such as Catalonia, Madrid, Valencia and Andalusia, are also those that have experienced the greatest increase in the number of immigrants. Regarding the number of immigrants, net migration experienced a decline during the recession, which was especially marked in those regions where the impact of the crisis or the foreign population was greater (Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2020)

The emigration phenomenon in Spain began again in the 2000s (Figure 3), and since then, it has gone from barely 173 emigrants (in 2000) to a gradual increase that intensified notably with the economic crisis, reaching its peak in 2013 with 532,132 emigrants, and which currently continues with annual figures of around 300,000 emigrants in 2018 (Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2020).

In related terms, the migration theory of circular cumulative causation points out that changes in migratory flows occur gradually, so that once emigration begins, the whole process tends to be perpetuated (King, 2002). Also, once a critical mass is reached, population movement begins to alter the social and economic structures within the sending regions, increasing the likelihood of further migration (Massey, 1988).

Further, as the theory of migratory networks points out, once started, international migration tends to expand over time until the connections of the migratory network have spread so widely in the region of origin that everyone who wishes to migrate can do so without any difficulty; then migration begins to slow down (Fussell, 2012).

Therefore, it is convenient to analyze emigration in further detail. If we observe, for example, the most recent data (2018) and the nationality of these emigrants (Figure 5), we realize that a large part corresponds to foreigners who arrived in Spain during the 2000's, most of them coming from other countries of the European Union. Likewise, approximately half of these emigrants correspond to native Spaniards (who have always resided in Spain), the rest are foreigners who have resided in the country since the 2000s, especially since 2015 and 2016 (Maza et al., 2019).

Nationality	Total	Always resided 2001 or earlier																	
		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017		
Spanish	79,260	44,725	9,195	2,493	2,103	1,729	1,707	1,804	1,999	1,832	1,221	1,089	1,055	1,009	1,091	1,239	1,739	2,383	847
European Union country without Spain	111,801	4,766	9,656	4,017	4,409	5,887	6,695	7,904	10,146	4,953	3,940	5,108	6,857	7,306	4,665	5,844	9,622	7,927	2,099
Country in Europe minus EU	11,757	302	799	279	284	291	280	297	358	290	330	368	627	737	752	1,007	2,441	2,058	257
From Africa	35,136	2,206	3,014	1,033	1,022	1,518	1,526	1,761	2,215	2,147	1,412	1,204	1,530	1,508	1,244	1,949	3,961	4,823	1,063
From North America	7,151	80	142	45	28	35	41	64	83	79	114	125	347	360	364	579	2,545	1,886	234
From Central America and the Caribbean	8,285	255	193	63	57	91	119	215	280	288	238	329	605	531	382	551	1,483	2,058	547
From South America	38,606	951	2,813	1,516	1,450	1,234	1,429	1,988	2,166	1,635	1,090	995	1,657	1,377	1,038	1,493	6,093	7,914	1,767
From Asia	17,152	890	571	310	326	426	486	468	595	668	523	700	978	854	970	1,353	3,323	3,176	535
From Oceania	313	1	7	3	3	3	5	10	8	6	5	7	35	29	15	12	78	75	11

Figure 5. Emigration Flow to Foreign Countries in 2018, by Year of Arrival to Spain and Nationality. Adapted from Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2020)

2.2 Migration Flows and Wages

The migration theory of the dual labor market states that growth requires, on the one hand, an increase in technology and highly skilled workers, and, on the other hand, it also requires low-skilled labor to do the work that is not wanted and lower wages (Dickens & Lang, 1984; Piore, 1979). So, to increase growth, labor could be replaced by capital, or in labor-intensive sectors, more immigrants could be hired to achieve this growth.

Likewise, the theory of the new economy of labor migration (Stark, 1991) indicates that immigrants will work in their country of destination within sectors where the concentration of immigrants is higher. These sectors are usually where the locals do not want to work, although the wages are higher than in the country of origin, so are attractive to immigrants. However, low wages in the host country mean that immigrants make a low contribution via taxes, but also the transfers they may receive from the State are lower than for locals (Nordregio, 2013).

Wages that immigrants receive for their work constitute the direct contribution of immigrants to an economy (Borjas & Cassidy, 2019). According to the literature on migration, wages are usually higher for locals since they also hold more skilled jobs (Nordregio, 2013). Moreover, in the case of Spain, wages for foreign workers have fallen sharply since the beginning of the crisis and have not yet recovered, so the wage gap with respect to national workers has widened (see Figure 6).

In fact, the level of wages of Spanish workers is higher than foreigners, so in 2008 the average wage of Spanish workers was 19,999 euros (16,873 euros in the case of foreigners) and in 2018 (the most recent data is 20,475 euros (12,244 euros for foreigners) (Spanish Tax Agency, 2020).

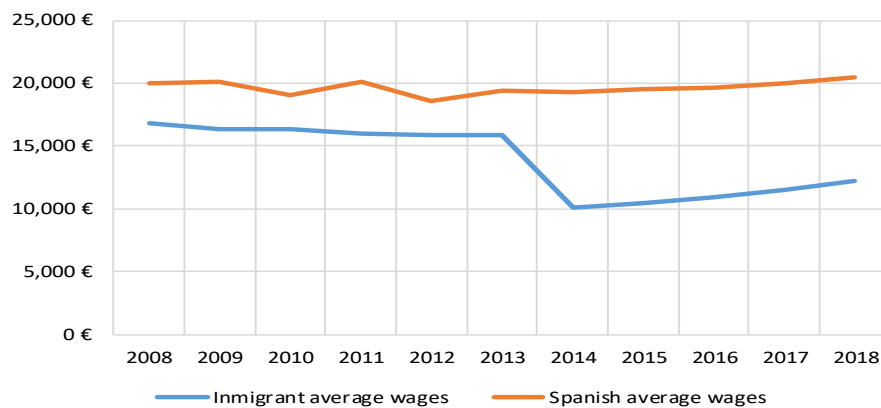


Figure 6. Average Wage of Spanish and Foreign Workers in Spain 2008-2014. Adapted from Spanish Tax Agency (2020)

This decline in wage income affects the evolution of GDP. From a microeconomic point of view, the reduction of companies' labor costs can favor the hiring of workers and the increase of production. However, from a macroeconomic perspective, for the overall economy a reduction in wages may lead to a reduction in the standard of living, in the purchasing power of workers and in the private

consumption of workers (Ferrari, 2020; Maza et al., 2019).

The fall in the wages of immigrants occurs in practically all regions of Spain. According to the literature, workers are usually concentrated in regions where wages are higher (Maza et al., 2019; Mihi-Ramírez et al., 2017). This is the case of Spain, where falling incomes have led to a resurgence of emigration to other countries and an intensification of concentration in higher-wage regions. This drop in wages is more pronounced where economic activities are more intensive in low-skilled labor: Extremadura, Castilla La Mancha, Valencia and Andalusia (Figure 7).

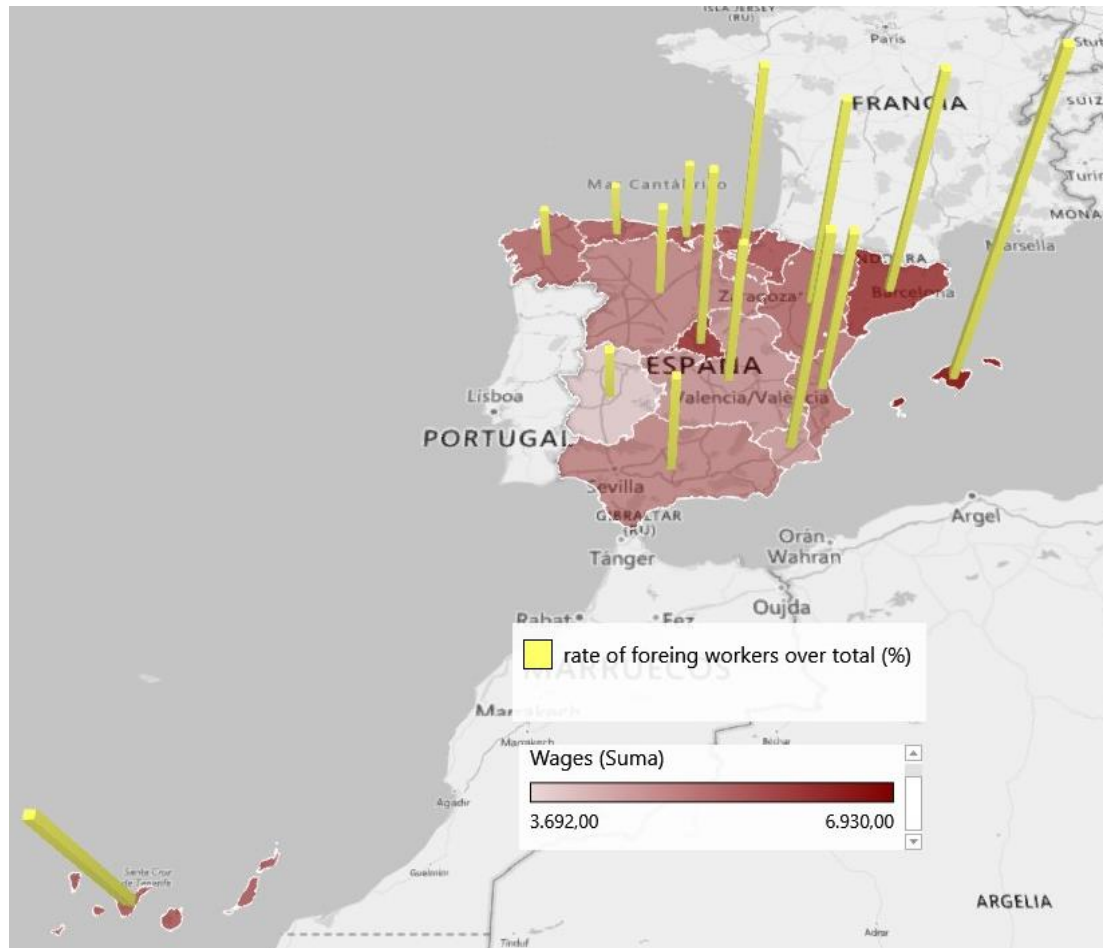


Figure 7. Ratio of New Foreign Workers over Total Workers in Spain and Average Wage of Foreign Workers in Spain by Region. Adapted from Spanish Tax Agency (2020)

2.3 Migratory Flows and the Spanish Labor Market

The labor market situation is another important determinant identified in the literature on migration (Mihi-Ramírez et al., 2017). Figure 8 clearly shows that the number of recruits of foreign workers has generally decreased in Spain since the economic crisis and has not yet recovered in most regions.

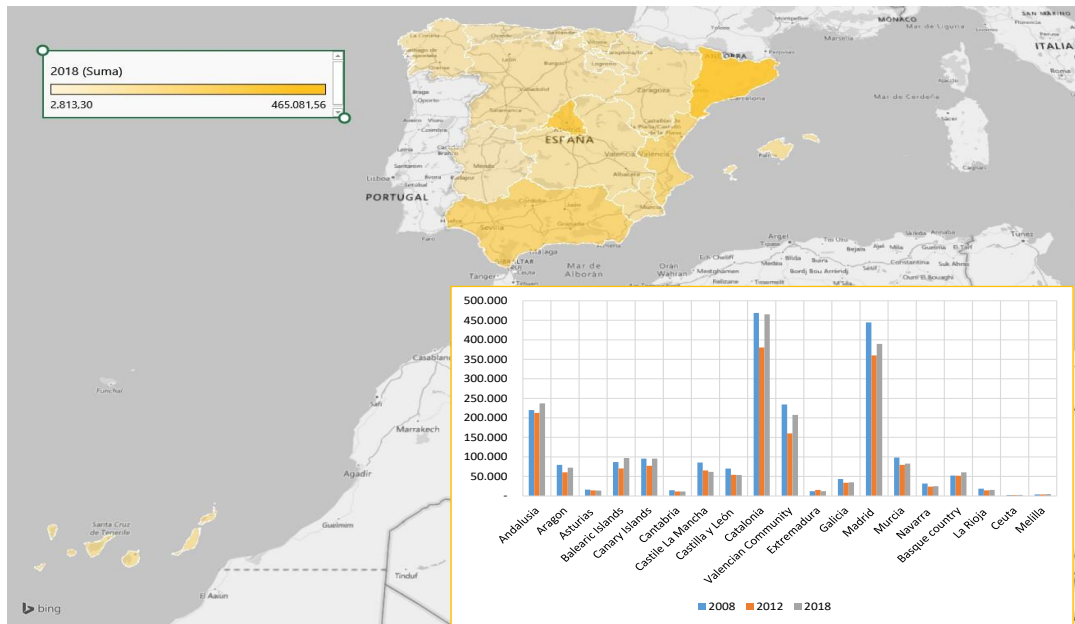


Figure 8. Foreign Workers Affiliated to the Social Security in Labour Registration by Autonomous Communities in Spain. 2007 y 2014. Adapted from Ministry of Labour Migrations & Social Security, 2020.

Regarding the number of foreign workers (Note 2), the aforementioned decrease (-6.5% fewer members between 2008 and 2018) logically also affects income via taxes and workers’ contributions to the Social Security system (SS). Thus, if we take the example of personal income tax, income declared by foreign workers represented a total gross amount of 23,973,602,362 euros in 2008, decreasing by -9% in 2013, although by 2018 it has recovered to pre-crisis levels (Spanish Tax Agency, 2020).

Similarly, with regard to income from Social Security taxes, Figure 9 shows how they have fallen from 2008 to an annual minimum of 677,297,482 euros in 2013, a drop of 7%, and have since begun to recover (Spanish Tax Agency, 2020).

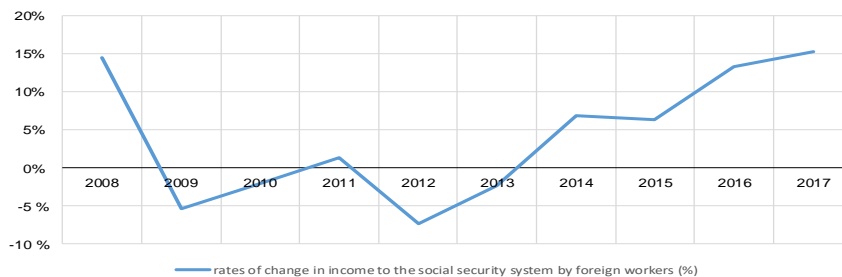


Figure 9. Incomes of the Social Security System of Spain by foreign workers. Adapted from Ministry of Labour Migrations & Social Security (2020)

The State’s income from these concepts represents a significant amount that varies according to the number of foreign workers.

This analysis is completed in Figure 10, which represents the labor insertion of foreigners based on several labor market indicators (Stark, 1991): the activity rate of foreign workers in Spain, the percentage of foreign workers with regard to the total number of employed persons, the unemployment rate of foreign workers, the percentage of foreign workers with a temporary or part-time contract, the percentage of foreign workers who work in lower-qualified jobs as regards their level of studies, and finally, the percentage of employed persons in lower-qualified jobs (levels 5 to 9 according to the national classification of economic activities).

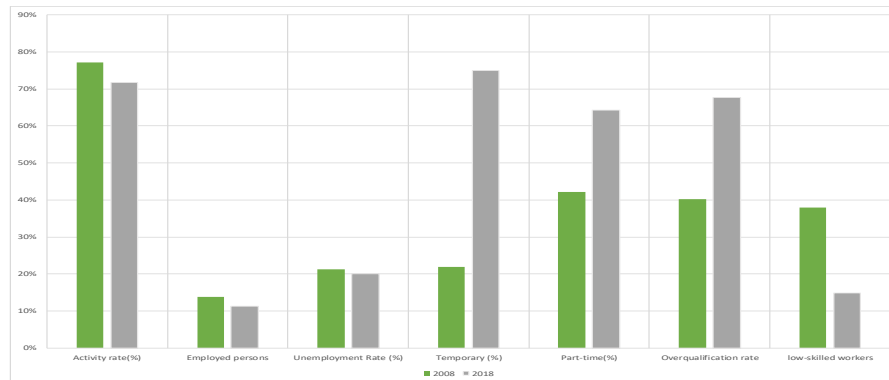


Figure 10. The Employment of Foreign Workers in Spain, 2008 and 2015. Adapted from Labor Force Survey, Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2019)

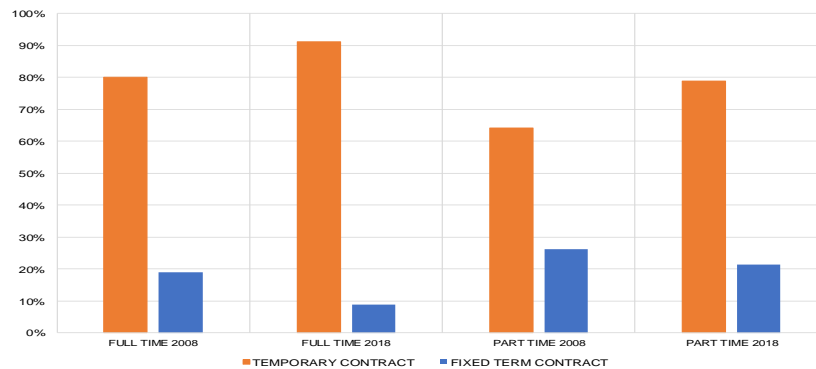


Figure 11. Foreign Workers According to Their Working Hours and Type of Contract in Spain, 2008 and 2018. Adapted from Labor Force Survey, Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2019)

Regarding foreign workers, the activity rate and the number of people employed in lower-skilled jobs have decreased as a result of the increase in unemployment, in emigration (Figure 2) and also because of the lower number of people employed in general.

Also, temporary and part-time contracts and over-qualification have increased significantly (Figures 10 and 11). This leads to a decrease in income and a deterioration in working conditions.

On the other hand, it is enlightening to analyze the importance of foreign self-employees. The percentage of foreign self-employed in Spain was 7% on average in 2008 and 10% in 2018 (Ministry of

Labour Migrations & Social Security, 2020). Probably the precarious situation of the labor market led them at first to start up small businesses, but it is also true that their growth has been continuously since the beginning of the crisis and that approximately 50% of these companies have been in business for more than 5 years.

Likewise, while the number of Spanish self-employed workers between 2008 and 2018 has decreased, in the case of foreigners their number has not stopped growing since then, and is especially intense in the case of immigrants from Asia and EFTA member countries (Figure 12).

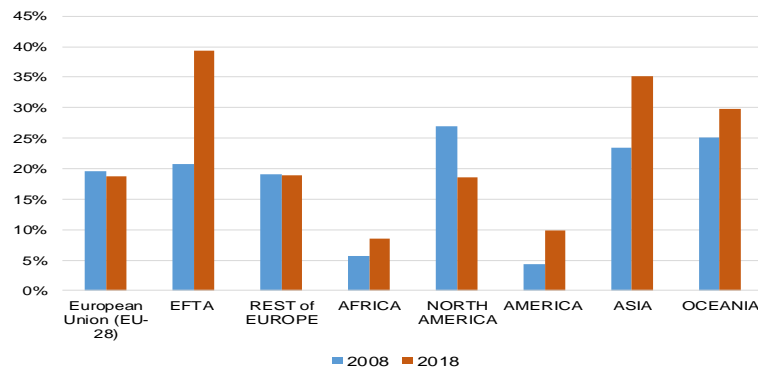


Figure 12. Distribution of Foreign Self-employed Workers in Spain by Country of Origin, 2008 and 2018. Adapted from Ministry of Labour Migrations & Social Security (2020)

3. Living Conditions

3.1. The Income of Immigrant Households in Spain

It is widely accepted since the neo-classical theory of migration that deteriorating working conditions and rising unemployment lead migrant workers to seek to maximize their options in other countries (Borjas, 2013), a fact that has been observed since the beginning of the economic crisis and also in the negative forecasts of the immigration flow from Spain (see Figure 1).

Together, these imbalances conform a strong negative synergy that causes the growth of emigration, making the Spanish labor market unattractive as a destination for immigrants, whether potential or already resident (Figure 5).

In addition, demographic projections draw a picture of a moderate reduction in the population living in Spain, which will result in a smaller number of active people and the ageing of this population (United Nations, 2020).

Ultimately, this has a strong negative impact on long-term economic development.

Countries with higher income levels also tend to offer better conditions for the prosperity of immigrants (Bonfanti, 2015). This is also in line with the concept of profit maximization developed by Wallace, DeLorme and Kamerschen (1997). The specific location of certain consumer products use to be in places linked to better lifestyles. These “location-specific consumption packages” (Wallace et al., 1997, p. 3) depend on the level of household income and government policies and actions.

The perception of better living conditions in Spain has been one of the factors of attraction in times of massive reception of immigrants, especially after the European integration (Maza et al., 2019; Mihi-Ramírez, 2013). In view of the current economic situation, it would at least be necessary to maintain the level of income of immigrant households in Spain so that foreign workers can cope with the poor situation on the labor market so that they decide to stay in Spain. This issue is also relevant for attracting new immigrants.

One of the specific sections of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (Section 1) is to introduce the perspective of households and the distribution of income, according to different population groups in the aggregates of the National Accounts (income, consumption, wealth). Therefore, we analyse the average income (of immigrant households) and the final consumption expenditure of these households, based on data from the Spanish National Accounts, as an aggregate macroeconomic reference to the living conditions of immigrants in Spain.

Figure 13 shows how the average annual income and average annual expenditure of foreign workers experienced a significant decline and is beginning to recover in recent years. Household consumption depends on growth expectations and the perception of the economic situation. Declining wages and unemployment are causing consumer confidence to fall and, as a precaution, in the face of negative growth expectations, consumption is being held back until things improve. In fact, the consumer confidence index shows this behavior, going from about 70% in 2010 to 44% in 2012, in the following years, it recovered and in 2018 it fell slightly again (90%).

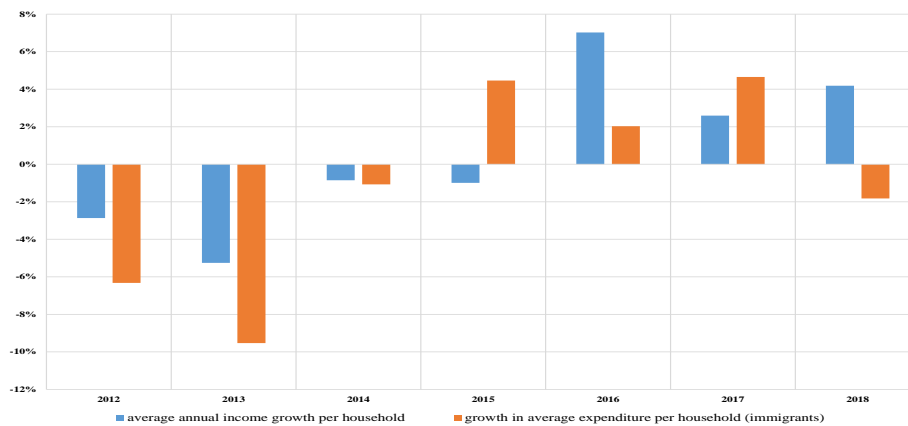


Figure 13. Growth of Average Income and Average Annual Expenditure of Foreign Households in Spain. 2011 - 2018. Adapted from Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2017)

As a consequence, the average expenditure of foreign workers contracted, contributing to reductions in production and ultimately to a reduction in the country's income levels. In turn, tax revenues, which depend on macroeconomic developments, will be reduced, especially progressive taxes, while some expenditure items (such as unemployment expenditure) will increase, acting as an income stabilizing mechanism.

4. The Material Conditions in Spain

4.1 The Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion of the Immigrant Population

It is worth asking whether the deterioration of working conditions and the decline in the purchasing power of foreign workers has led to changes in their standard of living. Along with purchasing power, the standard of living can be measured by knowing whether the population has the resources to meet its basic needs.

The living conditions survey carried out by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) examines the Arope indicator, which measures the risk of poverty. According to the INE (2019, 1), “The population at risk of poverty or social exclusion is that which is in one of these situations:

- At risk of poverty (60% median income per consumption unit).
- Severe material deficiency (lacking in at least 4 items from a list of 9).
- In jobless or low-employment households (households in which their working-age members did less than 20% of their total working potential during the reference year)”.

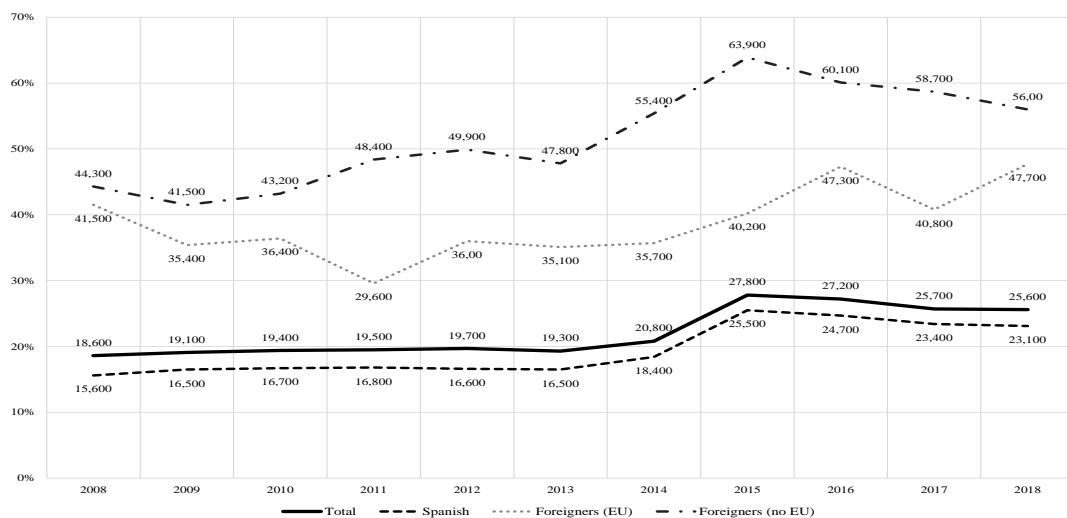


Figure 14. Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Spain by Nationality, 2008 - 2014. Adapted from Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE), (2019)

Figure 14 shows the percentage of persons below the risk of poverty line, which in Spain went from a total of 18.6% in 2008 to 25.6% in 2018. By breaking down this information by nationality, it can be observed that in the case of the Spaniards, it has evolved in a similar manner to the total, increasing from 15.6% in 2008 to 25.6%, with the deterioration of the economic situation.

For foreigners from other European Union countries, the risk of poverty is much higher, rising from 41.5% in 2008 to 47.7% in 2018. On the other hand, foreigners from non-EU countries are at the greatest risk of poverty and social exclusion. This increased from 44.3% in 2008 to a peak of 63.9% in 2015, although the most recent data puts it at 56% in 2018. Thus, this group is the most vulnerable to the deterioration of the economic situation in Spain.

Probably, we can find here the explanation to the great increase of the emigration of the resident foreigners in Spain from 2015. Here, the lack of expectations together with the better economic situation in other EU countries (which are relatively close and for which there is free mobility provided by the EU Schengen Treaty) has meant that in Spain, the large increase in the number of foreign immigrants that began with the economic crisis continues today in unprecedented numbers.

4.2 Social Benefits

It is worth noting that the foreign beneficiaries of social benefits have never accounted for more than 15% of the total in Spain over the whole period analyzed (Spanish Tax Agency, 2020).

This is a short of the automatic mechanism, the increase in unemployment after 2008 also meant an increase in the number of social benefit recipients (Figure 15), so expenditure on these issues increased especially from 2009 to 2012, and since 2015 it has started to increase slightly again. However, if we consider that a significant part of these benefits depends on working conditions, and that among foreigners low wages predominate (Figure 6), along with more precarious working conditions (Figures 10 and 11), we could say that social benefits for this collective are also limited (in terms of entitlement, amount and duration of the benefit).

Moreover, lower public spending on social benefits is also associated with the growth of emigration (Figures 3 and 5) and the creation of small businesses by foreigners in recent years (Figure 12).

In general, the total annual expenditure on social benefits in Spain since the beginning of the crisis is around 25% of GDP (for example, it was 264,577,878,000 euros in 2012), and of this amount, an average of 11.6%, from 2007 to 2018, corresponds to the foreign beneficiaries (Ministry of Labour Migrations & Social Security, 2020).

Figure 15 shows the breakdown of social benefits for foreign beneficiaries, based on data from the Ministry of Employment and Social Security between 2007 and 2018.

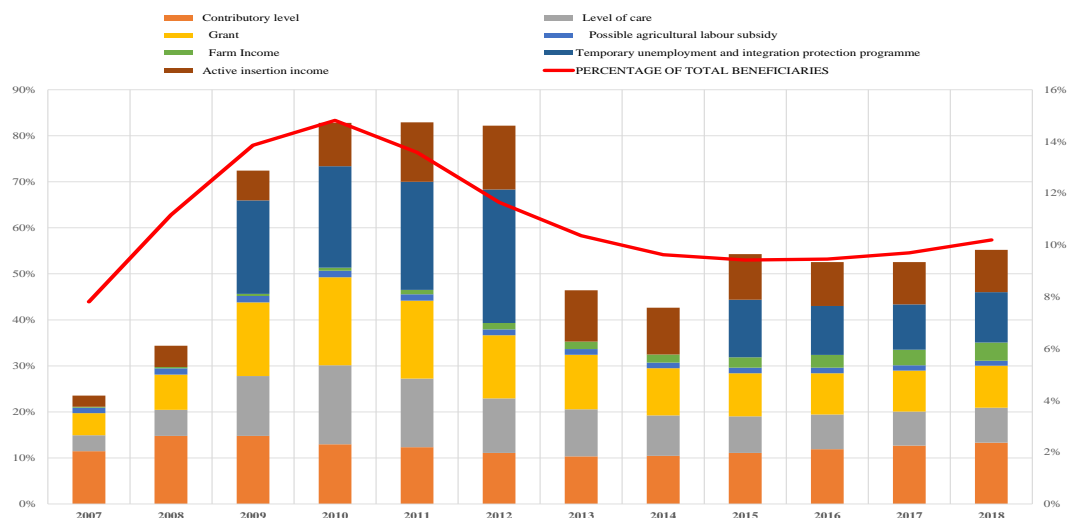


Figure 15. Foreigners Receiving Social Benefits. 2007-2018. Adapted from Ministry of Labour Migrations & Social Security (2020)

Financial poverty and social exclusion can also be measured indirectly through the difficulties expressed by individuals in making ends meet and coping with expenses considered as usual. This is a subjective indicator that complements the objective indicators based on material economic conditions, based on the Living Conditions Survey (Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2019).

Figure 16 shows the number of households facing major difficulties in meeting regular expenditures. In line with the economic cycle and the indicators analyzed above, there are large differences between locals (10%) and foreigners (25%), especially in the case of immigrants from non-EU countries. This situation translates into greater pressure to emigrate for these groups, especially in recent years.

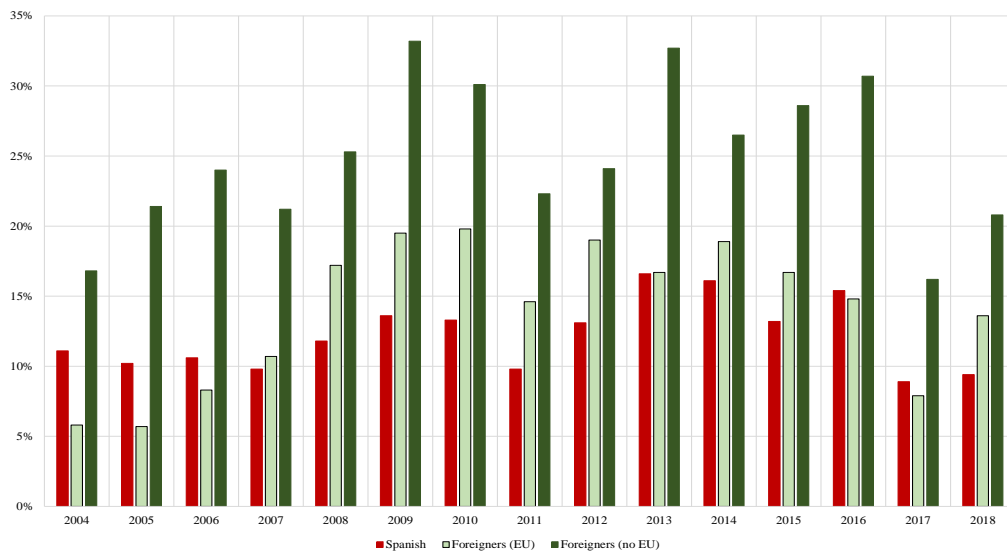


Figure 16. Great Difficulties in Making Ends Meet, According to Nationality (% of Population Aged 16 and over). Adapted from Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2019)

5. Economic Security

5.1 The Response and Resilience to Adverse Economic Situations

This section completes the analysis of the socio-economic push pull factors that determine migratory flows, on the basis of the indicators in the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report. We examine the economic risks and vulnerability of households and individuals, as well as their responsiveness and resilience in dealing with adverse economic situations.

We focus on objective indicators, such as payment delays, and also on subjective indicators, such as the inability to cope with unforeseen economic expenses. These indicators are collected in the Living Conditions Survey (Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2019).

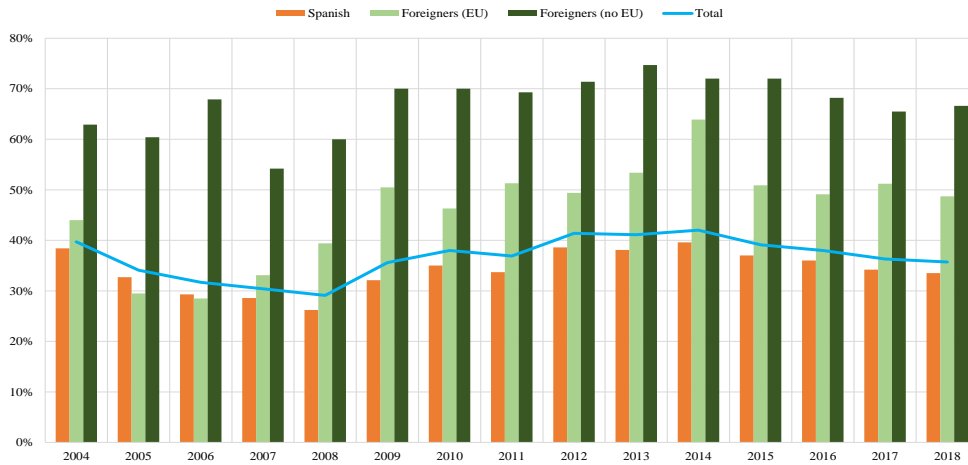


Figure 17. Households with Payment Delays (% of Population Aged 16 and over). Adapted from Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2019)

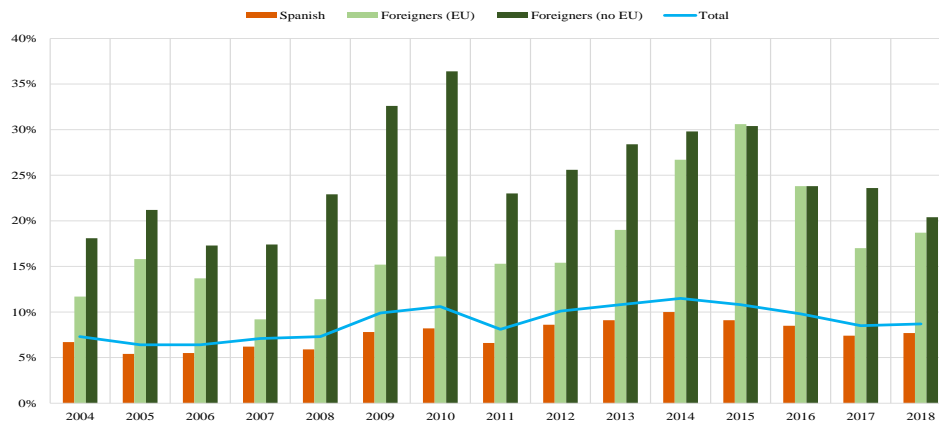


Figure 18. Inability to Meet Unforeseen Financial Expenses (% of Population Aged 16 and over)

Again, there are large differences between locals and foreigners, particularly in the case of immigrants from non-EU countries. This is a particularly vulnerable collective facing situations of difficulty, so they have a low capacity to withstand, which may lead to emigration as the only way out.

6. Conclusions

Migration flows will determine the population growth of developed countries like Spain in the coming years. Taking into account the deterioration of the global and Spanish economy and its effects on migratory flows, it is a priority to take into account its economic impact. The approach to this issue is complex given the existence of different theories, the scarce availability of data and also because of the existence of discrepancies by regions, types of industry and the changing situation of the economy.

This paper analyses the economic impact of migration in Spain, according to the changes in the most relevant push pull factors from the recent great economic recession to the latest available data.

To this end, the contributions of different migration theories have been taken into account, as well as

the 4 dimensions of indicators defined by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report. Likewise, we have examined data available from relevant official information sources such as the Spanish National Statistics Institute, the European Commission, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, etc.

Research has focused on the socio-economic push-pull factors determining the flows of foreign workers. However, in some cases, some comparisons are also made by Spanish workers.

Migratory flows in Spain are not a new phenomenon, although the effects are different according to the economic cycle. In general, in the case of Spain, the precepts of the literature on migration are fulfilled. As concerns immigration, we can say that foreign workers represent a minority of the working population, and a significant proportion of them are in lower-skilled jobs, so the impact since the crisis on this group has been particularly significant.

There has been a sharp fall in the average wages of foreign workers since the great recession that has not yet been recovered.

The same applies to the employment of foreign workers. Moreover, the precariousness of employment (temporary and partial contracts) has grown significantly in this collective, even more than in the case of the Spanish (Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2019).

And although the number of benefit recipients increased in the worst years of the crisis, we cannot say that spending on benefits has been significant in the case of immigrants, given that they represent a small proportion of the total number of benefit recipients, and also because of the increase in emigration and even the rise in self-employment among this group.

Also, the lower availability of income implies a reduction in consumption, in income for the country via taxes and an increase in relative poverty in the case of foreigners, especially if they are from countries outside the EU.

In summary, the evolution pattern of the factors analyzed explains the reduction in the impact of immigrants on the economy, and also the decline in living standards and conditions of this collective, so that Spain (although after the crisis it is once again a country of reception of immigrants), has also become a country of emigration, especially in the case of foreign workers.

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Notes

Note 1. Net migration: Immigration minus emigration (United Nations, 2017).

Note 2. Workers affiliated to the Social Security system that join the Spanish labor market for the first time. The act of affiliation occurs only once and allows the worker to obtain a Social Security number and the first contract in Spain.