

# Migration and Integration: A Study of Immigrants in Spain

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## ABSTRACT

This paper traces the history of the Moroccan, Romanian, Ecuadorian and Chinese immigrants in Spain. It focuses on two dimensions of integration: access to the labour market and the level of discrimination faced by immigrants. By analysing the socio-economic and political changes taking place in these sending countries it seeks to understand the diverse factors that propelled migration. Migration to Spain is predominantly economic. In order to understand the integration of immigrants in Spain it is essential to analyse the labour market mobility in conjunction with the protection against discrimination as this reflects equality of opportunity coupled with a positive attitude towards inclusion in society. The 20th century led to economic growth and an increased demand for low skilled labourers prompting migration towards Spain. Lack of employment opportunities and political instability in the home countries, larger changes in the world such as the Oil Crisis, creation of Israel, discontinuation of labor recruitment by North-western European Countries were major push factors. Immigrants face discrimination in their access to the labour market. Unequal treatment is experienced by most immigrants except the Chinese who are respected for their hard work but mocked for their appearance.

## KEY WORDS

Discrimination, Integration, Labour market, Migration, Spain

## INTRODUCTION

Spain has historically been a country of emigration with nearly 3.5 million Spaniards, mostly temporary workers migrating to Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Cuba between the 1850-1950. The flow of migrants shifted towards Morocco with the establishment of a protectorate in 1916-1919. From the 1950s to the mid-1970s seventy four percent Spaniards preferred moving to the Northern European countries (Ortega-Pérez 2003). This can be attributed to the economic reconstruction post the Second World War (Haas 2018: 7) that created employment opportunities closer to Spain, allowing Spaniards to move to and fro between northern European and central European countries (Calavita 2007: 7). Spain in the 20th century witnessed massive internal migration to industrialised areas like Madrid, Barcelona, and the Basque region from the rural southern areas of New Castile La Mancha, Old Castile-Leon and Extremadura (Bover and Velilla 1997: 7).

Economic growth and entry into the European Community (EC) led to a substantial rise in immigration in the last decades of the 20th century. The number of immigrants rose from

241,971 in 1985 to 499,773 in 1995. Throughout these years Spain witnessed certain changes in the composition and size of immigrants. Initially, before the mid-1990s a large number of immigrants, around 60 % were from the European Community. This changed as the 21st century was marked by an increase in nationals from countries outside the European Community. These new immigrants were from Morocco, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and China. There was also a growth in the number of immigrants from eastern European countries like Bulgaria and Romania (Ruiz 2003: 2). It was in 1998 that Africans preceded over other non-EU immigrant groups to become the largest legal immigrant community in Spain (Gómez and Tornos 2000: 5-6). Romanians were the largest immigrant group in 2013 (Pasetti 2014: 7). Currently, as of 1 January 2019 Moroccans (713,776) form the largest immigrant group in Spain followed by Romanians (670,186), British (286,753), Italians (243,748), Columbians (199,182) and Chinese (190,600) respectively. Recent statistics reflect a decline in the number of Ecuadorian and Romanian immigrants (INE 2019: 3).

Moroccans until the 1970s saw Spain as a transit country to reach other European nations like France, Belgium, Netherlands and Belgium. In 1964 a bilateral agreement between Spain and Morocco was signed that allowed Moroccans to enter Spanish territory without visa requirements (Villaverde 2011: 32). Geographical closeness and the existence of a large number of irregular Moroccan immigrants led the Spanish government to conclude three bilateral agreement on labour migration. The "Agreement on Residence Permits and Labour" (1996), "Administrative Agreement on Temporary Workers" (1999) signed in order to regulate seasonal work in agriculture and "Agreement on Labour" (2001) which came into force in 2005 (Jolivel 2014: 7-8).

Migration of Romanians to Spain was a consequence of lack of opportunities in Romania and the increase in labour demand due to Spain's economic growth between 1992-2008. The increase in Romanian immigration to Spain is also attributed to the signing of a bilateral recruitment agreement in 2002 and also the exemption of visa regulations for Romanians in many European countries the same year.

A former colony of Spain, Ecuadorians did not require a visa until 2003 to enter Spain. Migration from Ecuador took place in five phases divided as: until 1994, 1994-1996, 1998-2001, from 2000s and 2004-2009 (Gabrielli 2015: 9-11). It was with stricter immigration policy of the United States of America, economic crisis in Ecuador in the late 1990s, change in the perception of Spain as a developed country and the availability of low skilled jobs, the low cost of an undocumented trip to Spain as compared to the United States of America and colonial linkage were some of the factors that propelled migration towards Spain.

The Tian'anmen crisis in China coincided with Spain's entry in the European Community. The Chinese were aware that entry into the European Community would lead to stricter immigration policy of Spain. In order to enter the European border till the rules were relaxed, a large number of Chinese migrated between 1986-1991 to Spain. In 1992 the Olympic games in Barcelona and the World Fair in Seville created business opportunities further acting as pull factors.

The population of foreigners is unevenly distributed in Spain with Catalonia, Madrid, Andalusia, Valencia and the Canary Islands hosting the largest numbers due to their demand for unskilled, unqualified jobs in which the natives are disinterested. A gender imbalance can also be noted in the migratory flows. With Latin America representing the "most feminized flows" (Calavita 2007: 99). Women from Peru

and Philippines tend to emigrate alone in search of employment opportunities as domestic helps. While women from Maghreb countries and Pakistan remain unemployed (Cavavita 2007: 100). Certain immigrant groups and natives don't have much of a difference in their education qualification. The Spanish Labour Union points that there is a forty two percent job discrepancy between the job profiles of immigrants and their education levels. Most of the times immigrants employed as temporary workers are also over qualified for their job (Zapata-Barrero and Witte: 2006: 5).

### **A History of Moroccan, Romanian, Ecuadorian and Chinese Immigrants in Spain**

Economic development of western European countries 1962–72 led to an increase in labour needs. In order to meet the growing demand of economy several countries signed labour recruitment agreements with Morocco. France and West Germany signed an agreement in 1963 followed by Belgium (1964) and the Netherlands (1969). Though Europe received the majority of Moroccan migrants a sizable number also migrated to work on temporary contracts in oil rich Arab countries such as Libya and Moroccan Jews migrated to Israel, France and Canada. The Oil Crisis (1973) and the ensuing economic recession that lasted till the 1980s led to suspension of labour recruitment with the exception of family reunion. Mines were closed down in Europe and labour-intensive industries shifted to countries where wages were low. The years 1971 and 1972 were marked by two failed military coups in Morocco, which resulted in political instability and suppression coupled with economic hardships. Contrarily, Italy and Spain in the 1980s witnessed economic development that resulted in the demand for irregular, less skilled labour in construction, agriculture and female labour force for domestic and care giving sector. This gave an impetus to the emigration of Moroccans towards Italy and Spain. In order to join

the Schengen area Spain was obliged to comply with the European Commission's legislation, imposing visa requirements. This ended the circular nature of migration to Southern European countries that is, Moroccans could no longer travel from home to destination country causing them to over stay their visa or migrate illegally to Africa (Berriane et al. 2015: 506).

Moroccan immigrants were initially concentrated Catalonia, Madrid and Andalusia. An increase in the size of the population led to the distribution of the Moroccan immigrants to regions where they conventionally did not settle such as Extremadura, Aragon, Castile-La Mancha, La Rioja and Navarre. Moroccan migration is mostly through illegal channels and heavily dependent on migrant network. An estimated 450 Moroccans came to Spain every year between 1970-1974. This number rose to about 1400 people per year from 1974 (Gabrielli 2015: 13, 15). With family reunification and birth of second generation in Spain a shift in the gender composition from a dominance of males to slightly higher number of females can be noted. From just more than 15% in 1994 women constituted 32% of the Moroccan community in 2003 (Fuentes 2005: 135).

Growth in Spain's economy attracted Romanians as the rural countryside was plagued by under-employment as well as unemployment and the lack of economic opportunities in the country. Romanian migration to Spain can be categorised into three phases. The first phase was from 1990-1995 wherein a small number of about 2 % migrated to Spain as it was not considered a lucrative destination. In this period job searches in Spain were approached by a hit or miss attitude. From 1996 an impetus was created to migrate to Spain and Italy due to the existence of previously established networks, demand for labour, level of tolerance and the ability to learn the language. From 2002-2007 was the second phase which was marked by three landmark events. The exemption of

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Romanian citizens from visa requirements in many of the European Union countries in 2002 (Marcu 2012: 35). Signing of a bilateral agreement between Spain and Romania in 2002 with the aim of "Regulation and Arrangement of labour migration flows" (SYIL 2005: 222). Most of the people who got employment through this agreement were employed in seasonal agricultural work (CEPS Projectes Socials 2011: 10). Romania became a member of the EU in 2007 but its complete integration into the EU continues till date. The last phase began from 2007 and continues till date. There was an exponential increase in emigration from 211,325 to 603,889 in 2007 (Marcu 2012: 36). Spain's favourable attitude towards Romania's accession into the European Union and the hostile attitude reflected towards the Romanians in France also led to the redirection of Romanian immigrants towards Spain (CEPS Projectes Socials 2011: 9).

The importance of the Romanian community in Spain lies not only in its numbers but also geographical distribution. Out of the 51 provinces they are among the three largest groups in 39 provinces and the largest immigrant community in 24 provinces. In provinces of Ciudad Real, Cuenca and Castellón their population comprises of around 50% of the total number of migrants while in others they account for at least 30% of the immigrant population. Romanians are concentrated in the province of Madrid with a differential distribution in Castellón, València and Zaragoza. Sex ratio among Romanian migrants is slightly masculinised with 0.84 women per men. However, there exist regional variations. A masculinised sex ratio is present in the centre and south of Spain due to rural businesses and in northwest area because of the fishing market. Contrarily, Huelva in Southwestern Spain where strawberry collection is in demand has a larger number of females. An egalitarian sex ratio is present in Madrid due to the migration of the entire families

or it may be a reflection of equal job opportunities for both genders (CEPS Projectes Socials 2011: 11-25).

A small community of around 500 Ecuadorians resided in Spain before 1994. This increased to more than 1000 people in 1989 (Gabrielli 2015: 9). Ecuadorian migration to Spain became significant from 1996 with less than 5000 per year in the beginning of 1990 and grew to around 150,000 migrants per year in 2000. Ecuadorian migration shifted towards Spain and rose to 53 % while it dropped to 30% in the United States of America in the 2000s. This was due to stricter immigration policy of the United States of America, economic crisis in Ecuador in the late 1990, Spain being perceived as a developed, stable country with higher wages and the low cost of an undocumented trip to Spain costing 3,500-4,000 dollars in comparison to 12,000 dollars to the United States of America (Gratton 2007: 586).

A former colony of Spain, Ecuadorians did not require a visa until 2003 to enter Spain. An agreement on dual nationality was signed between the two nations in 1964 that became effective from 1965-2000 allowing Ecuadorians to take Spanish nationality within 2 years of legal residence in Spain. Those who did not obtain Spanish citizenship were guaranteed utmost rights. The agreement in application prioritised Ecuadorian workers in the labour market and their access to socio-economic rights. These factors also propelled the migration of Ecuadorians towards Spain (Gabrielli 2015: 10).

Women dominate the migratory flow from Ecuador to Spain. In 1997 fifty eight percent women migrated from Ecuador and 68% legally resided in Spain (Gratton 2007: 587-588). Gender composition of Ecuadorian emigration began equilibrating from 2000 with a slight majority of 51.2% women in 2005 (Gabrielli 2015: 11). The economic crisis of late 1990s led

to the migration of young, less educated men (80%) from rural areas of Ecuador to Spain. These people from the rural areas did not have a history of international migration. Madrid hosts the majority of Ecuadorian immigrants followed by Barcelona. In these areas 54% of the Ecuadorian population are women and there is a tendency among them to live alone. In contrast to the agricultural region of Murcia where women comprise of 43% and men tend to live alone. These men mostly hail from the province of Loja (Gratton 2007: 587-589).

The colonisation of Philippines by Spain where the Chinese traded prominently and coolie trade that took place in the New World as a consequence of the gradual abolition of slavery 19th century resulted in the contact between Spaniards and the Chinese. In the late 19th – 20th century oriental products like silk, china-ware, furniture fashionable among the European bourgeoisie reached Catalonia and Barcelona. Although some companies in Barcelona specialised in the import of these products, Chinese traders also began to visit Spain. Chinese settlement in Spain began in the 20th century, before the First World War in the Spanish city of Barcelona. Chinese peddlers in search for new markets travelled between different countries, cities and villages, selling their products (soap, tea, belts, stockings) door to door arrived in Spain during the 1920s-1930s. These mobile sales persons hailed mostly from the Zhejiang province. In the 1930s a handful of Chinese acrobats arrived in Spain from the Shandong province in China. They performed in several European countries but returned and settled in Madrid in 1940s. “Margarita Chen’s” and “Wang Family’s” were two circuses in Spain in the 1940s and they consecutively brought their families to Spain (Antolín 1998: 213-214).

The Chinese also participated in the Spanish Civil War as part of the “International Brigades”. The migratory flow of 1920-1930s stopped as the Second World war made Europe

an unsafe place. The first immigrants from China were only male with a desire to return to their native place in China. They expected to work in Europe and save in order to start a business, invest in land, build new homes for themselves but the majority returned without economic success and continued in their previous professions. Chinese migrants who wanted to live in Spain married Spanish women (Antolín 1998: 215).

The political situation of China changed with the creation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949. Foreign missionaries became unwanted and Spanish missionaries aided many fellow parishioners to escape to Taiwan. From Taiwan they sent Chinese students to Spain. The first batch of six Chinese students to Spain were sent by Jesuits from Anhui province in 1949. The Jesuits had aspirations to open a Catholic University over there. The Archbishop of Nanjing, Yu Pin, met with Franco and convinced the Spanish government to issue an endowment to thirty Chinese students. Spain and Taiwan shared an anti-communist ideology and in 1953 diplomatic relations between the two nations were instituted. In 1954 in order to receive Chinese students, the “University High School Residence of Saint Francisco Javier” was established. As a symbol of amity between the two nations fifty more endowments were furnished for Chinese students in 1956. The policy was later changed in 1963 as from then only five endowments were given each year, with a probability of extension for three years. With the recognition of the People’s Republic of China in 1973 the residence was closed. Nevertheless, the flow of students from Taiwan and China never stopped and a few settled in Spain becoming naturalised, others were ordained as priests and some married Spanish women. The Chinese community has witnessed a notable increase. The years 1986 and 1991 saw a substantial increase of 50 percent. This was a time when Spain was entering

the European Community (EC) and China was going through the Tian'anmen crisis of 1989. The Chinese were conscious about the fact that the entry into EC would lead to stricter entry rules and thus Chinese people in an attempt to exploit the final opportunity to enter the European borders with ease were gripped by an emigration fever. Moreover, other factors that attracted the Chinese to Spain were the Olympic Games in Barcelona and the World Fair in Seville in the year 1992, which created an opportunity for business. The Chinese are not a homogeneous community. Different, independent communities have a distinct history of migration (Antolín 1998: 216, 219, 221-222).

Geographically, Chinese immigrants are concentrated in Catalonia, Madrid, Andalusia, Valencia and the Canary Islands respectively. Chinese migration to Spain is mostly labour migration and there are not many instances of migrations due to political or academic reasons. The male-female ratio of Chinese migrants reveals a modest prevalence in men of 55.5 percent. Chinese immigrants are a closed group. They are also involved in other small communal enterprises that have emerged due to the needs of the restaurant businesses like growing vegetable, making tofu, bazaars for imported Chinese goods. Internal competition and surge in the number of restaurants resulted in saturation in 1995 and 1996. As a consequence, Chinese people ventured into other businesses such as textile manufacturing, leather and clothes retail shops. The first generation of Chinese migrants did not have higher education but recently there is a growing number of professionals in the community like engineers, translators, musicians, teachers, artists and lawyers (Nieto 2003: 226-231).

### **Immigrants Integration in the Labour Market and Anti-discrimination**

Immigrants integration into the society is reflected through parameters of integration:

access to the labour market, education, citizenship, anti-discrimination, political participation, family reunion and health (MIPEX).

Access to labour market is pertinent as migration of these immigrant communities to Spain is predominantly economic but in order to understand their inclusion into the Spanish society it is important to understand how the natives perceive and treat them, that is the level of discrimination faced by these communities in availing employment opportunities. A sense of inclusion can be guaranteed through fair treatment as discrimination can lead to alienation and negative attitude towards integration.

In Spain work permits are granted on the basis of the situation of the labour market and is carried out yearly through the quota system. Jobs are mostly advertised for those sectors that are deemed lowly by the natives such as domestic service, construction and agriculture (Gómez and Tornos 2000: 30).

The Spanish labor market is highly segregated. For the first few years after arrival, first generation immigrants from third world countries occupy low skilled jobs. But this occupational segregation does not exist between natives and immigrants belonging to countries that are a part of the European Union. There is improvement in occupational positions with time among the Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans but not among Africans (Rica et. al 2013).

Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants in comparison other nationalities face less unemployment, are socially more accepted and face less discrimination. The percentage of Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants who faced unemployment for at the most 12 months is 10% higher when compared with EU nationals but the percentage is less in case of remaining unemployed for more than one year. During economic growth in Spain, Romanians and Bulgarians had a low unemployment rate of 2.7%, this

was much lower than that of both EU migrants, who had 15.71% and other migrants who were at 11.48%. Among these two migrant groups, 12.97% did not change their first job in Spain and 11.41% changed their job but not the sector. This is much lower than the average for other migrants. They are mostly employed in agriculture, construction work and family care sector. Among these agriculture sector has the lowest permanency rate (CEPS Projectes Socials 2011: 35-39).

Ecuadorians are more integrated than the Moroccans despite Spain signing very similar bilateral labour agreements with both the nations in 2001. Employment rate and active population is higher among Ecuadorian than Moroccan immigrants. The high inactivity rate of the Moroccan immigrants can be attributed to the low participation of women in the labor force. In highly skilled jobs there are slightly more Moroccans than Ecuadorians but their numbers are starkly less than Spaniards. Self-employment is low among Ecuadorians as compared to Moroccans and Spaniards. In the service sector the percentage of Ecuadorian immigrants (70%) is close to that of the Spaniards (76%) but is less among Moroccans (57%). Twenty six percent of Moroccan immigrants and 12% of Ecuadorian immigrants occupy the agriculture sector (Gabielli 2015: 32-35). Gratton reveals occupational difference of Ecuadorians in Ecuador and Spain. He notes that 23% of Ecuadorians who did domestic work in Spain had administrative jobs in Ecuador, while 25% were involved in commercial activities, 19% in domestic service and 16% had no jobs. However, this downgrading is faced not just by Ecuadorian women, but also men. Demotion is common to all Latin American immigrants but is especially pronounced among Ecuadorians. With regard to job occupation, Ecuadorian men are concentrated in the construction sector, where more than one-third work (Gratton 2007: 589-594).

Chinese immigrants more oriented towards opening their own business and are largely self-employed. They mostly own restaurants but lately they have also expanded into leather and clothes retail, textile and manufacturing. Many of the second generation of Chinese children are not highly educated, as they leave school to work or expand family business. They have a high and positive participation in the economy. One-fourth of Chinese parents are self-employed (Aparicio & Portes 2014: 90-91). Many children of Chinese immigrants born or reunited in Spain are opting out of family business and are studying for different degrees. The annual social security entries up to January 2002 reveals that about 5,723 Chinese migrants were self-employed, 120 were active in agriculture, 477 as domestic helps and 13,194 were active in sectors that could not be clearly classified. According to Nieto, Chinese migrants will continue to grow, firstly due to the demand for labor in family business and secondly, the legal developments in Spain like the expansion of quota system, and family reunification provisions which motivate Chinese migrants to come to Spain and obtain legal status (Nieto 2003: 231).

Discrimination is defined as the “deliberate differential treatment with negative, unjust or illegal characteristics” (Actis et. al 2003: 12). Spain is half way favorable in terms of anti-discrimination (MIPEX 2015). Zenia Hellgren (2016) in her report found that in Spain African, Muslim and Latin Americans perceive their origin as a hinderance in the labor market. There is ambiguity in the opinion of the Chinese as they feel that they are mocked and harassed due to their appearance but respected for their hard work and harmonious nature. Despite acceptance of the Spanish customs and traditions, the second-generation immigrants believe that there are obstacles in the society at large that which still sees them as aliens and ‘does not allow them to belong’ (Hellgren 2016: 7-8).

Discrimination in access to employment is very high towards Moroccans and Ecuadorian men living in big cities. Job promotions are more difficult for Ecuadorian men and women in cities. Harassment or ill treatment at work place is mostly reported by Moroccan men and women. Ecuadorians and Moroccans also face difficulties in making friends with Spaniards (Actis et al, 2003: 23-24,33).

Romanian immigrants also face discrimination in the labour market. Silvia Marcu (2012: 44-45) through her interviews with Romanian immigrants reveals that immigrants believe that Romania has a bad image in Europe and this makes it difficult for them to find a place among Europeans. A Romanian immigrant pointed that they are considered second class citizens and are being used for Spain's interest as restrictions are put and removed anytime. They treatment unfairly and exploited. Similar is the opinion of an immigrant interviewed by Ana Bleahu (2004: 25) who reveals that immigrants feel that it is evident in the eyes of the Spaniards that the Romanians are not equal.

## CONCLUSION

The lack of economic opportunities in sending countries (apart from other socio-political issues) acted as a crucial catalyst for propelling migration. On the contrary, economic development in the 1980s coupled with demand for cheap, unskilled labour in Spain at a time when North-Western European countries were closing labour recruitment shifted the flow towards southern European countries. This transformed Spain from migrant sending to migrant receiving country.

Another factor that may have contributed towards increased migration are the regularisation programmes that Spain offered since 1985. Spain no longer conducts them and regularisation can be achieved through two permanent routes: labour and social settlement.

As per the MIPEX (2015, 2019) index Spain's labour market is considered "slightly favourable", and anti-discrimination as "halfway favourable". This can be attributed to the 2008 Eurozone crisis that has led to a decline in employment opportunities and caused a slight rise in anti-immigrant sentiments. In Spain there exists a discrepancy in jobs and the education qualification of immigrants. This can be due to the fact that employment openings are mostly in sectors which the natives are unwilling to work in, require less knowledge or skill like agriculture or domestic work. Job degradation is mostly faced by Ecuadorian immigrants, Moroccans suffer workplace harassment, Chinese are bullied on their physical appearance, Romanians are seen as inferiors and second-generation immigrants still feel like "others" in Spain.

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