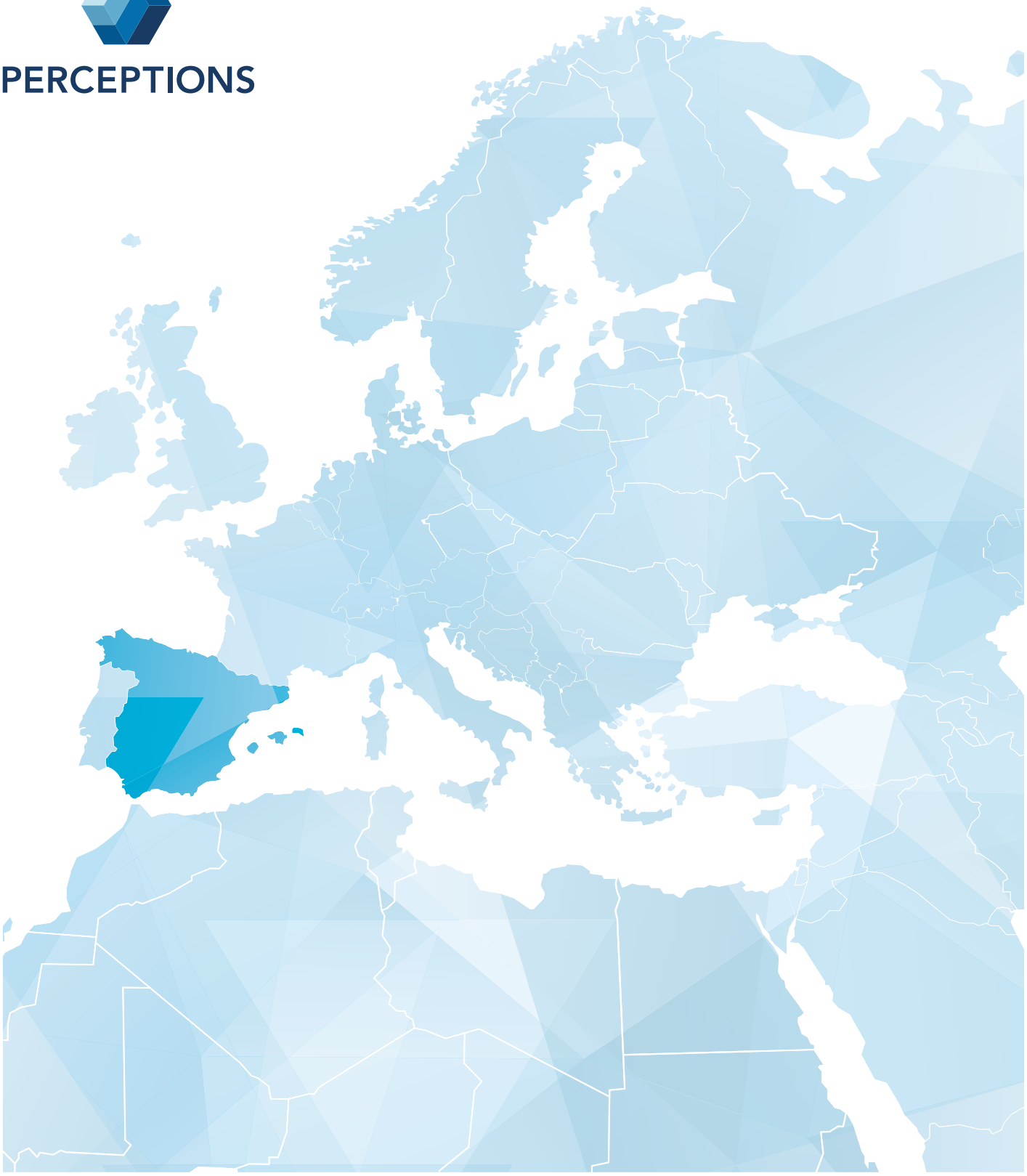
PERCEPTIONS



# Spain

## PERCEPTIONS Country Report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# PERCEPTIONS RESEARCH:
## Literature, studies, projects, stakeholders, solutions, tools and practices

DISCLAIMER:

Disclaimer: This report is based on desk-research conducted between 2019 and 2022 and covers major development between the period of 2015-2019. For more updated information on the country profile, please check the additional institutional links at the end of the document.

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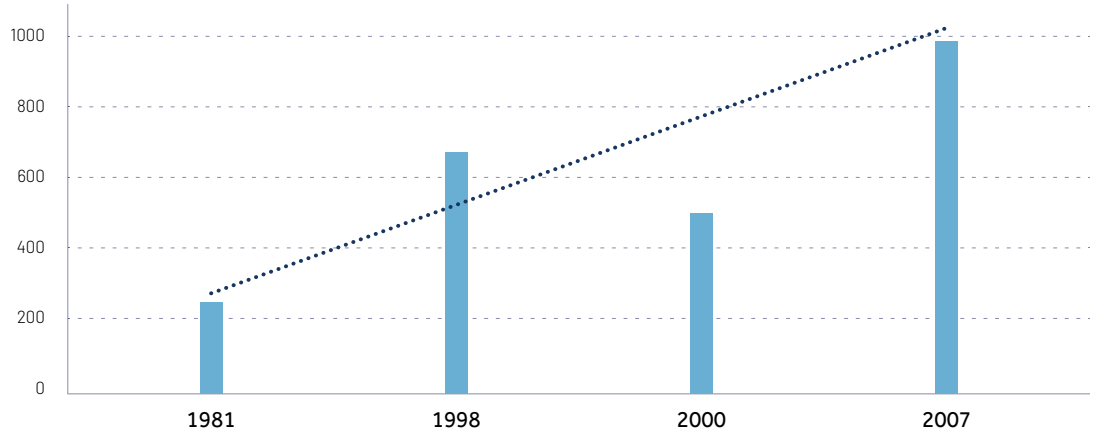
# a) Geographical map

## b) Short summary

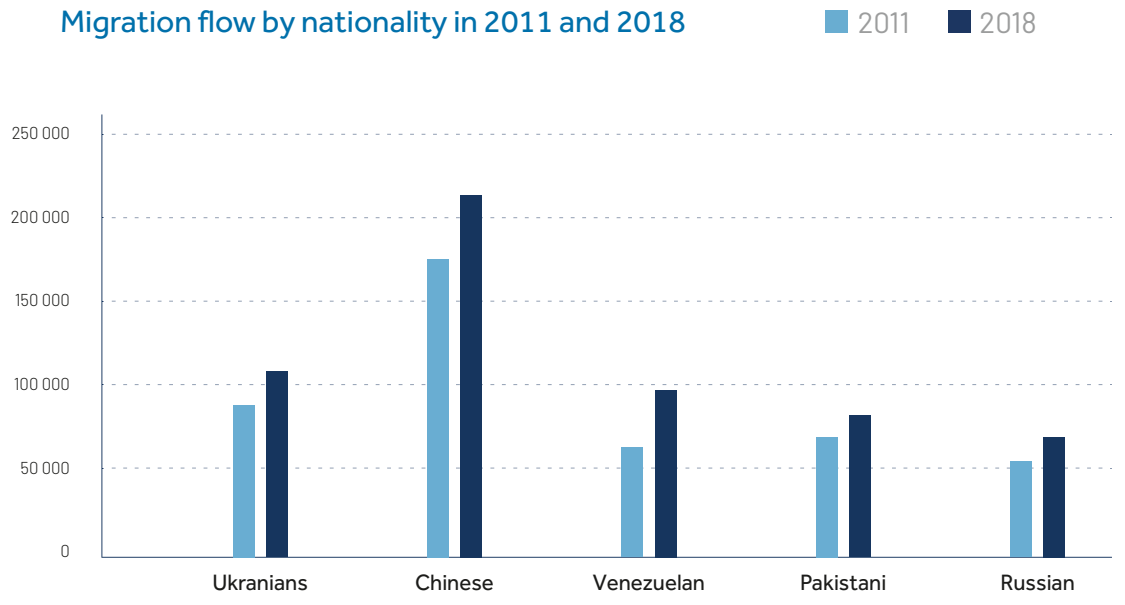
In the area of economic migration, the two higher levels of government (i.e. the central government and the governments of the autonomous territories) share responsibility. Issues related to border security are a federal responsibility, and border controls are carried out by the National Police (in authorized border crossing points) and by Guardia Civil that is in charge of controlling the rest of the border territory and sea. Nowadays, Moroccans remain the largest non-EU national immigrant group followed by the Romanians, whom since 2007 qualified for the communitarian regime following Romania's accession to EU membership. In previous years, Spain remained untouched by the arrival of refugees from Syria and Iraq to the EU, since it was geographically out of their way. In 2019, the main trends of the last two years have continued: a steady increase in inflows and a reduction in outflows, a sustained increase in asylum figures and a considerable number of irregular arrivals by sea via the Southern Border.

## c) Facts & figures

Migration flow to Spain 1981-2007 (in 1000s)




Migration flow by nationality in 2011 and 2018



# c) Full document

## Institutional setting

Spain is not a federal state but a rather decentralised one. It is among the most decentralised countries in Europe, along with Switzerland, Germany and Belgium, structured as a so-called "Estado de las Autonomías" (State of Autonomies). Policy responsibilities and decision-making powers are divided among three levels of government: i) the central/national government, ii) autonomous communities (totalled 17, plus 2 autonomous cities: Ceuta and Melilla) and iii) municipalities (local governments that amount for 8.131). Issues related to immigration and asylum are a central/national responsibility; the central government is in charge of issuing legislation while integration is mainly a competence of autonomous communities (immigration plans) and municipalities.

In the area of economic migration, the two higher levels of government (i.e. the central government and the governments of the autonomous territories) share responsibility. Autonomous governments are in charge of supporting those who live in their territories when incorporated to municipal records (padrón), for instance in terms of education and health services. The central government is responsible for asylum applications and the right to reside in Spain, as well as for issuing work permits for migrants with a temporary residence permit for humanitarian reasons or for seeking a job.

Issues related to border security are a federal responsibility, and border controls are carried out by the National Police (in authorized border crossing points) and by Guardia Civil that is in charge of controlling the rest of the border territory and sea. The Spanish EU external border is not easy to control. In addition to the mainland, its territory also includes two archipelagos: the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa, and the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea. The African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, make Spain the only European country to have a land border with an African country (Morocco). FRONTEX places Spain at the end of the Western Mediterranean Route of migration but also at the edge of criminal activities such as the smuggling of drugs. The last step in the path to Europe is crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Morocco.

## Short migration overview

From the mid-1850s until 1979, Spain was primarily a country of emigration. The change towards an immigration country began in the 1980s and culminated in the 1990s after Spain enters into the then European Community. Different factors explain that gradual change: restrictions on emigration imposed by receiving countries as a result of the economic crisis of the 1970s, along with improving economic conditions in Spain. By the 1980s the country gradually became a country of immigration and by the mid-1980s, Spain was receiving substantial numbers of immigrants attracted by the beginnings of the economic boom that coincided with its entry into the EC (Hazan, 2014; Hazan & Bermejo, in press).

Through the 1990s, however, the immigrant population grew at a relatively slow pace. In 1981, there were 233,000 immigrants, representing 0.6 per cent of the population. In 1998 there were 637,085, or 1.6 per cent of the population. Immigration accelerated intensely at the end of 1990s and continued into the 2000s. Between 1998 and 2007 Spain received around 500,000 immigrants each year. In the peak year of 2007 alone, it received 957,000 immigrants. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a surge of immigrants from North Africa and Eastern Europe. In the boom years of this century, the country also attracted large numbers of immigrants from Latin America, where most of the countries are former Spanish colonies that in those years were confronting major economic crises. These included Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and the Dominican Republic, which together surpassed Morocco as the largest immigrant contingent after 2000, and to a lesser extent Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. Bolivian and Paraguayan immigrants showed a striking growth between 2001 and 2018 and approach the numbers of those Latin Americans groups that came in the 90s (Hazan & Bermejo, in press).

Nowadays, Moroccans remain the largest non-EU national immigrant group followed by the Romanians, whom since 2007 qualified for the communitarian regime following Romania's

accession to EU membership (Hazan & Bermejo, in press).

In terms of integration, a study carried out by the Ortega-Marañon Foundation and Princeton University indicated in 2013 that "the integration of second-generation immigrants is rising in Spain: their aspirations and expectations are improving, their identification with the country is increasing and very few feel discriminated against" (Portes & Aparicio, 2013). The authors of the study conclude that "overall, it can be said that the bulk of the second generation is integrating at a good pace and that their differences with the native youth are diminishing, although they are still significant" (Portes & Aparicio, 2013). Moreover, from 2007 to 2014, the years of the economic crisis, in the areas of social relations and citizenship favourable integration paths were maintained. While in economic and labour matters, significant disadvantages of the immigrant population persisted; however, these were attenuated in the second part of the crisis, due to a worse relative trajectory among the native population (Rinken et al. 2019).

## Key development since 2015

In the period 2011-2018, most of the immigrant groups have remained relatively stable, except several non-EU nationalities: Ukrainians (from 86,316 in 2011 to 106,987 in 2018), Chinese (from 167,132 to 215,970) Venezuelan (from 59,805 to 95,633), Pakistani (from 70,165 to 82,874) and Russian (from 53,166 to 73,930) (Hazan & Bermejo, in press). 2017 is the year in which the immigration/emigration balance begins to resemble the situation before the economic crisis.

In previous years, Spain remained untouched by the arrival of refugees from Syria and Iraq to the EU, since it was geographically out of their way. In 2019, the main trends of the last two years have continued: a steady increase in inflows and a reduction in outflows, a sustained increase in asylum figures and a considerable number of irregular arrivals by sea via the Southern Border. A trend that has been attenuated throughout 2019, following the significant increase in arrivals in 2018, when Spain became the main entry point for migrants from the Mediterranean, overtaking the eastern and central routes.

The total number of people who crossed the Spanish borders irregularly in 2018 was 63,298, i.e. 131 per cent more than in 2017 (27,834). This was expected after the closure of routes in the central Mediterranean. 57,498 arrived on boats and the rest, 6,800, by land. Arrivals to the Canary Islands grew a 207.5% from 425 people (20 boats) to 1,307 (69 boats). There was a very relevant increase in the number of arrivals to the Continental Spain and Balearic Islands (165,4%), from 20,611 to 54,703 persons (from 1,198 to 1,955 boats). UNHCR has been calling the attention over the increase in the number of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea and particularly in the geographical area of Spain, due to the deaths in the Gibraltar Strait. According to their reports, the figure in 2018 is more than three times higher than in 2017, when 223 people died, and comes together with the increase of irregular arrivals by sea. One of the major issues, not only in Spain but also in Europe during the last 5 years, has been the humanitarian boats that rescue immigrants in the Mediterranean (Hazan & Bermejo, in press).

An updated report of Portes and Aparicio published in 2017 assures that "the majority of Spanish second-generation immigrants feel "at home". According to the report, 79.1% of the children of expatriates born on national territory or who arrived in the country at an early age feel Spanish. Portes and Aparicio (2017) relate the causes of this favourable situation to the high rate of integration, including, on the one hand, the equal treatment in the education and health system and, on the other hand, the good reception of the Spanish population.

### For more information, see:

IOM Spain:
https://spain.iom.int/es

Foreign Affairs Spain:
https://www.exteriores.gob.es/en/Paginas/index.aspx

Interior Affairs Spain:
http://www.interior.gob.es/en/el-ministerio

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