Focus on Spanish Society

May 2023

Focus on Spanish Society is published by the Social Studies Office of Funcas. The aim of this publication is to depict the Spanish social situation and provide brief insights into some of its most relevant aspects. *Focus on Spanish Society* consists of three sections. The first section, "Spain in Europe", draws attention to recently published statistical data and puts the Spanish case in comparative perspective. The second section, "Public opinion trends", examines in more detail one particular social issue as perceived by the Spanish public and manifested through opinion surveys. Finally, the third section "Follow-up social data" presents several social indicators related to demography and families, labour market and education, health and welfare benefits and services.

Section I.
Spain in Europe

I.1. Increase in births to women aged 40 and over

In Spain, social concern about population ageing focuses more on the growing share of elderly people than on declining births and changing fertility patterns. However, the ageing process is also evident as regards maternity. The average age at childbearing shows a striking upward trend in the last decades. In 1980, it reached at 28 years its lowest level since the advent of democracy; in 1996 it surpassed the 30 years-threshold, and in 2021 it climbed to 32.6 years (Figure I.1). In this latter year, Spain was the European Union country with the highest percentage of births to mothers aged 40 and older over total births (10.7%).
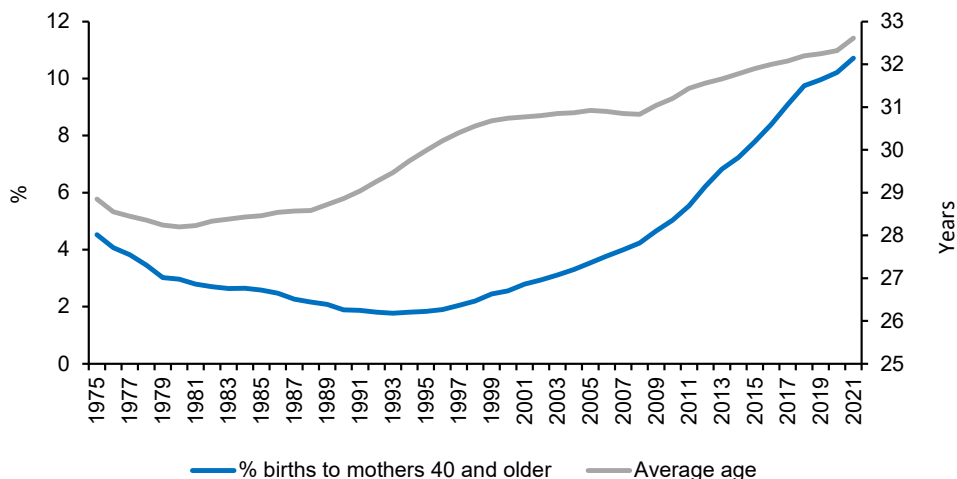
The Spanish percentage of births to mothers aged 40 and over is close to that registered in other Southern European countries, like Greece, Italy and Portugal, but twice as high as that recorded in France, Germany or Sweden (Figure I.2). Births to older mothers are less frequent in Eastern European countries, such as Romania or Lithuania (3.3%), but they are also low in The Netherlands (3.8%) and Denmark (4%).

Taking a closer look at Spanish data, the percentage of births to mothers aged 40 and older as a proportion of total births has increased steadily since 1993, when it represented 1.8%. True, this percentage does not take into consideration the age structure of fertile females, so that the percentage of those births could have increased because of the rising share of women in this age group (*i.e.* 40-49 years). Yet, age specific global fertility rates do not confirm this hypothesis. Births to each 1,000 Spanish women aged 40 to 44 amounted in 2021 to 17.2, while in 1993 they totaled 5.25.

The six-fold increase that Spain exhibits in the percentage of births to mothers aged 40 and
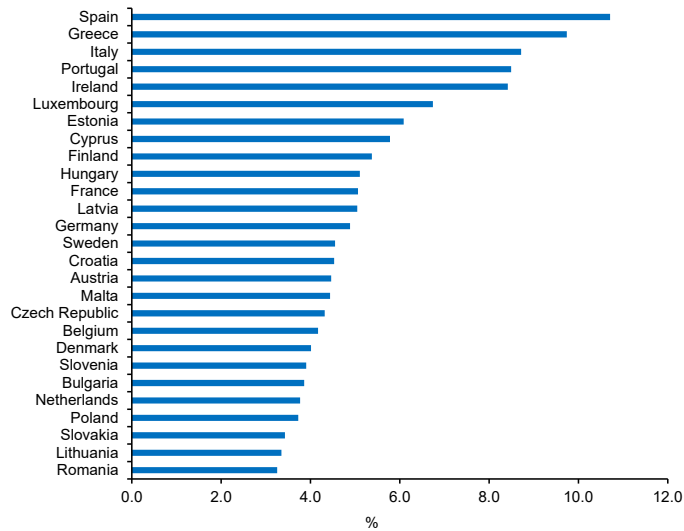
Figure I.1

Births to mothers aged 40 and over as a percentage of total births and average age at motherhood (Spain, 1975-2021)

Sources: Eurostat [DEMO_R_FAGEC] and INE [Basic demographic indicators].

Figure I.2

Births to mothers aged 40 and over as a percentage of total births (EU countries, 2021)

Source: Eurostat [DEMO_R_FAGEC].

over between 1993 and 2021 (from 1.8% to 10.7%) indicates the delay in fertility that has accompanied its drop during the last decades. Though in the 1970s a relatively high percentage of births to mothers aged 40 and over (4.5%)

coincided with a high fertility rate (2.77 children per woman), those births were typically of "latecomers" born to large families. These latecomer babies declined in the wake of fertility decreases and so did the percentage of mothers

Figure I.3

Births to mothers aged 40 and over as a percentage of total births and total fertility rate (Spanish autonomous communities, 2021)
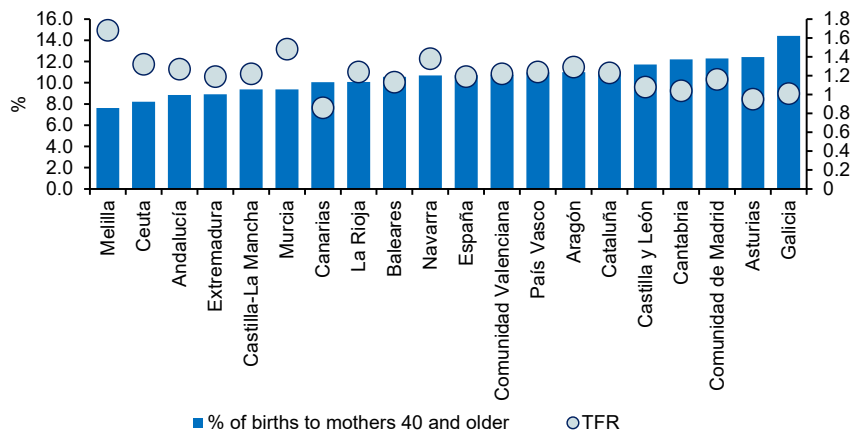
Source: INE [Basic demographic indicators].

aged 40 and over, before it rose again as of the mid-1990s. Yet, this latter rise was caused by postponed maternity and not by "laggards" of prolific families.

In 2021, the highest proportions of births to mothers aged 40 and above were to be found in Galicia (14.4%), followed by Asturias (12.4%), Madrid (12.3%) and Cantabria (12.2%). The Southern autonomous communities, together with Ceuta and Melilla, showed considerably lower percentages, even though above 8% (Figure I.3). Except for the Community of Madrid, those regions where the percentage of births to mothers 40 years and over is higher display lower total fertility rates.

I.2. Growth in public healthcare spending, but not in satisfaction with the healthcare system

In the European context, Spaniards exhibit a remarkably high level of trust in the health and medical staff working in the Spanish healthcare system. According to the Winter 2022-23 Eurobarometer, almost nine out of ten respondents (87%) expressed confidence in them, 11 points above the EU27 average (Figure I.4).

However, other demoscopic data show a growing concern of the Spanish population over the healthcare system. Thus, mentions to healthcare have significantly increased when interviewees are asked about the main problems in Spain (Figure I.5). In the same vein, recently published results from the first wave of the Spanish Healthcare Barometer suggest decreasing satisfaction of citizens with the performance of the healthcare system. If in previous barometers (administered between 2016 and 2019) the average assessment of the functioning of healthcare ranged between 6.6 and 6.7 on a scale from 1 ("very dissatisfied") to 10 ("very satisfied"), it plunged to 6.29 in 2022 and to 6.14 in 2023.

It should be noted that these signs of discontent do not appear in a context of cutbacks in

Figure I.4

Trust in health and medical staff (EU countries, 2023)
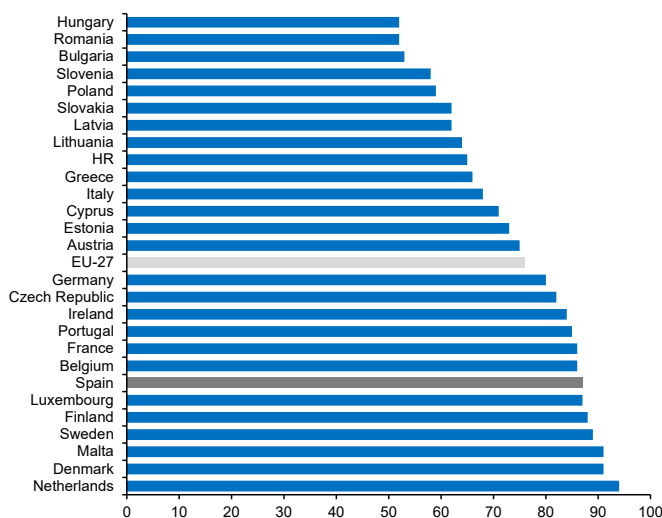
Question: "How much trust do you have in certain institutions? For each of the following institutions, do you tend to trust it or tend to not trust it? Health and medical staff in (own country) (%)".
Source: Standard Eurobarometer 98 (Winter 2022-23).

Figure I.5

Concern over healthcare as one of the three main problems in Spain (2000-2023)
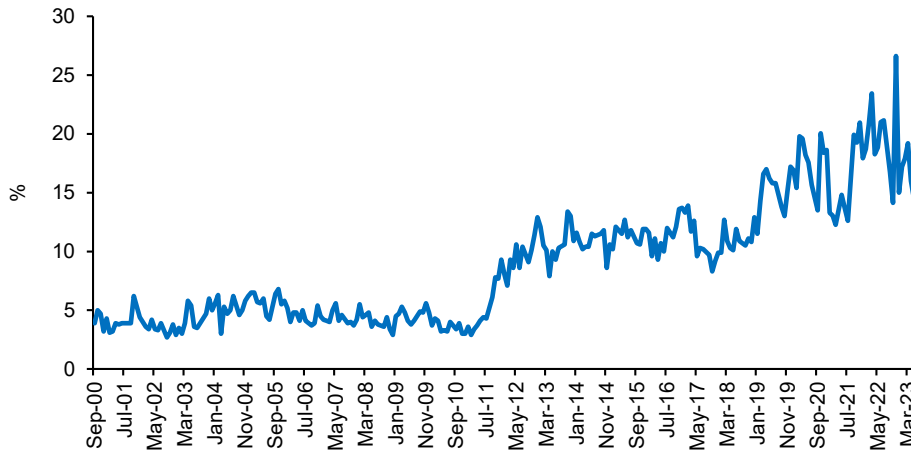
Question: "In your opinion, what is the main problem that currently exists in Spain? And the second? And the third?" (aggregated answers).
Source: CIS opinion barometers (2000-2023).

healthcare expenditure, but rather of increased public spending on health services. Indeed, the annual rate of change in (consolidated) public spending on healthcare has grown since 2014, outpacing in most years (except for 2016, 2017 and 2021) GDP growth (Figure I.6). This increase in public spending on healthcare also shows up when looking at purchasing power parities per inhabitant, though the Spanish figure for 2020 (latest available data) is at a

Figure I.6

Increase in public expenditure on healthcare and in GDP (Spain, 2011-2021)
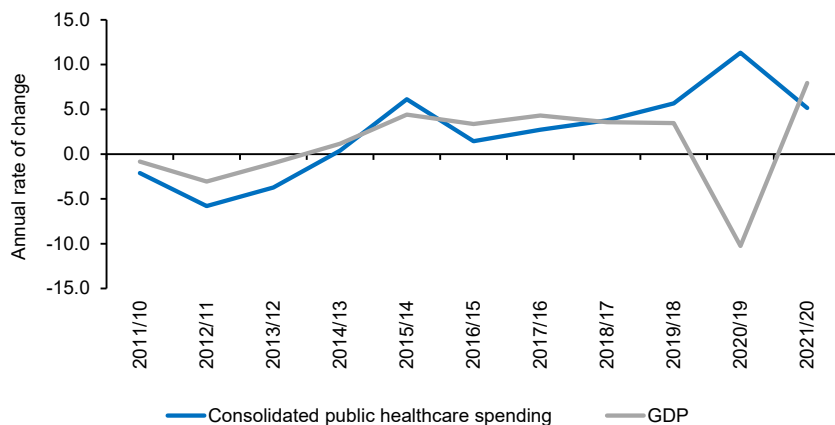
Sources: INE and Spanish Ministry of Health.

Figure I.7

Healthcare expenditure in purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant (EU countries, 2020)
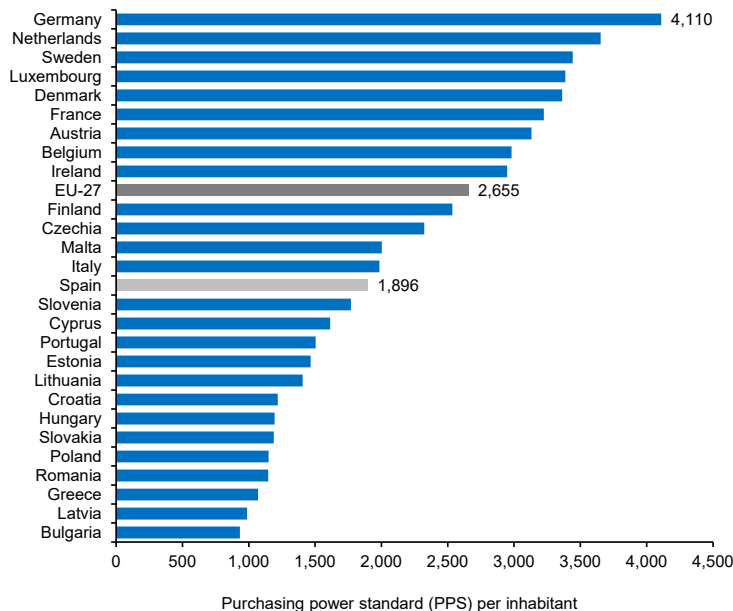
Source: Eurostat [HLTH_SHA11_HF].

considerable distance from those recorded in the Nordic countries as well as in France and Germany (Figure I.7).

The upward trend in public healthcare spending is evident in most EU countries (Figure I.8). Once the pandemic has been declared over,

Figure I.8

Health public expenditure in purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant (selected EU countries, 2000-2020)
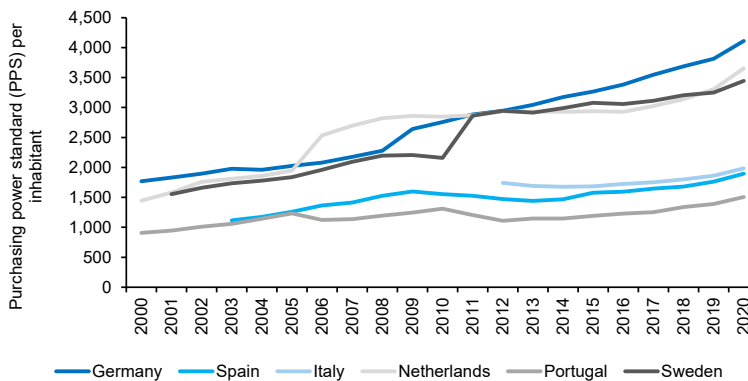
Source: Eurostat [HLTH_SHA11_HF].

demographic reasons and social preferences for access to more and better healthcare services explain the mounting pressure on healthcare spending. But in many countries, including Spain, the increase in spending in recent years has not been sufficient to absorb the growing claims for quality healthcare services. Recurrent demonstrations and protests by healthcare personnel as well as by beneficiaries draw attention to the difficulties in meeting the demands of the population with the available resources, not only human and material, but also organizational.

Section II.
Public opinion trends

Ideological self-identification:
Moderates on the rise, though
rightwing and leftwing, too

Although it is often claimed that Spanish society is not as polarized as the prevailing political discourse, the fear that it will end up being dragged towards polarization by the political elites is present in the public debate. In principle, the greater the proportion of the population evenly distributed at both ends of the ideological spectrum, the more polarized is a society. Conversely, the greater the proportion of the population converging toward central positions on the ideological spectrum, the less polarized is a society.

The series of data from the monthly survey of the Consumer Confidence Index administered by the Spanish Center for Sociological Research (CIS) shows the evolution of the ideological

self-identification of the Spanish population (16 and older) since 2011. This was a crucial year in Spanish politics and political culture given the coincidence of several events that reinforced trends in social division, such as the financial crisis with the subsequent international pressure to cut public spending and the movement of the "indignados" (also called "15M").

According to these data, since 2021, the percentage of people who place themselves at the far right of the political spectrum (values 8, 9 and 10 on a 10 points scale) has increased and so has the percentage of people who identify themselves with the extreme left (1, 2 and 3 on a 10 points scale), although this latter group (26%) is twice as big as the former (13%). However, these increases at both extremes of the ideological spectrum do not concur with a decrease in the proportion of those citizens in moderate positions, but rather with a fall in the proportion of respondents who chose to avoid ideological self-identification. Between the summer of 2021 and the spring of 2023, the percentage of this group of people who refrain from positioning themselves on

Figure II.1

Ideological self-identification (2011-2023)
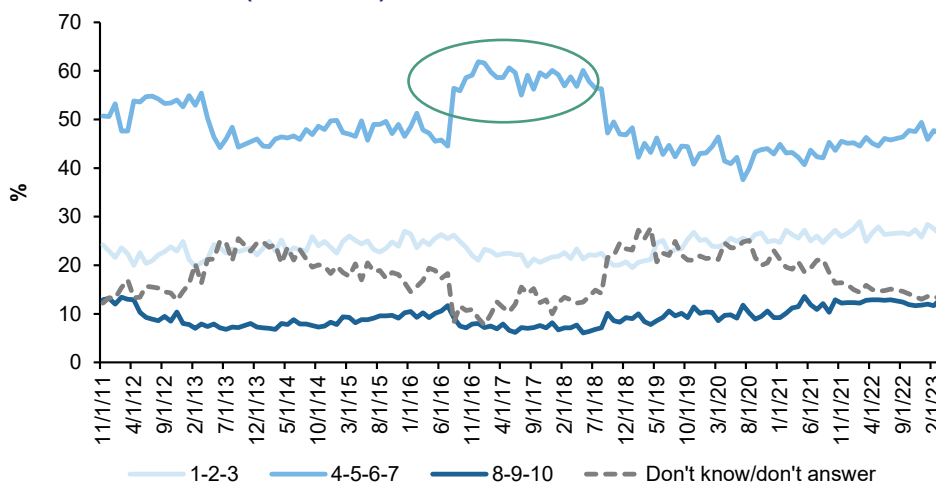
Question: "Can you place yourself on an ideological scale from 1 to 10, 1 being left and 10 being right?".
Source: Center for Sociological Research (www.cis.es), Consumer Confidence Index.

the ideological scale has dropped 7 points, from 21% to 14% (Figure II.1).

It is not the first time the proportion of people who eschew ideological self-identification is so small. Between the summers of 2016 and 2018, it also reached low levels, but during this two-year period preceding the first Socialist government of Pedro Sánchez the reduction of these "ideological abstainers" coincided with an intense increase in the proportion of those persons who identified themselves with moderate positions on the ideological scale (values 4, 5, 6 and 7). However, in the last two years (2021-2023), the decrease in those "abstainers" has concurred with the smooth increase in both the moderate and the extreme positions of the ideological scale.

In light of the debate on the reduction of the voting age to 16, the results corresponding to respondents aged 16 and 17 are of particular interest (although the sample size of these interviewees is small). This group of young people shares with the group of elderly people (65 and older) a high percentage of respondents avoiding ideological self-identification (ca. 20%), but in no other age group do respondents placing themselves in left-wing positions reach such a large proportion (Figure II.2).

Figure II.2

Ideological self-identification by age (2023)
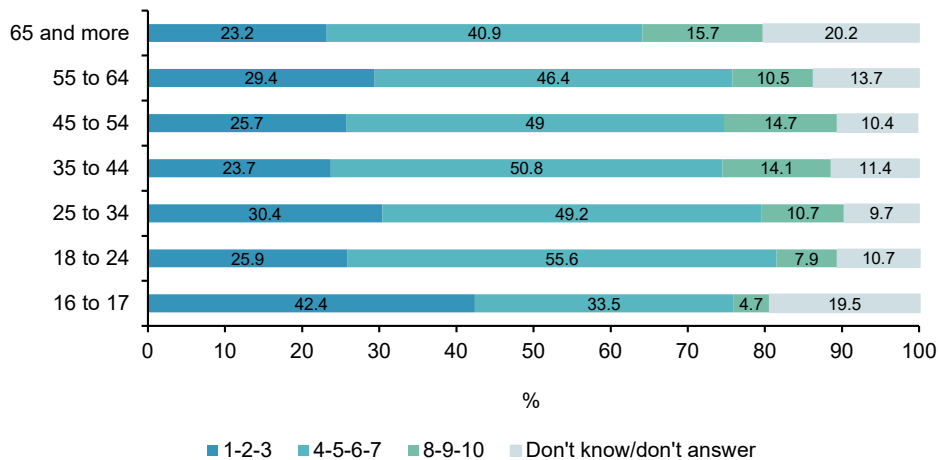
Age	1-2-3	4-5-6-7	8-9-10	Don't know/don't answer
65 and more	23.2	40.9	15.7	20.2
55 to 64	29.4	46.4	10.5	13.7
45 to 54	25.7	49	14.7	10.4
35 to 44	23.7	50.8	14.1	11.4
25 to 34	30.4	49.2	10.7	9.7
18 to 24	25.9	55.6	7.9	10.7
16 to 17	42.4	33.5	4.7	19.5

■ 1-2-3   ■ 4-5-6-7   ■ 8-9-10   Don't know/don't answer

Question: "Can you place yourself on an ideological scale from 1 to 10, 1 being left and 10 being right?".
Source: Center for Sociological Research (www.cis.es), Consumer Confidence Index.

Section III.
Follow-up social data

Table III.1
Population

	Total population	Average age	65 and older (%)	Life expectancy at birth (men)	Life expectancy at birth (women)	Dependency rate	Dependency rate (older than 64)	Foreign-born population (%)	New entries (all nationalities)	New exits (born in Spain)
2008	46,157,822	40.8	16.5	78.2	84.3	47.5	24.5	13.1	701,997	33,053
2010	47,021,031	41.1	16.9	79.1	85.1	48.6	25.0	14.0	441,051	39,211
2012	47,265,321	41.6	17.4	79.4	85.1	50.4	26.1	14.3	344,992	51,666
2014	46,771,341	42.1	18.1	80.1	85.7	51.6	27.4	13.4	368,170	66,803
2015	46,624,382	42.4	18.4	79.9	85.4	52.4	28.0	13.2	417,655	74,873
2016	46,557,008	42.7	18.6	80.3	85.8	52.9	28.4	13.2	492,600	71,508
2017	46,572,132	42.9	18.8	80.4	85.7	53.2	28.8	13.3	592,604	63,754
2018	46,722,980	43.1	19.1	80.5	85.9	53.6	29.3	13.7	715,255	56,745
2019	47,026,208	43.3	19.3	80.9	86.2	53.7	29.6	14.4	827,052	61,338
2020	47,450,795	43.6	19.4	79.6	85.1	53.5	29.8	15.2	523,618	41,708
2021	47,385,107	43.8	19.6	80.2	85.8	53.4	30.1	15.5	621,216	56,098
2022	47,475,420	44.1	20.0			53.5	30.7	15.9		
Sources	EPC	EPC	EPC	ID INE	ID INE	EPC	EPC	EPC	EVR	EVR

EPC: *Estadística del Padrón Continuo.*
ID INE: *Indicadores Demográficos INE.*
EVR: *Estadística de Variaciones Residenciales.*
Dependency rate: (15 or less years old population + 65 or more years old population)/ 16-64 years old population, as a percentage.
Dependency rate (older than 64): 65 or more years old population/ 16-64 years old population, as a percentage.

Table III.2
Households and families

Households

	Households (thousands)	Average household size	Households with one person younger than 65 (%)	Households with one person older than 65 (%)
2008	16,742	2.71	12.0	10.2
2010	17,174	2.67	12.8	9.9
2012	17,434	2.63	13.7	9.9
2014	18,329	2.51	14.2	10.6
2015	18,376	2.54	14.6	10.7
2016	18,444	2.52	14.6	10.9
2017	18,512	2.52	14.2	11.4
2018	18,581	2.51	14.3	11.5
2019	18,697	2.52	14.9	11.2
2020	18,794	2.52	15.0	11.4
2021	18,919	2.50	15.6	11.0
2022	19,113	2.48		
2023●	19,281	2.46		
Sources	LFS	LFS	EPF	EPF

Table III.2

Households and families (continued)

Nuptiality

	Marriage rate (Spanish)	Marriage rate (foreign population)	Divorce rate (per 1,000)	Mean age at first marriage (men)	Mean age at first marriage (women)	Same sex marriages (%)
2008	8.5	8.4	2.39	32.4	30.2	1.62
2010	7.2	7.9	2.21	33.2	31.0	1.87
2012	7.2	6.7	2.23	33.8	31.7	2.04
2014	6.9	6.5	2.17	34.4	32.3	2.06
2015	7.3	6.5	2.08	34.8	32.7	2.26
2016	7.5	6.8	2.08	35.0	32.9	2.46
2017	7.3	6.9	2.10	35.3	33.2	2.67
2018	7.1	6.6	2.04	35.6	33.4	2.9
2019	7.1	6.7	1.95	36.0	33.9	3.1
2020	3.8	4.1	1.63	37.1	34.9	3.5
2021	6.3	5.6	1.83	36.8	34.6	3.4
Sources	**ID INE**	**ID INE**	**ID INE**	**ID INE**	**ID INE**	**MNP**

Fertility

	Median age at first child (women)	Total fertility rate (Spanish women)	Total fertility rate (foreign women)	Births to single mothers (%)	Abortion rate	Abortion by Spanish-born women (%)
2008	29.3	1.36	1.83	33.2	11.8	55.6
2010	29.8	1.30	1.68	35.5	11.5	58.3
2012	30.3	1.27	1.56	39.0	12.0	61.5
2014	30.6	1.27	1.62	42.5	10.5	63.3
2015	30.7	1.28	1.66	44.4	10.4	65.3
2016	30.8	1.27	1.70	45.8	10.4	65.8
2017	30.9	1.24	1.70	46.8	10.5	66.1
2018	31.0	1.20	1.65	47.3	11.1	65.3
2019	31.1	1.17	1.59	48.4	11.5	64.1
2020	31.2	1.12	1.45	47.6	10.3	65.8
2021	31.6	1.16	1.38	49.3	10.7	67.2
Sources	**ID INE**	**ID INE**	**ID INE**	**ID INE**	**MSAN**	**MSAN**

LFS: *Labour Force Survey*.
EPF: *Encuesta de Presupuestos Familiares*.
ID INE: *Indicadores Demográficos INE*.
CGPJ: *Consejo General del Poder Judicial*.
MSAN: *Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad*.
MNP: *Movimiento Natural de la Población*.
Marriage rate: *Number of marriages per thousand population*.
Divorce rate: Number of divorces per thousand population.
Total fertility rate: The average number of children that would be born per woman living in Spain if all women lived to the end of their childbearing years and bore children according to a given fertility rate at each age.
Abortion rate: Number of abortions per 1,000 women (15-44 years).
● Data refer to January-March.

Table III.3
Education

Educational attainment

	Population 16 years and older with primary education (%)	Population 30-34 with primary education (%)	Population 16 years and older with tertiary education (%)	Population 30-34 with tertiary education (%)
2008	32.1	9.2	16.1	26.9
2010	30.6	8.6	17.0	27.7
2012	28.5	7.5	17.8	26.6
2014	24.4	6.1	27.2	42.3
2015	23.3	6.6	27.5	40.9
2016	22.4	6.6	28.1	40.7
2017	21.4	6.6	28.5	41.2
2018	20.5	6.4	29.2	42.4
2019	19.3	6.3	30.3	44.7
2020	17.7	6.1	31.3	44.8
2021	16.4	5.8	32.3	46.7
2022	16.1	5.8	32.6	49.2
Source	**LFS**	**LFS**	**LFS**	**LFS**

Students involved in non-compulsory education

	Pre-primary education	Secondary education	Vocational training	Under-graduate students	Post-graduate students (except doctorate)
2008	1,763,019	629,247	472,604	1,377,228	50,421
2010	1,872,829	672,213	555,580	1,445,392	104,844
2012	1,912,324	692,098	617,686	1,450,036	113,805
2014	1,840,008	690,738	652,846	1,364,023	142,156
2015	1,808,322	695,557	641,741	1,321,698	171,043
2016	1,780,377	687,595	652,471	1.303.252	190,143
2017	1,767,179	676,311	667,984	1,287,791	209,754
2018	1,750,579	667,287	675,971	1,290,455	217,840
2019	1,749,597	673,740	706,533	1,296,379	237,118
2020	1,622,098	687,084	772,417	1,336,009	247,251
2021	1,628,472	690,481	773,689	1,338,304	258,991
Source	**MECD**	**MECD**	**MECD**	**MECD**	**MECD**

Education expenditure

	Public expenditure (millions of €)	Public expenditure (% GDP)
2008	51,716	4.6
2010	53,099	4.9
2012	46,476	4.5
2014	44,846	4.3
2015	46,598	4.3
2016	47,579	4.3
2017	49,458	4.2
2018	50,807	4.2
2019	53,053	4.3
2020	55,176	4.7
2021	59,657	4.6●
Sources	**MECD**	**INE**

LFS: *Labour Force Survey.*
MECD: *Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.*
INE: *Instituto Nacional de Estadística.*
● Provisional data.

Table III.4
Social protection: Benefits

Contributory benefits*

	Unemployment	Retirement		Permanent disability		Widowhood	
	Total	Total	Average amount (€)	Total	Average amount (€)	Total	Average amount (€)
2008	1,100,879	4,936,839	814	906,835	801	2,249,904	529
2010	1,471,826	5,140,554	884	933,730	850	2,290,090	572
2012	1,381,261	5,330,195	946	943,296	887	2,322,938	602
2014	1,059,799	5,558,964	1000	929,484	916	2,348,388	624
2015	838,392	5,641,908	1,021	931,668	923	2,353,257	631
2016	763,697	5,731,952	1,043	938,344	930	2,364,388	638
2017	726,575	5,826,123	1,063	947,130	936	2,360,395	646
2018	751,172	5,929,471	1,091	951,838	946	2,359,931	664
2019	807,614	6,038,326	1,138	957,500	975	2,361,620	712
2020	1,828,489	6,094,447	1,162	952,704	985	2,352,680	725
2021	922,856	6,165,349	1,190	949,765	994	2,353,987	740
2022	773,227	6,253,797	1,254	951,067	1,035	2,351,703	778
2023	843,850■	6,333,029●	1,371●	946,102●	1,120●	2,350,892●	849●
Source	INSS	INSS	INSS	INSS	INSS	INSS	INSS

Non-contributory benefits

	Social Security			
	Unemployment	Retirement	Disability	Other
2008	646,186	265,314	199,410	63,626
2010	1,445,228	257,136	196,159	49,535
2012	1,327,027	251,549	194,876	36,310
2014	1,221,390	252,328	197,303	26,842
2015	1,102,529	253,838	198,891	23,643
2016	997,192	254,741	199,762	21,350
2017	902,193	256,187	199,120	19,019
2018	853,437	256,842	196,375	16,472
2019	912,384	259,570	193,122	14,997
2020	1,017,429	261,325	188,670	13,373
2021	969,412	262,177	184,378	11,892
2022	882,585	265,830	179,967	10,633
2023■	908,451	268,167	177,153	9,980
Sources	INSS	IMSERSO	IMSERSO	IMSERSO

INSS: Instituto Nacional de la Seguridad Social.
IMSERSO: Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales.
* Benefits for orphans and dependent family members of deceased Social Security affiliates not included.
■ Data refer to January-March.
● Data refer to January-April.

Table III. 5
Social protection: Health care

Expenditure

	Public expenditure (% GDP)	Public expenditure (millions of €)
2008	6.1	67,344
2010	6.6	71,136
2012	6.3	64,734
2014	6.2	63,507
2015	6.2	66,489
2016	6.1	67,724
2017	6.0	69,312
2018	6.0	72,157
2019	6.1	75,929
2020	7.6	85,503
2021●	7.3	88,625
Sources	**Eurostat**	**Eurostat**

Resources

	Medical specialists per 1,000 inhabitants	Primary care doctors per 1,000 people assigned	Specialist nurses per 1,000 inhabitants	Primary care nurses per 1,000 people assigned
2008	1.8	0.8	3.0	0.6
2010	1.8	0.8	3.2	0.6
2012	1.8	0.8	3.1	0.6
2014	1.8	0.8	3.1	0.7
2015	1.9	0.8	3.2	0.7
2016	1.9	0.8	3.3	0.6
2017	1.9	0.8	3.4	0.6
2018	2.0	0.8	3.5	0.7
2019	2.0	0.8	3.5	0.7
2020	2.0	0.8	3.7	0.7
2021	2.1	0.8	3.9	0.7
Sources	**INCLASNS**	**INCLASNS**	**INCLASNS**	**INCLASNS**

Satisfaction* | Time on waiting list (days)

	With the working of the health system	With medical history and tracing by family doctor or pediatrician	Non-urgent surgical procedures	First specialist consultations per 1,000 inhabitants
2008	6.4	7.0	71	59
2010	6.6	7.3	65	53
2012	6.6	7.5	76	53
2014	6.3	7.5	87	65
2015	6.4	7.5	89	58
2016	6.6	7.6	115	72
2017	6.7	7.5	106	66
2018	6.6	7.5	129	96
2019	6.7	7.6	115	81
2020			148	99
2021			121	75
2022	6.29			
Sources	**INCLASNS**	**INCLASNS**	**INCLASNS**	**INCLASNS**

INE: Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
INCLASNS: *Indicadores Clave del Sistema Nacional de Salud.*
* Average of population satisfaction measured on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "totally unsatisfactory" and 10 "totally satisfactory".
● Provisional data.

Table III.6

Labour market

	Employment		Unemployment				Social Security affiliation		
	Men (in thousands)	Women (in thousands)	Men (in thousands)	Women (in thousands)	Rate (men)	Rate (women)	Men (in thousands)	Women (in thousands)	Foreign population (in thousands)
2008	11,805	8,665	1,320	1,276	10.1	12.8	10,884	8,121	2,052
2010	10,424	8,301	2,536	2,104	19.6	20.2	9,710	7,872	1,841
2012	9,608	8,025	3,131	2,680	24.6	25.0	9,034	7,705	1,693
2014	9,443	7,902	2,917	2,694	23.6	25.4	8,853	7,639	1,555
2015	9,760	8,106	2,559	2,497	20.8	23.6	9,154	7,864	1,608
2016	10,001	8,341	2,213	2,268	18.1	21.4	9,421	8,097	1,688
2017	10,266	8,559	1,905	2,011	15.7	19.0	9,758	8,369	1,802
2018	10,532	8,795	1,675	1,805	13.7	17.0	10,058	8,643	1,947
2019	10,746	9,034	1,528	1,720	12.4	16.0	10,286	8,903	2,043
2020	10,430	8,773	1,679	1,852	13.9	17.4	10,038	8,729	2,046
2021	10,652	9,122	1,599	1,831	13.1	16.7	10,285	8,964	2,167
2022	10,965	9,425	1,393	1,632	11.3	14.8	10,634	9,371	2,385
2023	10,925♦	9,528♦	1,425♦	1,698♦	11.6♦	15.1♦	10,636●	9,441●	2,449●
Sources	LFS	LFS	LFS	LFS	LFS	LFS	BEL	BEL	BEL

BEL: *Boletín de Estadísticas Laborales.*
LFS: *Labour Force Survey.*
♦ Data refer to January-March.

● January-February.

funcas