

*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. Scarce participation of low educated people in adult learning
- I.2. Undervaluation of learning a foreign language in vocational training

### **Section II. Public opinion trends**

- Widespread concern about climate change, but far from a national priority

### **Section III. Follow-up social data**

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## Section I. Spain in Europe

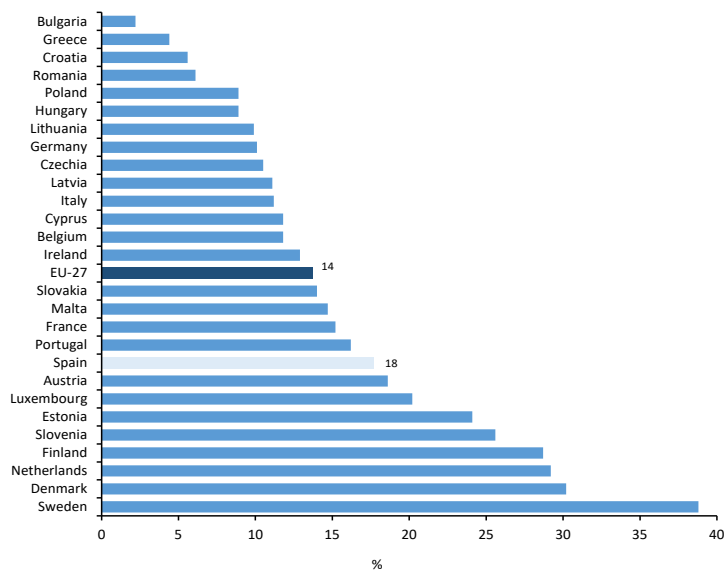
### I.1. Scarce participation of low educated people in adult learning

Lifelong learning is swiftly gaining significance in the context of the rapid evolution of the global labor market and demographic change. Participation in education during adulthood provides individuals with a tool against unemployment, reduces skills mismatches, and hence fosters personal development and well-being. Fostering a culture of lifelong learning in society is perceived as the best means to attain a resilient workforce while enhancing social cohesion by ensuring that citizens remain engaged in the labor market as long as they are able and willing to work.

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan targets a 60% annual training participation rate for all adults by 2030. Yet, the latest available data show that participation rates in formal and non-formal education across European Union countries among the 25-54 age group –where labor market participation is higher– is far from this target (Figure I.1). In 2022 the EU average of people aged 25 to 54 having participated during the last four weeks in formal or non-formal education amounted to 14%. Differences between countries are still significant. Sweden (39%), Denmark (30%), the Netherlands (29%) and Finland (29%) stand out as the countries with higher percentages. Some Eastern European nations like Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Poland, or Hungary, but also Greece, display much lower rates (below 9%). With a participation rate of 18%, Spain lies above the EU-27 average, and not only outpaces its Southern European neighbors such as Portugal (16%), Italy (11%),

Figure I.1

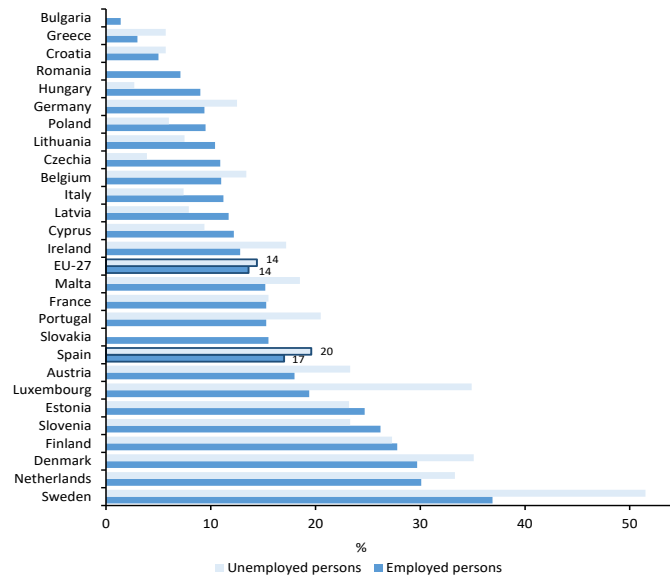
### Participation in education and training of people aged 25-54 in the last four weeks (European Union countries, 2022)



Source: Eurostat [trng\_lfs\_03].

Figure 1.2

### Participation in education and training of people aged 25-54 in the last four weeks among employed and unemployed (European Union countries, 2022)



Source: Eurostat [trng\_ifs\_03].

and Greece (4%), but also France (15%) and notably Germany (10%).

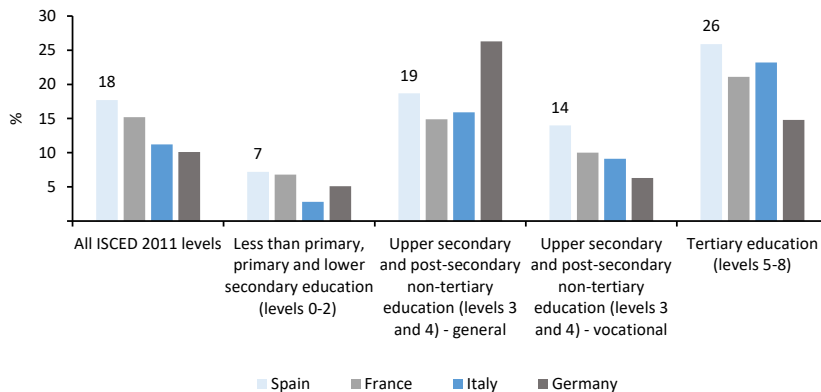
Adult education is particularly important for the unemployed population since it offers a path to reintegration into the workforce. Thus, in most European countries participation rates in adult education are higher for unemployed than for employed people (Figure 1.2). Sweden leads the group for both employed and unemployed 25 to 54 aged individuals having taken part in educational initiatives with rates of 37% and 52%, respectively, underscoring the nation's overarching commitment to lifelong learning. The Netherlands, Denmark and Finland follow closely in terms of employed persons, but there's a noticeable difference when it comes to the unemployed, suggesting varied national strategies for these groups. In Spain, participation in educational activities among the unemployed (20%) is higher than the EU-27 average (14%), though substantially below the Nordic countries.

It should be noted that adult education is more common among individuals who already have high educational credentials. A consistent trend emerges across European nations: Higher educated people are most eager to adopt lifelong learning initiatives (Figure 1.3). In other words, education promotes additional education.

Educational disparities in adult learning are considerably strong in Spain, where the share of people with tertiary education participating in adult learning (26%) almost quadruples the share of people with lower secondary education or less (7%). Thus, those people with the highest risk of unemployment are scarcely involved in lifelong learning. This evidences a problem that must be addressed in order to avoid the widening of educational and skill gaps among the workforce, hence increasing social inequalities.

Figure I.3

### Participation in education and training of people aged 25-54 in the last four weeks by education level (selected European Union countries, 2022)



Source: Eurostat [trng\_ifs\_02].

## 1.2. Undervaluation of learning a foreign language in vocational training

Learning a foreign language has traditionally been seen as a weak point in formal education in Spain. However, the latest available data indicate that all primary and secondary school students (compulsory and upper secondary) study a foreign language, which in almost all cases is English (Figures I.4 and I.5).

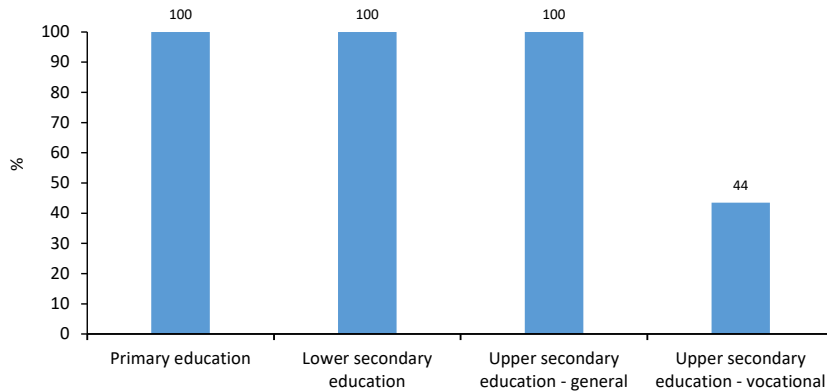
All European country's schools offer obligatory foreign language learning for all pupils in lower secondary education, but not in primary education. Thus, in Belgium and the Netherlands less than half of all primary education pupils learn a foreign language, while in Germany the percentage is also below 60% (Figure I.6). It seems that these countries have opted to introduce foreign language learning among some groups of their younger students at a later stage.

While foreign language learning has been universalized in general school education, it is absent in many vocational education programs. Along with Portugal and Greece, but

also Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, Spain belongs to the group of countries where the vocational modality of upper secondary education attaches lesser importance to foreign language learning (Figure I.7). In Spain, less than half of the students in vocational training (44%) learned in 2021 (latest available data) a foreign language. In contrast, in many European countries there are no significant differences in this respect between students of non-vocational and vocational education programs.

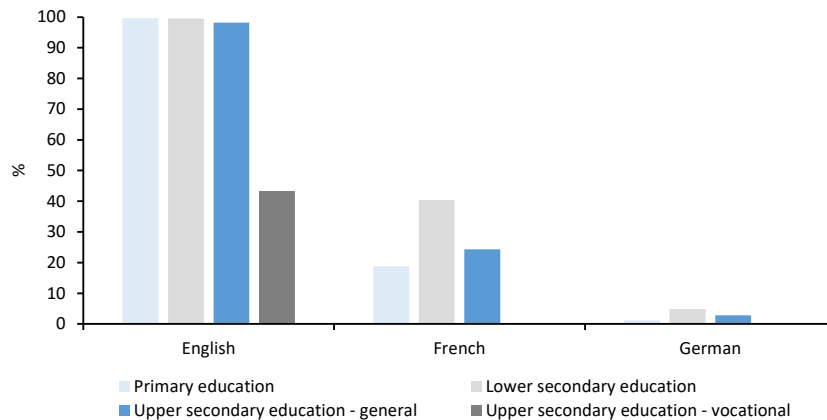
In any case, the differences observed in the Spanish case should be reduced in the coming years in accordance with the Strategic Plan for the Promotion of Vocational Training, included in component 20 of the Spanish Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan. The text considers "communication in a foreign language to be currently a key competence for any professional performance" and commits to promoting bilingualism in the field of vocational training, given its importance in the face of "the globalization of production systems and service provision, as well as with the unstoppable migratory movements between countries, and, fundamentally, as a contribution to a common European space."

Figure I.4

**Pupils studying a foreign language by education level (Spain, 2021)**

Source: Eurostat [educ\_uae\_lang01].

Figure I.5

**Pupils studying English, French or German as a foreign language by education level (Spain, 2021)**

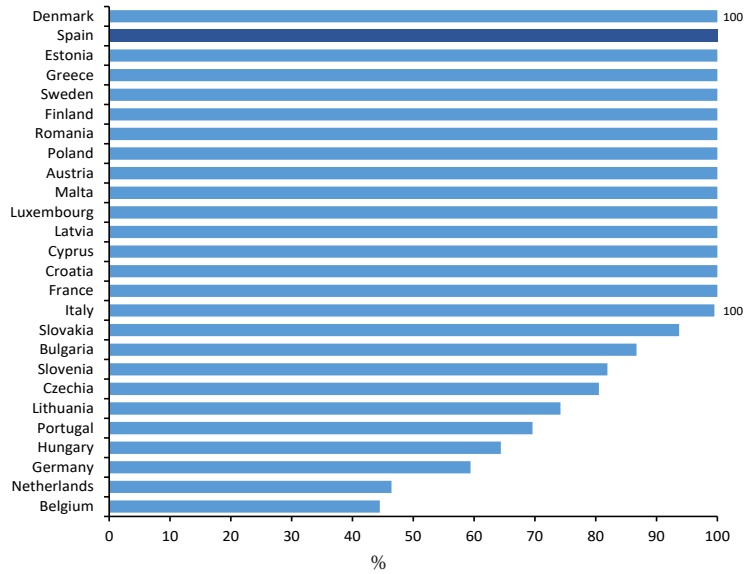
Source: Eurostat [educ\_uae\_lang01].

Moreover, with the digital transformation, the proficiency in English — the *lingua franca* of the digital world — is not just about communication, but also about leveraging the full potential of digital tools. As already

evidenced by academic research, AI chatbots and other digital services tend to have optimized performance in English, which may put non-English speakers at a disadvantage despite the improvement of translation technologies.

Figure I.6

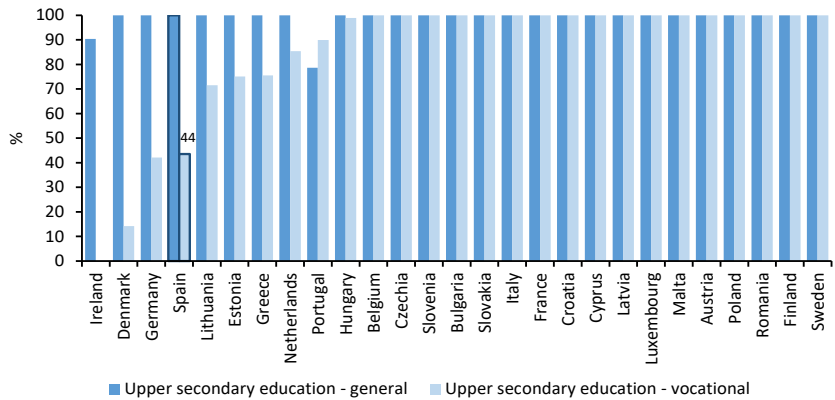
**Pupils studying a foreign language in primary education (European Union countries, 2021)**



Source: Eurostat [educ\_uae\_lang01].

Figure I.7

**Pupils studying a foreign language in general and vocational upper secondary education (European Union countries, 2021)**



Source: Eurostat [educ\_uae\_lang01].



## Section II. Public opinion trends

Widespread concern about climate change, but far from a national priority

According to an opinion poll administered in October 2023, eight out of every ten Spaniards (79%) are “much” or “quite” concerned about climate change. This proportion has consistently remained above 70% since December 2022, while the share of interviewees denying any preoccupation has remained under 10% (Figure II.1).

Contrary to expectations, younger individuals do not exhibit the highest levels of concern about climate change. While 73% of individuals aged 18 to 24 report being “much” or “quite” worried, the corresponding percentage among people aged 55 and over is above 80% (Figure II.2).

As females consistently manifest more concern than males about problems affecting the society, it is

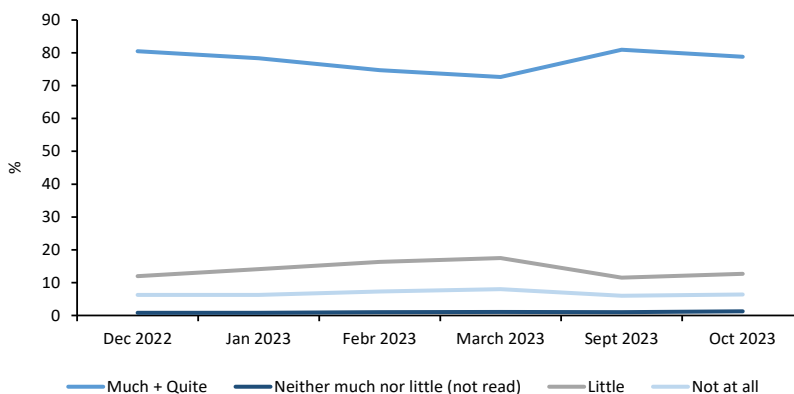
not surprising that the percentage of those declaring themselves as “much” or “quite” worried about climate change (84%) is 11 points higher than that of males (73%) (Figure II.3).

But ideology appears to influence perceptions about climate change more strongly than age or gender. The 2023 data show that nearly all interviewees positioning themselves on the extreme left (1-3 on the 10-points ideology scale) manifest a very high concern. Among people occupying extreme positions on the right, the share plunges to around 60% (Figure II.4). This probably has to do with leftist parties stressing climate change more than rightist parties in their policy agendas, the latter trying to balance this with other issues like economic growth or free enterprise.

Though people largely show concern about climate change when directly inquired about it, when asked about the main problems of Spain, climate change ranks lower than other problems. True, in October 2023 a tenth of interviewees perceive it as one of the three most important national problems, but this is a modest proportion compared to the share of people mentioning political issues (53%)<sup>1</sup>, economic

Figure II.1

### Concern about climate change (December 2022-October 2023)



Question: “Would you say that you are currently concerned about climate change much, quite, little or not at all?”.

Source: Center for Sociological Research (www.cis.es), Opinion barometers .

<sup>1</sup> The following answers have been added: “political problems in general”, “the bad behavior of politicians” and “the government and specific political parties”.



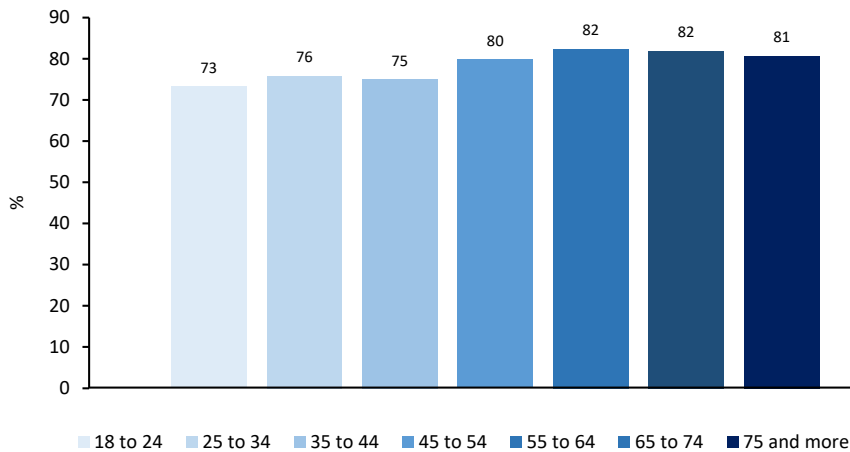
matters (37%) or unemployment (26%) as important problems (Figure II.5).

Thus, more immediate or urgent problems seem to crowd out the concern about climate change

in people's minds. As far as the green transition requires that people rank environmental problems as high priority, the comparatively low saliency of climate change in Spanish public opinion represents a challenge.

Figure II.2

**People declaring much or quite concern about climate change by age (October 2023)**

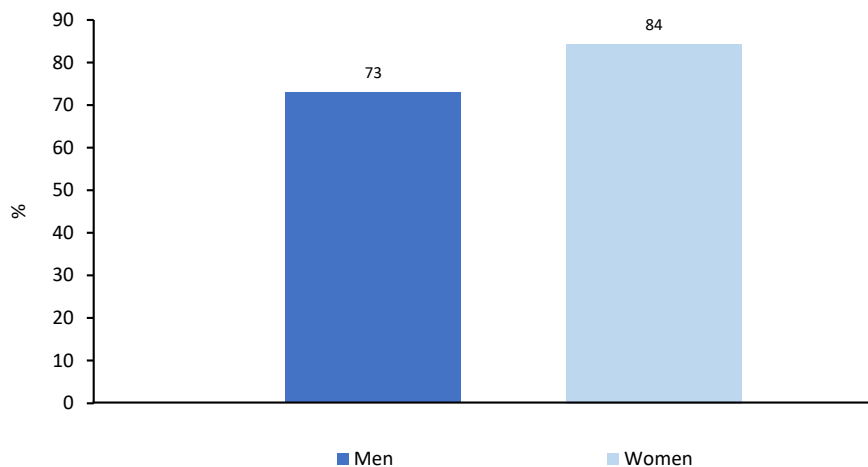


Question: "Would you say that you are currently concerned about climate change much, quite, little or not at all?".

Source: Center for Sociological Research (www.cis.es), Opinion barometer October 2023.

Figure II.3

**People declaring much or quite concern about climate change by gender (October 2023)**

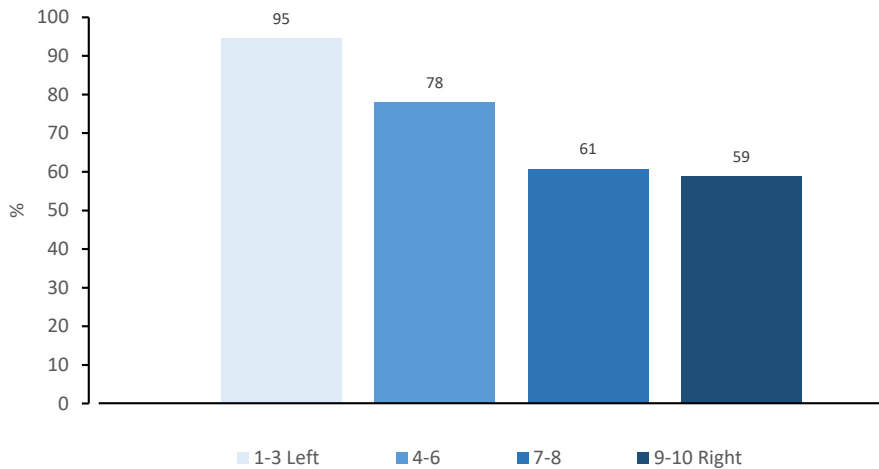


Question: "Would you say that you are currently concerned about climate change much, quite, little or not at all?".

Source: Center for Sociological Research (www.cis.es), Opinion barometer October 2023.

Figure II.4

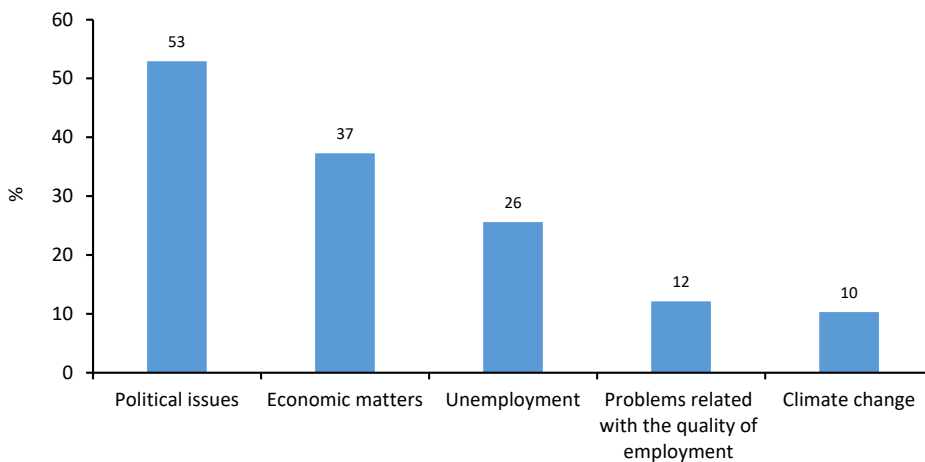
**People declaring much or quite concern about climate change by ideology (October 2023)**



*Question:* "Would you say that you are currently concerned about climate change much, quite, little or not at all?".  
*Source:* Center for Sociological Research ([www.cis.es](http://www.cis.es)), Opinion barometer October 2023.

Figure II.5

**Main problems of Spain according to public opinion (October 2023)**



*Question:* "In your opinion, what is the main problem currently existing in Spain? And the second? And the third?".  
[Answers have been added].

*Source:* Center for Sociological Research ([www.cis.es](http://www.cis.es)), Opinion barometer October 2023.



## 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)
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 (%)
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	15.4	11.7
2023	19,351■	2.45●		
Sources	LFS	LFS	EPF	EPF

Table III.2

**Households and families (continued)**

	<b>Nuptiality</b>					
	<b>Marriage rate (Spanish)</b>	<b>Marriage rate (foreign population)</b>	<b>Divorce rate (per 1,000)</b>	<b>Mean age at first marriage (men)</b>	<b>Mean age at first marriage (women)</b>	<b>Same sex marriages (%)</b>
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
<i>Sources</i>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>MNP</b>

**Fertility**

	<b>Median age at first child (women)</b>	<b>Total fertility rate (Spanish women)</b>	<b>Total fertility rate (foreign women)</b>	<b>Births to single mothers (%)</b>	<b>Abortion rate</b>	<b>Abortion by Spanish-born women (%)</b>
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
2022					11.7	67.0
<i>Sources</i>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>ID INE</b>	<b>MSAN</b>	<b>MSAN</b>

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-September.

● Number of households data from the LFS (January to September) and population data from the EPC (as of 1 January 2022).

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 (%)
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
2023■	16.1	6.2	32.9	50.3
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)
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	1,333,567	266,902
2022●	1,617,412	687,511	803,611	1,353,347	276,518
Source	MECD	MEFP	MEFP	MEFP	MEFP

**Education expenditure**

	Public expenditure (millions of €)	Public expenditure (% GDP)
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	MEFP	INE

LFS: *Labour Force Survey*.MEFP: *Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional*.INE: *Instituto Nacional de Estadística*.

● Provisional data.

■ Data refer to January-September.

Table III.4

**Social protection: Benefits****Contributory benefits\***

	Unemployment		Retirement		Permanent disability		Widowhood	
	Total		Total	Average amount (€)	Total	Average amount (€)	Total	Average amount (€)
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	794,501●		6,357,169■	1,374■	946,044■	1,119■	2,351,024■	851■
Source	INSS		INSS	INSS	INSS	INSS	INSS	INSS

**Non-contributory benefits**

	Social Security			
	Unemployment	Retirement	Disability	Other
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●	873,672	271,138	176,486	9,678
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-September.

■ Data refer to January-October.

Table III. 5

<b>Social protection: Health care</b>		<b>Expenditure</b>
	<b>Public expenditure (% GDP)</b>	<b>Public expenditure (millions of €)</b>
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
<i>Sources</i>	<b>Eurostat</b>	<b>Eurostat</b>

<b>Resources</b>				
	<b>Medical specialists per 1,000 inhabitants</b>	<b>Primary care doctors per 1,000 people assigned</b>	<b>Specialist nurses per 1,000 inhabitants</b>	<b>Primary care nurses per 1,000 people assigned</b>
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
<i>Sources</i>	<b>INCLASNS</b>	<b>INCLASNS</b>	<b>INCLASNS</b>	<b>INCLASNS</b>

<b>Satisfaction*</b>		<b>Time on waiting list (days)</b>		
	<b>With the working of the health system</b>	<b>With medical history and tracing by family doctor or pediatrician</b>	<b>Non-urgent surgical procedures</b>	<b>First specialist consultations per 1,000 inhabitants</b>
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	6.3		120	95
<i>Sources</i>	<b>INCLASNS</b>	<b>INCLASNS</b>	<b>INCLASNS</b>	<b>INCLASNS</b>

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)
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♦	11,190	9,735	1,336	1,579	10.7	14.0	10,861	9,629	2,599
<i>Sources</i>	<b>LFS</b>	<b>LFS</b>	<b>LFS</b>	<b>LFS</b>	<b>LFS</b>	<b>LFS</b>	<b>BEL</b>	<b>BEL</b>	<b>BEL</b>

BEL: *Boletín de Estadísticas Laborales*.

LFS: *Labour Force Survey*.

♦ Data refer to January-September.

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