Population of Spain: latest developments and projections

Pilar Cuadrado

POPULATION OF SPAIN: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND PROJECTIONS

The author of this economic note is Pilar Cuadrado, from the Directorate General Economics, Statistics and Research.

Population resident in Spain: latest developments

Based on the Spanish population statistics published by the National Statistics Institute (INE) in December 2016, it is estimated that at 1 July 2016 the population of Spain was 46,468,102, which is a year-on-year increase of some 60,000 persons (0.1%), interrupting the downward pattern observed since 2013 (see Table 1). The Labour Force Survey (EPA) data show that this pattern continued throughout 2016 Q3, also with a year-on-year increase of 0.1%. According to the latest Municipal Census figures, for 1 January 2016, the population of Spain totalled 46,524,943[1] which is a year-on-year decline of 0.2%, higher than that reflected by the Spanish population figures[2] (see Table 1).

According to the Spanish population figures, the increase in the total population (at 1 July 2016) was a result of growth in the Spanish-nationality population, which more than offset the decline in the foreign population. Of the 46.5 million persons resident in Spain, the foreign population accounts for 9.5%, which is 0.10 pp less than a year earlier and prolongs the moderate decline observed since 2008 (see Chart 1.2). This decline is partly due to the acquisition of Spanish nationality, which affected some 100,000 people in 2016 H1.

By nationality, the foreign population continues to be dominated by Europeans (49.7%), followed at some distance by persons from the Americas (21.7%, the majority from Ecuador) and Africa (20.8%, the majority from Morocco). The proportion of South Americans as a percentage of the total (16%) continues to decline, in favour of persons from the European Union (44%, headed by Romanians who account for 16% of the foreign population). Although at a much lower level, the proportion of Asians as a percentage of the foreign population continues to rise gradually, especially the Chinese who now account for 4%.

The age band containing the highest percentage of the population is that from 30 to 64. By nationality, for the Spanish population the highest percentage is in the 45 to 64 age band (28%), while for the foreign population it is in the 30 to 44 age band (35%). The ageing process that has characterised the Spanish population has begun to affect the immigrant population, which shows a decline in the percentage of persons aged between 16 and 29 and an increase in those over 45 years of age (see Chart 1.3). Thus, the dependency ratio[3] among the foreign population stands at 10.9%, compared with 5.4% in 2008, although it is still much lower than among the Spanish population (over 31%). By level of education[4], the gradual decline in the percentage of foreign population with a low

---

1 On 2 December the Council of Ministers approved the official population figures at 1 January 2016, setting the population at 46,557,008, slightly higher than the previously published figure. The breakdown is not included in this note as it will not be available until late January 2017.

2 As is customary, the Census population figures are higher than the INE's population figures on the latest data available. The main reason for the higher Census figures is the inability to correctly calculate outflows of foreign population, as these persons are not always deregistered when they leave the country.

3 Defined as the ratio of people over 64 years of age to those aged 16 to 64.

4 Three levels of education are identified: high, which is the top level, including university education and doctorates but not higher-level vocational training or training in plastic arts, design or sports; low, for persons who at most have obtained a lower secondary schooling certificate (compulsory secondary education); and medium, which includes all other levels.

POPULATION STRUCTURE BY AGE BANDS ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT SOURCES

TABLE 1

	Population Figures (a)						Census (a)			
					Changes between				Changes between	
	1 July 2016	1 January 2016	1 January 2015	1 January 2014	1 January 2016 / 2015	1 January 2015 / 2014	1 January 2016	1 January 2015	1 January 2016 / 2015	1 January 2015 / 2014
Total population	46,468,102	46,445,828	46,449,565	46,512,199	-3,737	-62,634	46,524,943	46,624,382	-99,439	-146,959
0 to 15 years (%)	16.0	16.1	16.1	16.1	0.0	0.0	16.0	16.0	0.0	0.0
16 to 64 years (%)	65.1	65.2	65.4	65.7	-0.2	-0.4	65.4	65.6	-0.2	-0.4
65 and over (%)	18.9	18.7	18.5	18.1	0.2	0.4	18.6	18.4	0.2	0.3
Dependency ratio	29.0	28.7	28.3	27.6	0.4	0.7	28.4	28.0	0.4	0.7
Spanish population	42,071,231	42,027,670	41,995,211	41,835,140	32,459	160,072	41,923,671	41,894,738	28,933	146,884
Percentage of total	90.5	90.5	90.4	89.9	0.1	0.5	90.1	89.9	0.3	0.6
0 to 15 years (%)	16.1	16.2	16.2	16.2	0.0	0.0	16.0	16.0	0.0	0.0
16 to 64 years (%)	63.9	64.0	64.2	64.4	-0.2	-0.3	64.1	64.2	-0.2	-0.3
65 and over (%)	20.0	19.9	19.7	19.4	0.2	0.3	19.9	19.7	0.2	0.2
Dependency ratio	31.2	31.0	30.7	30.1	0.4	0.5	31.1	30.7	0.4	0.5
Foreign population	4,396,871	4,418,157	4,454,353	4,677,059	-36,196	-222,706	4,601,272	4,729,644	-128,372	-293,843
Percentage of total	9.5	9.5	9.6	10.1	-0.1	-0.5	9.9	10.1	-0.3	-0.6
0 to 15 years (%)	15.5	15.5	15.6	15.6	-0.1	-0.1	15.7	15.8	-0.2	-0.1
16 to 64 years (%)	76.2	76.6	77.0	77.6	-0.4	-0.6	77.9	77.8	0.1	-0.3
65 and over (%)	8.3	8.0	7.5	6.8	0.5	0.7	6.5	6.4	0.0	0.4
Dependency ratio	10.9	10.4	9.7	8.8	0.7	1.0	8.3	8.3	0.0	0.5

SOURCE: INE (Population Figures and Municipal Census).

a Data at 1 July 2016 are provisional.

level of education is noteworthy, probably reflecting the fewer job opportunities for such persons post-crisis.
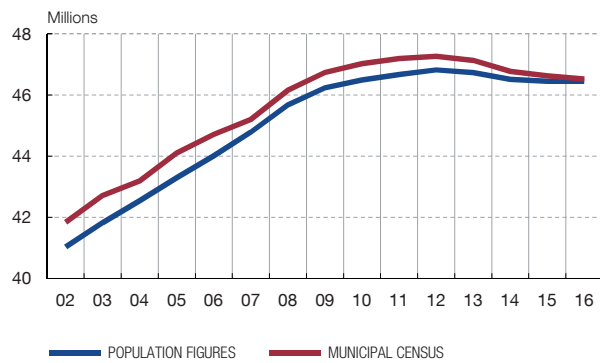
Throughout 2016 H1 migration moved towards a net inflow, following the net outflows observed in recent years. In annualised terms, the 2016 H1 figure (net inflow of 61,008[5]) exceeded that recorded in 2009, the last year in which net migration was positive. This was the result of an 8.8% increase in inflows and the reduction (-9.5%) in outflows (see Chart 2.1).In 2015 as a whole, the migration balance reflected a net outflow of 1,800 persons.

Foreigners largely accounted for the decline in population outflows, with the number of emigrants falling to 216,000 in annualised terms[6], less than half the peak recorded in 2013.
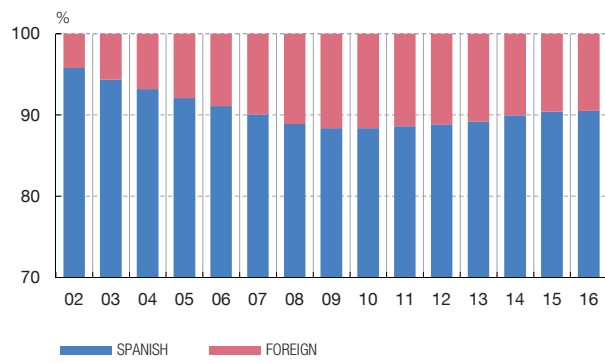
---

5 The previous INE population projections envisaged lower net migration in 2016 (12,939), as a result of inflows of 343,614 (less than 372,118 if the inflows in H1 are annualised) and an outflow of 330,675 (more than 311,110 in annualised terms in 2016).
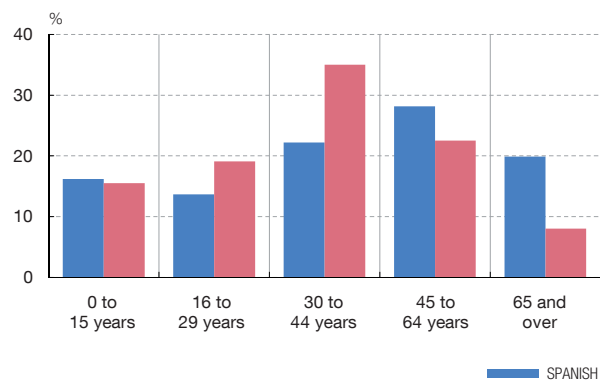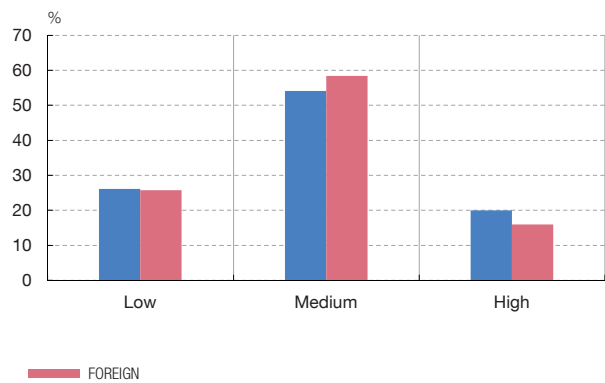
6 If the 2016 H1 figure is annualised.

POPULATION OF SPAIN, CHANGES AND STRUCTURE (a)

CHART 1

1 TOTAL POPULATION

Millions

POPULATION FIGURES — MUNICIPAL CENSUS

2 SPANISH AND FOREIGN POPULATION AS % OF TOTAL POPULATION

%

SPANISH — FOREIGN

3 POPULATION STRUCTURE BY AGE BAND IN 2016 (b)

%

0 to 15 years | 16 to 29 years | 30 to 44 years | 45 to 64 years | 65 and over

SPANISH — FOREIGN

4 POPULATION STRUCTURE BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN 2016 (c)

%

Low | Medium | High

SPANISH — FOREIGN

SOURCES: Population Figures and Labour Force Survey (INE).

a Unless otherwise indicated, data refer to 1 January of each year.
b Spanish (foreign) population in each age band as % of total Spanish (foreign) population.
c Average for each year, except for 2016 which is the result of extrapolating the figures for the first three quarters of the year.

In contrast, outflows of Spanish nationals amounted to almost 100,000, including those born in Spain, who represented nearly 20 % of total outflows, compared with just 7% in 2009. Overall, Spanish nationals' propensity to emigrate remains low, although the trend is rising, contrary to what has occurred with the foreign population. The recovery of migrant inflows observed in 2016 H1 was driven by the foreign population, with inflows of some 356,000 persons in annualised terms, accounting for more than 85 % of total inflows. Notably, however, Spanish nationals are gradually joining immigration processes (at a somewhat sharper rate in recent years among those born outside Spain), representing 8.3 % of total inflows in 2016 (compared with only 2.7% in 2008). By nationality, inflows are dominated by Europeans, followed at some distance by persons from Central and South America and Africa.
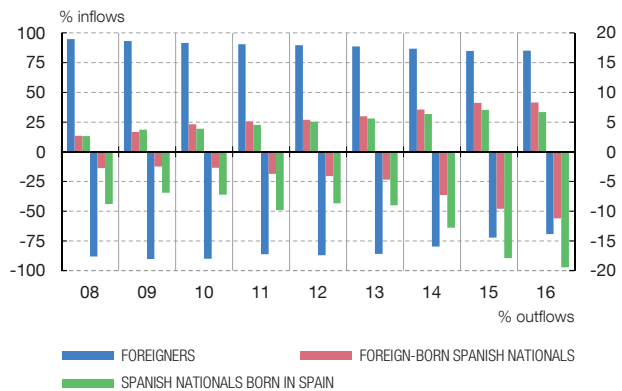
On EPA information, the migratory flows can be analysed by level of education[7]. The level of education of foreigners migrating to Spain continues to improve, with an increase in the proportion of immigrants who have a medium level of education and, to a lesser extent, a

---

7 If the foreign population who moved to Spain last year is used to approximate the inflow of foreigners. Likewise, the information on household members who have been temporarily residing abroad for less than a year could be used to approximate the outflow of Spanish nationals.
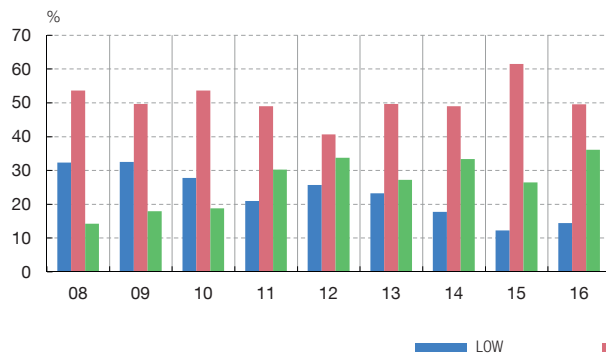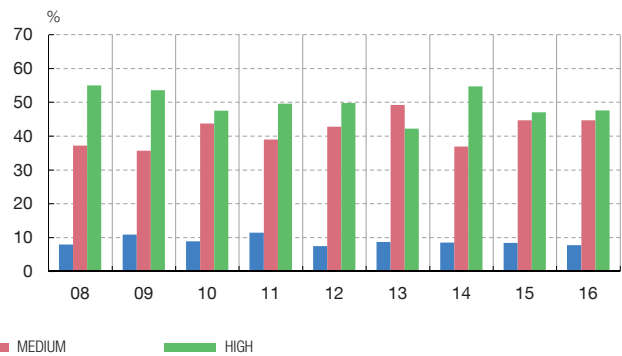
1 TOTAL MIGRATORY FLOWS (a)

Thousands

NET MIGRATION — IMMIGRANTS
EMIGRANTS
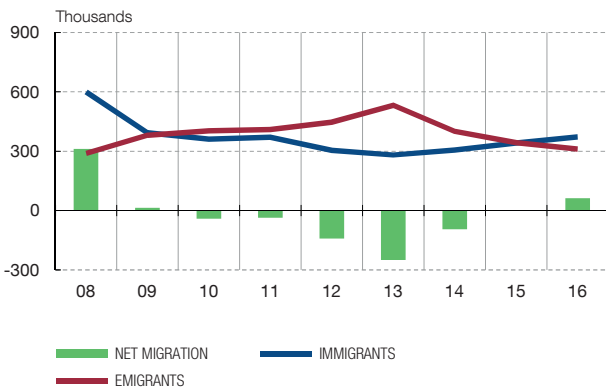
2 MIGRATORY FLOWS BY NATIONALITY AND COUNTRY OF BIRTH (a)

% inflows

% outflows

FOREIGNERS   FOREIGN-BORN SPANISH NATIONALS
SPANISH NATIONALS BORN IN SPAIN

3 FOREIGN IMMIGRANTS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION (b)

%

4 SPANISH EMIGRANTS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION (b)

%

LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH

SOURCES: Population Figures, Migration Statistics and Spanish Labour Force Survey of the INE.

a Data refer to the year as a whole. 2016 is the result of the annualisation of H1.
b 2016 refers to the extrapolation of the figures for the first three quarters of the year.

high level of education. In 2015, immigrants with a medium level of education accounted for almost 62% (up from 40 % in 2012). The fall in this percentage in 2016 was offset mainly by the increase in the percentage of foreigners with a high level of education (see Chart 2.3). With respect to Spanish nationals who left the country last year (see Chart 2.4), outflows were dominated by individuals with a medium or high level of education.

Population projections

The latest INE population projections were published in October 2016, updating those issued two years earlier. The starting point for these projections is the provisional population figures at 1 January 2016, which reflect an upward revision of almost 70,000 persons on the figure projected for that date by the INE in October 2014. The methodology used in these projection exercises assumes a continuation of the recently observed trends in fertility and mortality rates and migratory flows, which may require extrapolating the possible cyclical components of these variables.

The results of the projection exercise point to a gradual and steady population decline over the entire projection horizon, which would be somewhat more marked from 2050 on (see Chart 3) and take the population to 41.1 million by 2066, compared with the 46.4 million estimated for 2016. Set against earlier estimates, a slightly more moderate population decline is expected in the early years of the projection horizon, leading to a population increase of around half a million by 2066.
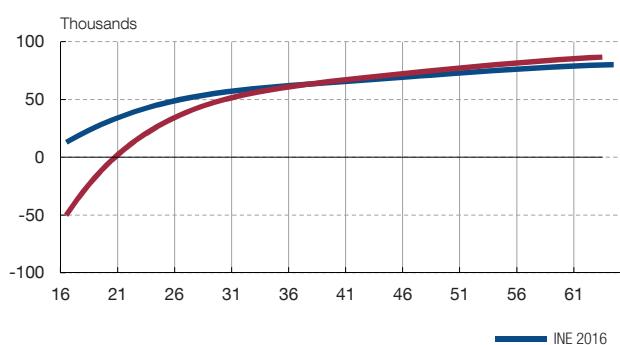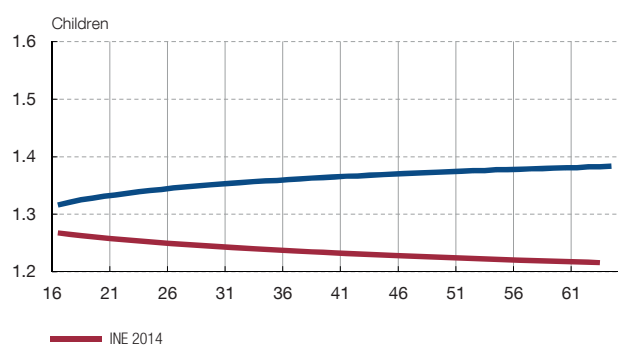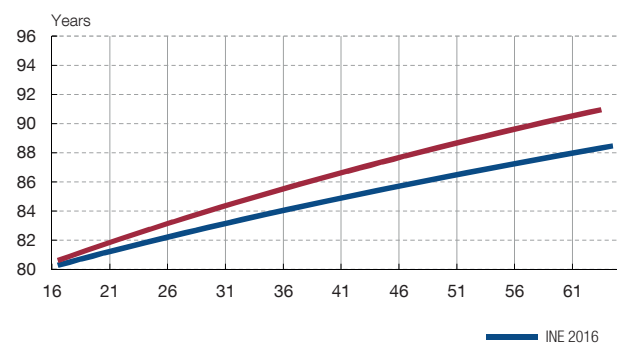
1 TOTAL POPULATION

Millions

2 DEPENDENCY RATIO

%

■ INE OCTOBER 2016   ■ INE OCTOBER 2014
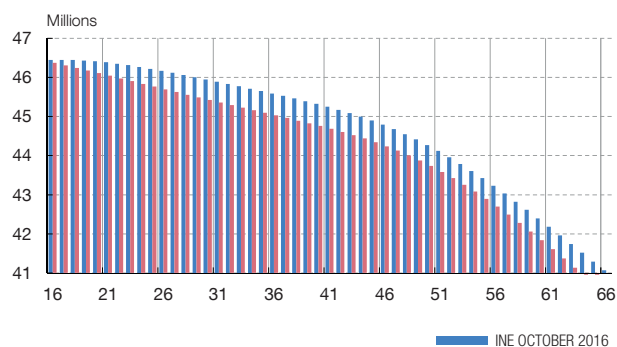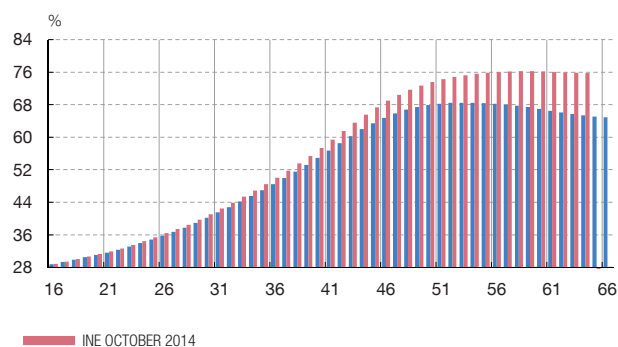
3 NET INFLOW OF FOREIGNERS

Thousands

4 AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER WOMAN

Children

■ INE 2016   ■ INE 2014

5 LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (MEN)

Years

6 LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (WOMEN)

Years

■ INE 2016   ■ INE 2014
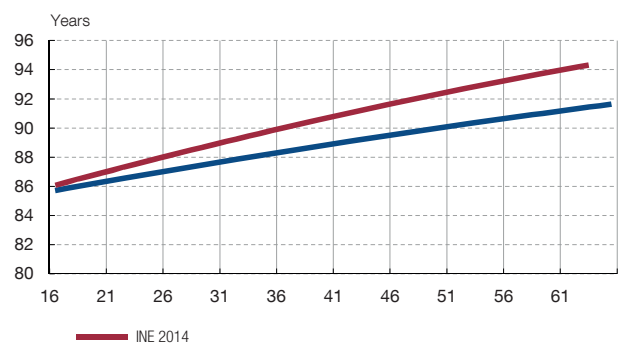
SOURCE: National Statistics Institute (INE) and Banco de España.

These new projections reflect certain changes in the underlying assumptions of the exercise, which are particularly significant in relation to migratory flows (see Charts 3.3 and 3.6). Specifically, the new assumptions are for a slightly lower life expectancy[8], and a higher and growing fertility rate, thus departing from the underlying assumption of the previous projection exercise (which was based on information[9] relating to the crisis period). As regards immigration, the new assumptions point to net positive migratory flows in the early years of the projection horizon, in contrast to the negative flows envisaged in previous projections. In short, net migration is expected to turn positive in 2016, after six years of

8   However, the assumptions continue to consider an increase of 8.3 years for men and 5.9 years for women in the period analysed.

9   Specifically, the INE uses the trend observed in fertility rates by age in the four preceding years.

negative figures, with a growing – albeit very moderate – profile, to reach only 81,000 persons a year by 2065. This would be the result of the combination of a constant inflow from other countries of 343,614 persons a year and a likewise constant propensity to emigrate (by age group and nationality), which would result in a declining trend in emigration, although the outflows would exceed 300,000 until 2023.

Overall, the latest INE projections envisage gradual and substantial population ageing along with a parallel increase in the dependency ratio, which has only begun to decline in recent years. The decreasing population forecast would be primarily concentrated in the 16-64 age group and younger age groups. Consequently, the dependency ratio, although revised slightly downwards from the 2014 projections[10], would rise from 28.8 % in 2016 to 64.9 % by 2066.

19.1.2017.

---

10 The dependency ratio forecast for 2064 in 2014 was 75.7%.