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Second Latin American Migratory Boom in Spain: From Recovery to Covid-19

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Abstract: At the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, Latin American migration to Spain showed a new quantitative increase in flows of such magnitude that we can speak of the existence of a second migratory boom. In contrast to what happened with the first migration boom at the beginning of the century, when pull factors dominated (mainly due to the expansion of the Spanish labour market), after the economic crisis of 2008 push factors played a more important role. Three processes leading to large-scale emigration are identified in Latin America: high levels of political instability in many Latin American countries such as Venezuela; growing insecurity, especially—but not only—in Central American countries, where it also coincides with increasing difficulties in entering the United States; and the effect of neoliberal policies, with growing tensions in many countries, as would be the case of Argentine migrants. Covid-19 has slowed down these flows and has led to increased numbers of returnees although the previous migratory intensities began to recover at the end of 2021.

Key words: International migration; Latin American; Spain; Migratory System

1. Introduction: recomposition of the Latin American migratory system in Spain

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Spain not only confirmed its shift from being a centuries-old country of emigration to being one of immigration but it also experienced an exceptionally intense migratory boom, the magnitude of which, in absolute numbers was only exceeded by the United States (Population Division, United Nations 2009). This exceptional increase in migrations was notable for flows coming from Latin America and the Caribbean (36% of arrivals in the period from 2004 to 2008), closely followed by those from within the European Union (some 32%), especially from recently incorporated countries like Romania. After the Great Recession of 2008, many observers believed that the migratory cycle had ended, owing to the COVID-19 syndemic. Nevertheless, since 2014, a second migratory boom has been underway and of proportions that suggest it would have exceeded those of the first had it not been for the interruption imposed by the closure of borders during the pandemic. This second boom was also led by immigrants from Latin America, now with an even greater presence (some 43.9% of the total number), to the extent that, in 2018 and 2019, their numbers exceeded that of arrivals recorded in the first boom, with 340,000 and 426,000 annual migrant registrations, thus giving, in the second case, a figure of 25% higher than the maximum of 327,000 recorded for 2007. Overshadowed by the both the preceding recession and the crisis caused by the pandemic, this second migratory phenomenon has not been given sufficient attention in the media, by politicians, or among academics who have mostly tended to overlook it. Now that the pandemic is considered to be over, its impact on migration would seem to be understood as a temporary effect in which, after the hiatus of 2020, there has been a progressive return to "normality", including with regard to international migrations. However, those who assume that the second boom is simply a repetition would be mistaken. Both the origins and sociodemographic characteristics of the immigrants have changed, as have the causes and conditions of this massive movement of people. Moreover, those who believe that the effect of COVID-19 on migrations between Latin America and Spain is limited to a temporary halt are also probably misjudging the situation. In this context, the study's main research question is as follows: which factors besides adaption of migrant flows to the economic cycle would explain the creation, transformation, or decline of a migratory system?

In order to make visible the existence of this second boom, we analyse migratory flows between Latin America and Spain during the twenty-first century, comparing the sociodemographic profiles of arrivals before (2000-2008), during (2009-2013), and after the

economic crisis (2014-2019), as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected flows from Latin America in the years of 2020 and 2021. Our aim, then, is twofold. First, it is to offer a description of the second boom of migrants coming from Latin America to Spain and, second, from the standpoint of migratory systems that originated at the start of the twenty-first century, to evaluate both the boom itself and the impact of COVID-19, which brought about its abrupt ending.

Systemic scrutiny of twenty-first-century migration between Latin America and Spain is relevant for three reasons. First, going beyond the framework of offer and demand, it reveals the different factors that contribute to the formation, maintenance, and decline of a migratory system. In the shaping of these systems, several dimensions play a key role: the historical-cultural (since former colonies are involved), the legal (with preferences with regard to obtaining citizenship), the demographic (with a significant presence of global care chains), and the political (with regard to origin and destination). Second, in the twenty-first century, these flows serve as an example of the migratory dynamics that have been shaped by globalisation, especially between the countries of the global South and North. The results can be extrapolated to migratory systems established between other countries. Third, it constitutes a privileged area for studying the intersection between the micro and macro levels. By micro level, we understand the analysis of individual decision-making that can affect emigration, return, or re-emigration and, by macro, the structural factors that explain, encourage, or restrict the range of possibilities in which these decisions are made, as well as the inertia represented by the aggregate making up the migratory system itself.

2. Theoretical framework: Spain and the Latin American migration system

Observation of the evolution of flows of migrants from Latin America into Spain during the twenty-first century offers a splendid opportunity for giving an account of the formation of migration systems (Mabogunje, 1970), its main components, resilience, and ability to reconstitute itself, and also for deeper analysis of push and pull factors in their evolution and transformation. According to De Haas (2010), a migration system is understood as "a set of places linked by flows and counter-flows of people, goods, services and information, which tend to facilitate further exchange, including migration, between the places" (De Haas, 2010: 1593)[1].

Unlike what has happened with immigrants to Spain from other origins, positive discrimination with the Latin American population with regard to Spanish nationality,[2] based

on colonial history and the existence of a common language, means that these flows are also an example of the so-called "ethnic" migrations and their encouragement as policy that seems to maximise integration of a population that is seen as similar (Bauböck, 2010). In the last few decades, several efforts have been made to measure and analyse flows originating in Latin America which may constitute a system (Kritz and Gurak, 1979). With globalisation and the acceleration of migratory flows at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a growing interest in systems in general (De Haas, 2009), and Latin American systems in particular (Sassone and Yépez del Castillo, 2014; Ruiz-Santacruz and Recaño, 2019; Carballo et al. 2019; Bayona et al. 2018; Domínguez-Mujica et al. 2020). In the latter case, the migration system established between Latin America and Spain, together with that in which the United States is the destination (CEPAL, 2007), is one of the most important in Latin America.

Both the constitution of a mature migration system and selectiveness by origin of migrations in Spain, as well as the relatively easy access to Spanish nationality in origin and destination for the population born in Latin America (Hierro, 2016), have contributed to the second migratory boom we wish to study here. In order to put this remarkable increase in perspective, we can divide recent migrations to Spain into four periods while also bearing in mind the evolution of economic cycles and the recent impact of COVID-19 as their determinants: 1) 2000-2007, the first migratory boom, or formative period of the migration system; 2) 2008-2013, economic recession and stagnation of the system; 3) 2014-2019, second migratory boom and recomposition of the system; and 4) 2020-2021, impact of the pandemic, which put an abrupt end to the exceptional growth of the last period, while opening up a new, uncertain space for international migratory flows.

We understand that the acceleration characterising the third stage, from 2014 to 2019, is due not so much to a "recovery" of flows interrupted by the economic crisis as it is to a second boom. This view takes into account its volume and intensity, variation in composition by origin and, most particularly, the predominance of push, or expulsion, factors over those of attraction, in contrast to the reverse situation at the beginning of the new millennium (Prieto and López-Gay, 2015). Then, during the first boom (Domingo et al. 2015), pull factors prevailed with a fast expanding Spanish labour market (Aysa-Lastra and Cachón, 2015) and a high demand for labour in such sectors as agriculture, tourism, construction, and domestic service, in addition to externalisation of domestic work related with the fact that Spanish women were entering the labour market at the time (Ribas-Mateos, 2004, Domingo, 2005). The years of economic recession led to increased unemployment and vulnerability for the Latin American population

in Spain (Aysa-Lastra and Cachón, 2012; Torres, 2014) and, with that, a decrease in migratory flows from Latin America and a concomitant increase in emigration and return to origin (Prieto et al. 2015), as well as re-emigration to other European destinations, which is the case of the United Kingdom (Mas, 2017), both these latter cases being processes related with acquisition of nationality (Recaño and Jauregui, 2014).

A glance at the origins that have been prominent in this second migratory boom would seem to suggest three basic push factors. First, is major political instability and a clear example of this would be migration coming from Venezuela (Castillo and Reguant, 2017). Second, is increasing insecurity, especially but not only in Central American countries (Parella, 2022), where this coincides, moreover, with the fact of having to face ever greater obstacles when trying to enter the United States. Third, is the effect of neoliberal policies which are giving rise to economic and social tensions in many countries amongst which Argentina and Colombia would be the most evident—but not the only—cases.

Spain's closing of its borders on 16 March 2020 as a strategy against the spread of COVID-19 was proof of the resilience of the migration system, thus making it possible to confirm the enduringness of migration systems once they are established (De Haas, 2009). In addition to the generalised downturn in international migration (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021), the pandemic also meant that economic migrants returned to their countries of origin because of lack of work (Lee et al. 2021). With a drop of 60% in the number of airline passengers in 2020 (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021), other forms of entry predominated, as happened in Spain (Esteve et al. 2021) and this meant a differential impact on the volume of inflows according to origin. On the global scale, it is calculated that the growth of international migrations was 27% less than what was expected. Moreover, it is expected that these effects will continue over time, due either to the expansion of telework, which could encourage future modifications in some of the already existing migratory routes (McAuliffe et al., 2022), or to the incentive provided by the pandemic for tighter future management of flows, thus leading to restrictions on mobility (O'Brien and Eger, 2021), all of which could entail changes in the profile of migrants owing to greater selectivity.

3. Hypotheses and methodology

In this study we propose three hypotheses: 1) in the second boom, push factors prevail over pull factors; 2) the closing of borders resulting from the battle against COVID-19 not only had

an impact on the volume of flows but also represented a tightening of the filtering process that is based on the characteristics of migrants; and 3) despite all the ups and downs in the evolution of migratory flows, the existence of a migration system guarantees their continuity.

When characterising the evolution of migratory flows from Latin America to Spain, we work with microdata from Residential Variation Statistics (RVS) for the period 2000 – 2021, and data, until January 2021, from the Continuous Population Register (*Padrón*), which is an administrative register that, once revised by the National Statistics Institute (INE, in Spanish), provides the official population of every municipality in the country. The *Padrón* records the demographic characteristics of individuals (sex, age, place of birth, and nationality), as well as usual place of residence, irrespective of the legal situation in the country in the case of foreign residents. This register is used to provide proof of the presence in Spain of foreign immigrants who have begun the process of regularisation (known in Spain as *arraigo* or, literally, taking root) which, in itself, is an incentive for presence on the register as well as facilitating access to health and education services. However, some municipal councils and the rental practices of immigrants in more vulnerable situations make access to the *Padrón* more difficult. The Residential Variation Statistics (RVS) are constructed on the basis of registrations and cancellations for migratory reasons in the *Padrón*, whether they involve movement outside the country or between municipalities in Spain. Our use of these data will be presented in a monthly format with the aim of evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on the flows. Rather than nationality, the country of birth has been chosen as the variable of analysis because so many Latin Americans have obtained Spanish nationality. Finally, the first, partial results of the most recent population and housing census, dated January 2021, allow analysis of educational level of migrants by year of arrival in Spain.[3] This enables comparison of the profile of migrants who arrived in 2020 with those who entered Spain in 2018 and 2019 in order to inquire into possible filtering by education as a result of measures adopted during the pandemic.

4. The growth of flows from Latin America from 2014 to 2019 and effects of the pandemic

4.1. Evolution of immigration to Spain from Latin America

The volume of immigration recorded in Spain during 2019, prior to the pandemic, was 827,000 registrations, a figure that was only surpassed in recent history by the 934,000 registered in 2007 when, at the height of the first migratory boom, Spain led Europe in terms of largest

migratory flows and was the second international destination after the United States (División de Población de las Naciones Unidas, 2009).[4] The subsequent economic crisis put an end to this period of extraordinary growth with a sharp drop in the number of arrivals after mid-2008 to reach a minimum of 315,000 registered immigrants in 2013. Since then, a progressive recovery of the flows has been documented and, as happened with the first migratory boom, Latin American immigrants predominate (Bayona and Ávila, 2020). In 2019, with a figure of 426,000 registrations of Latin Americans, the highest number of entries was reached. This, in fact, represented a historic maximum that is well above the former record of 327,000 registrations in 2007.

A breakdown of these flows by major continental groups (Figure 1) makes it possible to observe the presence of Latin Americans in the two major migratory waves of the new millennium, and their greater proportion in the second one. Hence, in 2019, almost half of all inflows (48.8%) are from Latin America, a volume that far exceeds the levels of volume and representativeness reached in the first wave. In this latter case, the prominence of Latin Americans was estimated as being 39% of the total number of registrations for 2007, although it was greater at the beginning when, in 2000 and 2001, the percentages represented more than half of the flows (51.7% and 53.2% respectively), each of them coinciding with exceptional regularisation processes. With the one-off exception of 2007, these flows of immigrants situated Latin America as the main migratory origin for Spain.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on international migration to Spain, with a first drop of 40% in registrations in 2020, compared to 2019, an effect that is still visible in 2021 when registrations are 24% lower than they were in 2019. In 2020, the greatest slowdown occurred among Latin Americans (with a drop of 49% in entries) and Asians (45% fewer) while the impact on immigration from non-EU European countries was less, with a drop of only 14.8%. Nevertheless, the 216,000 inflows from Latin America registered in 2020 still exceed those that occurred during the years of economic crisis, and even during the beginning of recovery (in the period from 2009 to 2016). In spite of the increase in 2021, with 267,000 registrations of immigrants from Latin America, the figures are still a long way from those prior to the pandemic, with a cumulative decline that still stands at 35%, which is the highest figure when compared with those for other origins.

(Figure 1 near here)

Observation of the monthly evolution of flows exclusively due to Latin Americans, (Figure 2), leaving aside the repeated fluctuations related with the cost of trans-Atlantic transport (and

partly with school calendars when it comes to family reunification or migration for studies) clearly indicates both the progressive escalation that the second migratory boom meant in terms of Latin America, and the circumstantial effect of the pandemic and subsequent recovery. The drop in numbers of 2020 coincided with the declaration in March that year of a State of Alarm. This regime of exception is covered by Spanish law with a view to dealing with extraordinary situations and giving greater powers to the government, thus making it possible to apply measures aimed at restricting mobility. A minimum of 2,084 entries was registered in April, and the first sign of recovery appeared in the following June with 15,297 registrations. By November 2021, the levels had risen to figures that were comparable to those being registered just before the onset of the pandemic, which is to say some 45,909 registrations. In the first two and a half months of 2021, just before the lockdown, more than 103,000 immigrants from Latin America had settled in the country, which offset the drop in the figures for 2020. What distinguishes the case of immigrants from Latin America by comparison with other origins is the delay in reestablishment of the flows after the pandemic. While in some cases (European Community) they had recovered and even surpassed earlier flows in 2020 and, in others (North and Sub-Saharan Africa), recovery was manifest throughout 2021, it took more than a year for flows from Latin America to return to previous intensities, which was also the case with flows from Asia. The restrictions on air traffic and aftereffects of the pandemic might explain this difference, especially when, in some countries of Latin America, the death rates caused by the pandemic peaked during the first months of 2021, and this also led to a prolongation of preventive measures and the closure of air spaces.

(figure 2 near here)

Evolution by country of origin (Figure 3) reveals the discontinuity of migratory flows in this period. Colombia (92,000), Venezuela (82,000), Peru and Argentina (35,000), and Honduras (32,000) were the main countries of origin in 2019. All of them showed higher figures by comparison with earlier years and, for some, the figures reached were a historical maximum. In total, 4,899,544 immigrants from Latin America have been registered as arrivals in Spain[5] since the beginning of 2000, 1,992,597 of them during the first boom (with some 250,000 migrations per year), 927,327 during the years of crisis (155,000 per year), 1,485,978 in the ensuing rise (247,000 per year), with 216,932 during the final year, 2020, and 276,710 in the immediate period of recovery, to reach intensities that are comparable with those of the second boom.

(figure 3 near here)

If we follow the progression of immigrant registrations since 2000, we can establish three patterns. The first would be that for those countries whose flows were concentrated in the first boom while, after the economic crisis, they not only dropped back to previous levels but also stayed well below them. Examples of this would be Ecuador and, later, Bolivia, which were clearly the two leading countries of the first boom, while showing an unparalleled decline in the second. If 91,545 Ecuadorians were registered as entering the country in 2000, by 2019, at the height of the second boom, the figure was only 19,287, a scant 21% of that for 2000. The same is true for Bolivian immigration, the growth of which was truncated by the bursting of the real estate bubble as the trigger of the Great Recession. In this case, the figure fell from a maximum of 78,066 registrations in 2007—coinciding with the demand for the Shengen visa (Vono et al, 2008)—to only 9,292 in 2019.

The second pattern would be that of countries which, having been prominent in the first boom, continued to be so in the second, the most representative in this case being Colombia, Argentina, and Peru. Hence, with Colombia, one sees how the bimodal growth during the first migratory boom—also due to the requirement of the Shengen visa introduced in January 2002 (Vono et al., 2008) and the subsequent family reunification—has been greatly exceeded by the flows of the second boom, which rose to 91,968 registrations in 2019, or 28% more than those recorded in 2001 when they reached their maximum for the first boom. The same could be said of Peru, which also exceeded the peak of the first boom with 35,128 new entries in 2019, a figure well above the maximum of 28,373, recorded in 2008. Although there has been progressive growth in immigration since the economic crisis, Argentina and, to a lesser extent, Brazil, Paraguay, and the Dominican Republic, have not gone beyond their earlier highs.

Finally, there are countries whose emigration to Spain has been increasing with time, amongst which the outstanding examples in recent years are Venezuela, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Cuba. In all these cases, although migrations prior to the economic crisis were not unknown, it was not until the second boom that they have stood out. With Venezuela, there are 4.8 times as many registrations (from a maximum of 17,056 in 2007 to 82,176 in 2019), with Honduras, 3.7 times as many (from 8,799 to 32,749 in the same period) and, with Nicaragua, 4.2 times as many (from 4,365 to 18,452).

As for exits from Spain, they are more difficult to count. The first data only appeared in 2002. Since then, 1.76 million Latin Americans have left Spain. Maximum values were reached

for most origins with the economic crisis, with 765,000 departures between 2008 and 2013, with the highest number of emigrants being recorded in this latter year (136,000). For some countries of origin, return or re-emigration occurred in the early years of the crisis, as happened with those that were, at the time, origins of recent arrivals (Bolivia, with 21,656 emigrations in 2009) who were in more precarious situations when the crisis hit. Then, some years later, it happened with other countries whose emigrants had spent more time in Spain. This was in around 2013 after the crisis worsened and when unemployment benefits had expired for many people who had been in the country longer (Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, for example). The balance for numbers of migrants from Latin America as a whole even turned negative in the middle years of the Great Recession, 2012, 2013, and 2014. However, not all countries showed negative figures, the exceptions being Venezuela and most of the Central American countries (Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, for example) from which outflows from Spain never exceeded inflows owing to the fact that the conditions in the country of origin did not encourage return. Moreover, these countries continued to present a certain number of immigrant registrations in Spain during the years of the crisis. By contrast, and as examples of marked negative balances, that for Bolivia from 2008 to 2015 was 63,000 people and, for Ecuador, between 2010 and 2016, 65,000. With COVID-19 and the closure of borders, there was a generalised downturn in outflows, so the resulting balance for Latin American immigrants was positive by more than 140,000 people. Nevertheless, there was a steep increase in the number of departures in 2021, reaching a figure of 127,000 Latin American returnees. For some origins (like Colombia or Peru), the numbers, taking in the returns that did not happen in 2020, reach record highs, thus showing the impact of the pandemic on the labour market, along the lines suggested with regard to South Asia by Lee et al. (2021). Despite this, and without exception, the balance between registered arrivals and departures continues to show positive figures for 2021, although they are far from the earlier high values of 2019.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are evident in all flows. Emergence from the slump, whether during 2020 itself or 2021, has occurred unevenly, depending on the country of origin. Hence, only Argentines exceeded the pre-pandemic figure of 35,198 immigrants with 38,597 new arrivals in 2021. There are two other cases with figures that are very close and, we might say, almost equal, namely Chile and Mexico. For the other countries of origin (see Figures A1 and A2 in the Annex), registrations in 2021 are well below those for 2019 and, in some cases (for example Honduras and Paraguay), show a drop of more than 50%. In other cases (for example, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Brazil), the decline is less but nonetheless significant.

However, the trend observed for most countries of origin in the last quarter of 2021 signals a recovery to the levels that preceded the pandemic, which suggests that the second migratory boom will continue along previous lines.

4.2. Composition by sex and age of migratory flows

Feminisation has been one of the most outstanding characteristics of migratory flows from Latin America to Spain, especially from origins that appeared in the first stages of the inflows and those with very marked specialisation in the service and care sector. Hence, 54.8% of the almost five million arrivals recorded since 2000 are women, with 400,000 more registered women than men. Three countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile) are not included in this feminisation, a situation that is also occurring with Ecuadorians over time. If women were pioneers in these cases, reunification with spouses and children ended up balancing the flows and, consequently, the resident population. Migratory flows from Central America present a clear example of this feminisation since, among immigrants born in Nicaragua and Honduras, the threshold of 75% for women immigrants was crossed, while the values for women among immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala were more than 60%. There were also marked contrasts due to feminisation among Paraguayan and Brazilian immigrants, as well as Dominicans in the early years of observation.

This feminisation is not constant over time. Observation of the historical evolution shows that the greater proportion of women in migratory flows coincides with the period of economic crisis because, during those years, migrants coming from Central America represented a considerable part of the total and also because of continuity of demand in the sector of jobs occupied by women, such as domestic service or third-party care. Immigrant women were therefore a link in the so-called global care chains (Hochschild, 2000). Likewise, the feminisation of the second boom (56.4%) is even greater than that of the first (53.2%), partly because, as happened with others, the early stages of many of these flows—especially from Central America—are notable for the pioneering role of women.

As for the migrants' age of entry when they arrived in Spain, on average they were very young (28.6 years), although this has gradually increased to 30.3 during the period of crisis and 31.7 during the second migratory boom. The year of the pandemic shows no difference from the latter figure but, with the reactivation of migratory flows, the age recorded for 2021 is 33.1 years. In terms of origin, Cuba stands out from the other countries with a much higher average age (37.7 years) which, moreover, is increasing over time.

(Figure 4 near here)

During the second boom, then, one sees a bimodal immigration profile with a first peak at young ages and a secondary peak at around the age of 50 (Figure 4). This rise in average age, as happened in the Cuban case we have mentioned and, in general, in the bimodal pattern we observe together with the presence of Spaniards born in some of the countries that were prominent in this second migratory boom (Figure 5)—whether it was Cuba (23%), Venezuela (21%), Mexico (14.4%), or Argentina (12.3%)—hints at the role that might have been played in activating these flows by the 2007 Historical Memory Law which facilitated Spanish naturalisation of descendants of Spanish citizens who emigrated during the Civil War or the early years of the Franco dictatorship (Izquierdo, 2011). Hence, the volume of people born in Latin America but who move as Spanish nationals has multiplied during this second boom, from only 11,781 cases in 2013 to 42,614 in 2018, and 41,780 in 2019. If we look at the proportion of Spaniards in the migratory flows, this rose to more than 30% of migrants from Cuba and Venezuela after 2007, thus suggesting that nationalisation is part of migration strategy. These percentages fall in the years of greatest migratory intensity (Figure 5) although, in absolute terms, the numbers of migrants with Spanish nationality keep rising.

(Figure 5 near here)

Meanwhile, during the second boom, there was also an influx of immigrants who were naturalised in the most prominent countries of the first boom, where the Historical Memory Law has a residual effect. In these cases, the increased number of Spaniards should be related to the returns to Latin America during the Great Recession by people who had previously obtained Spanish nationality. This would be the situation of some Ecuadorian and Bolivian migrants who, although they constituted migratory flows that were far from the intensity of those of the first decade of the century, were notable for a large presence of Spanish nationals. Among Ecuadorians, this was more than 30%. By contrast, among immigrants from the countries which, without historical migratory links with Spain, predominated in the second boom—as was the case of Nicaragua—the presence of Spanish nationals was very small.

As for structure, the presence of minors would reflect the existence of processes of family reunification. The numbers range from a maximum among Ecuadorians (25% of registered arrivals) to minimums among Cubans (12.4%) and Nicaraguans (12%), which would explain the secondary peak that appears at the age of 17 and the subsequent drop after the age of

majority is reached, which makes reunification more difficult. As for inflows of adults, their representation is significant among Cubans (7.5%), with values of around 5% among Argentines, Chileans, and Venezuelans in magnitudes that are always low and related to the difficulties of reunification with confirmed forebears in Spain (Domingo et al. 2010).

4.3. The impact of the second boom on immigrant population numbers

Observation of the year of arrival of the 3,236,130 Latin American immigrants who appear in the 2021 Spanish census makes it possible to verify the effect of this second migratory boom with clear identification of the countries that have predominated. About 1.3 million (41.7%) arrived during the first boom, which would be from 2001 to 2010,[6] 0.3 million (9.6%) during the crisis, and almost a million (30.4%) during the second boom. One also sees that, for some origins, the impact of the second boom is imperceptible. This is what has happened among Ecuadorians and Bolivians, most of whom migrated at the beginning of the century and for whom the second boom barely represents 12.4% and 14% of total residents. At the opposite extreme are the protagonists of this second wave since more than half of immigrants appearing in the census arrived between 2016 and 2019: 53.7% for Nicaragua, 53.5% for Venezuela, 53% for Honduras, and 49.7% for El Salvador. In these cases, significant volumes of immigration coincide with still very low figures for emigration, so the contribution in the second boom is substantial. However, in the countries of origin that lead both booms, registrations of recent years represent figures from 22.3% of currently registered Argentines to 33.8% of Colombians, who show a high degree of renewal of populations according to their participation in recent flows. However, if we take the years of crisis, from 2011 to 2015, there are still significant numbers of Dominicans (18.5%) and Cubans (19%), as well as of Hondurans (16.5%) and Nicaraguans (16%) among the residents who arrived in those years, which draws attention to the importance of push factors when they are coming to a country that is immersed in an economic crisis. Then again, with some origins, the first boom still represents most of today's residents, as is the case of 72.9% of Bolivians, 63.6% of Ecuadorians, and 56.1% of Uruguayans.

4.4. The existence of a migrant filter during COVID-19: selection by education

We start from the hypothesis that one of the collateral effects of the management of the pandemic would be a sociodemographic filtering in the selection of immigrants. In order to test this hypothesis, we again use the recently published data of the 2021 census, thanks to which

we can discover the educational level of migrants coming to Spain in 2020. We then compare these levels with those shown by arrivals in the previous years of 2018 and 2019. The data shown in Figure 6 indicate that, contrary to expectations, for all ages of registration, there is a decline in numbers of immigrants with higher levels of education in favour of those who arrive with only primary schooling.

(Figure 6 near here)

By country of origin, this guideline, which would suggest a negative filter by level of education, disappears and it only responds to unequal changes in the volume of entries from different countries. There is no clear pattern by age with some countries of origin where educational level increases slightly (2.9% more among Argentines, 1.6% among Cubans, and 1.5% among Brazilians) while, for other countries (Uruguay and Bolivia), the variations are barely discernible. For others it drops, in this case with a steeper decline, with 7% fewer migrants with higher education among Venezuelans, 6% among Nicaraguans, 3.4% among Peruvians, and 2.8% among Mexicans.

(Figure 7 near here)

5. Spatial distribution in Spain

Finally, we consider migratory flows from the perspective of territory in the country of destination with the aim of showing possible differences in the places of first registration over time. Migratory flows of Latin Americans into Spain have been characterised by their entry into the country through the two most urban provinces, preferably Madrid (28.5% of arrivals since 2020), with Barcelona in second place (17.5%). The third destination, some distance behind, is Valencia with barely 5.4% of arrivals. The sum for the two main destinations has always come to more than 40% of registrations, with two high points, one at the start of the first boom and another at the start of the second boom, in this latter case from 2014 to 2015 when the figure again rose to more than 50%. The country's two largest metropolises would therefore have been more attractive in times of accelerated immigration while, in later stages, the existence of migratory chains would have led to greater spatial distribution of the flows. Differences are observed among origins, with bigger concentrations in these two provinces of Peruvians (65.7%), Dominicans (58%), Mexicans (57.8%), Costa Ricans (56%), Hondurans and Chileans (54%), and Ecuadorians (53.7%), which eventually led to the existence of internal

migrations in Spain that contributed to their redistribution, both around provinces (Bayona et al. 2017) and also in metropolitan municipalities.

(Figure 8 near here)

By contrast, some countries of origin present patterns of specific settlement, either because they reproduce the geography of twentieth-century Spanish emigration, as was observed with the first wave from 2000 to 2007 (Vono and Domingo, 2007), for example with 25.8% of Cuban immigrants going to the Canary Islands and their concentration in some Galician municipalities, or because of specialisation in specific labour niches linked with certain localities (which would be the case of Argentines in tourist destinations like Malaga or the Balearic Islands), or the singularities of new migratory chains, for example the arrival of flows from Nicaragua to Zaragoza and Gipuzkoa (as also happened at one point with an unusual concentration of Hondurans in Girona). Accordingly, Cuba and Nicaragua are the only two countries of origin that do not appear with the provinces of Barcelona and Madrid as their main destinations. However, concentration in Barcelona and Madrid occurs with other immigrant groups and is only exceeded by Asian immigrants. If the figure for Latin Americans was 44.7% in 2019, that for Asians was 57.7%.

Moreover, in contrast with what happens with immigrants from other origins, this distribution is associated with high representation in provincial capitals. With minimum figures of over 40% for Argentines and Colombians, and maximums of almost 60% for Peruvians and Dominicans, a high degree of urban concentration is observed. Conversely, these values barely reach 30% for Europeans and Africans, despite a constant rising tendency of settlement in capital cities among the former. Only Asians, with figures of just above 50% would show greater urban settlement of migratory flows. This high degree of representation should be understood as being related to the function of cities as places of first entry but also and in particular with the high degree of labour specialisation of Latin Americans in the service sectors of urban economies.

The temporal evolution of flows shows a very stable pattern over time and one that is related with the uneven distribution of the Spanish population. The distribution of registrations is, then, very marked by the country's two biggest provinces and directly linked with the spatial location of the population. In order to sidestep this effect, Figure 8 relates immigrant registrations with the population in each of the Spanish provinces in the four periods under consideration.[7] However, the primacy of Madrid and Barcelona still appears to be very evident, although other

territorial dynamics closely related with the period under observation can also be observed. Hence, during the first boom, the province of Murcia in the southeastern Mediterranean stands out for its high level of attraction in which the ratio between registered immigrants and local population is even higher than it is for Barcelona. This can be explained by the inflow of workers, especially from Ecuador, into the agricultural sector which was highly intensive in those years (Pedone, 2000). The Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands, the Mediterranean provinces of Malaga, Valencia and Alicante, and Girona were also highly attractive destinations at the time. During the economic crisis, the province of Murcia, and especially those of the Valencian Community (where there was a considerable outflow of migrants with the onset of the crisis and increasing unemployment in the construction sector), and also Malaga, ceased to be centres of reception. Yet the demand in the islands remains stable and Navarre, in the north of Spain where the effects of the economic crisis are not so great, unequivocally appears as a destination.

The period of recovery shows a territorial pattern that is very similar to the preceding period, with a greater presence of Tenerife in the Canary Islands, which is explained by growing numbers of Venezuelan immigrants with historical ties to the islands (Díaz Hernández et al. 2021). At the same time and for the whole period, the scant relevance of a good part of Spain's inland provinces is noticeable. Only Guadalajara shows an attraction level in keeping with its population size, and this would be a result of its closeness to Madrid. Hence, on the basis of their population size, Extremadura, Castile and Leon, and Castile-La Mancha have received much smaller flows than expected. In the north, the Cantabrian coast, although with lower numbers than expected, still has a certain level of attraction owing to its migratory past and the enduring links with it.

6. Concluding remarks

The results of our study confirm the existence of a second migratory boom which, even more intense than the first, shows migrant profiles where age and feminisation are less important than they were previously due to the main reasons motivating migration (from pull to push factors), and also that the flows continue despite the changing economic circumstances. Nevertheless, we can observe that the decreased presence of women only applies to origins with a certain migratory tradition, while more recent origins show the feminisation patterns of the early stages or, in other words, the pioneering role of women in the construction of these

new migratory systems which tend to level out in time or, at least, show less gender bias in which women predominate. With the exception of Venezuela, a notable feature of the most recent migrant flows from Latin America—which is to say systems in formation, as is the case with most Central American countries—is the pioneering role of women. This is related with the persistence of, and demand for care and domestic work for demographic (ageing of the autochthonous population) and sociodemographic (the need to reconcile family and employment needs in a weak welfare state) reasons. In the large-scale nature of the outflow from Venezuela, by contrast, the gender difference is irrelevant. Yet, even with the flows from Central America, one might imagine that the pressure of expulsion factors could have the effect of an anticipated regrouping of male relatives (mainly sons and husbands). In consolidated migratory systems like those from Argentina and Colombia, however, *de facto* regrouping has occurred and has expanded the family circle to previous generations (parents) and other relatives while, not to be overlooked either is the pull factor for students, which is more linked with scholarship policy in the countries of origin and destination. Finally, there are the flows that have lost the importance they had during the second boom (like those from Ecuador and Bolivia). Although it might be considered that, in terms of earlier intensity and volume, they are in decline, they are still, in fact, maintained owing to the establishment of a transnational community on both shores of the Atlantic, which continues to exchange migratory movements under the aegis of Spanish nationality, and offers a latent possibility if these countries should present unforeseen conditions that lead to expulsion.

The second boom was abruptly interrupted by the declaration of a State of Alarm on 14 March 2020 because of the pandemic. This meant restrictions on mobility and their effects on trans-Atlantic flights but, despite these measures, inflows of migrants into the country were still greater than those during the various stages of the economic crisis. If, from the standpoint of 2014, the post-crisis recovery was unexpected, in the case of the pandemic where the downturn was temporary and, on occasion, steeper, the recovery this time, despite the impediments posed by the economic crisis, might be even quicker than the earlier one.

A second conclusion concerns the activating role of the legislative framework in enabling and accelerating flows. If, during the first boom, regularisations and the requirement of a Shengen visa were triggers for the acceleration or anticipation of flows in some cases, in the second boom it seems that the 2007 Historical Memory Law had a similar but deferred effect. We speak about “deferred” effect insofar as the large-scale nationalisation of descendants of Spaniards from some countries, who migrated after 2014, was seen as a safeguard to be used

only in case of need or, in other words, it was not necessary reflected in immediate flows. Its reform in 2022, with the Law of Democratic Memory (also known as the Law of Grandchildren), which allows for naturalisation in new cases, means that the flow will continue. In this regard, one might also wonder whether, although it is limited in scope, the New Reform of the Law on Foreigners, passed in 2022, which makes family reunification and obtaining work permits easier, might have an influence in the form of future increased numbers of people coming under these two headings. This preference in access to nationality ends up shaping, in Spain, a system of ethno-cultural selection of flows (favouring Latin Americans over immigrants from other origins). The result for the other countries of the European Union could be increased future migration of "new Spaniards", thanks to ease of mobility in the Schengen space once nationality has been obtained.

Pending publication of the complete data from the 2021 census, and thus lacking socioeconomic data on migrants, we are unable to confirm with any certainty one of our hypotheses, namely that the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic ended up applying a socioeconomic filter that would favour people with higher levels of education and better economic situations. The first data on education levels indicate that, for most origins, there is a drop in the number of arrivals of migrants with higher levels of education, although the closing of universities and the non-arrival of international students could explain this. Yet it is also true that selection is carried out under the umbrella of European Union legislation, which favours this type of migration over that of less qualified people, regardless of the labour market. In any case, we believe that if COVID-19 is not the cause, it could have represented a landmark in the sociodemographic characteristics of the flows, where higher levels of education would predominate after the pandemic.

To conclude, we have placed considerable emphasis on push factors as distinctive elements of the second migratory boom. It is not as if they did not exist in the first boom when, indeed, they had had an influence in certain specific circumstances, for example, the dollarisation of the Ecuadorian economy in 1996, and the *corralito* (mandatory restrictions on cash withdrawals from banks) in Argentina in 2001. However, even when the Spanish economy was characterised by the predominance of low-productivity sectors, requiring a massive influx of poorly paid workers—hotels, restaurants, and services linked with tourism—the push factors we have described, and the dense networks of previously established communities are what best explain this second movement. From a systemic perspective in the context of globalisation, the large-scale mobilisation of labour between the global South and North has the result of

accelerating reproduction of the system on the basis of unequal exchanges. Hence, the application of structural adjustment policies in several Latin American countries should be understood as being at the root of expulsion of populations (of different educational levels), mainly to the United States, Canada and, recently, to Spain. However, it is also possible to see how, in the case of Spain, migration from the global South has contributed to reproduction of the middle classes, especially when it covers low-skilled jobs and, as mentioned above, those related with care and domestic work. The factors that converge in the formation of a migration system between Spain and some Latin American countries can be extrapolated to other migration flows to the extent that previous colonial and migration experience on the one hand, and the effects of economic globalization, on the other can be observed in other countries of the global North with respect to their various colonies or areas of previous emigration. The colonial past, which has already been pointed out as essential in the formation of migratory systems (Castel, De Hass, and Miller, 2020), explains cultural, legal, and political elements that converge in their shaping and maintenance. Separately and together, cultural (shared language, preference of the destination population over other origins), legal (ease of obtaining nationality, establishment of migration conventions), and political (preference for the ethnic selection of migrants in terms of assimilation), factors all play a part, while globalization in the economic field has only deepened the unequal exchange that includes migrations themselves. It is this centrality of the colonial legacy that explains the fact that, even while considering the factors of expulsion and attraction, at a theoretical level analysis of migratory systems comes close to postcolonial theory in migration studies (Gómez Vélez et al., 2017), especially with regard to maintenance of global hierarchies that include the international division of labor, but also of racial and ethnic hierarchies that affect integration into the receiving society.

Notes

[1] The terms “Migration system” and “Migratory system” are both used to refer to the same process.

[2] Unlike other origins for which ten years of legal and continuous residence in the country are required, nationals from countries of Latin America need only two years of legal residence in Spain (a situation that is similar to that of Portuguese, Andorran, Filipino, and Guinean immigrants, and descendants of Sephardic Jews).

[3] The data are still provisional, and they do not detail the population’s relationship with employment.

[4] Inflows of migrants born in Spain are not counted as the dynamics of these movements are not always the same as those for international migrations.

[5] This figure represents a minimum because, in the early years and until 2004, immigrant registrations were not correctly recorded in the RVS.

[6] Owing to disaggregation of the census, we are not able to reconstruct the migratory periods identified in this study. By way of approximation, we work with the years from 2001 to 2010 as covering the first boom, from 2011 to 2015 as the years of crisis, and from 2016 to 2019, as those of the second boom.

[7] The maps show the ratio between the international migration flows of Latin Americans received in the province and its population halfway through the period. Values higher than 1 mean that, based on its population, the province received a higher percentage of immigrants from Latin America than was expected while figures of less than 1 indicate the opposite. Each of the categories is divided into two for better visualisation of the intensities of this attraction.

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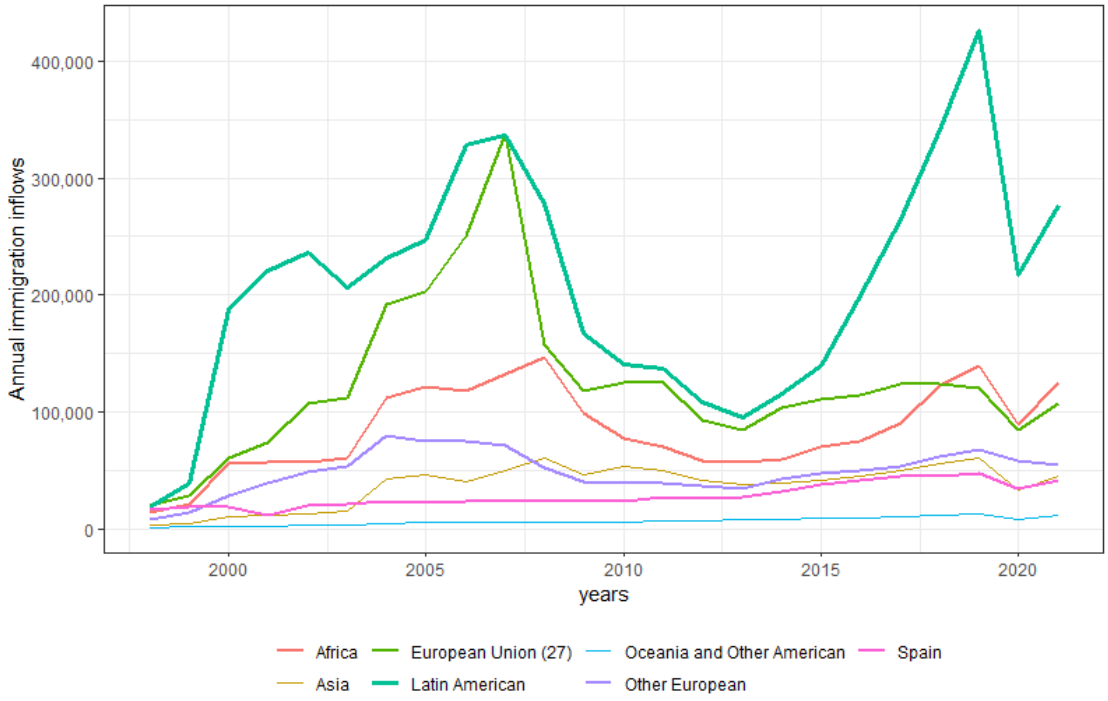
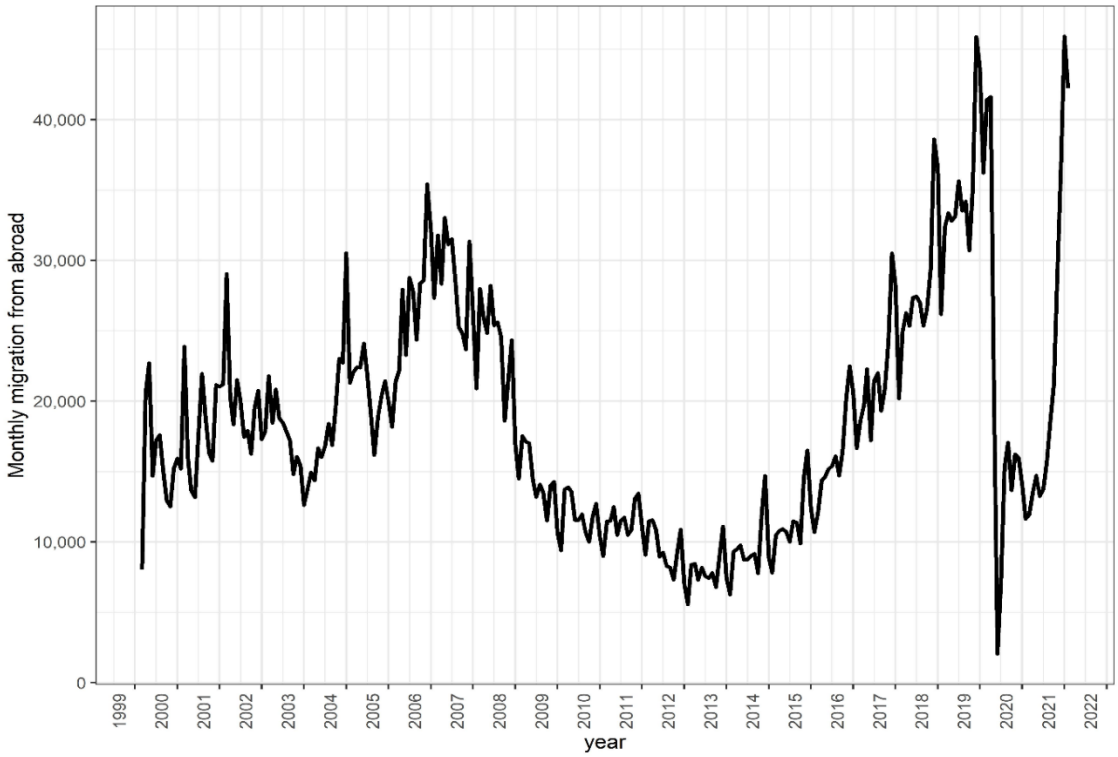
Figure 1. International migration flows by main continental aggregations: Spain 1998-2021



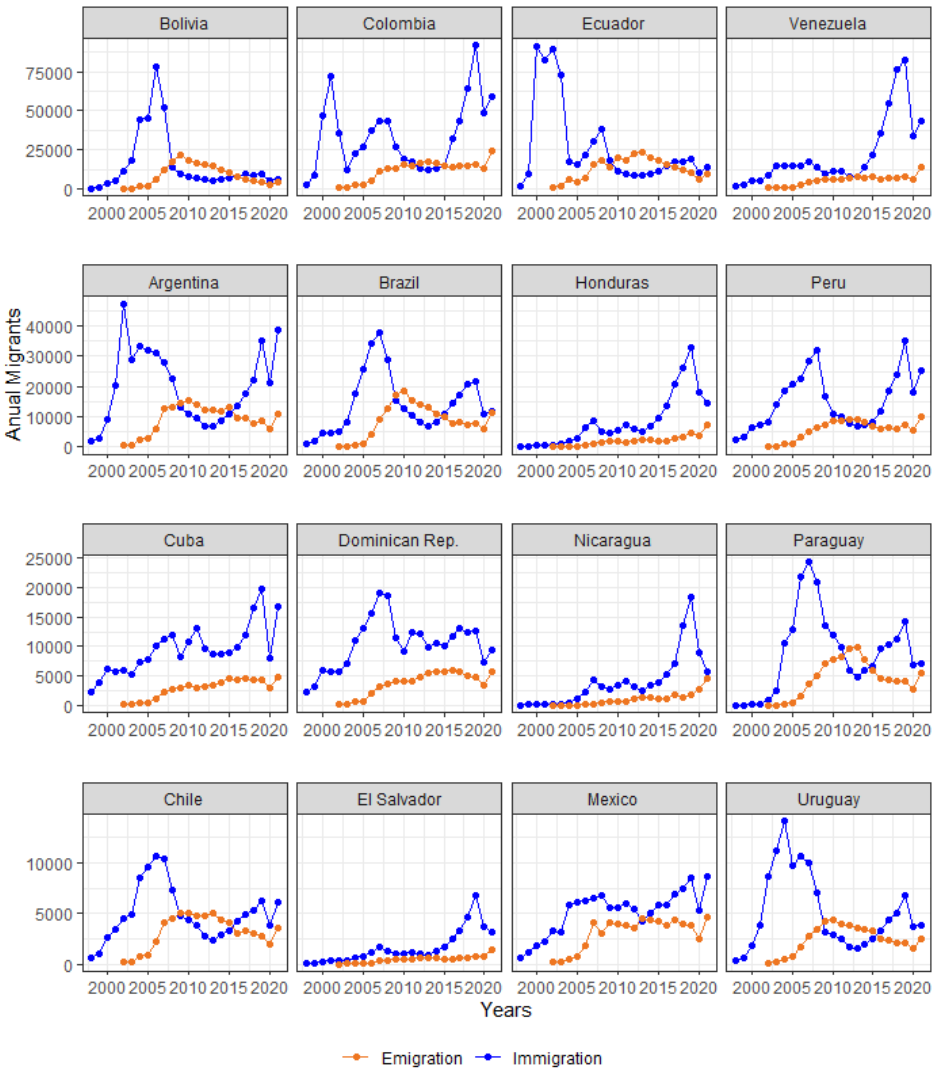
Source: Residential Variation Statistics, 2000-2021 (INE)

Figure 2. Monthly inflows to Spain entries of migrants from Latin America, 2000-2021



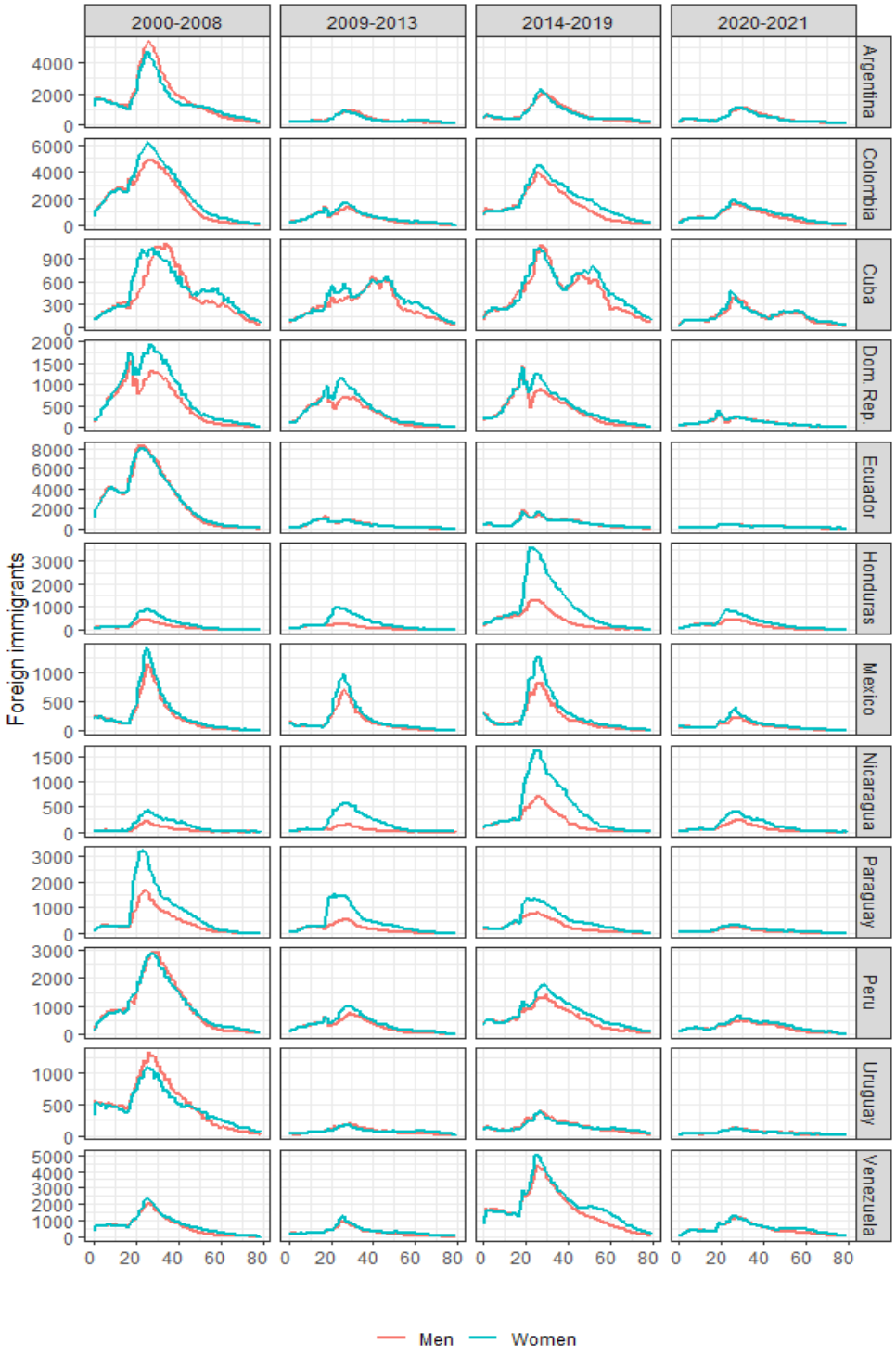
Source: Residential Variation Statistics, 2000-2021 (INE)

Figure 3. Evolution of Latin American immigration in Spain, 1998-2021



Source: Residential Variation Statistics, 1998-2020 (INE)

Figure 4. Profiles of registered arrivals by sex, age, and period of entry into Spain



Source: Residential Variation Statistics, 1998-2021 (INE)

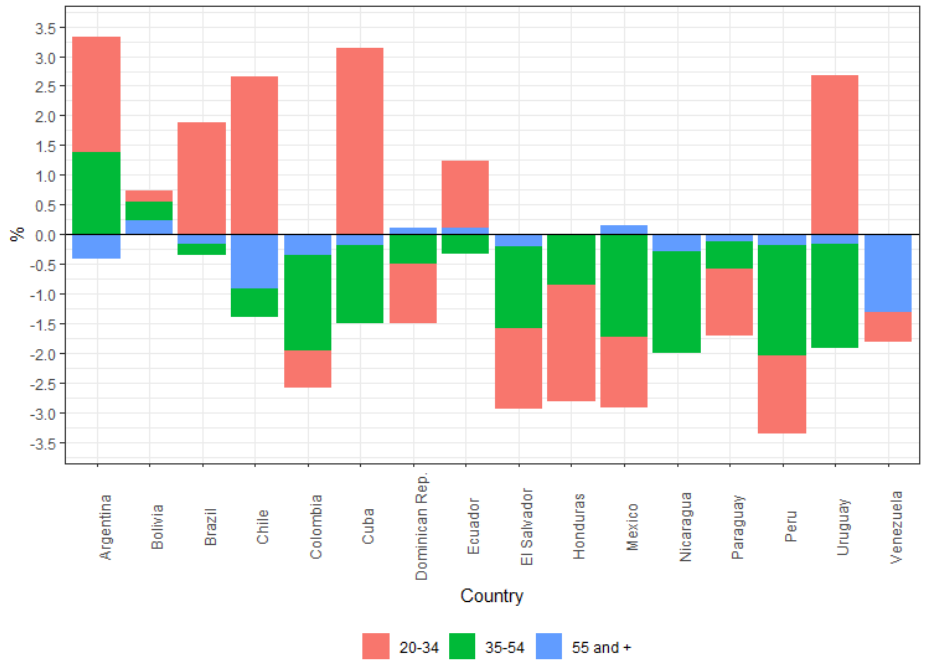
Figure 5. Registration by immigration and proportion of entries with Spanish nationality, 2000-2021

Source: Residential Variation Statistics, 2000-2021 (INE)

Figure 6. Latin American registrations by age and year of arrival in Spain, by educational level

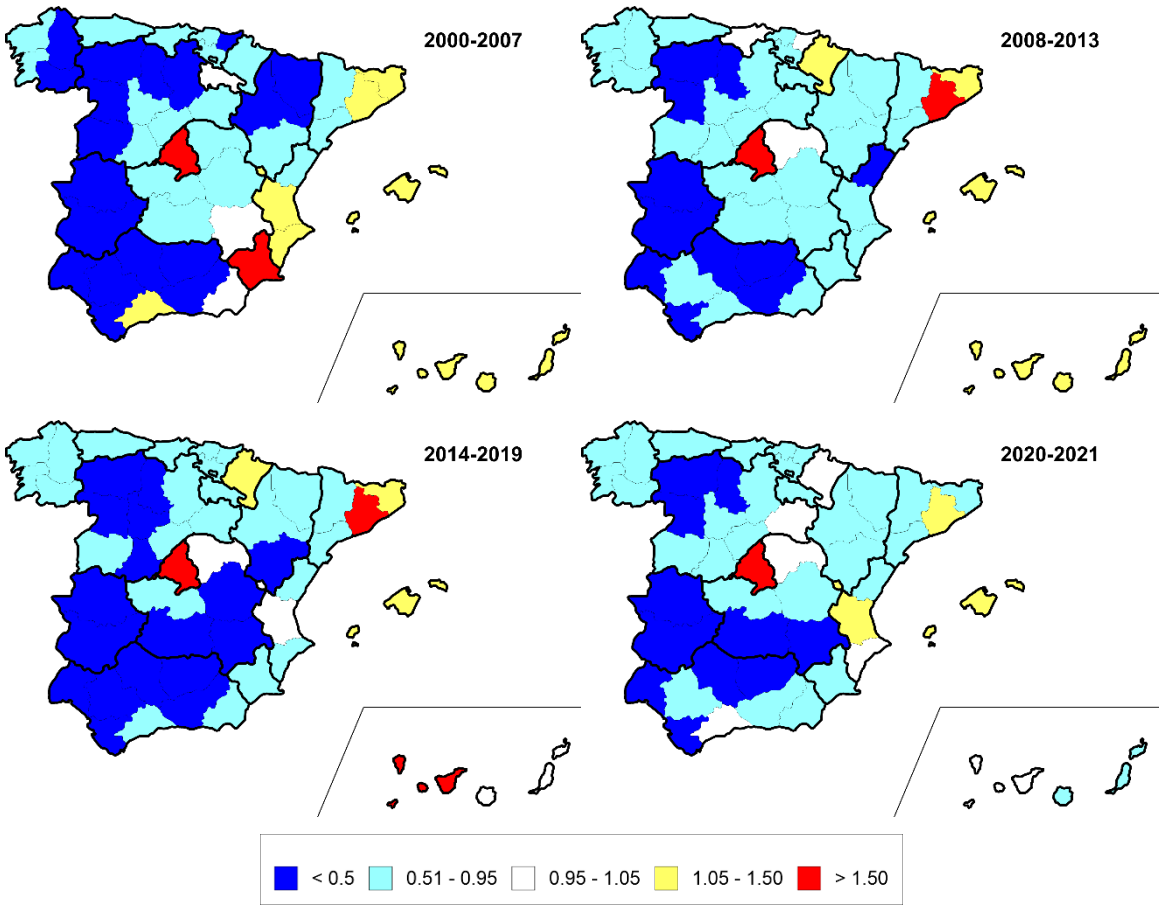
Source: Population and Housing Census, 2021

Figure 7. Percentage changes in educational level in registrations of immigrants in Spain before (2018 – 2019) and during the pandemic (2020)



Source: Population and Housing Census, 2021

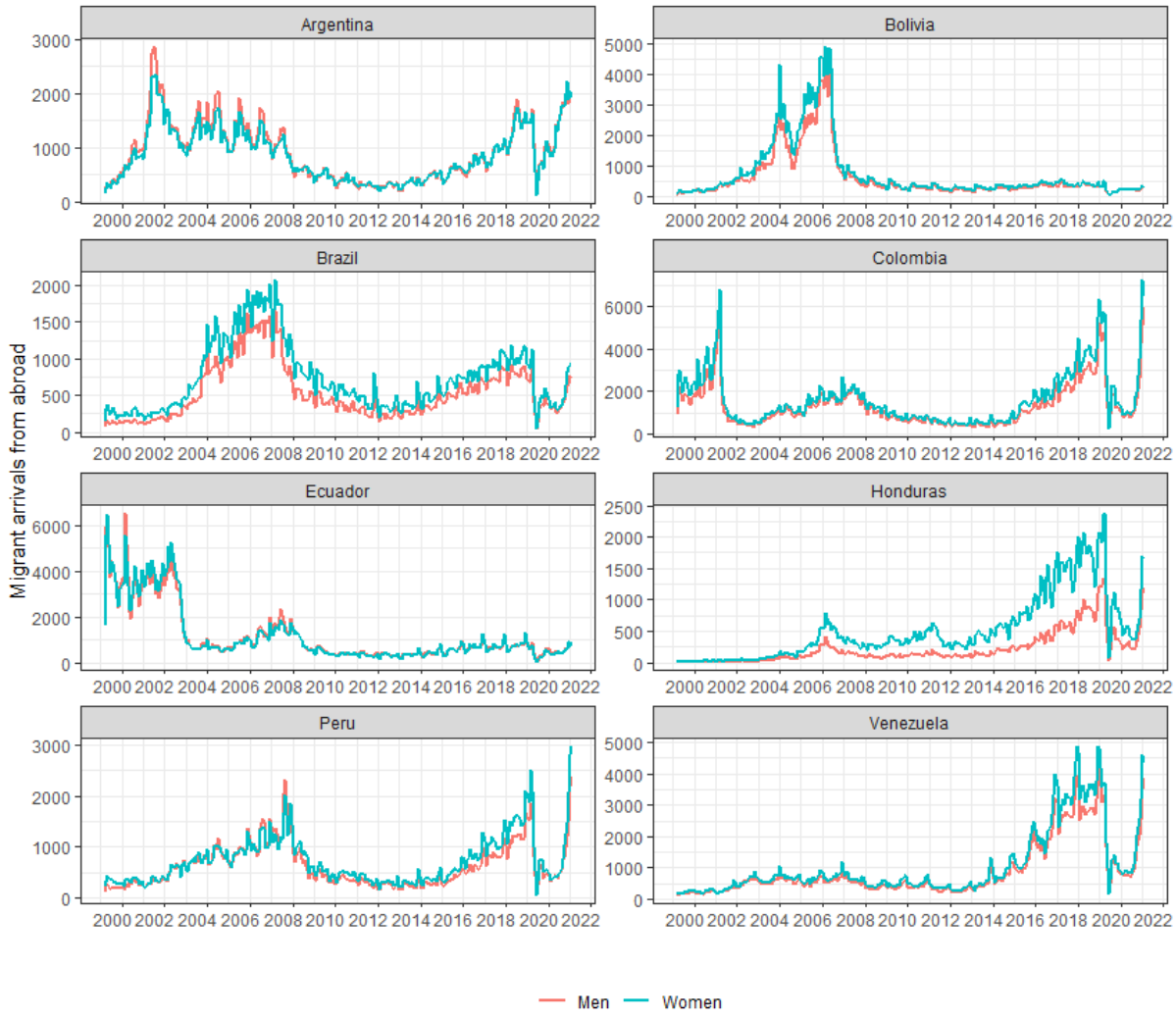
Figure 8. Relationship between registrations of Latin American immigrants and provincial populations in Spain, by periods



Source: Residential Variation Statistics, 2000-2021 (INE)

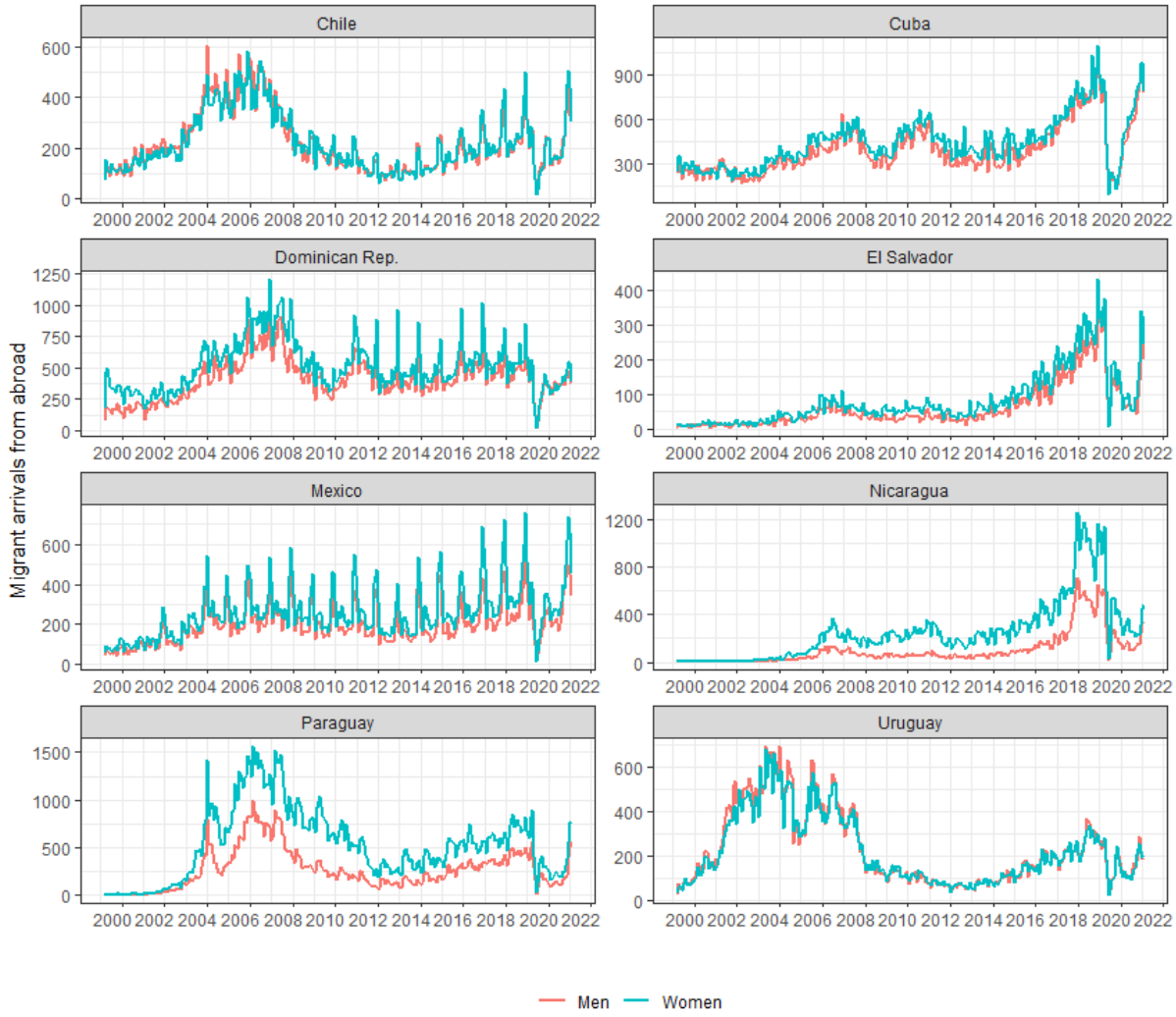
Annex

Figure A1. Registered arrivals per month by origin, sex, and main inflows from Latin America into Spain, 2000-2021



Source: Residential Variation Statistics, 1998-2021 (INE)

Figure A2. Registered arrivals per month by origin, sex, and main inflows from Latin America into Spain, 2000-2021



Source: Residential Variation Statistics, 1998-2021 (INE)