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Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

“Labour-market effects of recent immigration in Spain and their representation in the political discourse.”

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Abstract

The project examines the recent impact of immigration on the Spanish labour markets from both an economic and political perspective. Previous economic literature generally suggests that immigration has little or no significant effects on labour-market outcomes in Spain, whereas political science literature highlights that ideology and media sharp the political discourse and the public opinion and how such connection is created.

The economic analysis is based on the interpretation of regression models using labour-market data, immigration indicators and relevant economic variables. The political analysis relies on the examination of interviews conducted with politicians from different political parties.

The findings are consistent with previous economic literature, indicating that immigration does not generate significant distortions in the labour market. Nevertheless, the political interpretation of these developments appears to be strongly influenced by ideological considerations, leading to differing and sometimes opposite narratives regarding the economic and social consequences of immigration.

Keywords

Labour-market, immigration, economic impact, politics, Spain.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Movements of people have shaped the history of territories for many years, having an impact on every aspect of society, including demography, politics, economy, culture, beliefs, science…And Spain is one of the best examples; it is a country that has historically been involved in dense migration flows, both at internal level and international level, and these movements have transformed and defined the landscapes, cities and culture that define our society today.

Over the past centuries, Spain has shifted from being a country of emigration to one of immigration. Following the discovery of America, large migration flows moved toward the Americas for nearly three centuries, later concentrating in countries such as Argentina and Cuba, as well as in North Africa. During the 20th century, Spain experienced significant emigration due to the Civil War, the early years of the dictatorship, and a later economic migration in the 1960s and 1970s thanks to the openness of the dictatorship, alongside substantial internal rural-to-urban movements known as the big rural exodus.

A major turning point occurred in the 1990s, with democratic consolidation and economic growth, transforming Spain into a destination country. Increased labour demand and [1]improved economic conditions attracted an increasing number of migrants. Although immigration flows temporarily declined during the global financial crisis (resulting in negative net migration until 2015) and again in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic because

[1] Ibero-American Migratory Movements. (n.d.). Pares.mcu.es. https://pares.mcu.es/MovimientosMigratorios/staticContent.form?viewName=historia

of the restrictions of international mobility, they have since then recovered and continued to grow. This recent period of sustained immigration constitutes the central focus of this project

The project studies the labour-market effects of immigration in Spain, and examines how these effects contrast with regional media narratives and political discourse. Over the past decades, immigration has played a significant role in Spain's demographic growth, labour supply expansion, and sectoral development among others. Recent economic developments, especially the negative ones, have intensified debates about competition for jobs, wage pressures, and the sustainability of the labour markets. These discussions in most cases have been developed independently of academic findings in labour economics, leading to discrepancies not only by regular citizens but also in media and politics with experts on the field having very heterogeneous views.

Against this background, the project aims to analyse not only measurable labour-market outcomes such as unemployment or wages, but also how these outcomes are interpreted and communicated in the political discourse.
By situating the analysis within Spain's recent economic and political trajectory, the study seeks to understand whether public debate reflects the complexity identified in the economic literature, or whether it simplifies and reframes immigration's impact in response to broader institutional and electoral dynamics.

This project tries to approach the topic of immigration combining economics and politics to cover an existing gap in literature as there is no relevant study that approaches immigration from such an interdisciplinary approach. It is true that there are multiple studies in the different disciplines; but there's no relevant literature connecting them, so that is why

this project aims to connect these disciplines, which are deeply connected in real life but not so much in research.

1. 2. Research question

The project will be developed with the intention of answering the following research question:

Is there a mismatch between the empirical evidence on the impact of immigration and the way this impact of immigration is portrayed in political discourse ?

The purpose of this question is to study the empirical economic evidence (employment, wages…) and the political framing of this evidence, to see if there is relation in a positive sense (alignment) or in a negative sense (discretion). It wants to study the empirical claims and see if the discourse is framed accordingly or not, or up to which point discourse can be changed without an actual empirical shift.

To properly conduct the research to answer the main research question the analysis will be divided into two parts; one of them focused on the analysis of a proposition and the other one the analysis of a hypothesis.

Proposition: Political interests can bias interpretation of economic results and shape media discourse.

Given the high salience of immigration in public debate, it is plausible that economic findings are framed differently depending on political positioning, potentially shaping media discourse and public perception. This proposition arises from the latest developments in the political discourse where differences across politicians seem to be increasing with more radical discourses. This proposition will be analysed via a qualitative analysis that will

consist of interviews to politicians and a comparison of their answers, to analyse their respective discourses and see if ideology shapes them.

Hypothesis: Immigrants have a demonstrable impact on local workers when it comes to labour market outcomes related to quantity and quality of the jobs.

This hypothesis is grounded in labour economics. There are multiple media sources that claim different effects of immigration, the hypothesis is framed in order to understand how the impact of immigration on wages and unemployment depends on factors such as skill composition, sectoral dynamics, and institutional settings. This hypothesis will be analysed using quantitative methods and revising previous literature to understand if there is a significant effect and the implications of such effect.

By analysing everything it will be possible to have a complete understanding of the labour market dynamics and how they are framed by politicians, which is the ultimate goal of the project.

1.3 Expected results and contributions

The expected outcome of this project is to provide a clear answer to the research question. It is anticipated that political actors will emphasize different economic evidence according to their ideological orientation. It is also expected that the quantitative analysis demonstrates that the labour-market effects of immigration are heterogeneous and statistically significant.

In addition, media coverage is expected to reflect and potentially amplify these differences, contributing to the development of distinct narrative patterns surrounding immigration and labour-market outcomes.

The remainder of the dissertation is divided into the following sections: In section 2 an analysis of previous literature on the economic and political dimension will be executed to analyse previous answers to similar questions and provide a solid baseline for the analysis. In section 3 the main economic evidence and market trends are summarised, including analysis of reports and media content that will be useful to prepare the analysis for both sections. Section 4 explains the methodology used in both analyses. Section 5 introduces quantitative analysis with an emphasis on the data and the results obtained. In Section 6 the qualitative analysis is provided, focusing on the political dimension of the project. Lastly Section 7 provides the final conclusions and Section 8 includes the references of the whole project.

2. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

This section aims to provide a detailed summary of the relevant literature on the topic, which will be used as a baseline to which compare results of the project and to provide a solid foundation on the methods used to develop this project. It starts with an overview of general literature related to migration, then it is followed by an analysis of the most recent papers focused on the immigration impact on the Spanish economy and lastly it contains the review on political literature.

From a microeconomic point of view, individuals migrate to maximize their wealth or wellbeing and the differential between the current salary at the home country against the expected future salary in a foreign country (Hicks 1963). The theory also says that individuals think of a migration as an investment where individuals make a sacrifice today to be compensated in the future (Mincer 1978). This same model also suggests that with an increasing age, the benefits of migration are reduced and therefore the level of migration is also reduced, this is relevant because it is consistent for the immigration data in Spain for the period analyzed.

But how is immigration related to labour markets? According to Fischer and Straubhaar (1996) and Carrasco (1998) immigration leads to changes in the labour offer, in the productivity level, in the salary level, in the skill variety (differences in qualifications) and also lead to altered levels and composition of employment and unemployment.

Moving to the specific previous literature on Spain, there are two main approaches in the literature on the effects of immigration on the labour market: the structural approach and the empirical approach.

The first one is based on imposing an explicit theoretical framework that describes the relationship between immigration and variables such as wages or employment. The results obtained from this type of study are derived from simulations within these economic models, and therefore depend crucially on the assumptions of the adopted theoretical framework. Some of the aspects that can be different from a model to another are wage rigidities, the effect of innovation, the complementarity of capital and employment or the substitutability between native and foreign workers.

Inside the list of structural methods the most replicated ones to study this phenomena in Spain are the factor proportion, with a production function (usually a constant elasticity of substitution that can include extensions to distinguish between different levels of experience or education). The best example of this methodology is Izquierdo, Jimeno & Rojas (2010) as it analyses the aggregate effects of immigration using a macroeconomic theoretical framework.

Conversely, the empirical method places fewer theoretical limitations on the connection between immigration and the labor market. These studies utilize the noticed differences in immigrant presence across various aspects like geographical areas, industries, or labor market segments with differing skill levels to directly derive the effect of immigration on wages, employment and other market outcomes of natives.

This method is consequently more reliant on the data at hand and the identification strategies used, and less limited by theoretical assumptions. Some interesting references for this methodology are Atienza-Montero & Romo-Calixto (2021), that analyses observed labour-market outcomes using data from Spain between 2009 and 2018 and Maza & Hierro

(2025), since their study uses spatial econometric techniques to analyse the relationship between immigration and wages across Spanish regions.

But the truth is that empirical literature in Spain on the effects of the immigrant population on the wages and employment of native workers is relatively scarce, and, moreover, none of it analyzes the period following the Great Recession exclusively apart from Atienza-Montero and Romo-Calixto (2021) that analyses the effect of immigration on employment and wages of local workers for the period 2009-2018. For the period that will be analysed in this project (2021-2024) there are not relevant empirical papers.

This can be explained because INE's change in methodology to account for the number of immigrants in 2021 (more details of the process are given further in this project) seems to have created a limitation since it introduces a change of the data related to immigration. It is important to notice that data from INE is used by governments and affiliated entities and also other data providers like Eurostat so it is very influential when it comes to the collection of data.

Another aspect to consider is that the period after the change is relatively short and data has a very limited time-frame. It is very plausible that in some years research on the effect of immigration after 2021 will be conducted, but as of today it constitutes a gap in this type of economic literature. Nonetheless, there are lots of interesting papers that talk about immigration and its economic effects that are very relevant for the project.

It is widely believed that immigration is a threat for local labour markets, this is because people believe that immigrants take jobs from local people and as the competition for

the jobs increases wages tend to go down (Card, Dustmann and Preston, 2012). This seems very intuitive and it is aligned with standard models about labour and international economics. The economic research to date has found relatively little evidence for detrimental effects of immigration on the native population. This is because the labour market is more complex than basic models of supply and demand suggest, and the channels through which it can absorb new workers are more diverse than simple wage or employment adjustments (Glitz 2014).

Using panel data analysis, Atienza-Montero and Romo-Calixto (2021) find that the immigrant population does not have a statistically significant effect on the employment and wages of Spanish workers. However, cross-sectional estimations show that immigration had a negative effect on native employment during the post-crisis years of 2013 and 2014 and a positive effect in 2017. Regarding native wages, the effect was negative in 2010 and 2014.

Maza and Hierro (2025) also study the effect of immigration for the Spanish population for the period that goes from 2006 to 2021 using a regional approach. Their findings showed a slight, adverse effect that vanishes for highly skilled immigrants. Sanchis, A. G., Remoaldo, P., and Martinez-de-Ibarreta, C. (2025) performed a multivariate analysis using econometric panel data models. The analysis was done at a regional level, so the data panel was built using data from autonomous communities and they concluded that there was no significant relationship between the immigration share and the unemployment rate.

The article of Izquierdo Jimeno and Rojas (2010) on the aggregate effects of immigration in Spain shows that there is no significant relationship between the unemployment rate and immigration for the period 1995 to 2006.

Overall, the literature points to broadly consistent findings: immigration does not appear to have a significant impact on local labour markets, particularly in terms of wages and employment rates among the native population. Although some studies identify limited negative effects during specific periods, especially in the aftermath of the Great Recession, and others, such as P. Atienza-Montero and C. E. Romo-Calixto (2021), report positive effects on employment in 2017, these findings remain exceptions rather than the dominant trend in the literature.

From the political side, Scheve and Slaughter (2001) argue that attitudes toward immigration are strongly shaped by labor market competition. Using US data they find that high-skilled individuals are more likely to support immigration as they see it as complimentary to their labour-market positions, whereas low-skilled individuals are more likely to oppose immigration because of the perceived threat of substitution and to put downward pressure on wages. At an European level, Martín and Scuderi (2023) argue that the left party voters are more open toward immigrants than the right party voters.

Moving to Spain, Estrada-Villaseñor, Rúa and Fernández (2025) show that in 2021 right-wing political beliefs, Catholicism, a lower level of education, unstable employment, and little interaction with immigrants are the main factors associated with resistance to immigration. However, a startling pattern of somewhat intolerant stances was noted among center-left ideologies. The same publication states that attitudes toward migration in receiving

nations can be greatly impacted by the socioeconomic differences between immigrants and natives in Europe both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Because successful immigrant inclusion can be seen as advantageous to the overall economy, closing unemployment gaps and improving labor market integration in some situations may encourage more positive attitudes. However, negative perceptions of immigrants as economically vulnerable or dependent on social welfare systems may be reinforced by the persistence of income disparities, increased risks of poverty in some countries, and difficulties with basic education.

Rinken (2019) shows that voters for VOX have a less favorable opinion of immigration than those for other right-wing parties, but it's not clear how much of an impact it had on their vote. Although there are perceived complaints about poor working conditions and access to public resources, they rarely lead to anti-immigrant animosity; instead, the political and business classes are held accountable. Nonetheless, political attitudes towards migration are not only defined by the potential role that they play in labour markets, other economic aspects have a major role as well, like access to public services or state benefits. And of course aspects other than economics like cultural values, social perception or religion also play a very important role in the political discourse.

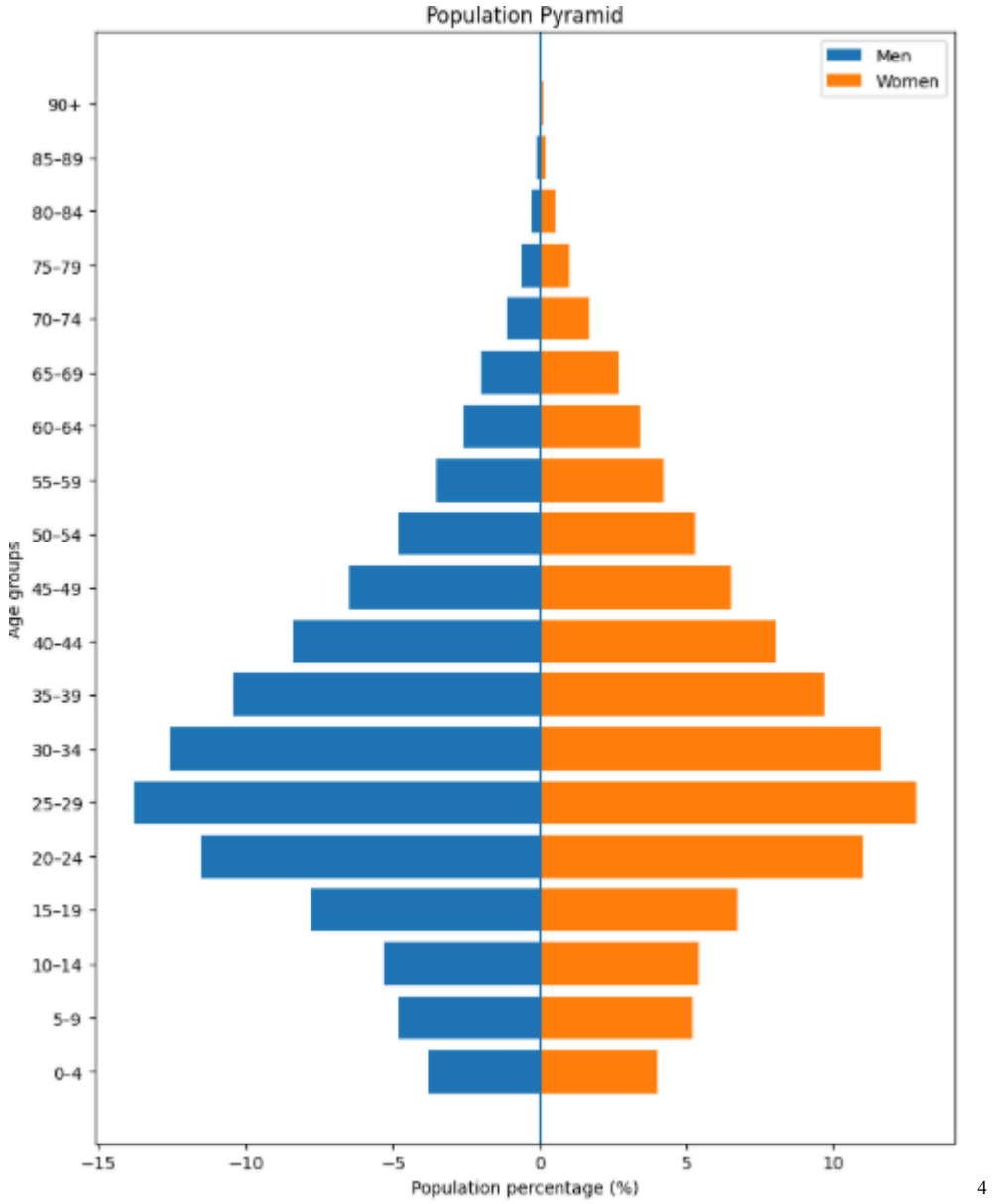
3. RECENT EVIDENCE ON MIGRATION AND MARKET TRENDS

To properly understand the phenomena and draw reliable conclusions from the research, it is necessary to have some background knowledge on the topic, especially for the period to be analysed.

After an unprecedented increase in 2022, temporary labour migration to OECD countries also continued to grow. More than 2.4 million work permits were granted in OECD countries representing a 16% year-on-year increase [2]. On average, almost 77% of immigrants were economically active, with almost 71% employed and less than 10% unemployed in 2024. Overall, the evolution of both employment and labour participation rates was more favourable among migrant women than men.[3]

It is important to mention that immigration is especially relevant to labour markets as a very important percentage of immigrants arrive in Spain during their working age.

[2] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/international-migration-outlook-2024_50b0353e-en.html
[3] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/international-migration-outlook-2025_ae26c893-en.html



[4]

The previous population pyramid shows the structure of the immigrant population in Spain. The first thing to notice is that there is a lot of parity between the number of men and women across all the cohorts. In 2024 (the year from which the data is extracted to build the pyramid) the number of male immigrants is 681.606 and the number of women is 606.956. In relative terms it's around 53% men against 47% women. The other characteristic that stands out is that the most dense cohorts are the ones corresponding to working years. A large part

[4] Graph elaborated using data from INE https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?t=69687. It shows the distribution of the immigrant population in Spain for the year 2024.

of the immigrants are between twenty and forty-five years old, thus implying that they will enter the labour markets and influence them. The pyramids from previous years are very similar to this one so to avoid repetition only the pyramid from the last year is included.

Immigrants in Spain generally have very limited job options and are forced to low-paying and unstable industries. In particular, at least 30% of workers in domestic service, hospitality, construction, and agriculture are immigrants, and they hold almost all of the newly created jobs in these industries.[5] It is worth mentioning that even though this is a general labour- market trend there are immigrants in all the economic and social sectors and some of them in the most prestigious industries, from CEO's from big companies to the famous corporate expats that are moving from northern countries to big cities like Barcelona [6] or even very well-known footballers and elite sportspeople, that require special residence and working permits[7]. But overall this is just an elite and the market analysis is guided by the general conditions of the vast majority of immigrants.

Immigrants decide to go to a country based on multiple factors: economic, legal, cultural…but the labour-market one is one of the key determinants, and this suits very well the case for Spain, as the sectors that are attracting more immigrants are those where labour is more scarce. According to the annual report of the Bank of Spain [8],the proportion of

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5 https://www.genbeta.com/actualidad/90-empleo-creado-enero-2024-a-marzo-2025-espana-fue-ocupado-inmigrantes-que-pura-logica

6 https://www.ara.cat/societat/barcelona/expats-aixi-son-nouvinguts-transformant-barcelona_130_4808590.html

7 https://www.gentile.law/autorizacion-de-trabajo-para-deportistas-y-artistas-en-espana/#:~:text=Deportistas%20profesionales%20fichados%20por%20equipos%20espa%C3%B1oles%20Los,desempe%C3%B1ar%20su%20actividad%20dentro%20del%20territorio%20nacional.

8 https://www.bde.es/f/webbe/SES/Secciones/Publicaciones/PublicacionesAnuales/InformesAnuales/24/Fich/InfAnual_2024.pdf

businesses reporting a labor shortage has significantly increased. This is very noticeable in the hospitality and construction industries, where 64% and 56% of businesses, respectively, report being impacted by a labor shortage and those sectors are the ones where immigrants find most of their job opportunities. The Bank of Spain's Business Activity Survey (EBAE) also states that recent years have seen especially high net immigration flows to Spain, which have been essential in supplying our economy's expanding job needs. Thus, foreign-born workers accounted for about 76% of all jobs created in Spain between the end of 2019 and the end of 2024, even though some reports like the one elaborated by Elcano institute estimates that this percentage is as high as 90%[9].

Moving to the political analysis, the current government of Spain has been led by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and its mostly left-wingled allies since 2018 and it has always shown a positive attitude towards immigration. Indeed in February 2026 Pedro Sanchez (president of Spain) announced that their intention was to keep incorporating foreign migrants into the Spanish labour-market and passed a decree that allowed the regularization of 500.000 immigrants so that they could access better labour-market opportunities and withdraw from the non-regularized labour situation. [10] Other parties from the government like Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya are in favour of a migration policy based on inclusion and for the regularization and political participation of the newcomers. [11] Also in the month of February the political force Sumar pushed for a proposal that allowed to

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9 https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/immigration-and-the-labour-market-in-spain-ii-latin-american-immigration/

10 orbes.es/economia/869634/el-gobierno-incorporara-mano-de-obra-extranjera-pese-a-quienes-quieren-que-500-000-personas-trabajen-en-b/

11 https://www.esquerra.cat/politiques-sectorials/ciutadania-i-migracions/#:~:text=Ciutadania%20i%20Migracions%20%2D%20Esquerra.

hire irregular migrants as interns . So overall there's a common intention to include migrants in the labour force.

The main force of the opposition is Partido Popular, which is the most important right-winged party in Spain since the 80's. This political force stands against irregular migration and more in favour of a more strict regularization with employment as an entry door to the country. The proposal focuses on making employment the main channel for immigration, based on merit and economic needs. The main points of their national plan for immigration[12] are the following ones:

-A points-based visa system will evaluate applicants based on education, experience, language skills, and integration. It includes two pathways: direct employment from origin countries in shortage sectors, or temporary visas to search for jobs in high-demand fields, all under strict controls and deadlines.

-It calls for an end to broad, uncontrolled regularizations. Instead, irregular migrants already in Spain would go through a case-by-case, points-based transitional system, prioritizing those who demonstrate employment, contributions, or genuine integration efforts.

-A circular migration program will be developed, allowing temporary workers to come legally for seasonal jobs (e.g., agriculture or construction) with guaranteed return mechanisms, coordinated with regional governments.

Overall, a positive but more strict attitude towards immigration which is not only influenced by labour-market outcomes but also other aspects like cultural integration and criminality among others.

[12] /https://www.pp.es/storage/2025/10/Plan-Nacional-de-Inmigracion-del-Partido-Popular.pdf

The other big political force in the opposition is VOX, which is considered purely right-wing, and has a more radical discourse in topics ranging economics, politics or immigration. They approach immigration with an even more stricter regulatory approach and with the idea to put an end to irregular immigration. The force shares their opinion on immigration and commerce (which is of course related to labour markets) in their official media sites, especially in multiple tiktok channels from Catalunya [13] where they talk about the exclusion of local national (owned by Spanish people) commerce because of the apparition of small business owned by immigrants.

Spanish citizens' perceptions of it diverge based on their ideology, place of residence, and place in the job market. Furthermore, opinions differ among different immigrant groups, but according to CIS 2017[14]54% of respondents evaluated immigration positively, continuing a broader trend of relatively tolerant attitudes in Spain compared with other European countries, but during the last years there has been a slight increase in negative attitudes towards immigration. According to Elcano Royal Institute [15] It is undetermined whether any of this shift can be associated with VOX's institutional presence, but the rise of VOX as an influential political organization is evident in Spain's growing ideological polarization, which interferes with reasoned discussion of immigration and its management.

Other relevant economic institutions like the ECB also show positive attitudes towards immigration, in their last report [16] the organisation states that at an European level the population is ageing, and this threatens labour force expansion and thus general economic

[13] https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNRQ1p6Ek/
[14] https://www.cis.es/es/w/2017
[15] https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/spanish-public-opinion-on-immigration-and-the-effect-of-vox/
[16] https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/blog/date/2025/html/ecb.blog20250508~897078ce87.en.html

growth, the labor force in the euro area has grown significantly in recent years due to the influx of foreign workers, which has counteracted the adverse demographic patterns. It is also mentioned that as shown by lower unemployment rates, higher qualification levels, and decreased overqualification rates, foreign workers' status on the labor market has improved. Even with these advancements, there is still plenty of opportunity to better match the qualifications of foreign workers with job requirements. This would increase their job security and bolster their contribution to the rise in productivity.

4. METHODOLOGY

This section explains the methodology followed to conduct both quantitative and qualitative analysis and links it to previous literature on the topic. The first part deals with quantitative analysis whereas the second shows the process to develop the qualitative analysis.

The research design combines both qualitative and quantitative methods following a mixed method design. The methodological reference comes from Creswell (2014) and it follows a Convergent Parallel Design, as the qualitative analysis and the quantitative analysis are developed during the same period of time but separately. Results from both types of research will be compared at the end of the thesis to elaborate the conclusions.

For the quantitative analysis; regressions based on immigration and labour-market outcomes will be conducted to study possible relations, following the empirical approach mentioned in the literature review section. This approach is coherent and linked to previous research as other authors have used this method and it is widely accepted in this type of literature. A good example of this methodology can be found in the work by Carrasco (2005). Other authors use different macro economic and micro economic models to study the impact of immigration, for instance, Borjas (2019) uses as a baseline model the canonical Solow model with immigration.

Regarding the data Collection and variables; Data will be collected through official webpages and government reports about immigration and labour-market outcomes. Some of the main sources include data from national and international databases like Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) and different reports published regularly from the Spanish government and research or economic institutions.

To do so, econometric tools will be employed, specifically linear regression analysis. Labour-market outcomes like wages and unemployment rates will be compared against the stock of immigrants and some control variables and later the results will be analyzed to see if there is any relation.

The objective of this project is not to claim or to prove formal direct causality between labour-market outcomes and immigration flows but to study if there are patterns and how these patterns are framed in the political discourse.
The analysis of already published literature and creation of new material have as a purpose the study and comprehension of these patterns (if any).

For the qualitative analysis a series of semi-structured interviews will be conducted. The methodological reference comes from Braun & Clarke, (2006). The project follows a thematic analysis methodology to understand how actors (politicians with expertise in the field of economics or migration) interpret, construct, and communicate the relationship between immigration, labour markets, and political incentives. This is directly related to the proposition and it will be possible to extract a general picture to understand and compare and work upon the results from the interviews. This method will allow to connect qualitative interview data with the development of theoretical explanations related to political bias and institutional mediation.

Then, after both types of analysis are conducted, and following the above-mentioned methodology, results will be compared to be able to obtain general conclusions and answer the main research question.

5. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

5.1 Description of the data for the quantitative analysis

For the quantitative analysis data was obtained primarily from databases from well-established institutions like Instituto Nacional de Estadistica (INE). Because of data availability and methodological consistency constraints the period analysed covers the years from 2021 to 2024. This limitation stems from a methodological change introduced by the INE in 2021 regarding the measurement of migration. Prior to 2021, migration estimates were based on population censuses and the municipal register database, whereas from 2021 onwards the calculations rely exclusively on administrative registers. As a result, combining data from both methodologies would introduce an artificial discontinuity in the series and distort the analysis.

Additionally, the political analysis focuses on recent years, as the political discourse tends to adapt to the current labour-market developments and recent migration trends. Nevertheless, the relatively short time span of consistent data represents an important limitation of the study and reduced robustness of the empirical results. Despite this limitation, the objective of the regressions is not to establish causality, but rather to identify observable patterns or relationships between immigration and labour-market outcomes to compare them with the representation in the political discourse.

To measure the presence of the migrant population across regions, the analysis uses the stock of immigrants rather than immigrant inflows. This choice is justified because the stock of immigrants provides a more stable measure of the degree to which local labour markets are exposed to immigration. Firstly, labour markets in Spain tend to adjust gradually,

meaning that the effects of migration shocks are more likely to emerge over longer periods rather than through recent inflows alone, consequently, labour-market outcomes such as employment and wages are influenced more by the overall labour supply and demand structure than by recent short-term migration flows. Secondly, regions that have recently received a high number of immigrants in these last years have generally been attractive destinations for migrants over a longer period, suggesting continuity rather than a sudden structural disruption. The immigrant population variable of the regressions was simply calculated as the ratio between the stock of immigrants and the total population of the region.

The purpose of the regression analysis is to explore whether there are observable relationships between immigration and selected economic outcomes, which constitute the dependent variables of the models. Two labour-market indicators were selected: the unemployment rate and the average salary levels. The unemployment rate was chosen because it relates directly with employment dynamics and to political debates concerning the impact of immigration on job availability.

Average salary levels were introduced to examine the potential relationship between immigration and wage quality. Both variables are commonly used in literature and most importantly, are connected to the research questions and hypothesis of this study.

Since immigration alone cannot explain the evolution of the unemployment rate and wages, several control variables were incorporated into the models, but given the limited number of observations, the numbers of controls also had to remain limited. First, regional GDP per capita was included, to account for pre-existing structural economic differences across Spanish regions. Second, the share of the population with tertiary education was

incorporated, as differences on the educational level are associated with differences in labour-market outcomes including employability and salary expectations.

Finally, sectorial controls were added to capture differences between regional economic structures. Specifically, the shares of employment in the services and construction sectors were included, as these are sectors that are both relevant at economic level and employ an important share of immigrants. A further justification of these variables and their impact on the regression is provided on section 5.2.

5.2 Results

After completing all the regressions, the tables below show the main results. There are two models, one for unemployment rate and another one for average salaries. The process followed to obtain the final results it's very similar in the two cases.

First, immigration shares were compared against both economic outcomes. Then in the next step, after testing for relevant variables the final control variables were added, and as last step the immigrant share variable was lagged one year, to correct for potential reverse causality.

The following analysis explains the process more in detail but it only includes the relevant results. Additional regressions that evaluated alternative variables or that helped to build the final model are not included as this section is focused on the final outcomes.

The first model has the following structure:

$$Unemployment_i = \beta_1 Immigrant_lag_i + \beta_2 \log(GDP)_i + \beta_3 Tertiary_education_i + \beta_4 Construction_share_i + \beta_5 Services_share_i + \mu_i + \varepsilon_i$$

And the second one looks like this:

$$\text{Average salay}_{i\square} = \beta_1 \text{ Immigrant_lag}_{i\square} + \beta_2 \log(\text{GDP})_{i\square} + \beta_3 \text{ Tertiary_education}_{i\square} + \beta_4 \text{ Construction_share}_{i\square} + \beta_5 \text{ Services_share}_{i\square} + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{i\square}$$

The intuition behind the first regression was to relate the unemployment rate with immigration, and in the second one the dependent variable is the average salary of the region i at year t (i and t refer to region and year in both models), but it is plausible to assume that the immigrant share alone cannot justify the unemployment rate nor the average salaries of a whole region. Consequently, in the next step control variables were included. The availability of data indicators at a regional level for the period 2021-2024 and the reduced number of observations were the main constraints, but some relevant variables were included.

Firstly, tertiary education is related to better labour-market opportunities.[17] The unemployment rate is typically lower compared to people with no tertiary education and the impact is also noticeable in terms of salaries, indeed in the model that examines the effect of immigration on average salaries, tertiary education is significant.

The variable of gross domestic product per capita is introduced as the macroeconomic situation of the region is expected to explain part of the variance of both unemployment rates and average salaries and the significance in both models confirms the intuition.

The logic behind the inclusion of the construction share and the services share is that economic structures of the region might affect the level of unemployment or salaries. The same regression models were estimated both with and without the inclusion of the sectoral

[17] https://www.fbbva.es/noticias/universitarios-empleo-acorde-cualificacion-u-ranking/

controls variables, and the resulting impact on the coefficients was minimal. This suggests that the estimated relationship of the two main models is not reflecting different sectoral differences between regions. Moreover, their presence improves the specification of the model and reduces the risk of omitted variable bias.

At this point there is the existing and logical concern of potential endogeneity, as one could believe that it is not only that immigration affects economic outcomes but also that economic outcomes affect immigration, as migrants might feel more tempted to go to regions with lower unemployment rates or higher average salaries. This implies that the explanatory variables are not fully independent from the outcomes, to address it a time lag of one year to the variable of the immigration share is applied to both models, with the objective to measure current economic outcomes with past immigration, as current economic outcomes cannot affect a migration flow that already happened, reducing the problem of reverse causality.

After doing this in the model of unemployment the estimated effect of immigration decreased from 0.94 to 0.73, which suggests that part of the original effect was driven by simultaneity bias. However, the effect remains, indicating a robust relationship and in both cases it presents no significance.

Nonetheless, this implies a trade-off between sample size and endogeneity since using lagged variables reduces the number of observations but it improves the credibility of the estimates by reducing reverse causality. Of course the time-frame limitation is acknowledged but addressing endogeneity is more important for obtaining meaningful estimates.

In the second regression, once the one-year time lag is applied to the immigration share variable, the results change. Without the immigration lag the value of the variables was significant and with a value of approximately -87, and after the lag the variable stopped being significant and had a value close to -20 which is the outcome observable in the table. To check the intuition, a reverse regression was conducted with both economic outcomes with the form" immigrant share at t= economic outcome at t-1", where immigration was the dependent variable and the lagged economic outcomes with the same controls were the independent variables. The immigration coefficient was significant in the case of salaries, thus reinforcing the idea of reverse causality.

Of course the limitations of the model limit the interpretation of the results but it reinforces the idea of using the lagged immigrant variable in the main model. In the case of unemployment the lag is introduced to keep models similar and because it can still explain part of the variation, even though in both cases (the unemployment model with lag and the model without lag) the difference between the coefficients is limited and significance is always null. In both models multicollinearity was checked using the same method (VIF test), and the results showed that it was not present in any of them.

Fixed Effects Panel Regression: Dependent Variable = Unemployment				
Variable	**Estimate**	**Std. Error**	**t-value**	**Pr(>|t|)**
immigrant_lag	0.7382	0.5551	1.2970	0.1930
log_gdp	-16.4734	3.8347	-4.2817	0.0002 ***
tertiary_education	0.0309	0.0935	0.3307	0.7430
construction_share	-0.1443	0.2627	-0.5491	0.5868
services_share	0.0184	0.2346	0.0786	0.9379
Model Statistics				
Observations (N)	56			
Groups (n)	19			
R-Squared	0.5370			
Adj. R-Squared	0.2042			
F-statistic (5, 32 df)	7.4231			p < 0.001
Note: *** p < 0.001. Model estimated with within (fixed effects) transformation. Unbalanced panel: n = 19 countries, T = 2–3 periods, N = 56 observations.				

[18]

The table summarises the main results of the regression. We can see that immigration cannot be considered relevant when it comes to evaluating the impact of unemployment.

The variable that seems more relevant is related to the gdp of the region. Intuitively a strong economic structure of a region leads to higher gdp and a lower unemployment rate. Of course, the limited number of observations, the omitted variable bias and still existing endogeneity limit the interpretation of the results.

[18] Original material, developed from the results from the unemployment model

Fixed Effects Panel Regression: Dependent Variable = Average Salary				
Variable	**Estimate**	**Std. Error**	**t-value**	**Pr(>|t|)**
immigrant_lag	-20.8332	53.8794	-0.3867	0.7016
log_gdp	1949.0546	373.4126	5.2196	1.049e-05 ***
tertiary_education	25.0894	9.0771	2.7640	0.0094 **
construction_share	9.3203	25.5013	0.3655	0.7172
services_share	35.0605	22.7706	1.5397	0.1335
Model Statistics				
Observations (N)	56			
Groups (n)	19			
R-Squared	0.7983			
Adj. R-Squared	0.6534			
F-statistic (5, 32 df)	25.3366			p < 0.001
Note: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01. Model estimated with within (fixed effects) transformation. Unbalanced panel: n = 19 countries, T = 2–3 periods, N = 56 observations.				

[19]

This table shows the results from the average salary model. Same as before the immigration variable is not significant, and as expected gdp is again the most explanatory variable of the model. In this case tertiary education has significance indicating a positive relationship between having a higher level of education and having a higher average salary.

Even though the time dimension is relatively short, and using lagged variables further reduces it, the panel structure still provides sufficient variation across regions. Moreover, including time fixed effects remains important to control for common shocks, even with a limited number of periods. Again, the time limitation is acknowledged but controlling for time fixed effects is preferred as it clearly changes the estimates. Nonetheless, as in previous stages of the model immigration shows no significance.

[19] Original material, developed from the results from the average salaries model

As expected, the general economic structure, measured by the GDP per capita ,and in the case of salaries the level of education as well, are more relevant than the share of immigrant population when trying to understand labour market dynamics.

6. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The quantitative analysis part of the project presented the data related to the economic effect of immigration in labour markets. This qualitative analysis aims to understand the current political discourse to see how different political forces sharpen their opinions on the matter. To do so, politicians from the most important parties in Spain and Catalunya were interviewed using the thematic analysis methodology. There were a total of six interviews, each one of them representing one of the most important political forces, including the center-right party Partido Popular , the center-left party Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE/PSC) the far left party Comuns, the left party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, the right party Junts per Catalunya and the far-right party Vox. The following paragraphs present the main conclusions drawn from the interviews, while the complete transcripts can be found in the annexes.

6.1 Introduction to Findings

The interviews have as a main objective to identify how politicians relate the impact of immigration to the labour markets and the overall economic situation as well as talking about the role of media and policy developments. We want to assess whether there are significant differences across ideology and the different perceptions of the current situation. The interview has a total of ten questions, including descriptive, exploratory, and opinion-based questions. Descriptive questions are focused on the current labour-market situation, exploratory questions examine hypothetical scenarios and future implications, while opinion-based questions address perceptions regarding media influence and political debate.

After the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the responses were analysed following a coding procedure aimed at identifying key messages and recurring ideas. These ideas were subsequently grouped into broader themes from which the main conclusions were drawn. The three main themes identified were: the impact of immigration on the labour-market, political debate and the role of the media, and finally policy recommendations. Each of these themes is presented and discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

6.2 Impact of the immigration in the labour market

This theme explores how interviewees perceive the economic effects of immigration on the labour-market in Spain. It focuses on key dimensions such as employment, wages, and sectoral dynamics. The analysis highlights both perceived competition between native and immigrant workers and the role of immigration in addressing labour shortages in specific sectors.

There is a general consensus on the positive trends at the macroeconomic level of Spain's labour-market, as the unemployment rate is slowly decreasing and the economy seems to be growing, but when analysed in greater depth there are also some concerns regarding the quality of employment, especially in sectors where most of the workers are immigrants. More specifically politicians agree on the problem of low wages in sectors linked to seasonality and hospitality, particularly in the context of recent inflationary pressures.

Also the bureaucratic issues (problems with visas, recognition of qualifications, regularisation procedures…) make it difficult for some people to enter the labour-market, and

when there is urgent need of income workers are pushed to informal sectors, therefore they are not able to join the formal labour force, which ends up in situations of precarity, lack of security and sometimes abuse.

Despite these challenges, there's a recurring perception that recent immigration is related to economic growth. Almost all the politicians argue that immigrants are taking positions that native people are not willing to accept and that there is no competition for jobs. There's a perceived trend of complementarity as immigrants are taking jobs which are essential to sustain the economic growth but not displacing Spanish people from their positions Indeed, the interviewee from Junts per Catalunya argues that "thanks to immigration there are some sectors that are still able to survive". This argument is supported by the fact that even though the immigrant population is increasing the unemployment rate continues to go down.

There's also broad convergence in the fact that independently of immigration, the Spanish labour-market has some structural deficiencies as there is permanent unemployment but at the same time there are lots of firms that are not being able to expand because they lack labour supply. But this is not related to immigration, but to a problem between the general skills/preferences of workers and the needs/demands of firms, even if they offer competitive salaries, which should be addressed by introducing tailored education programmes, continuous training and institutional promotion of professional courses to try to achieve equilibrium between job supply and demand.

Conversely, Vox draws different conclusions. They argue that the current situation of the labour market is not good, the main argument is that immigrants (especially non-EU ones) arrive in most cases in an urgent need of economic resources and tend to accept positions that wouldn't be accepted by local workers, causing a decrease in the salaries in positions with already low salaries but also in some cases in positions with higher salaries, and forcing the local workers to go to other countries to find more adequate salaries, this denotes a perceived competition and subsequent substitution between the native and the migrant labour force.

The only points where there is full agreement are that immigration is mostly concentrated in positions with low salaries even though they are also increasingly present in sectors with high salaries, and that the impact is heterogeneous and it depends on factors like qualification, territory or profile.

Overall, the interviews suggest a broad perception of immigration as complementary rather than competitive within the Spanish labour-market, despite the existence of important structural deficiencies. The main exception is Vox, which frames immigration primarily as a source of labour competition and wage pressure.

6.3 Political debate and the role of the media

This theme examines how immigration is framed within political discourse and how media influences these narratives. It focuses on the interaction between political ideology, public communication, and information channels in shaping perceptions of immigration. The analysis considers differences in how actors evaluate traditional and digital media, as well as how media coverage is seen to amplify or moderate public attitudes.

First, none of the interviewees thinks that the current debate in the Parliament shows the reality of the impact of immigration in Spain, Vox argues that left wing parties try to justify and show as desirable the massive flows of immigration despite the supposed negative consequences, whereas the other parties affirm that Vox is contributing to a more confrontational discourse with excessively harsh declarations towards immigration.

It is important to mention that the labour-market impact of immigration is not a very recurrent topic of debate itself, and most times economic or labour data is mixed with data from other topics related to immigration like security, demography or cultural identity.
In addition, all the participants agree on the fact that there is a clear relation between the debates in the parliament, people's opinion towards immigration and what is published in the media.

There's also broad consensus on the impact of social networks, which are becoming increasingly important and it is beginning to shape debates and the political discourse, but again there is an important distinction on how politicians evaluate this trend. Most of the political parties associate the trend of increasing use of social networks with a radicalisation of the discourse and public opinion towards migration.

Digital media survives thanks to elements like likes or visits to webpages and to get the attention of people they have to show impactful headlines, which often leads to an exaggeration of the facts. One of the negative consequences of these new trends is that people are only looking for viral content rather than looking for specific data or longer reports.

Again in this topic there's a clear difference between the opinion of Vox and that of the other parties. Even though all of the parties agree on the fact that traditional media (TV, newspapers…) is biased towards political and economic interests and that most times there is a clear distinction between "right-wing media" and left-wing media", there's also some shared criticism towards social networks, indeed Raquel Sans from ERC said that individuals are subject to the "tyranny of the algorithm", as users don't have control over the news that appear in their personal feeds or in their mobiles, and that in most cases the news tend to be less rigorous, with fewer mentioned sources or less elaborated arguments.

On the other hand Alberto Tarradas, from Vox, argues that social networks are the only places where there is freedom to challenge mainstream narratives. Indeed some parties agree that Vox is benefiting a lot from the social media trend as they usually have a more radical discourse which is the most amplified within social media dynamics.

Overall, the interviews suggest that media plays a central role in shaping the political discourse and the public perceptions of immigration, particularly through the growing influence of social networks. While most participants expressed scepticism towards both traditional and digital media due to concerns regarding bias, sensationalism, and algorithmic dynamics, Vox viewed social media more positively as an alternative channel capable of bypassing traditional media narratives.

6.4 Adequate policies

This theme analyses the policy proposals suggested by interviewees in response to immigration-related challenges and opportunities. It focuses on how different actors translate their perceptions of economic and social impacts into concrete policy preferences. These include labour-market regulation, integration policies, and migration management strategies. The analysis highlights both areas of consensus and divergence, reflecting underlying ideological and institutional differences in policy approaches.

The most frequently mentioned policy mechanism is regularisation, since reducing irregular employment emerged as a shared objective among participants . For the first time there is a clear distinction between right wing forces and left wing ones. Left wing forces do not mention border control, this reflects a stronger emphasis on integration and labour inclusion rather than migration restriction. Instead, inclusion policies at an economic and social level are at the core of their discourse. After regularisation, education, training and social inclusion policies are the most favourable ones as they help to integrate immigrants not only in labour markets but to our societies thanks to a wider range of opportunities. Right wing forces have a more strict position, especially towards border control. Vox and PP are in favour of a very strict border control whereas Junts agrees with the latter in the formula of contracts at origin, so that people that enter the country already have a pre-arranged employment contract to avoid facing economic vulnerability and accept irregular job positions.

Vox has a more radical approach, besides the closure of the borders, immediate re-emigration of irregular people thereby without the possibility of completing regularisation procedures, constitute the main actions to be taken. In addition, Alberto Tarradas is also in favour of national priority in the labour-market for the autochthonous population.

It is important to mention that the policy theme is affected by the impact of immigration in other areas, as mentioned before, labour-market effects are not the only topic related to immigration. The demographic impact, the cultural identities, security, public services usage, or contribution to the welfare state are also mentioned but will not be furtherly discussed as they deviate from the main topic.

To conclude, policy preferences appear to reflect broader ideological differences regarding the role of immigration within Spanish society and the labour market. While most parties prioritise inclusion and labour-market integration mechanisms, right-wing parties place greater emphasis on migration restrictions and labour-market control, with Vox adopting the most restrictive position. However, the relationship between perceptions of labour-market effects and policy positions is not always direct. For instance, although the Partido Popular generally acknowledges the complementary role of immigration in the labour market, its more restrictive stance on border control appears to be influenced by considerations beyond labour-market outcomes, such as broader political, institutional, or security-related concerns.

After analysing the themes it can be concluded that ideology plays a significant role in the political discourse, especially from Vox that has disagreements with almost all of the other parties. On the other hand, the other five political forces seem to have a more inclusive approach but differences between right and left wing parties are still meaningful.

7. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

After completing the literature review, the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis it is the moment to extract the final conclusions and to answer the research questions as well as verifying the hypothesis and the proposition.

Starting with the latter one, the proposition: “Political interests can bias interpretation of economic results and shape media discourse.”Is true, even though data towards migration is the same for everyone, the debate on the interpretation changes dramatically. Ideology towards migration clearly affects the debate in the labour-market outcomes of it. Politicians that are more inclusive towards migration argue that the data shows positive results and justify their policies in the matter using the data. The positive effects associated with regularisation and the idea of complementarity rather than competition are the two main pillars of the defense. Except for Vox, the position is relatively similar in the political landscape with the left-winged politicians being the most inclusive and right-winged having an open but more strict policy recommendation. Vox, that has a general policy more restricted towards migration interprets data of labour markets in a negative sense, referring to substitution, displacement of local workers and pressure towards reduced wages. These differences in the discourse are the ones that validate the proposition.

Discourse, especially from the media, seems to be more dramatic about the situation than what current literature shows. Most politicians agree on the impact of traditional media and social networks on the public opinion and political debate. Such an effect constitutes a possible area of future research related to the topic.

The hypothesis “Immigrants have a demonstrable impact on local workers when it comes to labour-market outcomes related to quantity and quality of the jobs.” is false. Previous literature showed that for periods before the one analysed the effect of immigration is almost null, and the results for the period analysed continue the same trend. It is necessary to acknowledge the difference between the different models but the results point in the same direction. The immigration population shows no significance in any of the models.

To conclude, the answer to the research question “Is there a mismatch between the empirical evidence on the impact of immigration and the way this impact of immigration is portrayed in political discourse ?” is affirmative. This project shows that the impact of immigration in labour markets is almost null, not only by developing two models combining immigration, labour-market outcomes and economic variables but also thanks to an extensive review of previous literature. And the qualitative analysis of the interviews shows that the data is interpreted very differently. The main causes identified are relation of immigration towards other aspects like cultural identity or security, general positioning of the political party (left vs right) and the effect of media, with structural biases and new challenges related to freedom of speech, impact and ethics behind it.

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9. GENERAL ANNEXES

INTERVIEW WITH XAVIER BLANCO, FROM PSC

Hello good morning my name is Alessio and I am an economics student at UAB. I am doing an end of degree thesis about the impact of immigration in the labour market and its representation in the political discourse. For the economic analysis I have analyzed data from different sources and from the political analysis I am doing the same interviews to different members of the most representative political parties.

Question 1: As a first question I'd like a brief introduction of yourself, your name, your position in the party, how you arrived here, your professional background…

Answer: My name is Xavier Blanco and my role in the Ajuntament of Lleida is to be in charge of programmes related to youth, education, occupation and traditions. I've been working a lot on the occupation topic and right now I am part of the council.

Question 2: How would you describe the current situation of the Spanish labour market in terms of quantity and quality of employment, unemployment…

Answer: In terms of occupation we are in a moment of need for a labour force from different profiles and levels of education. I believe we are also in a moment of "social ladder" related to the labour market. There's a need especially in the labour force with intermediate qualifications. Originally markets presented a more pyramidal structure but now is changing thanks to mechanization and new technologies and this leads to a more homogeneous market that allows to climb the social ladder and to access more qualified jobs.

Question 3: How do you think that immigration has contributed to the recent developments of the labour market?

Answer: Once immigrants arrive they come to contribute, when they arrive they go to different sectors, depending on the previous education. We can see for example immigrants in the health sector but also in sectors like transportation. The economy is growing and this means that it needs human capital to maintain the growth, and immigrants contribute to solve this. We are generating opportunities, and they come to contribute. It is important that they are regularized and that they can access the labour markets and contribute to our economy.

Question 4: Through which mechanisms do you think that immigration can affect employment?

Answer: They complement the actual labour force. For example in the health sector they come to satisfy the needs of our actual health system, or the same could apply for other sectors like construction, where we have needs that are satisfied by them. Overall they come to complement the needs of our economic system. With economic development new needs, profiles and dynamics appear, but I don't think it represents any type of threat to local workers but more of a complement. We also have to give them possibilities to climb the social ladder, for example someone that comes for a season of food harvesting should have the opportunity to access the labour market and find opportunities. I don't like to stigmatize these people, they can be found in different areas where the labour market has needs and our role is to give support to the different profiles that can fill these gaps. It is true that in some sectors we have to deal with the fact that the roles in the value chains are more or less valuable. We have to give value to all activities and not stigmatize traditional professions like electricians and give opportunities to everyone

Question 5: Do you think that immigrants have any effect over the local workers? In which sectors of profiles happens more frequently?

Answer: Yes of course since immigrant workers can present very different profiles not only in terms of labour but also in terms of social values, cultural values…but in any case it's not a threat but a complement.

Question 6: Do you think that the impact of immigration is homogeneous? or it depends on factors like profile, qualification or territory?

Answer: Of course the activities that are more popular in each territory will determine the labour market profiles that are attracted. For example in my town, Lleida the seasonal fruit campaigns determine the type of workers that come and I imagine that towns near to the coast will have different necessities for example related to the service sector that are possibly satisfied thanks to immigrants and even in big cities with constant demand immigrants will also find economic interest so yes the economic activities of course play a role on the migratory movements.

-Okay, now let's switch to the more politically-driven questions. Now I have a clear picture of how your organisation understands the economic situation of Spain and the role of immigration and now I want to link it with the political discourse.

Question 7: From your point of view, do you think that the current debate about migration reflects the current economic situation?

Answer: No, I don't think so. We are in a situation where inside the political discourse there are elements that are not related to the labour market. It is clear from the EU that we need migratory movements to maintain economic growth, but we can see in some discourses

racism or xenophobia, for example in the case of the recent regularization, where immigrant people are willing to obtain permits and to contribute to the human needs of the labour market but then we hear about concerns of security or other aspects and at the end the message is distorted. When we talk about the labour market we should separate the other elements of the debate. But the real world is different. For example, in my department when firms want to open production plants they come to us to ask for legal requirements and for the availability of human capital and the different labour and technical profiles in the area, they never ask about nationality of the labor force of the area. At the end firms want solutions and labour the labour market offers solutions to the firms, regardless of their nationality. It is true that in some sectors the immigrants fill gaps or "solve" the need for different profiles for some firms. I think that labour market debate should be separated from other types of debate like common laws, security, civility…This leads to stigmatization of some workers for example in the health care sector where it's common to see migrant professionals.

Question 8: Which role do you think that media has in the construction of the narrative of immigration and labour markets?

They clearly have responsibility, the way in which the info is transmitted affects the perception of it. I would also appeal to the collective responsibility of citizens to check the veracity of the information and to decide which are the channels that you use to receive information, as this also conditions your opinion on the topic. Fake news represent a clear threat and this is not only responsibility of politicians or media sites but from the consumers that alimentate the media that share the news, not only on this aspect but in every other topic

- Good answer, let's proceed

Question 9: If data showed that immigration has not increased unemployment, do you think that it would affect the current political debate? How?

Answer: I am completely sure that immigration has not contributed to unemployment in the end, reality is what it is and we have to take into account the underground economy and its impact. Employment depends more on how the user is willing to be educated and updated with the latest knowledge. For example we see all the debate arising from the regularisation that is being used at a political level to counter attack to this measure.

Question 10: Do you believe there are economic costs associated with immigration? What types of policies (whether in the area of immigration or labor market regulation) do you consider appropriate to maximize the benefits and reduce the costs of immigration?

I understand that this is more of a generalist question. For example when a doctor from Colombia comes here it doesn't generate an extra expenditure to the Administration and then it contributes with taxes. From the political side we have to help people to access the labour market and to guarantee access to opportunities with equal rights and obligations so people can equally contribute. But this answer is not only focused to immigration as it only signaled when it's vulnerable which is not always the case.

INTERVIEW WITH ALBERTO TARRADAS, FROM VOX

Hello good morning my name is Alessio and I am an economics student at UAB. I am doing an end of degree thesis about the impact of immigration in the labour market and its representation in the political discourse. For the economic analysis I have analyzed data from different sources and from the political analysis I am doing the same interviews to different members of the most representative political parties.

Question 1: As a first question I'd like a brief introduction of yourself, your name, your position in the party, how you arrived here, your professional background…

Answer: Hello well my name is Alberto Tarradas Panenque and I'm the president of Vox in the province of Girona, I come from the private sector and throughout my professional career I've worked in multiple sectors, but I've always had interest about politics in some areas like national defense and activism towards re emigration and defense of the national borders. So yeah that's why I entered the organisation and I am now in the Parlament de Catalunya.

Question 2: How would you describe the current situation of the Spanish labour market in terms of quantity and quality of employment, unemployment…

Answer: I think that the best argument for the bad situation of the labour market, or at least to defend that it is not in its most optimal conditions, is that so many young people have to look for decent opportunities abroad. It is true that according to some politicians we are having more and more occupied people but it is misleading. The population is also growing so it is logical that we have more occupied people. But the real problem is that most of the new contracts are not sufficiently stable and the level of income is no longer associated to the

increase of the cost of living for the households, so overall the situation of the labour market is not good.

Question 3: How do you think that immigration has contributed to the recent developments of the labour market?

Answer: Immigration has led to a decrease in prices (salaries) in both the higher parts (jobs with average higher salaries) and the lower parts (jobs with traditional lower salaries) of the labour market. We've been told that traditionally that they come to do the jobs that Spanish people don't want to do and this might be true for some specific areas but this is an exaggeration. We have to take into account that immigrants come with lower salary expectations than Spanish people, and this goes for both irregular and regular immigrants. Because of these lower expectations they are willing to accept working conditions that Spanish people wouldn't accept. It is true that it happens the most in lower areas but also happens in higher areas like medicine where this last year thousands of medical licenses have been convalidated for professionals coming mostly from South America. These professionals come here and accept contracts that Spanish people wouldn't accept and this forces Spanish professionals to look for better opportunities abroad where their salaries are more likely to help them to develop their life.

Question 4: Through which mechanisms do you think that immigration can affect employment?

Answer: I think that regularisation plays a major role, since we are letting illegal immigrants enter our territory this has a clear impact on the underground economy. But also people that come in a regular way also provoke the distortion in the labour market. Markets are designed

to work for a fixed number of people and inside of a cultural context society etc, but when the immigration is massive then it also causes these distortions in the labour market.

Question 5: Do you think that immigrants have any effect over the local workers? In which sectors of profiles happens more frequently?

As I mentioned it happens in areas with lower and higher salaries but most importantly in areas with lower salaries. And also affect the quality of the results for example in manual labour, like painters, there's a lot of people hiring immigrants because they ask for less money and this also impacts the final result of the work or product that they have done because our professions have more years of development and formation and generally the work done by spanish people has better quality thant the done for immigrants. But because of the economic conditions we are forced to hire immigrant laborers because we don't have capacity to hire autochthonous people with their respective salary expectations.

Question 6: Do you think that the impact of immigration is homogeneous? or it depends on factors like profile, qualification or territory?

Answer: Of course depending on the sector the impact is different.

Question 7: From your point of view, do you think that the current debate about migration reflects the current economic situation?

Answer: No, I think that absolutely not. What we hear here is not what happens in the streets. We keep talking about massive migration as a desiderable and positive event that leads to economic growth, especially by left wing parties. They say things like "if we don't have immigrants who will take the jobs that Spaniards don't want? For me this is a very materialist view of immigrants. Immigrants shouldn't be perceived as people who come to take these

jobs as this leads to the displacement of autochthonous people. This has also a dramatic impact on demography. Vox acknowledges it, but not the other forces. In some decades it will be when local people will be a minority. Indeed in some cohorts and populations the percentage of immigrants is around 40% and this will probably increase and it will impact our culture and social values.

Question 8: Which role do you think that media has in the construction of the narrative of immigration and labour markets?

Answer: All of the traditional media are completely intervened, so there is no real power of free communication there.The true power can be found in social media where people can freely communicate what is happening, for example recording the streets and show what is happening. I think it's the most free space where people can comment and debate what is happening. Traditional media (especially the written ones)have buyers and they survive thanks to subsidies from lobby, from organisations related to politicians, from la Generalitat or the national government…At the end they survive thanks to public subsidies so this conditionates the freedom, as the speech is framed in the interests of who is paying to maintain the mean open. This leads to the impossibility of having a true space with freedom to show and debate about what is happening and as consequence doesn't show what is happening in real life, in the streets. Indeed what is happening in the streets is usually more severe than how it is framed here in the Parliament. Sometimes what you see in traditional media is almost an insult to what happens in reality.

Question 9: If data showed that immigration has not increased unemployment, do you think that it would affect the current political debate? How?

Answer: It would be very interesting to treat real people as adult people and show them the real impact of immigration. It would be interesting as people would have real info and not a controlled narrative which is what we have now in the traditional media of communication in things like the record of occupation in Spain, but this doesn't mean that the economy is better.

Question 10: Do you believe there are economic costs associated with immigration? What types of policies (whether in the area of immigration or labor market regulation) do you consider appropriate to maximize the benefits and reduce the costs of immigration?

Yeah of course it has a cost. Indeed we have a report from Fundación Disenso showing the cost of non-European immigration in Spain and it concluded that it has a deficitary annual cost around to 50.000 per year per person, it was calculated taking into account what they contribute and the expenditure in education services that they can access etc. For an immigrant to have a neutral impact it should earn almost 50k to return to society everything that it receives from the institutions, and that is assuming that it has a job. But if a person comes with his family and it's a single worker the cost is multiplicated. The cost is not positive, we are not economically benefited , it's the opposite. But even if the whole immigration had a positive impact we are against it as massive immigration has an impact on our identities, way of living, cultural and social values to our demography…and so our position against immigration is exactly the same. It's not only economic criteria.

I would apply a closure of borders and to initiate a process of massive re-emigration and deport people that have entered illegally or that have entered legally but are committing crimes or that import things against our culture. For the labour market thing I would say national priority, protection of native people. They have to be prioritised not only in the labour market but in access to education, health, housing…

INTERVIEW WITH RAQUEL SANS, FROM ERC

Hello good morning my name is Alessio and I am an economics student at UAB. I am doing an end of degree thesis about the impact of immigration in the labour market and its representation in the political discourse. For the economic analysis I have analyzed data from different sources and from the political analysis I am doing the same interviews to different members of the most representative political parties

Question 1: As a first question I'd like a brief introduction of yourself, your name, your position in the party, how you arrived here, your professional background…

Answer: Let's start, my name is Raquel Sans Guerra and I am the current vice president of the Parlament de Catalunya, aside from representing my political party. I combine my institutional role with the political one. Before this I was in the direction board from Esquerra Republicana during 5 years and general vice secretary of feminism LGTB and everything related to inclusion. I've also worked in the inclusion of immigration even though not specifically in the labour market but in the overall economic system. So yeah basically this is how I arrived where I am right now. In addition, I am a professor in the area of Communication at URV and I like when students ask for interviews as I am used to working with them as well.

Question 2: How would you describe the current situation of the Spanish labour market in terms of quantity and quality of employment, unemployment…

Answer: The data shows positive results in terms of quantity, but it also clearly shows that this quantity is not related to quality, so even though macro economic data seems positive, we see that labour markets offers less generous salaries, there's no equivalence between macro

data and real situation of workers at the end of the month, and the same goes for self employed workers. In addition we also see more jobs with seasonality and less stability, and this somehow shapes the view of the data.

Question 3: How do you think that immigration has contributed to the recent developments of the labour market?

Answer: I think that for this question data speaks for itself. Immigration has contributed to the positive growth of the economy not only in Catalunya but also in Spain., that has been above the European average, and this economic growth is partially explained by immigration, without it macroeconomic data wouldn't explain the growth of Catalunya and Spain. I am not sure right now but I think that around 20-25% of the growth is exclusively due to the positive impact of immigration. This macroeconomic data is good to refute the discourse of the far-right parties that argue that immigration impoverishes local people. It is also important to talk about the demography of Spain and Europe, that is aging at unprecedented rhythm, and migration helps to palliate this effect, this demographic misadjustment.But as a final comment, yeah immigrants are mostly in their early working ages and they are entered in labour markets and contribute to the economic growth.

Question 4: Through which mechanisms do you think that immigration can affect employment?

Answer: I think immigration contributes positively, as I said this is what data shows. From the Parlament de Catalunya we have contacts from multiple sectors, and in most of them there is a lack of available workers and labour. Not also in more general areas like agriculture or construction but also in determined specific positions like electricians or mechanics. Generally all the jobs that are typically known as trades. This also comes from the bad

reputation of professional formation. In recent years we've had lots of university students that have ended up working in other industries, waiters for example) or they directly are not able to find a job and cannot contribute to the economic growth as much. On the other hand immigration is helping to solve the lack of labour market supply in the sectors I mentioned before. Is it a problem when you see a constant number of jobless people but also you talk with industry firms and they complain about the lack of workers even if the labour conditions are good. Even though immigrants are helping to solve this situation, it should be addressed at a global level and we should contribute to finding the equilibrium between supply and demand across all sectors. Another problem that concerns us is the bureaucratic limitations for qualified migrant people that have more difficulties to access some sectors even though they possess the required education. So to give a quick final answer I think that immigrants act as a complement to the local workers and we should work towards regularisation. People should be given working permits as in some cases they are waiting for them for months or even years and it is completely pointless as they come here to find a better life and to work and the possibility is not given because of bureaucracy in terms like homologation of qualifications or recognition of education. I am saying this because most times this leads to immigrants to look for positions with less requirements when they could be in other positions. This happens a lot for the more feminised sectors in the health sector for example where some positions are typically given to immigrants and they accept them because they have no other alternatives. Or for men I would say that this also happens in the construction sector. The lack of labour forces makes it easier for them to enter these sectors.

Question 5: Do you think that immigrants have any effect over the local workers? In which sectors of profiles happens more frequently?

Continuing my argument with the previous question, in any case I don't think that they are a threat to local workers; indeed, they occupy the gaps that autochthonous workers leave empty. We don't see competition or at least direct competition.

Question 6: Do you think that the impact of immigration is homogeneous? or it depends on factors like profile, qualification or territory? Also, this genre perspective is interesting, do you have any further comments regarding the issue?

Answer: Well, of course there are more feminised sectors, and this is very notorious for women immigrants, they have even more difficulties because most times the jobs that they take are very precarious like the cures, and it is more tied with irregularities, this leads to a big number of women working in very bad conditions, often irregularly. This also happens in the domestic chores, where most people doing these things are immigrant women and usually without contracts. It is true that with men there's also the same problem and it should be of course addressed, but it is less aggravated as their jobs typically involve more risk (easier to have an accident in the construction sector for example). I would like to insist on the necessity of regularisation.

Question 7: From your point of view, do you think that the current debate about migration reflects the current economic situation?

Answer: Absolutely not, I think that the current discourse environment has been imposed by far right parties. And the discourse is based on generating fear, especially in people that can feel more threatened, people in a more vulnerable situation. As I said, it is true that there is a growing number of employed people but there's also a lot of unemployed people and people that have huge difficulties to arrive at the end of the month with money, even if they are

full-time workers. Far right makes things simple, it generates a fight between the most vulnerable people, the last vs the next to last, and that your major threat is the immigrant that has just arrived in the country. More specifically, I think that islamophobia is very present in the debate, mainly because of the cultural differences, that are used to create the threat and to expand the discourse to other areas, but they are not saying that there are a lot of sectors with scarce labour offer, and that most immigrants are taking essential jobs, like taking care of elderly people, but this is not on the table. We have to give simple answers to such complex phenomena, because this discourse is not only present in Spain but also in other parts of the world.

Question 8: Which role do you think that media has in the construction of the narrative of immigration and labour markets?

I think that nowadays we have a society that is increasingly using social networks to receive information rather than traditional media. The role of the traditional media is diminishing, so we receive information thanks to social media, especially young people. It is true that traditional media is biased because of economic or institutional interest, but they have a differential element: They follow a code of ethics, even though the newspaper headlines can show the information in slightly different manner there are a minimum of criteria and ethics. Sadly, they are becoming less and less important and now we are facing what I like to refer to as the tyranny of the algorithm. An algorithm that almost no one truly understands but they have the ability to offer some content but they chose to not show another one, and here is precisely where the far right takes advantage, as there is no need to satisfy any ethical cole, there is no need to cite the resources and where the information is taken from, and most times it leads to a very worrying relate, where we see things like “immigrants come here to take our jobs” or “they come to put an end to our civilised society”. This leads to an increased feeling

of anxiety and even in some extreme cases to disbelief of all media and the preference to not receive any type of information. And this discourse is very easily expanded and the information can be shared to everyone immediately. Don't misjudge me, but I am the vice-president of the Parlament de Catalunya , but almost no one would recognise me or know who I am in events or in the streets but there's some people from the far right that have become extremely popular just because of their extreme discourse. Also if you have a more elaborated discourse, if you are more than 2 minutes talking people get bored and they look for drastic, short news, where the far right can exploit their advantage.

Question 9: If data showed that immigration has not increased unemployment, do you think that it would affect the current political debate? How?

Answer: Well it's related to what I was saying before, data is becoming less and less important in the political discourse, it is way more important to say something that looks good in a headline or in the social networks than real data. The far right has decided that it needs an enemy to blame for all problems and in the Spanish case it is immigration. Take for instance all the news related to the use of the burka in public spaces. They talk a lot about this and show photos but not about the lack of labour force in some sectors.

Question 10: Do you believe there are economic costs associated with immigration? What types of policies (whether in the area of immigration or labor market regulation) do you consider appropriate to maximize the benefits and reduce the costs of immigration?

Answer: I don’t think immigration represents any economic cost, I think that it is a contribution especially in the labour markets. We are having massive inflows of people that come here to work, we are increasing our labour force, what we have to do is to manage the labour and supply in different sectors to achieve the equilibrium in labour markets. I think we should guide these people to help them to access the jobs. I think that it is also important to apply not only labour market policies but also inclusion policies, to fully integrate these people in the society so they can have real opportunities. I would also suggest fighting the far right discourse with data. And even though I mentioned it already, of course the regularisation is essential to the whole process, so it is very important as well.

MEETING WITH JOAN CANADELL, JUNTS PER CATALUNYA

Hello good morning my name is Alessio and I am an economics student at UAB. I am doing an end of degree thesis about the impact of immigration in the labour market and its representation in the political discourse. For the economic analysis I have analyzed data from different sources and from the political analysis I am doing the same interviews to different members of the most representative political parties

Question 1: As a first question I'd like a brief introduction of yourself, your name, your position in the party, how you arrived here, your professional background…

Answer: Good, my name is Joan Canadell, I am 58 years old and I come from the industrial sector. I've worked with many firms, I am basically a director and entrepreneur. I was also a member of the chamber of commerce between 2019 and 2021, and since 2021 I work here in the Parlament with the group of Junts Per Catalunya in the commission of firms and employment. Talking more about Junts as you may know there are different movements inside the party, some more close to the left and some closer to the right. I would allocate myself more on the rightish-liberal side, but in some cases as a group it is true that we agree to present proposals that could seem more typical from left-sided parties like salary regulation.

Question 2: How would you describe the current situation of the Spanish labour market in terms of quantity and quality of employment, unemployment…

Answer: Well, the numbers speak for themselves, I think that we are the country or among the countries with the highest unemployment rates in Europe, above 10%. It's very high if we compare it with some European countries. And the problem is structural and this situation has

been persistent for many years. But on the other side, there are studies that show that in some sectors, especially related to the industry and "traditional" jobs, firms are not able to expand because there's a lack of labour supply. Indeed if all the industrial firms could hire the people they need the unemployment rate would be around 5%. But this is a problem of education not matching labour market requirements and people not willing to accept some labour proposals. Collaboration between the public and the private sector would be key, as professional associations and clusters with lack of personnel are willing to teach the necessary skills to enter and they have the knowledge, but there's a lack of resources that is also not satisfied by the public sector.

Question 3: How do you think that immigration has contributed to the recent developments of the labour market?

Answer: Following my previous argument, there are a lot of firms, for example in the construction sector that cannot expand. And if it wasn't for immigration the situation could be worse. And this also applies to other sectors, such as tourism and the meat industry, where immigration is very important in terms of labour supply. Also in the health sector related to elder people. There's a clear misadjustment in our labour markets, but this is not because of immigration, it's the other way around, thanks to immigration there are some sectors that are still able to survive, otherwise they would have to shut down. But this also comes from the fact that the youth is not attracted to some jobs, like collecting fruits. I have to say that immigration also has an impact in the labour market positions where salaries are very high. We know them as "expats", people that come to live in Barcelona and other places of Spain because they like the lifestyle and they still have very good working conditions. From Junts we want to look for immigrants at their originary places so they can come here with already a

position in a company and a part from that to provide with skills and education. Coming here to be educated and then get a job is also good but it shouldn't be the main model.

Question 4: Through which mechanisms do you think that immigration can affect employment?

Answer: Education is the key. This will allow them to integrate wherever they want. Also inclusion in the culture. For instance if someone wants to work in the public administration they will need a certain proficiency in the local language. The far right (even though it is not such a popular claim) has argued that owners of firms are contracting immigrants because they are willing to take the job and earn less money so they are cheaper, but I don't think that's the correct interpretation. For instance in the sector of nursing older people, if there weren't people willing to work for salaries close to the minimum legal salary that would mean that someone (either the public administration or elderly people themselves) would have to pay more for these services. But I believe that there is not a substitution, it is a complementarity as in most cases immigrants take jobs that local people wouldn't accept. From our side we also defend an increase in the minimum salary, as that would encourage people to enter the labour markets (both immigrants and locals) and that would probably help to solve the misadjustments that we can find. There's people that receive some kind of contribution from the public administration and that earn some money by doing some non-formal activity and that don't enter formal labour markets, which leads to these types of problems. But in any case this is not just a problem of immigration, it's a general trend. Everyone wants the local fruit at their homes, or the train rails to be maintained but these are typically jobs that almost anyone is willing to do and immigrants do it.

Question 5: Do you think that immigrants have any effect over the local workers? In which sectors of profiles happens more frequently?

Answer: It happens mainly in sectors with lower added value and where the labour conditions are less comfortable. But it is important to distinguish between the different generations. The first generations of immigrants are the one who have worse working conditions, and that typically end in these “undesired” jobs. But once the family is settled, even though there’s still a bias, the conditions are not that different. Immigrants of second and third generation that are educated here also have opportunities to receive higher education, go to university or simply to have more opportunities in the labour markets. This is important to notice, as it talks about the possibilities and necessities of integration. We also have to help immigrants to have this type of opportunity. Also, not all the undesired jobs that immigrants tend to take have bad working conditions. Sometimes they fill the gaps in jobs that are not popular but the working conditions and salaries are very decent. For example there’s an increasing number of foreign bus drivers and welders, and the salaries in these positions are around almost 2k euros per month.

Question 6: Do you think that the impact of immigration is homogeneous? or it depends on factors like profile, qualification or territory?

Answer: Yeah well I think most of the things from the previous question work also for this question, but to add something I’d say there are territories with a much higher impact of immigration depending on the industry that you can find in the area. This even leads to the formation of some small communities concentrated in specific areas, but this is good for integration. Here, another interesting policy would be to have again the figure of the apprentice. But this is not restricted to immigration but to everyone,but of course it would be very interesting especially for immigrants that have less education or less professional skills.

That would be a great opportunity to obtain valuable skills and to integrate future workers. But that would imply that the public administration should create the legal framework, provide financial help for the firms to train people, and guarantee some conditions…

Question 7: From your point of view, do you think that the current debate about migration reflects the current economic situation?

Answer: No, definitely not. The far right has contaminated the debate. Especially Vox and here in Catalunya Aliança Catalana. It is true that there are problems with immigration (as well as with everything, there are problems). But these problems are often driven to immigration. Not all migrants are bad people and not all local people are good people. It is true that with immigrants there are some added difficulties because they tend to be in worse conditions compared to the locals but it's not fair to just accuse immigration of some problems. Generally people come here to work, but it is true that some of them are not able to find a job and end up in the streets and well it gets complicated but this is not exclusive to immigrants. And the far right takes advantage of things like this and introduces it in their fascist discourse, one example are burqas. Recently they have been in newspapers and tv news headlines and how they are "bad" but I've never seen anyone wearing them, but I see a lot of people sleeping on the streets but no one talks about this.

Question 8: Which role do you think that media has in the construction of the narrative of immigration and labour markets?Answer: Well, traditional media is subject to economic and political interests, they are not free and they show what some people decide.

Question 9: If data showed that immigration has not increased unemployment, do you think that it would affect the current political debate? How?

Answer: The claim that "immigrants take our jobs" is not that popular here, the discourse is more biased towards security, I don't think is the main political element. I have not seen any report saying "because of immigration there's unemployed people". I think that it wouldn't affect the current political discourse.

Question 10: Do you believe there are economic costs associated with immigration? What types of policies (whether in the area of immigration or labor market regulation) do you consider appropriate to maximize the benefits and reduce the costs of immigration?

As with everything there might be some costs related to immigration, for example that they send money to other countries, but it is fair as they have earned this money, but if we look also at the positive things, the balance is clearly positive. As I said before, if it wasn't for them there would be a lot of industries and firms that wouldn't be able to operate. Also this generates revenue for the state and they pay taxes etc. Another positive thing is that they are generally young, they are currently contributing to pay some pensions and they will continue to do so for many years, and help to fight the demographic problem that we are facing. They also present a high fertility rate that will be important in the future.

As for specific policies I've mentioned some of them during the interview, but the most important one is education. It is key in both the social and economic aspect as it will allow them to have access to the labour market, a job, and everything.

INTERVIEW WITH ANDRÉS GARCÍA BERRIOS, FROM COMUNS

Hello good morning my name is Alessio and I am an economics student at UAB. I am doing an end of degree thesis about the impact of immigration in the labour market and its representation in the political discourse. For the economic analysis I have analyzed data from different sources and from the political analysis I am doing the same interviews to different members of the most representative political parties

Question 1: As a first question I'd like a brief introduction of yourself, your name, your position in the party, how you arrived here, your professional background…

Answer: Well let's start, my name is Andrés García Berrio, and I am from the parliamentarian group of Comuns. I've been in the Parlament de Catalunya for two years and I am the spokesperson of the commission of interior, justice and foreign action. I also work transversally with actions against racism and topics related to migration.

Question 2: How would you describe the current situation of the Spanish labour market in terms of quantity and quality of employment, unemployment…?

Answer: Well I think that data shows that right now we are in a good moment especially if we look at quantitative data related to unemployment as we have been registering the lowest unemployment rates since 2008. I think that the policies that have been applied have been good, especially taking into account that we had the pandemic, and now these policies have placed Spain in a better position. To understand this later success we have to analyse the latest labour reforms, that have generated very good results. I think right now we are in a good moment, but of course there are some big challenges like the persistent high rate of unemployment or the increase of the cost of living.

Question 3: How do you think that immigration has contributed to the recent developments of the labour market?

Answer: From my point of view, the fact that the number of enrollments to the Social Security has increased is positive, and this is mainly thanks to immigration, and shows the needs of contracting for some sectors that are growing in this economic context and also the incorporation of migrant people that has come here to occupy these positions. This shows a positive correlation between economic growth and incorporation to labour markets of migrant people that have arrived here. The number of people arriving here is increasing yet the number of unemployed people is decreasing. This could be used as an argument against some positions that state that an increasing number of migration leads to higher unemployment or that it affects native employment. The most important thing is the type of worker needed and the demand of the sectors. This is also relevant when preparing policies.

Question 4: Through which mechanisms do you think that immigration can affect employment?

Answer: I think that the most important thing that right now affects the Spanish labour market and immigration is the regularisation. It is crucial that everyone can legally access labour markets. We hope that the current process of regularisation contributes to regularise labour relations with contracts to fight against non-regulated job positions. Especially in vulnerable sectors like taking care of the elderly.

Question 5: Do you think that immigrants have any effect over the local workers? In which sectors of profiles happens more frequently?

Answer: We should analyse the sectors that employ a higher percentage of immigrants, like industry, agriculture, construction but we don't see any negative effect. But also we should analyse sectors with higher profiles and we see that there is also demand for people that come from abroad, the incorporation of these people is contributing to economic growth and complementing the labour market given our current context. There's no impact on the local workers as the regularisation and law applies for everyone, and the impact is the same for everyone.

Question 6: Do you think that the impact of immigration is homogeneous? or it depends on factors like profile, qualification or territory?

Answer: There's a trend to think that immigrant people only enter the labour market through non-qualified positions but we also see the demand in more qualified sectors, like medicine, especially given the context of economic growth. In addition I'd like to add that we have to see this phenomena with a proper perspective, when a local student or worker like a doctor goes to another country to look for a job we say that we are losing our talent and that it is generally negative. But in most cases when someone comes from abroad to work here we believe that it is negative for our society. We have to think about this and why we are willing to accept people from some countries to occupy some positions and we don't when people from some countries also come to occupy some positions, but this is a matter of racism and it exists in our society and biases our interpretations of the reality that surrounds us.

Question 7: From your point of view, do you think that the current debate about migration reflects the current economic situation?

Answer: The current debate towards migration is more related to the political intentions of some parties and a process of radicalisation and racism that we are living rather than actual economic data. There is no relation between the discourse of the political discourse from some parties -and I am not only talking about the far right, and the reality. The debate is subject to some interests, and there are some parties interested in creating differences between local and non-local people, with the objective that the autochthonous believes that non-autochthonous people are the source of their problems. We have to think about how we develop adequate policies to integrate and include people. Indeed I'd like to talk more about inclusion rather than integration, as integration implies that we decide how to integrate and if a person is useful or worth it for us, instead when we include someone we directly accept this people in our society and build a society around diversity and not with people "on top" and people in the bottom of society. It is important to reflect on how we adapt society to people that have recently arrived to join our labour markets and are also citizens. What some people seem to forget, we have to guarantee equal access to rights.

Question 8: Which role do you think that media has in the construction of the narrative of immigration and labour markets?

Answer: The content that we have in the media is absolutely relevant to our perception of how the things that happen, and I think that it is affecting the public migration contents more related to social networks more than traditional media. This debate requires data and deep thought but nowadays there's a lot of contamination in the social networks that is shaping the narrative. And of course there is a connection between what is posted in the media, what

happens in reality and what is debated in the Parliament and the discourse is being shaped by this relation. The situation is changing rapidly.

Question 9: If data showed that immigration has not increased unemployment, do you think that it would affect the current political debate? How?

Answer: Yes, I think that sometimes we just read the news about the increasing number of enrollments in social security or the decreasing rate of unemployment but there's no complementation, and we don't link it yet to the good functioning of the economy. If we could clarify this correlation it would be beneficial for everyone.

Question 10: Do you believe there are economic costs associated with immigration? What types of policies (whether in the area of immigration or labor market regulation) do you consider appropriate to maximize the benefits and reduce the costs of immigration?

First of all, when immigration is not safe and regular, it generates a human cost, but this is a minority. We need an appropriate policy in terms of visas that would reduce this phenomenon for both receiving and sending countries. This would facilitate things in areas like taxes and social contributions. Moving more to economics, for local people we make a social investment in education for children, and it is not debated or criticised, there's a clear consensus on educating people that will later contribute to the society, and the same goes for other aspects. But if a new person arrives, people and we invest in it don't like it. This happens with minors, especially minors that arrive at 16-17 years without parents. We believe that we are wasting money on helping these people for a few years so they can be included in society and find a job. We only see it as a cost, and not as an investment and people say that there are other social investments that are more important, when it is more than clear that we

have to incorporate migrant people into our labour markets. Yes we have to pay for services for these people but we don't take into account the benefits of the inclusion of these people in this society. So the best policy is definitely social inclusion. Every migratory process needs good planification and investment, which is also lacking at a political level in our society, and if this was done properly it would also eliminate other concerns related to this topic.

INTERVIEW WITH MIRIAM CASANOVA

Question 1: As a first question I'd like a brief introduction of yourself, your name, your position in the party, how you arrived here, your professional background…

Answer: Yes, of course. Let's see, I was a board member at the Barcelona City Council from 2011 to 2015. Before being a board member, I was an advisor in economic matters, in taxation, in budgets, in everything that was the general account, in the annual accounts.

And then, during the time at the City Council, I had been giving classes at different universities, but then I worked in the fiscal area, accounting, for business parties.

I work in the areas of economy, economy and finance. So, here, between budgets and fiscality. Then, I am in the area of research and universities.

And, well, this has been a little bit my trajectory. I mean, a little bit for the professional profile, as an economist, I started in the city council, and I liked to work for the common interest, and that led me to be a regent, and now here I am, working as a deputy.

Question 2: How would you describe the current situation of the Spanish labour market in terms of quantity and quality of employment, unemployment…

Answer: Let's see, I think there is an aspect that is good, and that is the fact that the unemployment rate is low. So, now, after the pandemic, we've had some years of economic growth, and that has also led to the creation of jobs and the unemployment rate going down. So, this is good data.

Now, when you analyse it in more detail it can be seen that there is a very high rotation in certain professions, and there is also excessive temporality in jobs such as hospitality or agriculture. In certain seasons there is too much weight, on the job contracts of fixed and discontinuous, because, in the end, they only work for seasons. And then, the other aspect, that needs to be improved, is that the employment that is created is not of high quality.

So, in general, there is low quality and that also means that the salaries are low.

And this brings us to the issue of professional qualification. It is also true that many workers, throughout their professional life, do not do continuous training, so that they are not adapted to what companies really need. And the problem that we have is that companies have difficulties in finding employees. And the other problem that has also grown is that of labor absenteeism, as it really means putting the business in danger.

In macro terms, we are doing well, because the low unemployment rate is below 10%, but then as you analyze it you see that the labor market has a series of difficulties and challenges.

Another problem is the lack of training, and this really disappoints me, because here in Catalunya we have the Continuous Training Consortium, and then we have the SOC. They do a lot of training courses, but it does not end up being well linked to the business world.

Question 3: How do you think that immigration has contributed to the recent developments of the labour market?

Answer: I believe that immigration, in general terms, has allowed us to cover jobs that the national population did not want to occupy. And that's why, basically, we find them in very specific sectors, such as agriculture, hospitality, the health care sector, and transport, most of them because of the low wages offered.

And on the other hand, now that we are talking so much about regularization, of course, we are also of the idea that immigration has to be ordered. And, therefore, very linked to work. And from here, it would proceed an integration into the society in which we live. What has also happened? That as we have been receiving more irregular immigration in recent years, this has also increased the work in the submerged economy.

And, therefore, this means that we have people that do not quote, they do not pay taxes, and that, in the end, they are more subject to abuse on the part of others. Whether they are foreigners or whether they are from here.

Question 4: Through which mechanisms do you think that immigration can affect employment?

Answer: The main type of immigrant person is a person who has a low level of qualification. And, in general, also with urgent economic needs. This leads them to covering places of work that nationals don't want, because they are associated with low wages.

So, of course, when we get immigrants who have a higher level of professional and training qualification, and who no longer have so many economic needs, this is when they could really start to compete with the national workers.

Now we don't see that the orderly immigration, the legal one, is having a negative impact. But it is true that, if a higher profile starts to arrive in quantities, in a massive way, it could have an impact. And the population could see that they are being substituted.

Question 5: Do you think that immigrants have any effect over the local workers? In which sectors of profiles happens more frequently?

Answer: Sure, yes.What we see is that they have gone to very specific sectors, especially what I said, hospitality, agriculture, transport, logistics, cures… so yes, there are sectors where a greater effect is detected.

And also in terms of the profile; lower education or professional qualification. Again this is not all of the cases but it is a general trend.

Now, of course, we can draw more aggregated data, right? They show this, a little bit with the line I told you, that in the end, immigrant workers are earning 30% less than national

workers, precisely because they go to work in jobs that in general require little qualification and the salary is lower.

The effect is different depending on the sector, depending on the profile, and depending on the territory. Because it is true that there are territories, for example, the collection of fruit in Lleida, they have to organize because an important amount of labor comes to collect the fruit.

Question 6: Do you think that the impact of immigration is homogeneous? or it depends on factors like profile, qualification or territory?

Answer: Yes, I think that there are differences in sectors, in qualifications and in territory. But in any case they end up occupying jobs that nationals do not want.

Therefore, they end up entering in substitution contracts, temporary contracts, because, in the end, they are job contracts that nationals have rejected or have no longer shown up.

In reality, now, the effects are good. Immigration, organized and legal, is good in the labor market. The problem is that when it is not distributed in a homogeneous way in the territory, it ends up generating a tension, a pressure on public services.

And then, on issues of housing access, access to public health, to schools, to public aid, and this is where I think this negative image of immigration is. Because, in reality, from the point of view of economic activity and the labor market, the effects so far are good.

Question 7: From your point of view, do you think that the current debate about migration reflects the current economic situation?

Answer: The current economic situation is good at the macroeconomic level, because we have growth rates that are good. This year it is expected to be 2.3%, that is, we have been two or three years with significant growth around 3%. Therefore, the political debate has nothing

to do with the current economic situation, because in macro terms it is good. Another thing is at the microeconomic level, because it is also true that when you analyze it in detail, here in Catalonia the data of the IDESCAT, the latest ones, reflect that 47% of Catalan families have difficulties getting to the end of the month.

Therefore, we return to the fact that we have lost purchasing power and that salaries do not rise according to product inflation. Therefore, it is good at the macro level but at the micro level, we see that many families are having a hard time.

The political debate on immigration is very bad, especially here in the Parliament. It is always first those at home, before those abroad, and all this is the fault of those abroad.

That is, there has been a total discord between the political debate, which is all the pressure they generate on public services, on access to housing, and then also that they further accentuate income inequality, because people who come in general have few resources and therefore the differences between nationals and immigrants is growing. And then there is the whole issue of irregular immigration. So here, the problem we have had is that in recent years there has not been much control.

And therefore a lot of people have come in irregularly. People who enter with a visa as a tourist spend the three months and stay. And then those who enter are hanged by the mafias, risking their lives.

There is a great problem in the field of irregular immigration. And this has also made it seen in a very pejorative way immigration in general.

And before I was telling you, the problem is the pressure on public services and also access to housing. But in reality I think at least it is not due to immigration that we have, but there has not been good planning. And therefore it has not been foreseen what growth we would have of people and that they were necessary to incorporate them into the labor market, because companies also demand it.

And both health, education and housing have not been made, the right policies have not been made. There has not been good planning. But in the political debate it is the fault of immigration. Everything is the fault of immigration, that social assistance goes to immigrants, that in the end they go ahead when it comes to accessing official housing and that they are always in the middle and that when they go to public school they have it collapsed too. This discourse is especially from the far right but the problem here is not well planification on the needs of the territory, but is easier to blame immigrants.

–Yes, yes.

And in the end we are let's see, we have 20% here in Catalonia of immigrant population. If that 20% collapses the 100% is like a little suspicious right?

Therefore, practically in all debates we have it. In fact, I think that where we have it less is in the labor market.

Question 8: Which role do you think that media has in the construction of the narrative of immigration and labour markets?

Answer: Yes, yes. Look, I have two examples of news quite recent. One said, Spain allocates more than 1,800 million euros a year to serve irregular immigrants and only 60 million euros to prevent their arrival.

This is one. And the other says: immigrants contribute 10% to social security income, while the use of public services represents around 1% of the expenditure. Look, the media currently have very extremist visions.

Few media talk about the good and the bad, but they go to one extreme or the other. The first news shows that it is a right-wing media, the second is a left-wing media.
I think that the media has a very important role when communicating and giving messages and headlines, especially because people end up reading the headlines, but they make headlines that are very, very biased. But to find out about political issues, general interest issues, I think people will use it less and less because it is not credible

And in the end, for example, in the issue of immigration, we are very hard on what is the entry control. Here we do say that the control must be strengthened much more, especially at the external borders. And, on the other hand, this is like that in the media almost does not come out. Or also that people that don't have a plausible professional profile and that have a criminal record should be forced to leave our country, but in the media it seems that only Vox is promoting this because we are more in the center-right than pure right like them.

Question 9: If data showed that immigration has not increased unemployment, do you think that it would affect the current political debate? How?

Answer: Right now it's not the case bc unemployment is decreasing, but if unemployment increased with no doubt immigrants would be blamed, statements like "immigrants take jobs from the locals" would arise with no doubt, but if we look at reports like the one from el Banco de Espanya we see that 76% of new jobs created between 2019 and 2024 have been occupied by immigrants but no one complains in this sense. But since unemployment is decreasing there are no arguments to blame immigration. But we see how immigrants are blamed for other aspects like long queues in the health sectors to be attended, or the collapse of the public education system…But the problem here is that there was not a good planification of the public services, which has generated these problems. But this is not because of the arrival of migrant people but from a lack of planification and money being spent on other things rather than public services. It is true that the percentage of migrants received during these last years has been more significant, but in any case it still represents less than 18% of the population. The problem is clearly bad expenditure schemes and lack of planification.

Question 10: Do you believe there are economic costs associated with immigration? What types of policies (whether in the area of immigration or labor market regulation) do you consider appropriate to maximize the benefits and reduce the costs of immigration?

Answer: We believe that one of the key measures would be to use the employment contract at origin. Here in Catalunya last year there were around 1000 contracts of this type of contract. This is the best way to make sure that immigration can effectively access the labour market

when entering Spain. Also to give more incentives to firms to create new labour positions. This would also generate demand for international talent, specially for firms looking for talent from abroad and for foreign firms to come here. All of these would result in a positive result for immigrants and the labour market and firms and overall the economic system. Then as we said before, to have a more strict border control and to ban the entry to irregular migrants and migrants with criminal records. We also have programs to help developing countries that should be improved and aimed to create labour in those countries so they wouldn't have the necessity to leave their countries.

DATA SETS FOR THE REGRESSIONS

The following tables were used for the regressions, data was obtained from INE

Region	Year	Employment (%)	Unemployment (%)	Total Population	Immigrant Share (%)	Avg. Salary (€)	GDP per Capita (€)	Tertiary Education (%)	Construction Share (%)	Services Share (%)
Andalusia	2021	47.5	21.85	8484804	7.81	1864.5	19591	34.1	6.9	75.1
Andalusia	2022	46.8	19.12	8511167	8.29	1906.8	21569	35.1	6.8	76.6
Andalusia	2023	45.8	18.24	8584147	8.68	2100.7	23165	35.8	6.5	77.4
Andalusia	2024	44.5	16.46	8631862	9.02	2146.5	24542	36.2	7	77
Arago	2021	54	10.33	1331938	11.41	1975.3	29144	41.1	7.2	66.9
Arago	2022	53.6	9.62	1328215	11.92	2040.8	32717	43.3	6.7	68.5
Arago	2023	53.1	8.58	1341289	12.37	2243.8	34742	42.9	5.5	68.7
Arago	2024	52.4	8.14	1351591	12.81	2353.5	36699	41.3	6.4	68.9
Asturies	2021	46.2	12.35	1012117	4.11	2083.6	23466	44.6	7	74.9
Asturies	2022	44	12.52	1004960	4.33	2096.7	26544	43.3	6.4	75.2
Asturies	2023	43.2	12.13	1006060	4.52	2228.5	28130	43.6	7	75.4
Asturies	2024	44.2	10.12	1009599	4.77	2319.8	29660	44.3	7.9	73.6
Balears	2021	58	14.32	1183415	17.64	2066.2	25807	36.2	10.4	81.6
Balears	2022	57.1	10.62	1187043	18.42	2305.8	31030	33.7	10.4	82.1
Balears	2023	57.2	10.32	1209906	18.84	2237.1	33995	33.5	9.5	83.8
Balears	2024	54.2	9.34	1231768	19.21	2342.2	36093	34.6	10.5	81.7
Canaries	2021	51.4	23.46	2178924	12.11	1954.8	19021	36.1	6.6	85
Canaries	2022	50.2	17.63	2185607	12.78	1879.6	22238	36.9	6.3	86.6
Canaries	2023	48.7	16.08	2213016	13.21	1987.9	24256	34.3	6.3	86.5
Canaries	2024	44.3	13.76	2238754	13.66	2051.7	25861	35.4	7.2	85.8
Cantabria	2021	51.5	11.25	584708	5.82	2064.8	24303	43.6	7.9	73.1
Cantabria	2022	50.4	9.57	585450	6.11	2125.9	26506	45.6	7.1	73
Cantabria	2023	49.5	8.14	588387	6.34	2317.1	28392	49.4	8.3	73.6
Cantabria	2024	49.0	7.84	590851	6.59	2327.2	29893	48.8	7.9	74
CastLleó	2021	49.2	11.61	2385223	5.71	1990.3	25020	39.4	6.7	70
CastLleó	2022	48.8	9.93	2375583	5.92	2061.3	27511	39.9	6.5	71.3
CastLleó	2023	48.9	9.68	2383703	6.11	2176.5	29273	40.8	6.9	70.5
CastLleó	2024	47.3	9.41	2391682	6.33	2299.1	30887	42.1	6.6	70.8
CastManxa	2021	50.4	15.67	2052505	8.41	1926.1	21515	31.1	7.4	69.8
CastManxa	2022	50.8	14.64	2058278	8.96	1954.6	24156	31.5	7.9	69.7

Region	Year	Employment (%)	Unemployment (%)	Total Population	Immigrant Share (%)	Avg. Salary (€)	GDP per Capita (€)	Tertiary Education (%)	Construction Share (%)	Services Share (%)
CastManxa	2023	50.1	13.21	2084086	9.39	2025.2	25090	32.7	8.2	70.2
CastManxa	2024	49.3	13.34	2104433	9.81	2221.5	26291	33.6	9.1	69.8
Catalunya	2021	56.1	11.69	7749896	15.01	2174.8	30360	43.2	6.4	75.1
Catalunya	2022	55.8	9.97	7761823	15.79	2261.5	33043	44.7	6.4	74.8
Catalunya	2023	54.9	9.33	7901963	16.23	2439.1	35600	44.8	6.1	75.8
Catalunya	2024	54.0	8.89	8012231	16.61	2529.9	37477	45.9	6.2	76
ComValen	2021	51.5	16.08	5067911	14.02	1945.3	22944	38.6	6.6	73.9
ComValen	2022	51.6	13.3	5108116	14.72	1937.4	24715	37.5	6.9	73.6
ComValen	2023	50.9	12.8	5216195	15.3	2079.9	26512	38.6	7.5	74.5
ComValen	2024	48.5	12.62	5319285	15.84	2181.2	27626	38.2	7.1	74.6
Extremadura	2021	46.3	20.16	1061636	2.91	1628.2	20363	29.6	7.7	70.9
Extremadura	2022	46.0	17.32	1056808	3.33	1841.2	22250	32.1	7.2	72.6
Extremadura	2023	45.4	17.37	1054306	3.49	1915.9	23891	34.5	6.8	72.9
Extremadura	2024	43.7	15.51	1054681	3.71	2127.2	25224	35.1	7.1	73.8
Galícia	2021	48.2	11.54	2698177	3.92	1992.3	23927	41.9	7	71
Galícia	2022	47.8	11.04	2692825	4.18	2038.6	26570	42.7	7	71.7
Galícia	2023	47.0	9.72	2699424	4.38	2136.1	28661	41.4	6.8	71.7
Galícia	2024	46.4	9.37	2705833	4.61	2229.7	30191	42.2	7.2	70.4
ComMadrid	2021	57.5	11.69	6726640	13.45	2358.3	35703	50.2	5.9	85.2
ComMadrid	2022	57.0	11.22	6743254	13.82	2374.5	39246	50.3	5.7	84.7
ComMadrid	2023	56.2	9.95	6871903	14.03	2575.5	42639	50.5	5.9	84.5
ComMadrid	2024	55.9	8.97	7009268	14.44	2761.8	44749	50.9	6.2	84.7
Murcia	2021	52.1	14.71	1518279	14.01	1878.1	22087	34.2	6.6	68.8
Murcia	2022	52.0	13.58	1529658	14.52	1865.6	24263	31.3	5.9	69.8
Murcia	2023	51.5	12.78	1551692	14.79	2027.2	25536	32.7	6.5	71
Murcia	2024	51.3	12.73	1568492	15.12	2120.9	26944	33.1	5.8	70.7
Navarra	2021	54.7	10.71	662032	10.21	2280.4	31486	49.1	6.5	62.9
Navarra	2022	52.9	9.74	664514	10.66	2292.5	34720	48.7	7	64.5
Navarra	2023	53.0	9.94	672155	11.02	2515.7	36987	48.3	5.7	65.7
Navarra	2024	51.9	7.63	678333	11.38	2589.1	39096	50.1	5.3	64.8
PaísBasc	2021	51.5	10.29	2212628	7.41	2440.8	32898	56.1	4.9	72.4
PaísBasc	2022	52.5	8.88	2205826	7.92	2517.9	36280	56.4	5.5	72.8
PaísBasc	2023	51.4	7.73	2216302	8.32	2624.3	39041	55.7	5.7	73.1
PaísBasc	2024	50.5	8.11	2227684	8.71	2809.9	41010	56.2	4.7	74.7
LaRioja	2021	52.8	11.61	319444	11.92	1949.1	27365	40.3	5.4	61.2
LaRioja	2022	53.4	9.55	319617	12.41	2084.8	30433	42.4	7.3	58.9
LaRioja	2023	53.8	9.38	322282	12.97	2248.9	32412	40.2	8.2	59.1
LaRioja	2024	52.9	9.74	324184	13.44	2366.1	34125	41.6	5.9	60.4
Ceuta	2021	43.9	30.85	84071	5.21	2243.9	19661	31.9	2.5	94.4
Ceuta	2022	43.4	29.93	83051	5.56	2169.5	21273	30.1	6.2	90.8
Ceuta	2023	42.8	29.97	83052	5.87	2284.5	22413	26.9	3.8	92.7
Ceuta	2024	38.4	27.45	83179	6.12	2739.1	23070	33.8	4.9	92.4
Melilla	2021	42.2	25.4	86450	12.91	2122.1	17891	31.9	4.9	92.5
Melilla	2022	40.8	25.94	84932	13.31	2169.7	19433	30.1	2.7	93.7
Melilla	2023	43.3	26.62	85493	13.71	2363.3	20454	26.9	3.2	94.2
Melilla	2024	45.5	28.33	85985	14.02	2502.2	21118	33.8	4.7	92.3