

MEASURING THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN SPAIN

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Integration is a frequently used term when discussing immigrant persons. However, it is only recently that it was defined as a technical term. On many occasions it is used without specifying its content, or as an ideal to be attained in order to improve the integration of immigrants in their host country. Indeed, depending on how countries deal with their migrant situation, very different concepts of the relation between integration and immigration can arise. In the “immigrant-guest worker” model, exemplified by Germany, this relation depends on the amount of time worked. Conversely, in the French “assimilationist” model, the relation is based on the idea that immigrants will stay in the country permanently, and immigrants are asked to assimilate to the dominant culture. Finally, in the “integrationist” model of the United Kingdom, the immigrant’s permanence is handled within a framework of multicultural coexistence.

There are multiple factors that influence processes of integration, including legislation, economic situation, cultural and social differences between host societies, as well as countries of origin and perceptions and group stereotypes. With this in mind, it is important to develop instruments that can measure and quantify this reality, not just at a particular given moment, but also over an extended period of time. The different aspects of the integration can be grouped into four categories or dimensions, each of which can include numerous indicators: 1) the socio-economic dimension, with indicators for employment and unemployment, documentation status, income, social security, education level, housing, residential segregation, etc.; 2) the cultural dimension, with indicators for attitudes about the values and norms of the host society, choice of couple, contacts with their society of origin, language skills, delinquency, etc.; 3) the political and legal dimension, relating to civic issues, with indicators for naturalization processes, political participation, etc.; and 4) the dimension of the host environment, with indicators for attitudes and opinions relating to immigrants, for governmental and other programs that aid immigrants and for discriminatory practices, etc. This categorization, together with other quantifiable aspects, demonstrates the complexity of

performing an empirical analysis of such a multifaceted reality. There have been numerous studies which have defined the theoretical context, in addition to less-frequent studies which have explored the possibilities for empirical analysis via other indicators.

The present study has the objective of measuring the integration of the principal groups of immigrants residing in Spain in 2007. In earlier studies we focused on the analysis of integration, including many of the aspects falling under the four dimensions described above, but the inclusion of so many indicators made it very difficult to interpret the results. On this occasion, we have opted for analyzing specific aspects of integration and, at the end, performing a parallel reading of each one. In addition, and also as a result of earlier studies, we decided to analyze integration by discriminating by the immigrants' countries of origin. Just as host countries have different ways of understanding and defining immigrants' integration, it is likely that persons coming from the same country understand –and respond to– integration into Spanish society in a characteristic way that is distinct from the experience of those who come from other countries.

The data source we relied upon to perform this study is the National Immigrant Survey (ENI), a macro-survey of 15,465 foreign-born Spanish residents undertaken in 2007 by Spain's National Statistics Institute (INE). The groups chosen for performing our comparative study of integration processes –Romanians, English, Moroccans, Argentinians, Columbians and Ecuadorians– have a representative sample within the data collected by the INE survey, as well as being the groups with the greatest presence in Spain. The limitation of the ENI survey is that it does not include information about immigrants' attitudes nor about governmental programs directed to them. Therefore, our analysis will focus on three of the four dimensions mentioned above.

As a proxy indicator for the socioeconomic dimension we have chosen the availability of permanent residence permits and investments made while in Spain. The cultural dimension was analyzed via the indicator of marriage to a Spanish citizen, while the civic dimension was measured via immigrants' participation in associations that are not specifically directed toward foreigners. We assume, therefore, that having a permanent residence permit, having made investments in Spain, having married a Spaniard and participating in associations not directed towards foreigners are aspects that speak to integration. We are conscious that these four realities deal with a very small part of the complex reality hidden behind the process of integration. We make no pretense of dealing with everything; instead, we seek to throw light on specific aspects that aid in a general understanding of the topic.

We have considered each of these aspects as a dependent variable that we wish to explain, and have studied them by applying a logistic regression over those aspects that may be predictive of the given facet of integration. In the study's first stage, we performed a binary logistic regression in order to determine the relevance –or non-relevance– of the variables included. In the second stage, we ran a multivariate logistic regression in order to weigh each of the variables that were statistically significant in the first stage. We repeated this process for each of the four aspects chosen for our study of integration: documentation status, investments while in Spain, marriage with a Spaniard and participation in associations.

Migration into Spain over the last 15 years has been characterized by a high degree of irregularity, which has led to the development of normalization on the part of public institutions. Having a residence permit has been, up to now, a marker corresponding to enormous

differences in immigrants' possibility to integrate into Spanish society. Half of foreigners born in Spain and Argentina have a permanent residence permit or else, as Spanish citizens, do not need one. This statistic falls to 40% for Columbians, 35% for Ecuadorians and 15% for Rumanians. We have excluded British immigrants, since they no need to acquire these permits. Statistical analysis reveals important differences in the probability of having a permanent residence permit: a) Time is the variable with the greatest predictive power: those persons who arrived earlier are much more likely to have legal documentation; b) Being married to a Spaniard is the second most important predictive variable; c) Moroccans have the greatest probability of having a permanent residence permit, while Rumanians have the least. In the middle, in order of decreasing probability, are the Argentinians, Ecuadorians and Columbians. These are the most important variables, statistically speaking, although others also have statistical significance: being married rather than single, having an indefinite employment contract rather than a temporary one, making investments while in Spain, participating in associations, not having children (or if they have children, living with them rather than being separated), being male instead of female, having received more education rather than less, and having plans to remain in Spain. The results of this analysis support the original hypothesis and are in agreement with the timelines of arrival for the different groups studied.

The second integration indicator that we analyzed was investment while in Spain. It is important to remember that the ENI was carried out in 2007, a time of economic expansion. We focused our attention on investment since we believe that a person who invests money, as opposed to merely having it, demonstrates a desire to stay in Spain. 57% of foreigners surveyed indicated that they had made investments. The English had the highest percentage, with eight out of ten having made investments in Spain. This measure falls to four out of ten for Ecuadorians and Argentinians, three out of ten Moroccans and Columbians, and two out of ten Rumanians. Buying a house is the most common investment, although for Argentinians starting a business is also important, with 26% doing so. The results of the multivariate analysis once again highlight the importance of the time factor: those who arrived earlier have three times the probability of having made investments. Furthermore, there is a marked difference between groups from different countries: the British are those who are most likely to have made investments, followed by Ecuadorians, Moroccans, Columbians, Argentinians and Rumanians. The profile of British immigrants, of whom a high percentage is retired, explains this statistical difference. The family profile is also connected to the probability of having invested: those who have no children or who live with them have higher probabilities of investment than those who do not live with their children, and who tend more strongly towards sending money back to their countries of origin. In contrast to the earlier analysis, in this case income is statistically significant: higher income correlates to more Spanish investment. The remaining predictive variables have the same internal coherence as in the previous model, although they have differing statistical weights: those most likely to invest are those who wish to remain in Spain, have a permanent residence permit and a higher education level, are a man instead of a woman, and participate in groups not specifically directed toward immigrants.

The third integration indicator we included, common in immigration studies, is marriage to a citizen of the host country. We assumed that having a life-project shared with a Spaniard will increase the probabilities of successful integration. In regards to the criteria for defining

a mixed marriage, i.e. where one partner was born in Spain or is of Spanish nationality, there are more cases if we use nationality as a criterion than if we focus on place of birth; in our case we used nationality. Using this criterion, Argentinians and Columbians are those who most frequently marry or form a couple with a Spaniard, with the frequency running around 30%, while with Ecuadorians the percentage falls to 19%, 14% among the English, 13% among Moroccans and a mere 7% among Rumanians. Multivariate logistic regression indicates that the variable with greatest predictive effect is the level of education: those who have a university degree have five times the probability of having a Spanish partner than those without any sort of studies. The second most important variable is having a permanent residence permit or else not needing one; nevertheless, the directionality with this relation is not that of being a cause of having a Spanish partner, but rather its consequence. Latin Americans, and especially Argentinians, are much more likely to have a Spanish partner than those from elsewhere. The time factor is also a predictive variable here, in addition to having plans to stay in the country, having made investments, having a high income and being a man. Furthermore, variables which were unexplored in prior models appear as predictive factors in our study, for example having a family network in Spain prior to arrival. The variables relating to the family situation indicate that those immigrants who have no children have twice the probability of being married to (or forming a couple with) a Spaniard than those who have minor children.

Finally, in our latest model we study integration via an indicator of civic significance, i.e. that of participation in associations not specifically directed towards immigrants. It is logical to think that sharing leisure time with Spaniards helps in forming links with our society. We are also aware of the variation in levels of social participation in different cultures. Spanish society, in fact, has much lower levels than other cultures, especially English-speaking ones. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this indicator includes widely varied types of associations: social, sports, religious, cultural, etc., which means that it applies to highly diverse realities. The English and Argentinians have the highest levels of participation (24%), followed at a distance by Rumanians (8.5%), Ecuadorians (8%) and, in last place, Moroccans (7.5%). The results of applying multivariate logistic regression in order to better understand which indicators have a statistical relation to civic participation are not as robust as in earlier models, since the probabilities are notably lower. Having studied at the university level and having arrived earlier are the variables that stand out the most. Those who have permanent residence permits, have invested, are men, have a long-term labor contract and are married to Spaniards (among other factors) show a higher probability of participating in associations. This profile indicates that a person has achieved a stability of life in Spain.

Reading the results obtained from these four models inclusively, we see first of all that each has a high explanatory solidity. If we also compare the results of these models we find that there is a strong coherence among them. This leads us to conclude that our methodological approach is valid, giving us the ability to study integration in light of an understanding of its different aspects and enabling us to derive conclusions about key aspects of integration based on the elements shared by the distinct realities. The first of these is the importance of time in the integration processes. We are, however, conscious of the distortion that results from working with a survey that, logically, does not include as part of the sample those who have left the country. The second is the level of education, which is a predictive factor in

several of the models we analyzed. The third influencing aspect is the family situation of the person surveyed; those who have minor children in their country of origin are less likely to successfully integrate. Finally, the country of origin also plays a relevant part, since it reflects important differences between cultures: Latin-Americans, and among them Argentinians, are those whose levels of integration are much higher than those of Rumanians or Moroccans.

In conclusion, we would like to note that managing the integration of immigrants requires developing deeper knowledge of the phenomenon and creating analysis frameworks that rely on concrete results. There is a need, therefore, for continuing to study the distinct tiles that make up the complex mosaic of integration processes.

