

Country Focus: Migration of Spanish nationals during the crisis

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This report is a brief description of the main results obtained from an e-survey among Spanish emigrants, within the research project “Migrations from the Southern Member States of the European Union (Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece) and Ireland”.

The e-survey ran between May and August 2013. It was disseminated through media and social networks. In the Spanish case two journals with a wide circulation, *El Mundo* and *ABC* included information about the survey in their electronic versions, and it was also disseminated through associations of Spanish emigrants, the foreign services of the Spanish Open University, and the social networks of the Elcano Royal Institute.

The Spanish language version of the questionnaire was filled by 1,543 individuals. The analysis of the obtained sample suggests that the channels of dissemination of the survey did not reach naturalized immigrants who form, according to the available statistics, the biggest part of the population who has left the country since the beginning of the crisis, as only 127 out of the 1,543 respondents were born outside Spain. For this reason we decided to exclude these respondents from the analysis, in order to get a more homogeneous group formed by native Spanish emigrants. In addition, a further 157 respondents who were residents in Spain at the time they took the survey have also been excluded from the final sample.

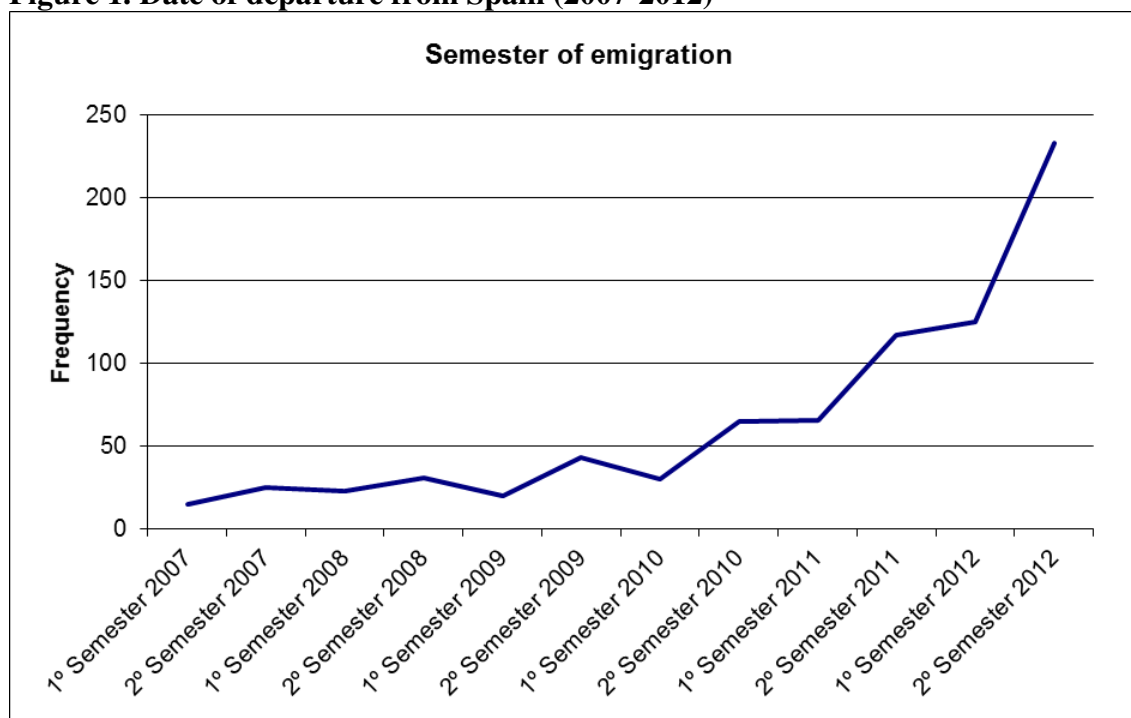
After excluding both groups we still had 1,259 respondents in the Spanish sample. Despite its size, it is not a representative sample of the whole population of Spanish emigrants: this population is mostly composed of old migrants and their children born abroad, but very few of them answered the survey (14% of the sample left Spain before 2007). Furthermore, a mere 9% of respondents had a medium or low level of education. We cannot be sure whether this small presence of low qualified migrants in the sample is a consequence of the real distribution of qualification levels among Spanish emigrants or whether it is a result of the lower presence of less qualified workers in the social networks we used for disseminating the survey and their lower level of reading of newspapers. Hence, we have decided to exclude both those who migrated before 2007 and non-graduate respondents from the final database that we then analysed. Thus, the dataset that remained is composed of 982 people. It is representative of qualified migrants, born in Spain, who have left Spain from 2007 onwards (i.e., after the first signals of economic crisis were perceived in the country).

The features of this dataset are the following: 60% of respondents are men and 40% women, 54% are under 30 years and 40% are within the 31-45 years group. In spite of their young age, more than half of the respondents (54%) had previously migrated to another country. Their main discipline of studies is “Engineering” (30%), followed distantly by “Economics, Management and Business” (17%), “Social Sciences” (15%), “Humanities and Education” (12%) and “Mathematics and Natural Sciences” (10%).

51% have a partner or spouse, and 87% of those partners also hold a higher education degree.

The outflow of migrants in the sample has been accelerated since the second semester of 2010 and especially during 2011 and 2012, when unemployment in Spain reached 26% of active population. Figures referring to the first semester of 2013 have not been included as the survey was launched in May.

Figure 1. Date of departure from Spain (2007-2012)



Reasons for leaving

Unemployment is not the first driver of emigration: 52% of respondents were employed prior to leaving and 47% of these held a long term contract. Unemployment is only cited by 34% of migrants as a reason for emigration.

According to the answers of a pre-codified question, the most relevant reasons for leaving were the sense of **not having a future in Spain, unemployment**, and the desire to **improve their academic and professional situation**.

The comments and answers provided to an open question of our survey suggest that the following factors are also **significant drivers of outmigration from Spain**:

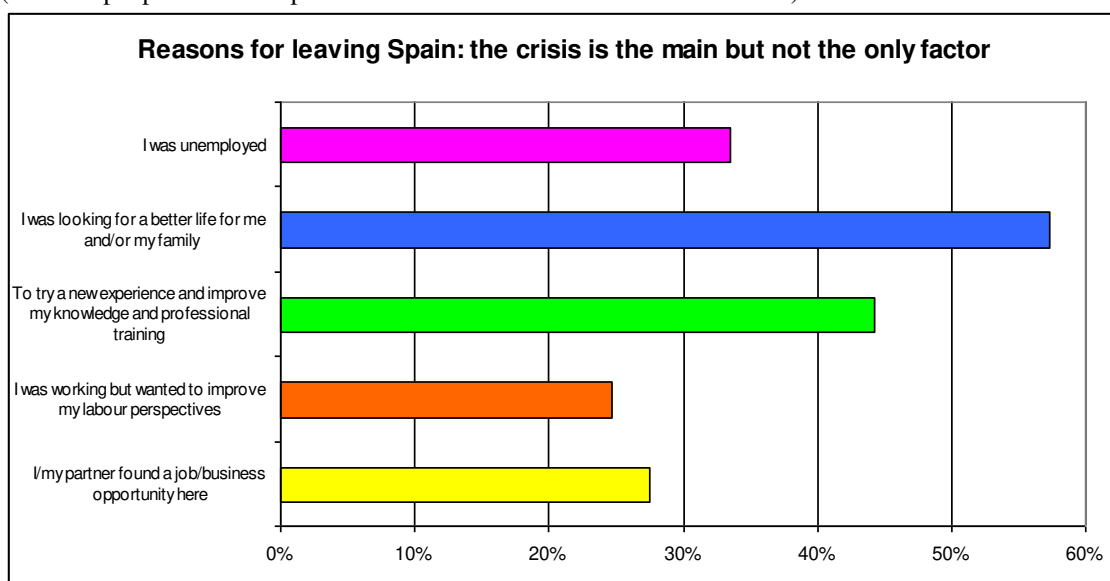
- ✓ Disappointment with the **lack of meritocracy**.
- ✓ Anger with the **level of corruption and the failures of the political system**.
- ✓ **Job insecurity and precarious working conditions** (low salaries, lack of stability, etc).
- ✓ Discouragement with some features of Spanish society such as **lack of civility, disorganization, apathy**, etc.

Table 1. Reasons for leaving Spain (pre-codified question)

Reasons for leaving Spain	Percent (multiple answers possible)
My company sent me abroad/offered me work here	7
I was unemployed	34
I was employed but my salary was very low	15
I was employed but had no opportunity for further profession	20
I wanted to improve my academic/ professional training	31
My quality of life was overall rather poor	14
My spouse/ partner left for professional reasons and I accompanied him/her	8
I saw no future for me in the country	53
I wanted a better future for my children in a new country	6
Dissatisfied with the political situation in the country	8
I wanted to try a new experience, a new adventure	26
I could find better business opportunities here	14

Figure 2. Reasons for leaving Spain (grouped answers)

(Note: % people who have provided at least one reason of the same nature)



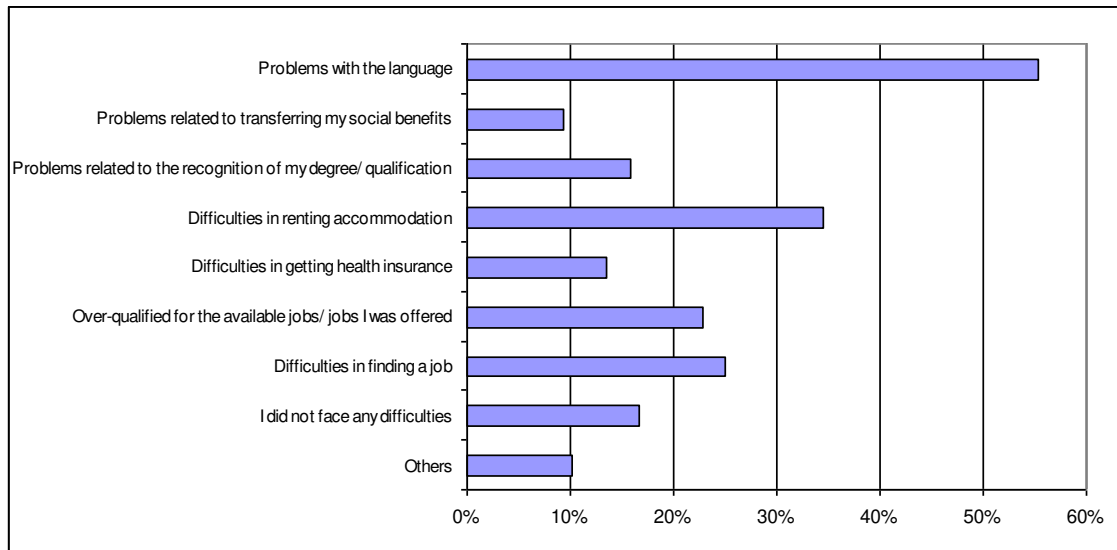
Situation in the host country

77% of respondents have a job in the destination country and 50% declare they are **satisfied or very satisfied with the income** they are earning. Only 12% do not have any income.

The **core areas** in which they are employed are engineering (20% out of total workers), education and research (14%), provision of services (10%) and information technology (10%).

Insufficient knowledge of the host country language is the main challenge faced by Spanish emigrants. 55% of respondents admit they confront this problem.

Figure 3. Difficulties faced while settling into their new country of residence (%)
 (Note: multiple reasons could be ticked by the respondents)



54% of our respondents have had a previous migratory experience, and 24% of the whole sample plan to move to a third country. These figures suggest a highly mobile population, ready to move to wherever better opportunities can be found.

The migration project has a medium-to-long term perspective since only 13,5% have plans to return to Spain within a year, while the largest group (36%) plan to stay for a period of 1 to 5 more years, and 32% express a desire to stay for more than 5 years. In spite of these plans for a medium-to-long stay, among respondents whose partner and/or children are living in another country (46% of respondents), only 22% have plans to regroup them in their current country of residence.

Figure 4. Future plans (%)
 (Note: The option “Move to a third country” is compatible with other answers)

