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Recent Immigration in Spain:
Facts, Economic Outcomes and Lessons



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**Recent Immigration in Spain:
Facts, Economic Outcomes and Lessons**

Sara de la Rica¹

Universidad del País Vasco,
IZA – Institute for the Study of Labor (Bonn),
FEDEA – Fundación de Estudios de Economía Aplicada

Abstract

In the past 12 years Spain has undergone one of the fastest and most intense immigration processes of any developed country. From a demographic point of view, this process has contributed to positive population growth: without it, growth would have been zero. In addition, it has helped to “rejuvenate” an aging Spanish population, as the average age of incoming immigrants is considerably lower than that of natives. From an economic point of view, two issues are dealt with in this study: first, there seems to be a positive assimilation process in terms of occupational upgrading for all immigrants apart from Africans; second, immigration leads to a shift of less well-educated natives towards more highly qualified occupations.

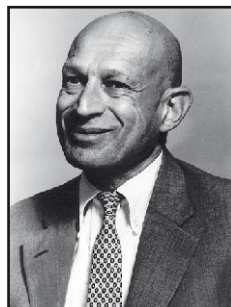
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About the IZA Annual Migration Meeting (AM²) and the Julian Simon Lecture:



In June 2004, IZA hosted the first Annual Migration Meeting (AM²) in Bonn. It was created to foster migration research by bringing together international researchers and establishing the IZA migration group. AM² established the Julian Simon Keynote Lecture in honor of Julian Simon, in recognition of his research on the economic effects of population change.

Julian Simon was an optimist on population issues and a migration expert. He was Professor of Business Administration at the University of Maryland, Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, and a member of the Action Institute's Advisory Board. He died unexpectedly on February 5, 1998, four days short of his 66th birthday.

Dr. Simon graduated from Harvard University, where he completed the ROTC program, and later served as a naval officer before receiving an M.A. in Business Administration and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. An entrepreneur, he opened his own business before joining academia.

A prolific writer, Simon was the author of almost two hundred professional studies in technical journals, and he wrote dozens of articles in such mass media as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Readers Digest*, *New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. In 1989 he published *The Economic Consequences of Immigration*, arguing that immigrants make “substantial net economic contributions to the United States.” Julian Simon was an advocate of an open-door immigration policy.



About the Author

Sara de la Rica is a full Professor of Economics at the University of the Basque Country, Spain. She is a Research Fellow at FEDEA, a Foundation for Empirical Economic Analysis in Madrid, as the director of the Research Grant “Fuentes Quintana” Bank of Spain-FEDEA. In addition, Sara is a Research Fellow at CReAM (Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration, London). She has been an IZA Research Fellow since January 2005.

She obtained a Master of Arts in Economics at the University of Warwick and a Ph.D. at the University of the Basque Country before she became a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Industrial Relations Section of Princeton University.

Sara is strongly attached to the European Society for Population Economics (ESPE). She was a member of the Executive Council (2000-2004), currently acts as the Secretary of ESPE (2004-2010), and will be the President-elect of the Society in 2011. She also served as the Secretary of the Spanish Economic Association (2006-2009).

Her research is focused on the empirical analysis of the labor market and can be divided into three main topics: (i) gender economics, (ii) the economic analysis of immigration and (iii) the economic analysis of labor institutions, especially unions and labor contracts.

She has published her work in a number of high-quality journals in labor economics, such as *Journal of Population Economics*, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, *Journal of Human Resources*, *Berkeley Electronic Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy (Contributions)*, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *Economica*, and *Spanish Economic Review*.

Introduction

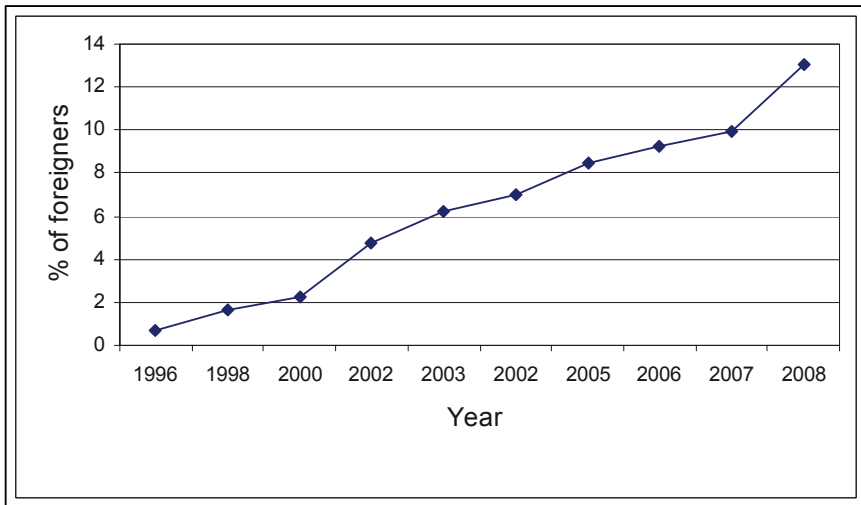
This paper is intended to provide a general picture of the recent phenomenon of immigration in Spain and is based on my Julian Simon Lecture (IZA Annual Migration Meeting, Bonn, May 2008). Spain is an interesting country to examine when analyzing immigration as an economic phenomenon because it has faced one of the largest inflows of immigrants of any industrialized country in the last 12 years. In 1996 only 1.2 percent of the Spanish adult population (about 400,000 individuals) was foreign-born. By 2008 the figure had risen to 13 percent (5,200,000 individuals). The speed and intensity of this phenomenon have led Spanish economic researchers to try to understand it from an economic point of view.

My intention in this paper is to offer an economic overview of the phenomenon of immigration in Spain based on my recent research on the topic. I first describe the main stylized facts regarding the phenomenon in Spain and the main individual and labor market characteristics of recent immigrants. Then I turn to the economic outcomes of immigrants; in particular, I analyze the labor market assimilation process of immigrants in Spain. Following from this, I examine the economic impact of immigration on natives, and particularly on the distribution of occupation among natives. There is some evidence that immigrants and natives specialize in different occupations, which results in a lack of competition of natives and immigrants for the same jobs. In conclusion, I briefly describe some lessons to be learned.

1. The Immigration Boom in Spain: Stylized Facts

Figure 1 depicts a notable upward trend in the foreign population share in Spain from 1996 to 2008. As can be seen from the figure, less than 1.2 percent of the population was foreign-born in 1996. By 2008, the figure was 13 percent. This rapid growth is a unique phenomenon that clearly deserves attention.

Figure 1
Trend in the Percentage of the Population of Spain Accounted for by Foreigners (1996-2008)



Source: Spanish Institute of Statistics – Padrón Municipal [Municipal Registers of Residents]

This rapid and intense inflow of immigrants drove the main features of Spanish population growth over the years studied. In terms of figures, the overall population of Spain increased by 5.4 million from 1998 to 2008, but 72.2 percent of this increase (3.9 million) was accounted for by foreigners. Immigrants have thus driven most of the population growth in Spain since the late nineties.

Where do immigrants in Spain come from? If we take a pool sample of all working-age immigrants from the 1999-2007 Spanish Current Population Survey, which is the most up-to-date representative dataset for examining the main characteristics of immigrants in Spain, we see that about

52.3 percent of all immigrants aged between 16 and 64 come from Central and South America, 24.4 percent from Africa and 24.3 percent from non-EU15 countries.

Are immigrants in Spain different from natives with regard to their personal characteristics? Table 1 depicts some of the main individual and labor market characteristics of immigrants compared to natives.

Table 1
Means and Characteristics of Working-age Natives and Immigrants
1999-2007 Spanish Current Population Sample

Variables	Natives	Immigrants	Africans	Non-EU15	Latinos
Female	50.5 -0.49	51.7 -0.49	38.3 -0.48	52.3 -0.49	57.7 -0.49
Age	38.7 -13.68	32.6 -10.2	32.19 -9.76	32.5 -10.28	32.8 -10.35
Head of household	27.4 -0.44	20.5 -0.4	24.2 -0.43	19.6 -0.4	19.23 -0.39
Married	57 -0.49	54.13 -0.49	59.5 -0.49	59.13 -0.49	49.4 -0.49
<i>Education</i>					
Primary or less	27.7 -0.44	25.4 -0.44	45.13 -0.49	14.92 -0.35	21.01 -0.41
Secondary	49.9 -0.5	53.7 -0.49	36.4 -0.48	57.63 -0.49	60.11 -0.49
University	22.35 -0.41	20.76 -0.4	18.46 -0.39	27.44 -0.44	18.9 -0.39
<i>Work Status</i>					
Employed	54.4 -0.49	65.4 -0.47	54.9 -0.49	69.9 -0.46	68.21 -0.47
Unemployed	8.06 -0.27	11.2 -0.31	14.4 -0.35	9.62 -0.29	10.3 -0.3
Observations	981,693	22,859	5579	5320	11960

Note: Individuals aged between 16 and 64. Standard deviations in parentheses. All statistics are weighted.

Source: Spanish Institute of Statistics.

For instance, the average age of an immigrant is approximately six years younger than a native, and there is a slightly higher proportion of females among immigrants. Education-wise, natives display a higher educational attainment than the average immigrant in our sample; however, as discussed below, there are major differences depending on the immigrant's origin.

Table 1 reflects notable differences across the three major migrant groups: only 38.3 percent of Africans are female compared to 57.7 percent of Latinos. In addition, 24.2 percent of African migrants are household heads, compared to 19 percent of Latinos. Education-wise, there are major differences from one immigrant group to another, depending on their origin. Forty-five percent of African migrants have no more than primary education; whereas the figures for non-EU15 immigrants and Latinos are 15 and 21 percent respectively. By contrast, only 18 percent of African immigrants have a university degree, compared to 22 percent of Spanish natives and 27 percent of Europeans. Lastly, the unemployment rate among African migrants (approximately 14 percent) is the highest of any group, be it immigrant or native.

2. Economic Outcomes of Immigrants

A very important question to look at for countries with non-negligible immigration rates, not only from an economic but also from a social perspective, is the labor market performance of immigrants. Since the seminal work by Chiswick (1978), a great deal of attention has been dedicated to assessing the labor market performance of immigrants relative to natives as they integrate into their host countries.

Preliminary findings by Chiswick (1978) for the US show that while immigrants earned significantly less than natives upon their arrival, they caught up with natives in terms of earnings as they integrated into the host country. Chiswick (1978) uses cross-sectional studies and compares the earnings of immigrants relative to natives of different cohorts. These findings are later questioned by Borjas (1985, 1995a), who challenges the assumption in these cross-section studies that the quality of immigrants across cohorts does not change.

Indeed, Borjas (1985) refutes that assumption and shows that the quality of immigrants in the US had declined over the decades and, as a result, assimilation did not take place as rapidly as Chiswick (1978) suggests. Additional studies of the assimilation of immigrants into countries other than the US include Longva and Raaum (2001) for Norway, Hartog and Winkelmann (2003) for the Netherlands, Bevelander and Nielsen (2001)

for Sweden, Constant and Massey (2003) for Germany, and Wheatly Price (2007) and more recently Clark and Lindley (2005) for the UK. Amuedo-Dorantes and De la Rica (2007) conduct the first empirical study on the labor market assimilation of immigrants in Spain. In this section, I briefly summarize the main findings regarding the labor market performance of immigrants into Spain and their assimilation process the longer their stay in Spain.

2.1. Changes in the employment probability of immigrants as compared with natives

The first point to consider when looking at the employment assimilation of immigrants is how to capture changes in the employment probability differential between similar immigrants and natives as immigrants' stay in the host country lengthens. This issue has been dealt with, among others, by Bevelander and Nielsen (2001) in Sweden, and Wheatley Price (2007) and Clark and Lindley (2005) in the UK. However, given that the reservation wage for immigrants is far lower than that of natives, the employment probability is a rather imperfect measure of the labor market performance of immigrants as compared to natives. Datasets which contain information on wages usually look at the wage differential between natives and immigrants as the length of the stay of the immigrants in the host country increases. However, in the absence of information on wages (which is the case for Spain), an examination of the assimilation of employed immigrants occupation-wise may be a more suitable indication of immigrant labor performance. Occupations can be ranked on the basis of their average earnings, so that it is possible to analyze immigrants' occupational assimilation as their residency in Spain lengthens relative to similarly skilled natives. Amuedo-Dorantes and De la Rica (2007) carry out this analysis separately by gender to uncover differences in the economic adaptation of male and female immigrants. In addition, immigrants are differentiated according to their country of origin.

The first result which emerges from this paper is that immigrant men and women are significantly less likely to be employed than similar natives. On average, recent male and female immigrants (i.e. with less than one year

of residence) are 15 and 4 percentage points less likely to be employed respectively than comparable natives. However, the magnitude of these employment gaps differs not just according to gender but also according to an immigrant's country of origin. Specifically, African immigrants are 8 percentage points less likely to be employed upon arrival than comparable natives; whereas recently arrived Latino women are statistically (if not economically, as the marginal effect is practically zero) more likely to be employed than comparable natives. A second finding from the paper refers to the assimilation rate of immigrants compared to natives as the number of years since migration increases. In this regard, the employability gap between native men and their immigrant counterparts narrows from 12 percentage points when immigrants first arrive in the country to about 2 percentage points five years later. The largest employment gap reduction occurs within the first year of residence, when the gap effectively disappears. This result applies to all immigrant groups, which clearly reflects the fact that immigrants coming to Spain do so to work. If we differentiate the employability patterns of immigrants by gender, it is worth noting that immigrant women appear to assimilate faster than men, although the process differs according to country of origin. In particular, an African woman's employability likelihood five years after arrival is similar to the figure at entry; whereas Latino women are 18 percentage points more likely to be employed within five years than similarly skilled native women.

2.2. Occupational upgrading of immigrants as compared to natives

Seeking to assess the occupational upgrading process of immigrants as compared to natives, Amuedo-Dorantes and De la Rica (2007) rank occupations in Spain in terms of their average earnings. The rank is the dependent variable, and the aim of the exercise is to investigate how immigrants move up in occupational rank compared to natives as their stay in Spain lengthens. The methodology used is an ordered logit model where the usual controls are included. Estimations are drawn up separately by gender, and differences across different immigrant groups are allowed for.

The results seem to support the notion of upward occupational mobility and assimilation on the part of non-EU15 and Latino immigrants as

their Spanish residency lengthens. However, there does not seem to be a clear pattern of occupational assimilation in the case of African immigrants. This could be linked to skill transferability, language proficiency or labor market discrimination. As for differences in the occupational assimilation patterns of immigrants depending on their educational attainment, Amuedo-Dorantes and De la Rica (2007) find that for less well-educated male immigrants with less human capital experience, the occupational assimilation process is slower than for those with secondary education. However, this pattern is only observed in the case of male immigrants, suggesting the existence of gender differences in the educational and occupational attainment of immigrants and natives possibly driving the different role played by education in explaining male and female immigrant assimilation.

3. Occupational Specialization of Immigrants and Natives in Spain.

A second interesting question is what the consequences of migration may be for the labor market situation of natives². There is a large and growing body of literature on the consequences of migration on the wages of native workers in the US (see Borjas, 1994, 1995b, 1999, 2003, 2005; Borjas and Katz, 2007; Card, 1990, 2001, 2005; Card and DiNardo, 2000; Card and Lewis, 2007; Lewis, 2003; Ottaviano and Peri, 2005, 2006). For instance, take the widely accepted fact that if workers' skills are differentiated mainly by their level of educational attainment and workers of different education levels are imperfect substitutes, a large flow of immigrants with limited schooling should (i) increase the wages paid to highly educated natives and (ii) reduce the wages paid to less educated ones.

Yet in general, immigration has had little or no effect on the wages of less educated natives in the US, and indeed in Spain (see Amuedo-Dorantes and De la Rica, 2008a; González and Ortega, 2008; Carrasco et al., 2008). However, as recently noted by Ottaviano and Peri (2006), this is not surprising given that the effect of immigration depends on the degree of substitution between native and immigrant workers *within* each

2 Most of the results presented in this section are taken from the paper by Amuedo-Dorantes and De la Rica (2008b).

educational group. If native and immigrant workers of similar educational attainment possess production skills that lead them to specialize in different occupations, it is reasonable to find little or no impact of immigration on natives' wages, as immigrants and natives are not competing for the same jobs.

3.1. Segregation of natives and immigrants across occupations

In this sub-section, I provide evidence of immigrants and natives being imperfect substitutes *within* similar educational categories. Given the lack of adequate information on wages of natives and immigrants in Spain, I examine the occupational distribution of the two groups. In particular, I show that immigrants and natives seem to be in quite different occupations even within similar educational levels.

Table 2 provides evidence of the different distribution of less educated immigrants and natives across nine different occupational categories (one-digit International Standard Classification of Occupations – ISCO-88)³ separately by gender. Similar features emerge regarding differences in the occupational distribution for those with secondary education and for those with primary or less. In the first place, in the occupational distribution for males the concentration of immigrants in blue-collar occupations, and in particular in elementary occupations, is very noticeable when compared with their native counterparts. Besides service and sales jobs, the presence of immigrants in white-collar occupations is barely significant. For women, a similar feature emerges: the concentration of female immigrants in elementary occupations – basically domestic service - is very significant when compared with their native counterparts. In white-collar jobs, service and sales occupations employ quite significant and similar percentages of native and immigrant females.

3 Potential competition of natives and immigrants for the same jobs makes sense only for the least educated workers. For that reason, I have left highly educated workers out of this analysis.

Table 2
Occupational Distribution (%) of Natives and Immigrants by Education Level

Secondary				
	Native Men	Native Women	Immigrant Men	Immigrant Women
Managers	8.41	6.78	1.98	1.09
Professionals	0.73	0.84	0.41	0.47
Technicians and professionals	9.45	10.49	2.87	1.74
Clerical support workers	6.59	17.48	1.27	4.01
Service and sales workers	12.08	33.61	12.18	33.58
Skilled agricultural/fishery workers	4.73	1.99	3.34	0.59
Craft and related trade workers	28.96	4.26	34.95	2.24
Plant/machine operators and assemblers	16.94	5.39	9.73	1.87
Elementary occupations	12.12	19.15	33.27	54.42
N. observations	180,420	104,653	3628	3216
Primary or Less				
	Native Men	Native Women	Immigrant Men	Immigrant Women
Managers	8.15	11.19	1.28	0.99
Professionals	0.13	0.16	0	0
Technicians and professionals	2.53	1.88	0.46	0.63
Clerical support workers	2.29	3.82	0.93	1.26
Service and sales workers	7.61	22	6.78	21.01
Skilled agricultural/fishery workers	11.79	9.13	3.88	0.81
Craft and related trade workers	33.17	5.53	30.14	3.14
Plant/machine operators and assemblers	17.86	4.78	5.91	1.35
Elementary occupations	16.47	41.51	50.61	70.83
N. observations	87,989	40,252	1725	1114

Note: This distribution of occupations is taken from a pooled sample for the 1999-2007 Current Population Survey. Only those immigrants with at most five years of stay in Spain are included.

3.2. Does immigration lead to a relocation of natives in different occupations?

Given the evidence of clear segregation of natives and immigrants in different occupations even within the same education level, the second question to examine is whether immigration has led to a shift of natives to different occupations.

A region-year cell can be taken as the unit of observation to answer this question, looking at the distribution of native workers in four major occupational categories by cell, i.e.: (i) qualified white-collar jobs, (ii) clerical and service jobs, (iii) qualified blue-collar jobs, and (iv) elementary blue-collar jobs. Then the impact of the share of foreign-born workers in each province-year cell on the distribution of natives in those occupations

can be estimated for each of these occupational categories. Given the notable segregation of males and females (both native and immigrant) across occupations observed in Table 2, it is advisable to carry out these estimations separately by gender.

Table 3 presents the results. Each coefficient presented in the table is the result of a different estimation. Starting with the impact of immigration on the relocation of male natives across occupations, it is very clear that as immigrants enter a particular province-cell; natives basically leave qualified blue-collar occupations and secure more qualified white-collar jobs. This is very promising for natives given that this move represents a clear upward occupational mobility for them. If we look at the impact of immigration on native females, immigration seems to shift native workers out of elementary blue-collar occupations and into qualified white-collar occupations. A more detailed look at the specific occupations into which native females move reveals that they are of the Associate Professional category – although not reported here, most of them seem to relocate to teaching and health jobs. This also represents a clear occupational upgrading of native females, similar to that seen for the relocation of native men.

Table 3
Impact of the Share of Foreign-born on the Distribution of Natives
across Occupations

	Native Men		Native Women	
	OLS	IV	OLS	IV
	Share of Foreign-born		Share of Foreign-born	
Qualified WC workers (managers, professionals and technicians and assoc. professionals)	0.41**	0.51**	0.34**	0.65**
	-0.12	-0.17	-0.17	-0.35
Clerical support, service and sales	-0.01	-0.15	0.3	0.09
	-0.13	-0.17	-0.2	-0.39
Qualified BC jobs (craft, plant machine op. and assemblers)	-0.28**	-0.34*	-0.23	-0.18
	-0.13	-0.23	-0.12	-0.22
Elementary BC occupations	-0.12	-0.002	-0.40**	-0.55**
	-0.13	-0.14	-0.12	-0.2

Notes: The dependent variable is the density of natives (men and women separately) across major occupational categories by cell (province and year). The main independent variable in each regression is the share of foreign-born workers in each cell. In addition to this independent variable, region and time dummies are included, along with some average characteristics of workers in each cell (generally age and education). For the IV estimates, instruments for the share of foreign-born workers include region and time dummies and the share of long-term immigrants by cell.

4. Conclusions and Lessons

Spain is an interesting country to study when analyzing immigration as an economic phenomenon because it has experienced one of the largest immigrant inflows of any industrialized country in the last 12 years.

Even before any economic considerations are made, immigration entails a clear demographic benefit for Spain in terms of population growth: in the first instance, immigrants have driven most of the population growth in Spain since the late nineties. Without immigrants, the growth in population would have been barely above zero. In addition, given that immigrants are younger on average than natives, the entry of immigrants has helped to “rejuvenate” an aging Spanish population.

This paper highlights two economic outcomes and consequences of immigration. First, concentrating on how well immigrants are performing in the labor market, Amuedo-Dorantes and De la Rica (2007) find some interesting results: to begin with, immigrant men and women are found to be significantly less likely to be employed than similar natives; however, the employability gap between native men and their immigrant counterparts narrows considerably from 12 percentage points when immigrants first arrive in the country to about 2 percentage points a year later. As regards to the occupational upgrading of immigrants as their stay in Spain lengthens, our results seem to support the notion of upward occupational mobility and assimilation on the part of non-EU15 and Latino immigrants as their Spanish residencies lengthen. However, there does not seem to be a clear pattern of occupational assimilation in the case of African immigrants, which could be linked to a lack of skill transferability, language proficiency, or help for African immigrants with learning either the Spanish language or other skills that they are apparently failing to learn in order to move upwards in the Spanish labor market.

This paper examines the issue of substitutability versus complementarity of immigrants and natives with respect to the consequences of immigration for natives. Descriptive evidence shows that even within similar educational levels, immigrants and natives are concentrated in rather different occupations. Furthermore, it is found that immigrants seem to help natives leave blue-collar occupations and move into qualified white-collar

occupations, mainly teaching and health. This seems to be a very positive shifting effect of immigration on natives, as it helps them upgrade their occupation, and thereby increase their wages. The lesson to be learned from this study is that we should look at immigration more positively, given the positive impact of immigrants on upgrading the occupational mobility of natives.

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IZA

P.O. Box 7240

D-53072 Bonn

Germany

phone: +49-(228) 38 94 0

fax: +49-(228) 38 94 210

email: iza@iza.org

web: www.iza.org