

Statistics on Acquisition of Spanish Citizenship of Residents

Methodology

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1 Introduction

Throughout the first years of the 21st century, our country has experienced one of the periods with the greatest demographic impetus of its history, fundamentally due to the massive arrival of inhabitants from beyond its borders. Cross-border mobility of populations is an increasingly visible social phenomenon that has transformed the social-demographic dynamic of Spain and which has represented an enormous challenge for the official statistics.

The acquisition and measuring of statistics for foreign population and their characteristics is extremely complex, in fact, it is one of the fields of official statistics on an international level where this is still much to be improved in terms of consistency and comparability of information. These needs are contained in the *Regulation 862/2007 of the European Parliament and Council for Statistics for Migration and International Protection*.

Among other elements, this regulation demands annual information from member states for the people whose permanent residence is in the territory of the member state and who have acquired the nationality of the member state over the course of the reporting year.

The main aim of the *Statistics on Resident Acquisition of Spanish Citizenship* is to provide a quantitative measure of these acquisitions. This allows for demographic change¹ analysis, this complementing the rest of the demographic components: births, deaths and migrations.

The creation of the *Statistics on Resident Acquisition of Spanish Citizenship* is based on the statistical treatment of the entries in nationality records in the Civil Registry.

2 Acquisition of Spanish Citizenship

The Spanish legislation (articles 17 to 28 of the Civil Code, CC) regulates various ways or means through which Spanish nationality can be obtained:

- **ORIGEN**
 - *Those children born to a Spanish father or mother.*
 - *Those children born in Spain:*
 - a. *To foreign parents if, at least, one of them was also born in Spain.*
 - b. *To foreign parents, if both parents lacked a nationality, or if the legislation of neither of them attributes a nationality to the child (SIMPLE PRESUMPTION)*
 - c. *Children born in Spain to parents of an unknown identity.*
 - *Children under the age of 18 adopted by a Spaniard (ADOPTION)*

¹ Until 2022 (reference data up to 2021), this statistic has been one of the basic sources of information for the elaboration of the *Population Figures*, ever since the 2011 census. Upon the publication of the 2021 Population and Housing Census in November 2022, a methodological shift took place regarding the population estimates: the *Population Figures* operation—based on the application of demographic flow within a specific period to obtain the end-of-period population—ceases publication, and the *Continuous Population Statistics*, based on the annual Population Censuses as of 2023, takes its place.

- **ACQUISITION**

- **BY CHOICE**

This is a benefit that the law offers foreign nationals who are in particular circumstances that entitle them to acquire Spanish nationality. The individuals that will have the right to acquire Spanish nationality in this way are:

- a. Those persons that who are or have been under the parental authority of a Spaniard.*
- b. Those persons whose father or mother had been Spanish and had been born in Spain.*
- c. Those persons whose parentage is determined after turning 18 or their birth in Spain.*
- d. Those persons whose adoption on behalf of Spanish parents is accomplished after they have turned 18.*
- e. Other cases regulated by law. Specifically, the Historical Memory Law allows acquisition by option for those persons whose father or mother had been originally Spanish and for the grandchildren of those who lost or had to renounce Spanish nationality as a consequence of exile.*

- **BY NATURALISATION CERTIFICATE**

It has a discretionary nature and is not subject to the general rules of administrative procedure. *It is authorised by the crown and Spanish government.*

- **RESIDENCE**

It requires the person to have resided in Spain for 10 years legally, continuously and immediately prior to the request.

- **CONSOLIDATION**

The possession and continued use of Spanish nationality for ten years (POSSESSING A STATUS)

- *Furthermore, it can be lost (**LOSSES**) and recovered (**RECOVERIES**)*

However, according to what is established in European regulation 862/2007, **the Statistics on Acquisition of Spanish Citizenship only take into consideration the processes that involve a change of nationality and that refer to people whose usual residence is in Spain**, that is, by residence, by option and by discretionary conferral.

It therefore excludes the nationalisations acquired by adoption and simple presumption, because they do not involve a change of nationality. It also excludes the nationalisations acquired by "Possessing a Status", because they do not involve a change of nationality, as it strictly applies to those persons that already act as Spanish (Article 18 CC).

Losses and recoveries are not considered, because their reduced volume and the effect of compensation of the recoveries for losses mean that their exclusion is not significant.

Since 2013, the INE has received on a monthly basis from the General Directorate of Legal Security and Public Faith of the Ministry of Justice, the *national registry of new acquisitions or losses of Spanish nationality* registered in the Civil Registries- Said process culminates these administrative procedures and marks the effective date.

This information for nationalisations is used as input for the statistics of the Population Figures and, also from this year onwards, are forwarded to the European Office for Statistics, Eurostat. From 2015 onwards, they will be published each year in its own right by means of the Statistics for Residents Acquiring Spanish Citizenship, the series being started in the reporting year 2013.

Until 2013, the only available source on nationalisations were the Statistics on the Granting of Spanish Citizenship for Residence, prepared by the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, who continues to provide this information. This statistic differs from the Statistics on Acquisition of Spanish Citizenship in two key points: in only considers acquisitions by residents, and the reference date is the date the citizenship was granted, which is a separate procedure that takes place prior to the actual acquisition, leading therefore to a time gap between both statistics.

3 Objectives

The Statistics on Resident Acquisition of Spanish Citizenship are created for the achievement of three objectives:

- The fundamental objective is to provide the number of persons whose permanent residence is in Spain and those persons that acquire Spanish nationality throughout the course of the reporting year, having previously had the nationality of another country or statelessness.
- With these statistics, they comply with the requirements for information considered by the Regulation 862/2007 of the European Parliament and Council for Statistics for Migration and International Protection in terms of the acquisition of nationality.

4 Definitions and concepts

The Statistics on Resident Acquisition of Spanish Citizenship quantify the volume of acquisitions of nationality that have occurred in a year, in line with a series of concepts and definitions that follow the international guidelines for such matter and, in particular, include what is established in the *Regulation 862/2007 of the European Parliament and Council for Statistics for Migration and International Protection* and in the *Regulation 1260/2013 of the European Parliament and Council for European demographic statistics*. These concepts are:

- **Acquiring a nationality:** Action by means of which a person acquires the nationality of the country of reference, having previously had either the nationality of another country or statelessness (without recognition of nationality on behalf of another state).
- **Resident Population:** the resident population in a certain geographical area of the national territory is defined as those people who, on the reference date, have established their habitual residence in it.

- **Habitual residence**¹ is the registered place of residence, which is, essentially, where the person is registered.
- **Nationality**: legal link between an individual and a State, acquired by birth or naturalisation if it is by declaration or acquired by choice, marriage or other terms, according to the national legislation. This refers to the nationality at the reference date, classified as Spanish so long as the individual has said nationality, though they may have others as well.
- **Sex**: refers to the biological sex of the person.
- **Age**: age in years of age refers to the number of birth anniversaries on the reference date, i.e. the age on the last birthday. The reference date is, in each case, the date of the migratory movement.
- **Year of birth**: the year in which the birth occurred.
- **Country of birth**: the place of residence of the mother at the time the birth occurred.

5 Scope

Scope of population

The population that is the subject of the study is formed by persons whose permanent residence is Spain and that have acquired Spanish nationality for the year of reference for the information, having previously had the nationality from another country or statelessness.

This means, it only includes the cases that involve a change of nationality and exclude those processes in which Spanish nationality is obtained as a result of their country of origin (due to simple presumption or adoption) or as a result of consolidation (possessing a status for whomever already acts as Spanish).

Clasification variables

The acquisitions of nationality are broken down according to the following population characteristics:

- Gender
- Age (grouping information for people aged 65 and over)
- Place of residence (autonomous community and province)
- Previous country of nationality (most relevant countries for each geographical scope)
- Country of birth (most relevant countries for each geographical scope)
- Method of acquisition (Option, Residence or Naturalisation Certificate)

¹ Definition of habitual residence established in *Regulation 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Population and Housing Censuses and in Regulation 1260/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European demographic statistics.*

Starting in 2022, four additional variables have been included, calculated for acquisitions starting in 2019:

- Year of arrival to Spain
- Level of education
- Relationship with Economic Activity
- Employment

Geographical scope

The whole national territory is investigated and the acquisitions of nationality are provided for the national total, by autonomous communities and by provinces.

Time scope

The reference period for the data is annual.

Units of measure

Registrations of acquisition of Spanish nationality in the Civil Registry.

6 Information processing

Data source

These statistics are created based on the acquisitions of nationality recorded in the Civil Registry database, from the from the General Directorate of Legal Security and Public Faith, in which the records corresponding with the entries for registrable events appear (deaths, marriages, guardianship, etc.) and that includes all nationalisations (regardless of their method of acquisition) recorded with their date of registration.

Since January 2013, the Civil Registry issues the INE with files on a monthly basis with the acquisitions of nationality registered, and it is these files that are used for the creation of the Statistics for Residents Acquiring Spanish Nationality.

Statistical processing

Now the nature and administrative purpose of the Civil Registry make it necessary to carry out the statistical processing of the information recorded therein, for the purpose of attaining the best statistical approximation to the phenomenon.

The statistical processing that is applied is as follows:

1) Filtering of the monthly file

It is carried out a basic validation process for the monthly file received from the Civil Registry. Those records that contain serious errors in the basic identification fields are dismissed (less than 1% of the information received monthly). Specifically, the following are dismissed:

- Duplicated records (pure duplicates).
- Records with false or incomplete information:

- Invalid territorial codes
- Insufficient registry identifications
- Insufficient information for change of nationality
- Invalid personal identification
- Invalid registration of effective dates

2) Search for records in the Continuous Register

After the first filtering phase, each register is searched in the Continuous Register to retrieve useful information for the estimation process. More than 95% of the registers are found.

3) Loading of historical files and processing of impure duplicate records.

The information received on a monthly basis is loaded into a single database that contains the historical file of acquisitions received. A cross-check is performed to verify if the acquisitions from the Civil Registry already exist in this file (that is, if they present values identical to other registries in terms of the main demographic and nationality variables). If so, they are considered duplicates and are not added. The rest of the cases are included in this accumulated file of nationalizations.

4) Allocation of registry information

Information from each record of acquisition of nationality is filtered and completed with census information (in cases where the latter is available), so that:

- If any personal identification information is missing (gender, date of birth, previous nationality, country of birth) or it involves an invalid value it is assigned a value that appears in the Register.
- In all cases, priority is given to the place of habitual residence appearing in the Register.

Between 3% and 4% of the acquisitions registered do not manage to cross with the *Register*. For these cases, the information deriving from the Civil Registry is taken (when there is some and it is valid). In this respect, it needs to be highlighted that for these cases in which no province for the permanent residence is available they are allocated the registration province. Since the implementation of the 2021 reference data, there are only a few cases left of incomplete residence provinces, which are imputed as indicated below.

5) Allocation of empty variables (country of nationality and country of birth):

Approximately 4% of the acquisitions registered do not have a previous country of nationality and approximately 0.1% do not have a country of birth.

For all of these cases, an allocation procedure is carried out taking the most frequent value within the group defined by the province of residence, gender, the previous country of nationality and the country of birth with valid values in all of the variables.

6) Imputation of incomplete variables (province of origin):

Since the implementation of the Single Civil Registry¹ by the end of 2021, the province of registration—used during the last step of the assignment of a province of residence—is missing.

The few cases that still lack the data are imputed by taking the most frequent value within the group, determined by sex, previous country of nationality and country of birth with valid values across all variables.

Moreover, as regards the reference data to be imputed, only the data from this new system is taken into account.

7) Processing of information received after deadline

Sometimes there is a time lag between the registration date in the Civil Registry and the moment when registration occurs in the Civil Registry database. This gap means that less than 1% of nationality acquisitions registered in a given year are received by the INE after the date on which the results of the annual statistics are obtained.

Nationality acquisitions from years prior to the reference year already published but received late will be included in estimates for the current reference year; that is, they will be considered as if their inscription year were the current reference year.

The choice of this processing method is based on the fact that it allows years to be finalised with a definitive nature. Furthermore, the volume of acquisitions received after the deadline is tiny and does not cause any bias in the results; even any missing information from a year would be compensated with the inclusion of delayed information received from the previous year.

8) Year of arrival to Spain

As of June 2022, the year in which the persons who acquired Spanish nationality in the reference year arrived in Spain is published, in the event of having previously resided abroad, beginning the series with acquisitions that occurred in 2019. Since the publication of 2024 with data from 2023, priority is given to the value of the year of arrival obtained for the population census as of 1 January of the reference year of the data, having annual censuses available since December 2023. If it is not found, mainly due to the person entering Spain after the census date, it is obtained as it has been until now: based on the record of movements of each person. If a person entered Spain on more than one occasion, the last entry is considered.

9) Educational level, relationship with economic activity and occupation

As of June 2022, these variables are published for people who acquired Spanish nationality in each reference year, starting the series in 2019. The educational level is published for the population aged 25 and over, and the relationship with economic activity and occupation for those aged 16 and over. These data are obtained from administrative records and reflect the situation of the person on January 1 of the year in question; they do not reflect, therefore, the situation at the moment in which the acquisition of nationality takes place. In addition, due to the terms of availability of the various administrative sources, each year the variables related to the

¹ Law 20/2011, 21 July, of the Civil Registry.

acquisitions of the previous year are published. From 2024 onwards, with the availability of annual censuses, these variables are obtained directly from those calculated in the censuses, so their availability is conditioned on the publication schedule of the censuses. Previously, direct recourse was had to administrative sources.

7 Dissemination of the results

Since 2022, the Statistics on Acquisitions of Spanish Nationality by Residents has been published once a year. In the second quarter of each year, the acquisition data for the previous year is definitively published.

Until 2018 there was also a single publication per year, with definitive character, which was released at the end of the year. From 2019 to 2021, a publication was added in June with reference to the acquisitions of the previous year and of a provisional nature, which was replaced by the definitive data in the publication of November of that same year. But the improvement in the rate at which the data arrives has made it possible to make a single publication per year, definitively, on the date on which the provisional data were previously published.