

## Pathways to Union Formation of International Migrants in Spain

Albert Esteve (aesteve@ced.uab.es)  
Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics

Alberto Del Rey (adelrey@ced.uab.es)  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Clara Cortina (clara.cortina@cchs.csic.es)  
Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas

### Abstract.-

This paper uses recently released data from the National Immigrant Survey (n = 15.465) to examine pathways to family formation of international migrants in Spain. The objective is twofold. First, we provide descriptive insights into the family formation trends for the 3 largest immigration groups in Spain (Ecuadorians, Morroccans and Rumanians) and 4 continental groupings. We take into account the time and place of union formation and the marital status at the time of arrival. Second, we use event history analysis to examine individual, family, and contextual background factors on (i) entry into marriage or cohabitation in Spain and on (ii) marrying (or cohabiting with) a Spaniard. Results will contribute to validate and extend existing knowledge based on cross-sectional data with almost no biographical information (i.e. census, labor force surveys and vital registration data) and to address critical questions with regard to the assimilation and integration of international migrants in Spanish society.

### Extended abstract.-

Spain has experienced an accelerated and remarkable growth in its population of foreign nationals during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The magnitude and intensity of the growth of immigratory flows makes it an exceptional case in the European context. In 2000, Spain was still bringing up the rear among countries of the European Union (2,3% of foreign nationals) but in 2007 the number of foreign nationals had risen above four million people placing Spain at the head of the ranking in relative terms (9.9% of foreign nationals). This extraordinary growth of the international migration flows has been accompanied by a diversification of the countries of origin and by a recent increase of Latin-American and Eastern-European origins.

Together with population growth, the incidence of immigrant population is having an important impact on demographic dynamics. Marriage figures are very eloquent: the proportion of marriages celebrated in Spain involving at least one foreign national partner was 4.7% in 1996 and 19.9% in 2006. Among them, mixed marriages were 75% of the total number of marriages with at least one foreign national partner. By contrast, the Spanish 2001 Census shows lower levels of intermarriage (20% on average). The pool of unions differs quite substantially between the two sources: the census includes consensual unions and married couples that were not married in Spain. However, it does not give any clue about where and when the unions were formed. This limitation has restricted the scope of the hypotheses that can be tested with regard to the marital

assimilation and family formation processes of international migrants in Spain. A large fraction of immigrants either came with their spouses or were in partnership at the time of arrival, opening the door to later family reunification. We can not assume that all immigrants were in the marriage market at their time of arrival. Consequently, the specification of hypotheses and the interpretation of the results in light of the classical or segmented assimilation or social ex-change theories has been limited by the scarce and poor quality of the biographical information regarding international migrants in the existing data of Spain.

The National Immigrant Survey (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) was specifically designed to overcome some of the limitations in the existing datasets and to provide a dynamic and more realistic view to the immigration process. Our expectations regarding the quality and possibilities of this survey are reasonably high. In this paper, we use data from the National Immigrant Survey to examine pathways to family formation of international migrants in Spain. The objective is twofold. First, we provide descriptive insights into the family formation trends for the 3 largest immigration groups in Spain by sex (Ecuadorian, Moroccans and Rumanians) and for 4 continental groupings. We take into account the time and place of union formation, marital status at the time of arrival, and family reunification. Second, we use event history analysis to examine individual, family, and contextual background factors on (i) entry into marriage or cohabitation in Spain and on (ii) marrying (or cohabiting with) a Spaniard. The authors have an extensive record of research on similar topics.

#### Data and sources.-

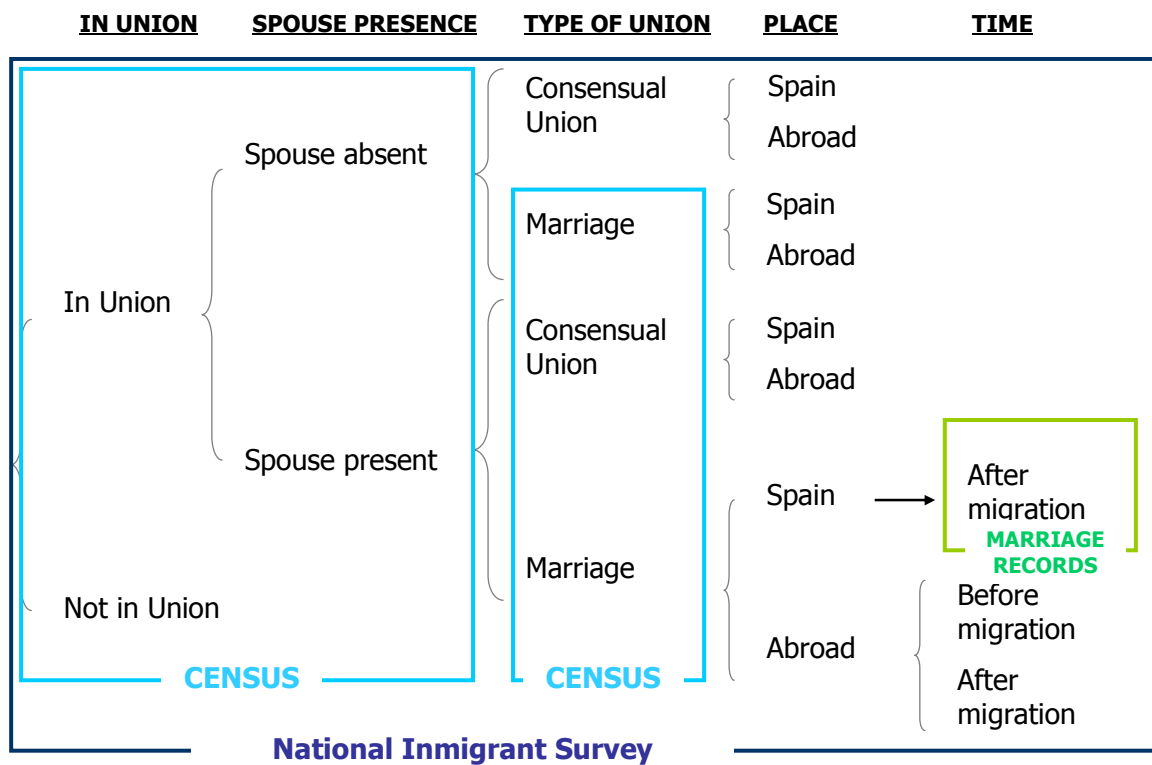
The data used in this paper come from the National Immigrant Survey (NIS) produced by the National Statistical Institute of Spain. The target population of the survey was defined as all persons born outside of Spain who, at the time of the survey, were 16 years old or over and had been residing in Spain for more than one year or had the intention of doing so. Spanish citizens by birth born abroad were not included if they were younger than 2 years old at their arrival. The size of the sample is 15.465 individual registers. The survey has been designed to provide estimates at national level for the 3 most representative immigration groups (Ecuadorian, Moroccans, and Rumanians) and 4 continental groupings<sup>1</sup>. The survey questionnaire covers a wide range of topics divided into eight categories: sociodemographic; migratory experience; situation at the country of origin; arrival to Spain; work history in Spain; residential history; ties with their country of origin; social participation in Spain.

In the first part of the analysis we use descriptive methods to identify the most relevant pathways to family formation of international immigrants for each group and sex individually. To modulate the pathways, we focus on the following events: year of arrival, year of entry into current marriage or cohabitation, year of entry into residence with the spouse in the current household; year of union dissolution. Additionally, we take into account the marital status at the time of arrival, the origin of the spouse, and the place of union formation (Spain or abroad). We expect a large and diverse number of trajectories to illustrate the differences between national origins and between men and women. Results will contribute to validate existing knowledge based on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Latin-America without Ecuador; Africa without South Africa and Morocco and Asia without Japan; North America without Mexico and Oceania; UE15 plus UE economic area and Switzerland.

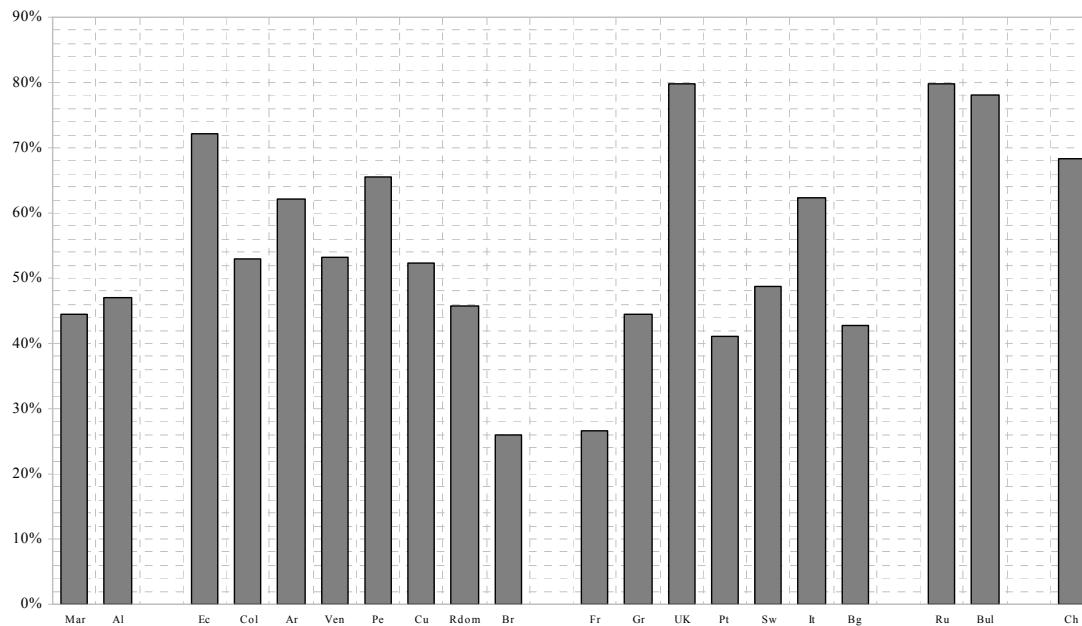
authors' previous research. The following diagram illustrates a structure for classifying international migrants with regard to their union status and type of union. It also shows differences between statistical sources. The National Immigrant Survey should provide statistics to fill all the sections of the diagram.



In the second part of the analysis, we use event history methods to examine trends in union formation and intermarriage for those immigrants that entered into union after migration. At the individual level, our models include age, educational attainment, year of arrival, Spanish citizenship, national origin, family condition and labor status. At the community level, we include group size, sex ratio and ethnic heterogeneity. These variables have been selected to test whether assimilation and structural hypotheses work for the Spanish case.

As for the time being, no results have been yet produced because the dataset was released less than two months ago. We are now in the preliminary stage of getting acquainted with the dataset and documenting all cases. There are approximately 2100 variables and 15465 individual records. The following figure is shown as an example of the type of analysis that can be done with the survey. It shows the proportion of married international migrants residing in Spain by national origin that were already married one year before arriving to Spain.

**Proportion of married international migrants that were married one year before the year of arrival by national origin, Spain 2007**



Mar, Morocco. Al, Algeria. Ec, Ecuador. Col, Colombia. Ar, Argentina. Ven, Venezuela. Pe, Peru. Cu, Cuba. Rdom, Dominican Republic. Br, Brazil. Fr, France. Gr, Germany. UK, United Kingdom. Pt, Portugal. Sw, Switzerland. Bg, Belgium. Ru, Romania. Bul, Bulgaria. Ch, China.

Source: National Immigrant Survey, National Statistical Institute of Spain

References (short list).-

ALBA, R. D.; NEE, V. (1997) "Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration". *International Migration Review*. 31(4): pp. 826-874.

VAN TUBERGEN, F. ; MAAS, I. (2007) « Ethnic intermarriage among immigrants in the Netherlands: An Analysis of population data ». *Social Science Research* 36: pp.1065-1086.

CORTINA, C.; ESTEVE, A. y DOMINGO, A. (2006). "Crecimiento y singularidades demográficas de los matrimonios de extranjeros en España". *Migraciones*, (20): 75-105.

CABRÉ, A., CORTINA, C. y ESTEVE, A. (2008). "¿Con quién se unen los latinoamericanos en España? Respuestas a partir de tres fuentes estadísticas". *Notas de Población*, 86.

CORTINA, C.; ESTEVE, A.; DOMINGO, A. (2008). "Marriage patterns of foreign born population in a new country of immigration: the case of Spain". *International Migration Review*, 42(4).

DEL REY, A. (2007) "Determinants and Consequences of Internal and International Migration". *Demographic Research*. Vol. 16, N°10: 287-314.

DEL REY, A.; ORTEA, J.A.; (2008) "Birth replacement in Spanish regions. Internal and international migration from 1975 to 2005" European Population Conference 2008, .Barcelona, 9-12 de julio.

PAGNINI, D. L.; MORGAN, S. P. (1990) "Intermarriage and social distance among U.S. immigrants at the turn of the century". *American Sociological Review*. 96: pp. 405-432.

PORTES, A.; ZHOU, M., (1993) "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants among Post-1965 Immigrant Youth". *Annals of the American Academy of Political Sciences*. 53: pp.75-98.