



# Spain

## General Information



### Population

48 848 840 (World Bank 2024)

49 315 949 (STAT ES 2025)



### Immigration

8 870 527 (UN Immigration Stock 2024)

1 250 991 (STAT ES 2023)



### Emigration

1 623 550 (UN Emigration Stock 2024)

608 695 (STAT ES 2023)



### Working-age population

32 207 413 (World Bank 2024)

31 432 358 (STAT ES 2022)



### Unemployment rate

11.3 % (World Bank 2024)

11.2 % (STAT ES 2024)



### GDP

1 725 671 652 742.2 current prices USD (World Bank 2024)

1 498 324 000 000 current prices EUR (STAT ES 2023)



### Refugees, Asylum seekers, IDPs

#### Refugees

471 081 (UNHCR 2025)

6 355 (Office for Asylum and Refugees of Spain 2024)

#### Asylum Seekers

276 450 (UNHCR 2025)

167 366 (Office for Asylum and Refugees of Spain 2024)

#### IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2025)

200 000 (IDMC 2024)



### Citizenship

#### By Birth

No (GLOBALCIT 2024)

#### By Descent

Yes (GLOBALCIT 2024)

#### Years of Residency

10 years of residence required (GLOBALCIT 2024)



### Territory

505 370 km<sup>2</sup> (CIA World Factbook)

# Migration Authorities

## Responsible Body

Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration

## Line Ministries

Ministry of the Interior

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Labour and Social Economy

Ministry of Territorial Policy

## Agencies

Secretariat of State for Migration

General Directorate for Migration

General Directorate for Humanitarian Attention and Social Inclusion of Immigration

Office of Asylum and Refugees

## Key Policy Documents

Law 4/2000 on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners

Law 12/2009 on the Right to Asylum and Subsidiary Protection

Royal Decree 557/2011 on the Rights and Freedoms of Immigrants

2015 Citizen Security Act

Royal Decree 1325/2003 on Temporary Protection Regulation

Spain's Foreign Action Strategy 2025-2028

## Relevant Publications

Exploring the Potential of Digitalisation in Migration Management in the Prague Process Region

Digitalisation and labour migration: the use of modern technology, challenges and opportunities

How will migration to Europe look in the Future?

Intra-corporate Transferees (ICTs): The benefits for the EU and the opportunity cost

ENIGMMA 2 Case Study: Georgian Diaspora in Greece, Italy and Spain

ICMPD, Unaccompanied and Separated Children in the Mediterranean Region

ICMPD, BRAZIL - EUROPE MIGRATION The situation of Brazilian immigrants in Spain and Portugal, and Portuguese and Spanish immigrants in Brazil

Spain has undergone a shift from a traditional country of emigration – sending large numbers of workers abroad in the 20th century – to one of the EU’s major immigration destinations. As of 1 July 2025, its population stands at **49,315,949**, making it one of the EU’s most populous Member States. Spain remains a key entry point to Europe for migrants from Latin America, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, while also attracting many EU citizens and retirees drawn by its climate and lifestyle.

Migration is a central driver of demographic growth and labour force renewal. In 2023, Spain registered a net migration balance of **642,296** – one of its highest since before the 2008 financial crisis. UN DESA estimates that Spain hosted **8,870,527** international migrants in 2024, with the largest foreign-born groups originating from Morocco (1,088,408), Colombia (792,228) and Venezuela (602,539). Recent inflow follow a similar pattern, with nationals from **Colombia (39,200)**, **Morocco (26,000)** and **Venezuela (22,600)**, followed by **Ukraine (6,100)** and **Romania (6,000)** leading arrivals in the first quarter of 2024.

Residence-permit data further underscores these trends. Eurostat confirms a steady rise in first residence permits issued to non-EU nationals from 312,355 in 2020 to 561,640 in 2024. Most permits in 2024 were granted to nationals of Morocco (92,817), Colombia (75,662) and Venezuela (48,409) on family reunification grounds (46%) and for education (20.8%), followed by employment (17.4%) and other reasons (16.1%). According to the OECD, Spain maintains a diversified framework of work-related permits, including seasons schemes such as **GECCO** in agriculture, traineeships, intra-company transfers, digital nomads, and researcher mobility. As the EU’s fourth-largest economy, Spain relies on such sectors as tourism, manufacturing (automotive and chemicals), agriculture, and increasingly renewable energy and digital services, with many migrants working in hospitality, agriculture, construction, and domestic work, along with health care, transport, and logistics. Despite improvement on the local **labour market**, the country continues to face structural challenges, including a relatively high unemployment rate, particularly among youth and temporary workers.

In 2024, Spain continued to participate in EU and **bilateral initiatives** promoting legal migration and skills mobility, including cooperation with Latin American and North African countries to facilitate training, recognition of qualifications, and circular migration pathways. In recent years, Spain signed **MoUs with Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal** to strengthen and secure regular migration pathways and protect worker rights. One notable initiative is **WAFIRA**, whose first edition concluded in January 2025. The programme provides training and education to seasonal women workers, enabling them to launch income-generating activities upon their return to Morocco.

Spain is also an important destination for international students due to its affordable tuition fees, wide offer of English-taught programmes, and participation in EU mobility schemes such as Erasmus+. In 2023, **73,032** foreign students were enrolled in bachelor’s and master’s programmes, with many pursuing education in such fields as **business administration, social sciences and health**, and engineering. The largest share of foreign students in tertiary education come from **France (11.6%)**, followed by **Colombia (9.4%)** and **Ecuador (6.5%)**.

In 2024, Spain received **165,435** asylum applications, nearly three times the number recorded in 2021 (62,050). As in previous years, Venezuela and Colombia remained the main countries of origin of asylum seekers in 2024, with **65,595** and **39,750 applications** respectively – together accounting for over 60% of all asylum requests that year. Other notable countries of origin included Mali (10,600), Peru (10,380), Senegal (7,700) and Morocco (4,020). In 2024, the recognition rate for refugee and subsidiary protection was **19.8%** (57% including humanitarian status).

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Spain has started granting temporary protection to those fleeing Ukraine. Beneficiaries receive two-year renewable residence and work permits, immediate access to the labour market, healthcare, education, and social services, and can apply through Reception, Attention and Referral Centres (CREADE) across major cities. In October 2025, Spain hosted over **250,000** temporary protection beneficiaries. According to **UNHCR**, by mid-2024, about 70,000 Ukrainians were employed in Spain, primarily in construction, hospitality, domestic work, and trade. Over the years, the government has invested over **€1.5 billion** to support people fleeing the conflict, and extended protection until March 2027.

Irregular migration remains a significant component of Spain’s broader migration landscape, shaped by its geographic position. In 2024, that **84,690** non-EU nationals – with most being nationals of **Mali (17,840)**, **Morocco (14,340)**, **Senegal (13,415)** and **Algeria (13,010)** – were found illegally present in Spain, one of the highest figures since 2015. Over the past four years, Morocco and Senegal have consistently been the main nationalities, whereas the sharp rise in cases involving nationals of Mali and Algeria appears only in 2024. The orders to leave issued to non-EU nationals reached **51,025 in 2024**, down from **64,260 in 2023**, yet comprising one of the highest figures since 2015. Out of those ordered to leave in 2024, approximately **8,725** have actually returned, implying a return rate of around 17% that year. This figure is well above the 5,995 returns recorded in 2023, 3,335 in 2022, and 3,230 in 2021, indicating a steady strengthening of return implementation over the past four years.

Spain remains primarily a country of destination and transit for victims of trafficking, with sexual and labour exploitation as the most prevalent forms. According to the **U.S. State Department TIP Report 2024**, Spain fully meets the standards for the elimination of trafficking (Tier 1). However, **GRETA’s 2023 evaluation report** noted persisting challenges in victim identification, access to justice and compensation, and the low number of convictions for labour trafficking. A draft comprehensive anti-trafficking law, expected to strengthen protection and establish a National Referral Mechanism, is still under discussion. In the period of 2017–2022, **1,687** victims of human trafficking were officially identified in Spain.

According to **UN DESA**, 1,623,550 Spaniards were living abroad in 2024. Whereas the data from **National Statistics Institute (INE)** of Spain, indicates that, as of 1 January 2025, 3,045,966 Spanish nationals were residing abroad, reflecting a steady long-term increase. The main countries of destination include **Argentina (482,176)**, **France (310,072)**, **the United States (206,278)**, **the United Kingdom (189,779)** and **Germany (188,250)**. The diaspora has a dual profile: around 61.8% of Spaniards abroad were born outside Spain reflecting long-standing communities of Spanish descent, while the remainder includes more recent emigrants, often younger and

highly educated, who left Spain following the 2008 economic crisis in search of employment and international experience. In 2023, [465,721](#) people, including [126,901](#) Spaniards, emigrated from Spain. Most departures were involved young and working-age adults, reflecting both labour-market motivations and increasingly mobile lifestyles.

Migration governance in Spain is primarily regulated by [Organic Law 4/2000](#) on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain and Their Social Integration (Ley de Extranjería), as amended by Organic Laws 8/2000, 11/2003, 14/2003 and 2/2009. This law establishes the rights and obligations of non-EU nationals, rules on entry, residence, family reunification, employment, and return procedures. Its implementing regulation - [Royal Decree 557/2011](#) - details administrative procedures for residence and work permits, study authorisations, and other residence modalities. Spain's migration policy is framed within the European Union Acquis, including the Common European Asylum System, the Schengen Borders Code, and the EU Blue Card Directive, among others. Asylum and international protection are regulated separately under [Law 12/2009](#) on the Right to Asylum and Subsidiary Protection, which transposes relevant EU directives. Spain also upholds commitments under international conventions such as the 1951 Refugee Convention. As a Schengen and EU Member State, Spain aligns its national legislation with EU directives and regulations governing entry, residence, asylum, and return.

In [November 2024](#), the Spanish Ministry of Integration, Social Security and Migration adopted a [new regulation of the Law on Foreigners](#) to facilitate legal migration channels and simplify procedures, including the regulation of temporary work and family reunification. Spain is actively preparing for the implementation of the [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), which is set to begin in 2026.

Spain participates in several regional and global migration dialogues, including the Prague Process, Rabat and Khartoum Processes, and the Budapest Process, as well as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and is the signatory of the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

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