

An analysis of internal and external migration in the Basque Country

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In this brief summary, we are going to perform a concise analysis of the spatial and demographic characteristics of internal and external migrations in the Basque Country, a region whose external and internal migratory systems have undergone major changes, which have been developed in tandem with other geographical areas of Spain.

The first decade of the 21st century experienced an unexpected increase in internal and external migrations that had not been seen since the 1960s, to which the Basque country was no exception. The reasons for the sharp increase in internal movements compared to previous decades are based on two factors that have had a great impact on social, economic and demographic dynamics: the construction boom prior to the economic crisis and its impact on residential mobility and the influx of almost 6 million immigrants from abroad, whose spatial redistribution in the region has been instrumental in reviving internal migration dynamics at all provincial levels. The economic crisis then brought the immigration model to an end for the moment (highest influx in 2007) and led to a temporary growth in foreign emigration, the consequences of which spread throughout the region with extremely uneven effects and that we can now see is rapidly subsiding.

In the mid-1970s, the internal migration model based on rural exodus and urbanisation went through a major crisis. From then onwards, a new migratory model emerged, the pillars of which were the deconcentration of urban areas, geographical dispersion, the reversal of interregional flows (return migration) and a more balanced exchange between regions, with increasingly smaller migratory balances, which is exactly what happened in the Basque Country.

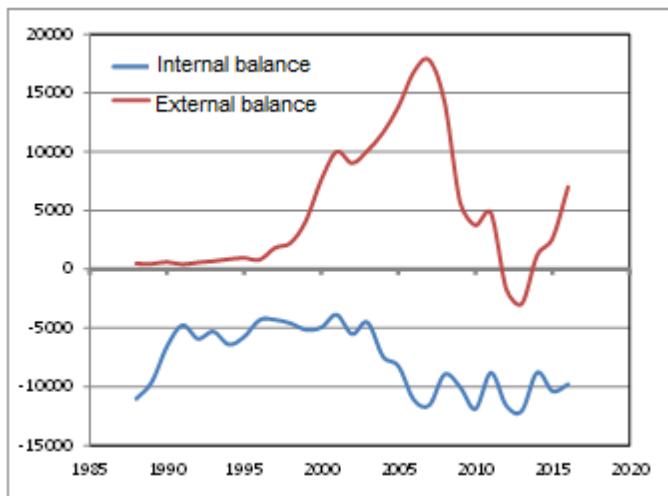
Table 1. Geographical origin and destination of flows in the Basque Country

Autonomous Region	Immigration			Emigration		
	Origins			Destinations		
	1988-2000	2001-2008	2009-2016	1988-2000	2001-2008	2009-2016
Andalusia	5.8%	3.8%	5.2%	8.6%	5.9%	4.4%
Aragón	2.5%	1.4%	1.7%	2.8%	2.0%	1.5%
Asturias (Principality of)	1.9%	1.0%	1.2%	2.0%	1.5%	1.2%
Balearics (Islands)	1.4%	1.0%	1.2%	1.9%	1.6%	1.3%
Canary Islands	3.6%	2.1%	2.4%	4.4%	2.9%	2.2%
Cantabria	6.6%	5.2%	5.7%	9.7%	12.6%	6.5%
Castilla - La Mancha	1.4%	1.1%	1.8%	1.6%	1.4%	1.1%
Castilla y León	19.2%	8.0%	7.7%	17.9%	13.0%	7.5%
Catalonia	4.7%	4.3%	5.9%	5.2%	6.2%	5.6%
Comunidad Valenciana	4.4%	3.5%	4.9%	7.6%	5.9%	3.9%
Extremadura	4.2%	1.5%	1.3%	5.0%	2.5%	1.4%
Galicia	5.7%	2.8%	2.4%	7.1%	4.7%	3.0%
Madrid (Community of)	9.4%	5.9%	6.8%	10.3%	9.4%	8.4%
Murcia (Region of)	0.6%	1.0%	1.4%	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%
Navarra (Autonomous Community)	7.8%	3.9%	3.7%	8.7%	6.4%	4.4%
Rioja (La)	5.1%	2.8%	2.8%	6.0%	5.0%	3.0%
Ceuta	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Melilla	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Abroad		50.5%	43.5%		17.9%	43.6%

Source: prepared by the author based on microdata from the Basque Country

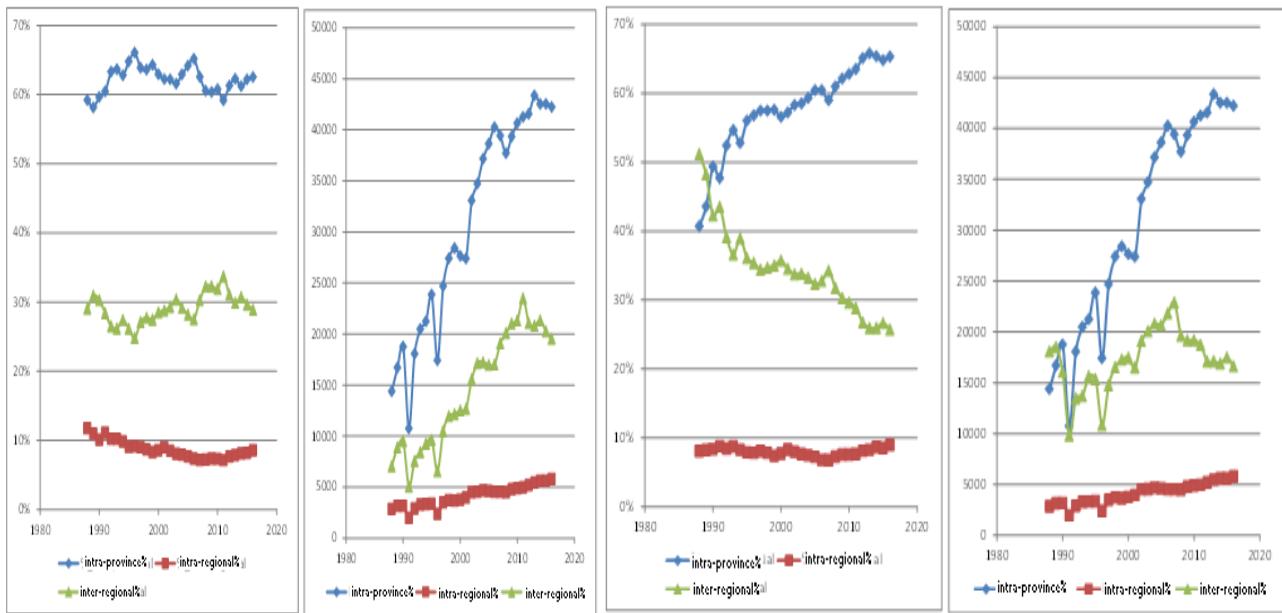
From the 1980s, the migratory balance of the Basque Country with the rest of Spain remained negative, while the migratory balance with other countries grew exponentially, although this was to be drastically altered by the economic crisis. However, we will come back to this in greater detail later in our analysis.

Figure 1: Internal and external migratory balance in the Basque Country (1988-2016)



Source: prepared by the author based on microdata from the Basque Country
The key characteristics of the trend during this long period correspond to the distinction between long-distance and short-distance migration. Long-distance mobility fell, while intra-provincial, or short-distance, mobility increased. Migrations between regions reached its high in Spain in the 1960s, both in absolute and relative terms. From that

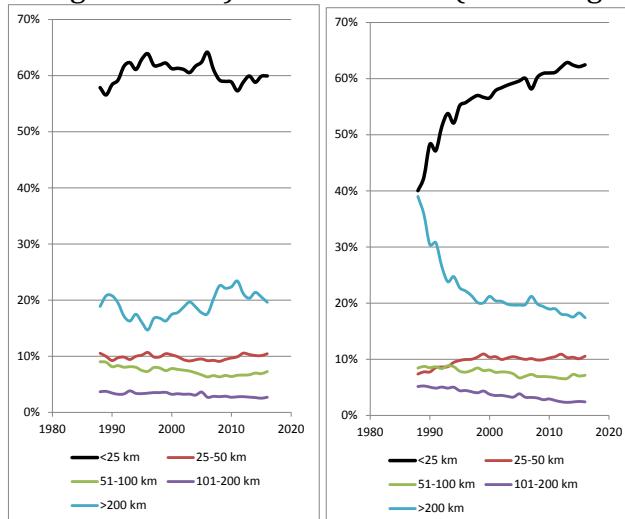
date on, they continued to decrease until the first few years of the 21st century, a period which broke the trend with a notable increase in the number of people changing region compared to the 1990s. For its part, intra-provincial migration registered a more erratic trend in the same period, although the long-term trend is that of increasing intensity, both in absolute and relative terms.



Source: prepared by the author based on microdata from the Basque Country

The spatial migration model underwent a dual transformation over the course of those years: a continuous decrease in the rate of long-distance mobility and the ongoing consolidation of a migratory model dominated by short-distance movements. Within this broad context, the most notable fact is that the first decade of the 21st century is the period with the highest rate of intra-provincial mobility in the history of the Basque Country in absolute and relative terms. The Spanish-born population experienced a continued rapid decline in medium-distance migrations until the second half of the 1970s when they then stabilised, while people born abroad displayed very different traits: immigrants from less developed countries moved longer distances compared to those recorded by the Spanish. These results suggest that the internal migration of certain groups of immigrants acted as a compensating factor for imbalances in local and regional labour markets over the first few years of the 21st century.

Figure 3: Migratory distances in the Basque Country
Influx (Percentage distance) Outflow (Percentage distance)



Source: Prepared by the author based on Residential Variation Statistics for the period 1988-2016

In the context of age groups, demographers highlight a number of basic characteristics of the profiles of internal migration rates by sex and age that repeatedly come up among the Basque population: a high concentration of migrants among young adults, high rates of migration in the first few years of life associated with the migration of parents, low mobility from age 40 onwards and a possible revival of migration in retirement ages. Foreign residents in the Basque Country adopt their migratory behaviour to labour market needs, extending migration propensity to very advanced ages, in which migration among the native population is not common. Changes of residence of the foreign-born population are much greater in number than those of Spanish citizens, a characteristic that can also be seen in the Basque Country. Internal migrations of foreigners are thus triple the rate recorded among Spaniards in relative terms. Furthermore, the migratory response of both population groups to the economic crisis of 2008-2012 has been very different: it has notably reduced internal mobility rates of foreigners (-25 percent) and changed their profile as regards ages, while among Spaniards, the decrease is barely noticeable in terms of rate (-1.9 percent) and demographic structure. In any case, the effects of the economic crisis have been felt in all migratory typologies.

What individual factors explain the different types of internal mobility of the Basques? Among young people, women move less in all types of migration, although the differences are greater between intra-regional migrations. The mobility of people born abroad is higher in all types of migration. Single people move less than those with other marital statuses, particularly in short-distance mobility, while the dissolution of

marriage notably increases the probabilities of moving compared to married people. Extended education increases the migration propensity of young people.

Women also have lower mobility among those of retirement age. A Spaniard born outside the Basque Country has a much greater probability of moving interregionally at retirement age than a person born in the Basque Country. Rises in education levels increase the probability of any type of movement at retirement age.

Main results to be considered

The first decade of the 21st century consolidated a migratory model dominated by residential migrations and the dispersion of destinations and migratory distances that, following a long period of decline, have reached a certain stability. However, these years were an exceptional period in the history of internal migrations in Spain, during which the highest absolute number of internal migrants was recorded and the highest relative rates among short-distance migrations were registered for as long as migratory statistics have existed. The main change in the migratory model during this period was the structural role that foreigners played in internal migratory movements. However, the exceptional economic, social and demographic conditions (property market boom, entire generations in search of independence, high immigration levels) that were recorded during the first decade of the 21st century have since disappeared. Over the next few years, it is more than likely that we are going to see a decline in internal mobility in absolute and relative terms, as the factors that led to the exceptional nature of the period from an internal migration perspective, have been replaced by a sudden downturn in the property market, a drastic reduction in influx from abroad, added to which is the emergence of emigration abroad, and dwindling younger generations. We can therefore conclude that the economic crisis has brought the period of highest internal migratory mobility in the history of Spain to an end. But what will the future bring? The latest economic data may make us reconsider the recent trend, especially with regard to external migration.

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Annex

External migration and economic crisis

Composition of external immigration into the Basque Country by country of birth

Period	Spain	EU-15 and Developed Countries	Rest of Europe	Africa	Latin America	Asia	Total
2000-2007	5,982	11,528	19,095	16,271	63,047	5,645	121,568
2008-2015	8,859	10,675	21,116	27,832	51,501	12,358	132,341
2000-2007	4.9%	9.5%	15.7%	13.4%	51.9%	4.6%	100.0%
2008-2015	6.7%	8.1%	16.0%	21.0%	38.9%	9.3%	100.0%
Variation	1.8%	-1.4%	0.2%	7.6%	-12.9%	4.7%	

Composition of external emigration from the Basque Country by country of birth

Period	Spain	EU-15 and Developed Countries	Rest of Europe	Africa	Latin America	Asia	Total
2002-2007	7,692	2,538	2,838	3,920	7,376	1,281	25,645
2008-2015	16,986	11,298	16,852	19,596	33,920	6,596	105,248
2000-2007	30.0%	9.9%	11.1%	15.3%	28.8%	5.0%	100.0%
2008-2015	16.1%	10.7%	16.0%	18.6%	32.2%	6.3%	100.0%
Variation	-13.9%	0.8%	4.9%	3.3%	3.5%	1.3%	

Source: prepared by the author based on microdata from the Basque Country