

MILMET Project

IO1-Handbook: Country's situation

Migration in Spain

Migration in the Canary islands, Spain

Given the geographical location of Spain, the country has experienced continuous migration from Northern Africa and Western sub Saharan Africa to its Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts.

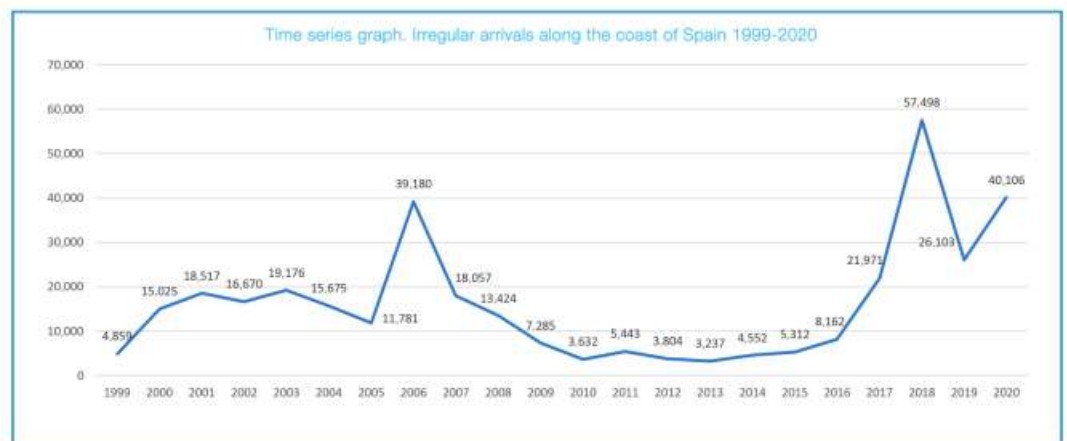
Immigration to Spain increased significantly since the end of the 20th century due to its rapid economic growth. Since the year 2000, Spain has presented one of the highest annual immigration rates in the world. At its highest point, in 2010, migrants represented 12.2% of the Spanish population. Spain is also the tenth country on the planet in terms of absolute number of migrants.

Upon the arrival of the economic crisis, the migrant population in the country dropped between 2011 and 2017, down to 9.8% of the national population before increasing again to 11.5% of the national population in 2021. In total, 7,322,408 foreign-born persons (with or without Spanish nationality) were living in Spain in 2021, 15.5% of the total population. The main migrant communities in Spain originate from Latin America, Africa and other parts of Europe.

The number of migrants who have died in their attempt to reach the Spanish coast in 2021 has exceeded 4.400.

Among migrants from outside of Europe, persons from Sub Sa-

haran Africa are particularly vulnerable in Spain, particularly because of the difficulty in obtaining documentation. Sub-Saharan immigration to Spain has a long history but



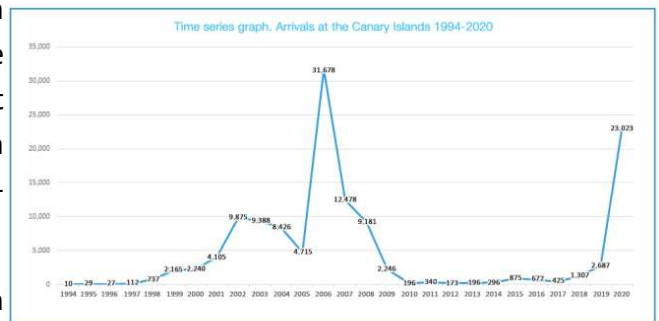
Source: Ministerio del Interior [Spanish Ministry for Home Affairs]. Compiled in-house

was very limited quantitatively until the 1990s. In the second part of the decade persons from Sub-Saharan Africa started arriving in larger numbers and were oriented towards employment in sectors such as agriculture, construction, services and street commerce, characterised by low wages and precarious employment conditions. Between January 1998 and January 2003, the arrival of sub-Saharan immigrants tripled, reaching the figure of 110,000 people.

Evolution of migration to the Canary Islands

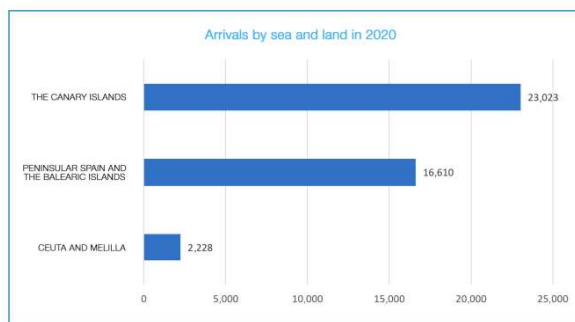
The stand-out feature of 2020 was the arrival of 23,023 migrant individuals to the Canary Islands. Factors affecting the migration from Africa to the Canary Islands include the sharp demographic increase, the negative impact of climate change, social inequalities and armed conflicts. On this occasion, there is a new factor: the increase in the number of undocumented individuals who have travelled to the Atlantic coast of Spain from Morocco. The example of the province of Las Palmas is a very illustrative one. Out of the 19,852 individuals who arrived there in 2020, 60% of them were from Morocco, followed by only 3,104 citizens from Mali.

In 2006 there was a considerable increase in arrivals of sub-Saharan migrants along the coasts of the Canary Islands archipelago. At the time, Spain initiated what became known as the Africa Plan, a new framework for relationships with sub-Saharan Africa.

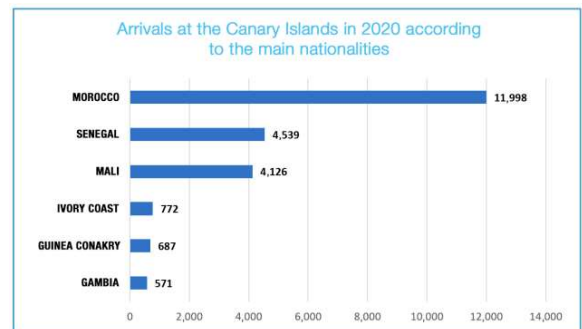


Source: Spanish Ministry for Home Affairs. Compiled in-house

Implementation of the aforementioned plan led to, amongst other things, a more than 60% decrease in arrivals of individuals on dugout canoes at the Canary Islands in 2007 compared with 2006. In general terms, the operation was a relative success since it managed to decrease irregular arrivals from almost 32,000 in 2006 to 12,478 in 2007. Since then, the trend has continued to decrease to just a few hundred arrivals, leaving this channel sealed over the last decade.



Source: Spanish Ministry for Home Affairs. Compiled in-house



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The Canary Islands Plan Work to set up new centres providing global care for immigrants who arrive at the coast has been ongoing since late 2019. On 20 November, the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration presented the Canary Islands Plan that includes 7,000 short-term accommodation spaces in tents. Work will also commence to ready military facilities made available by the Ministry of Defence and consolidate a permanent accommodation network on the Canary Islands archipelago.

Protection of minors

Autonomous communities are responsible for protecting minors in their respective territories. For this reason, when a minor is classed as unshielded, the public entity responsible for protecting minors in that geographical area must act as the individual's guardian and provide the necessary measures for his or her protection.

On the Canary Islands, during the so-called 'dugout canoe crisis', numerous unannounced interventions and visits to centres for the protection of minors took place. Between 2006 and 2009, according to data provided by the Canary Islands local government, 2,727 minors were accommodated using emergency resources. On this occasion, ten years later, around 15% of the undocumented individuals who arrived at the coasts of the Canary Islands in 2020 were minors. Data provided by the organism for the protection of minors on the Canary Islands, as of 12 February 2021, places the number of unaccompanied migrant minors under its care at 2,666.

Individuals who go missing en route

According to data provided by the Spanish Ministry for Home Affairs, 23,023 undocumented individuals arrived at the Canary Islands by sea in 2020. They did so in 745 vessels and, in many cases, had to be rescued. UNHCR estimates that, in 2020 alone, at least 480 individuals lost their lives while attempting to reach the islands.