

INEQUALITIES IN SPAIN

IMPLEMENT STRONG AND EQUITABLE PUBLIC POLICIES TO REVERSE THE UPWARD TREND OF INEQUALITY, POVERTY AND EXCLUSION

Futuro en Común - Coordinated by ECODES

Income and poverty

Ranked fourth most unequal country in Europe¹, with a GINI coefficient of 34.1 in 2017 Spain is experiencing increasing rates of inequality, poverty and exclusion. Since the 2008 economic crisis, the poverty rate has risen by over 3% to 26.8% - some 12 million people.² In 2017, 70% of households had seen no benefit from economic recovery, with this figure rising to 91% for households already below the poverty threshold.³ A third of all children are affected, two thirds in the case of those with non-Spanish parents,⁴ half of all single-parent households,⁵ three out of four Roma households⁶, one out of three persons with disabilities⁷ and more than half of non-EU foreigners.

Spain's labour market is unstable, disadvantaging women and young people especially. Social security payments are inadequate and do not reach those whom they are supposed to benefit: during 2017 more than 100 people died every day without having received the assistance to which they were entitled.⁸ Rates of child support are almost half of the European average.⁸ Spain lags behind on pensions and on minimum income.

Gender

The gender wage gap is calculated at 12.7 (2018).⁹ Single parent households – 83% of which are headed by women – are those most likely to experience poverty.

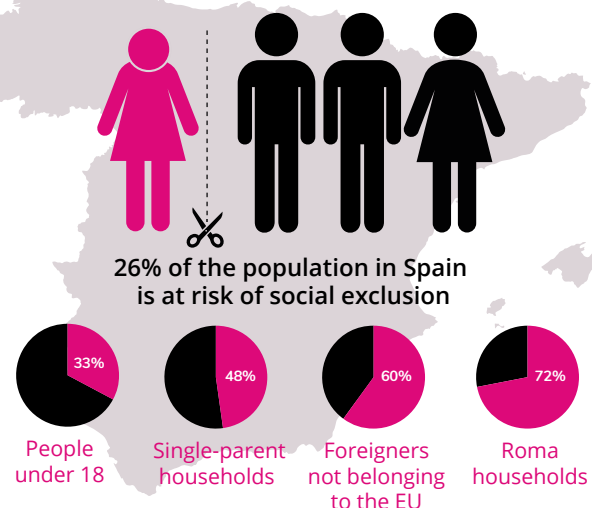
Gender violence is widespread and, despite improvements in recent years, there is insufficient recognition of the issue on the part of government. Between 2003 and 2018, 937 women were murdered by partners and ex-partners.¹⁰ 12.5% of women reported having experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetimes.¹¹

Between 2016 and March 2019 in Spain, 104 have recorded multiple sexual assaults, more than 111 women, 36% minors, by 356 sexual aggressors, 87 of them (24.4%) minors.¹² The justice system does not do enough to protect female victims of sexual violence and deters migrant women from reporting violence with the threat of expulsion.

Education, health and housing

Spain's school drop-out rate of 18.3% (2017) is the third highest in the EU.¹³ Children from non-EU, Roma and poorer Spanish families have the highest drop-out rates. Migrants without residency lost the right to treatment in the public health system in 2012, and though the situation was partially reversed by a legislative modification in 2018, it still needs the approval of a regulation to fully enter into force.

POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN SPAIN



Source: Futuro en Común
https://futuroencomun.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/informe_desde_la_sociedad_civil_final.pdf

There are no guarantees of universal access to essential services, including the right to affordable housing.¹⁴ In 2016, 9.8% of people had difficulties with mortgage payments or rent.¹⁵ Energy poverty¹⁶ and evictions remain high,¹⁷ sub-standard housing is common and the number of homeless people is on the rise.

Environment

In 2016 72.3% of all energy was derived from imported fossil fuels, with only 17.3% of primary energy coming from renewable sources.¹⁸ Misuse of irrigation systems, hydroelectric dams¹⁹ and habitat destruction have adversely affected water quality.²⁰ In 2016, 43% of rivers and wetlands and 44% of Spanish aquifers were in bad condition. Spain is the heaviest user of agrochemicals in the EU.²¹ 59% of agricultural land has less than acceptable content of organic matter.²²

Civil liberties

The so-called 'Gag Law' of 2015 is threatening freedom of peaceful assembly, expression and information, and is leading to the criminalisation of the poor in public spaces, affecting sex workers, street traders and homeless people. In 18 months alone the law was used to impose 25,000 penalties.

Migrants

Victims of human trafficking are seen first and foremost as illegal migrants. Finding and protecting them should not be seen as an issue for migration control but should be handled by a specialist body. Migrants' rights are violated before and after they arrive in Spain, they are mistreated by officialdom and experience harsh detention regimes and delays in the handling of applications for asylum. The "immediate returns" policy and collective expulsions in Ceuta and Melilla make it impossible to identify people seeking protection and intensify the difficulties faced by unaccompanied minors for whom there are no special safeguards. 400,000 people and their families are held in reception centres waiting for decisions on their nationality approval on the basis of their residency.²³

Inequalities at the international level

Since 2012, Spain's ODA has been below 0.2% of GNI, against the EU average of 0.5%,²⁴ and is not on course to achieve the target of 0.4% set for 2020. Aid quality has also declined. The use of aid in non-genuine goals as security and migration control or businesses international promotion of national companies, or the use of aid as concessional loans and other financial instruments, distorts its essential purpose of combatting inequality and poverty within and between countries. On the other hand, tax evasion and fraud of some Spanish companies overseas is the result of a very permissive law that affect developing countries. The IBEX-35 companies – main stock market – has 1285 subsidiary companies in tax heavens.²⁵

Conclusions and recommendations

To reverse the upward trend of inequality, poverty and exclusion, Spain must:

- Legislate and guarantee enough public social investment to ensure universal social protection, health, housing and education for all.
- Demonstrate national and global leadership to uphold human rights, curb the powers of transnational corporations and support distributive taxation measures such as the financial transaction tax.
- Implement reforms to end violence against women and children, discrimination and racism, and repeal the Gag Law.
- Exercise positive leadership on the global issues of migration, the arms trade, climate change and foreign trade.
- Establish a credible roadmap for achieving 0.5% in the short term and ensure that fighting poverty and inequality and upholding human rights remain the focus of the Cooperation Policy. Promote a more robust business and human rights framework.

To read the full national report and the comprehensive Europe-wide report with all references, please visit: www.sdwatcheurope.org/SDG10



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- ² Spanish Statistical Office (INE), Living Conditions Survey (ECV), At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate – AROPE indicator, available in: www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10005
- ³ Foessa (2017), “Analyses and Perspectives 2017” Report, available in: www.foessa.es/noticias_tags_noticia.aspx?Tag=%20An%C3%A1lisis%20y%20Perspectivas%202017
- ⁴ EAPN (2018), Report on the Situation of Poverty in Spain 2017, available in: www.eapn.es/estadoddepobreza/
- ⁵ INE, ECV, At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE indicator) by type of household, available in: www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?t=10010&L=1
- ⁶ Foessa (2014), 7th Report on exclusion and social development in Spain. FOESSA Foundation 2014, available in: www.foessa2014.es/informe/index.php
- ⁷ EAPN (2018), Report on the Situation of Poverty in Spain 2017, available in: www.eapn.es/estadoddepobreza
- ⁸ According to 2014 data, 1.3% of the GDP versus European average 2.4%: UNICEF (2016), Report Card 13, Equity for children: a league table of inequality in child well-being in the world’s rich countries, available in: www.unicef.es/noticia/espana-es-el-cuarto-pais-de-la-ue-con-masdesigualdad-infantil Provision per dependent child: UNICEF Spain (2014), Public policies to reduce child poverty in Spain, available in: www.unicef.es/sites/unicef.es/files/unicef_politicas_para_reducir_pobreza_infantil_espana_baja.pdf
- ⁹ https://elpais.com/economia/2018/03/06/actualidad/1520362982_401961.html
- ¹⁰ Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (MSSSI) <http://estadisticasviolenciagenero.msssi.gob.es/> Data on femicide including crimes committed by persons who are not partners or ex-partners: <https://goo.gl/HguV5F>
- ¹¹ http://www.violenciagenero.msssi.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/estudios/colecciones/pdf/Libro_22_Macroencuesta2015.pdf
- ¹² Observatorio Femicidio.net
- ¹³ Eurostat, early dropout rate in education and training, European Labour Force Survey, available in: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_40&plugin=1
- ¹⁴ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) in their opinion on Spain 2017
- ¹⁵ INE, ECV, People and households with material deprivation - Indicator of people that had delays when paying expenses related to their main dwelling: http://www.ine.es/prodyser/pubweb/anuario18/anu18_07condi.pdf
- ¹⁶ In 2017, 8 million people in Spain could not keep their home adequately warm in winter or in summer. http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_mdcs01&lang=enx
- ¹⁷ Eviction rates as a result of rentals and foreclosures: 58.7% and 36.8% respectively. Source: General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ), available in: <https://goo.gl/YRg2nj>
- ¹⁸ Share of renewable energy: Eurostat, Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=sdg_07_40&plugin=1 Energy dependency: Spanish Energy Club, 2016 Energy Balance and Perspectives for 2017 www.enerclub.es/file/p_fHq_aAayRc6KV2OP1O1Q
- ¹⁹ Spain is the country with larger dams per inhabitant and surface, and it is estimated that there is half a million illegal wells over 7000 m³. Source: WWF (2009), Communicating rivers: WWF Spain communication strategies for the conservation of rivers, available in: <https://goo.gl/gdGAeY>
- ²⁰ Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment (MAPAMA) (2016), 2015 Report on the State of Natural Heritage and Biodiversity in Spain, available in: <https://goo.gl/yyfQhY>
- ²¹ MAPAMA (2009), Management of biowaste within municipal waste
- ²² MAPAMA (2015), Spain: national rural development program, available in: <https://goo.gl/ve6FLW>
- ²³ Ombudsman (2018), Annual report 2017, available in: www.defensordelpueblo.es/noticias/defensor-del-pueblo-tramito-25-776-quejas-2017-4817-mas/
- ²⁴ European Commission. International Cooperation and Development. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/news-and-events/eu-remains-worlds-leading-donor-development-assistance-eu757-billion-2017_en
- ²⁵ <https://observatoriorsc.org/la-informacion-fiscal-las-empresas-del-ibex-35/>