



Making migration and migration policy decisions
amidst societal transformations

Insights on decision-making along the journey from Nigerians' in Spain

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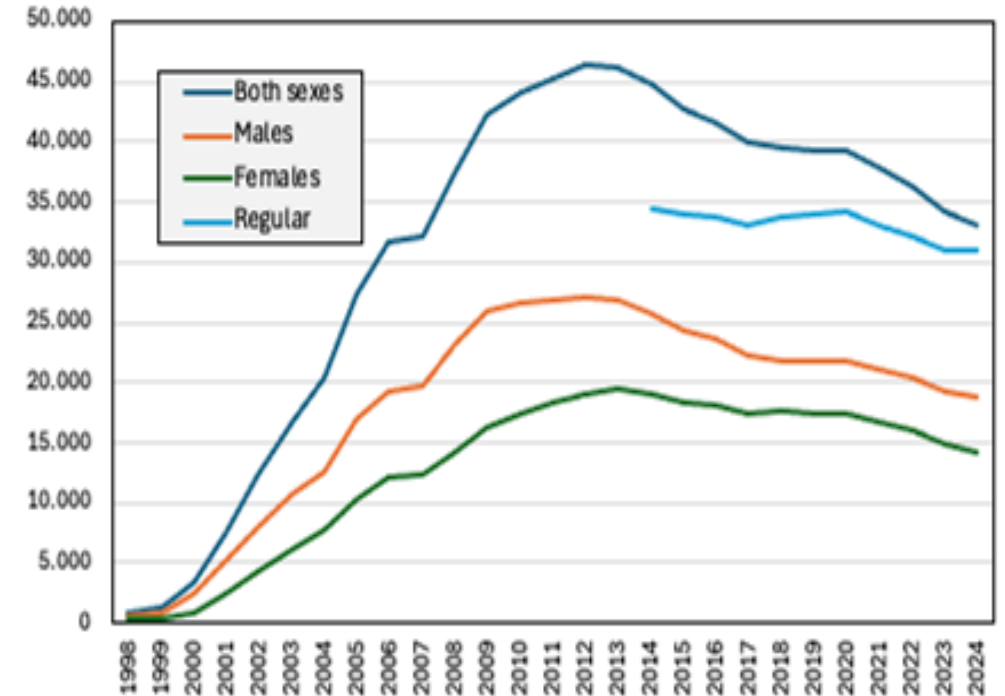
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Highlights on Nigerian migrants in Spain

- **34th largest foreign nationality in Spain.**
- **30%** of authorisations correspond to **first authorisations and first or second renewals**, followed by long-term authorisations or changes of status (usually transitions from salaried employment to self-employment).
- **Nigerians obtaining Spanish citizenship** have fluctuated since 2013 (3,356 in 2021; 1,929 in 2022, 2,369 in 2023 and **1,715** in **2024**).
- In August 2025, **Frontex** recorded 1,592 entries by Nigerians, being **less than 1%** of the irregular entries detected.

INSIGHT: We have identified individuals arriving from these entries in PACES fieldwork.

Figure 1: Nigerian population in Spain (1998-2024)



Source: Continuous Register (1998-2022), Annual Population Census (2023-2024), Foreigners with residence permit.

Highlights on Spanish migration policies

- **Bilateral agreements:**

- Readmission agreement signed with Nigeria in 2001.

- **Spanish migration policies framework:**

- Organic Law 4/2000, of 11 January, on the Rights and Liberties of Foreigners in Spain and their Social Integration (Foreigners Act), amended by Organic Laws 8/2000, 14/2003 and 2/2009.
- **Right to free public healthcare and education**, freedom of association and the right to strike on the same terms as Spanish citizens.
- **Regularisation process:** allows people who entered clandestinely to seek to regularise their situation not through an extraordinary, exceptional or humanitarian process (which also exists in Spain), but by providing evidence of integration.

 **This is called "arraigo" (rootedness)**

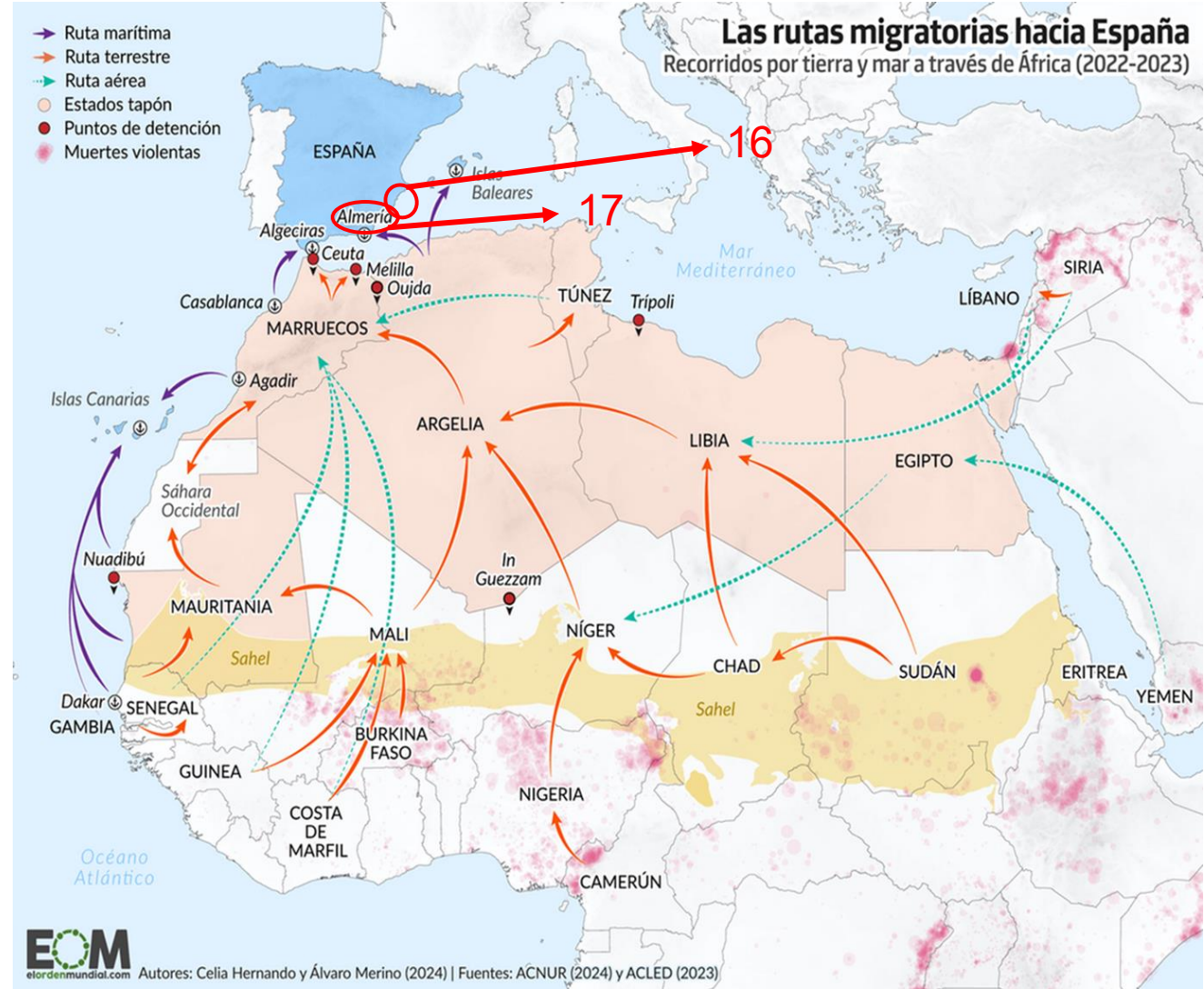
Table 1: Regularisation processes in Spain

AÑO	PRESIDENTE EN CARGO	SOLICITUDES CONCEDIDAS
1986	Felipe González	38.294
1991-92	Felipe González	114.423
1996	Felipe González	21.294
2000	José María Aznar	264.153
2001	José María Aznar	239.174
2005	José Luis R. Zapatero	576.506
2026	Pedro Sánchez	500.000 (<i>estimación</i>)

Source: Maldita.es

Fieldwork location in Spain: Alicante and Almería

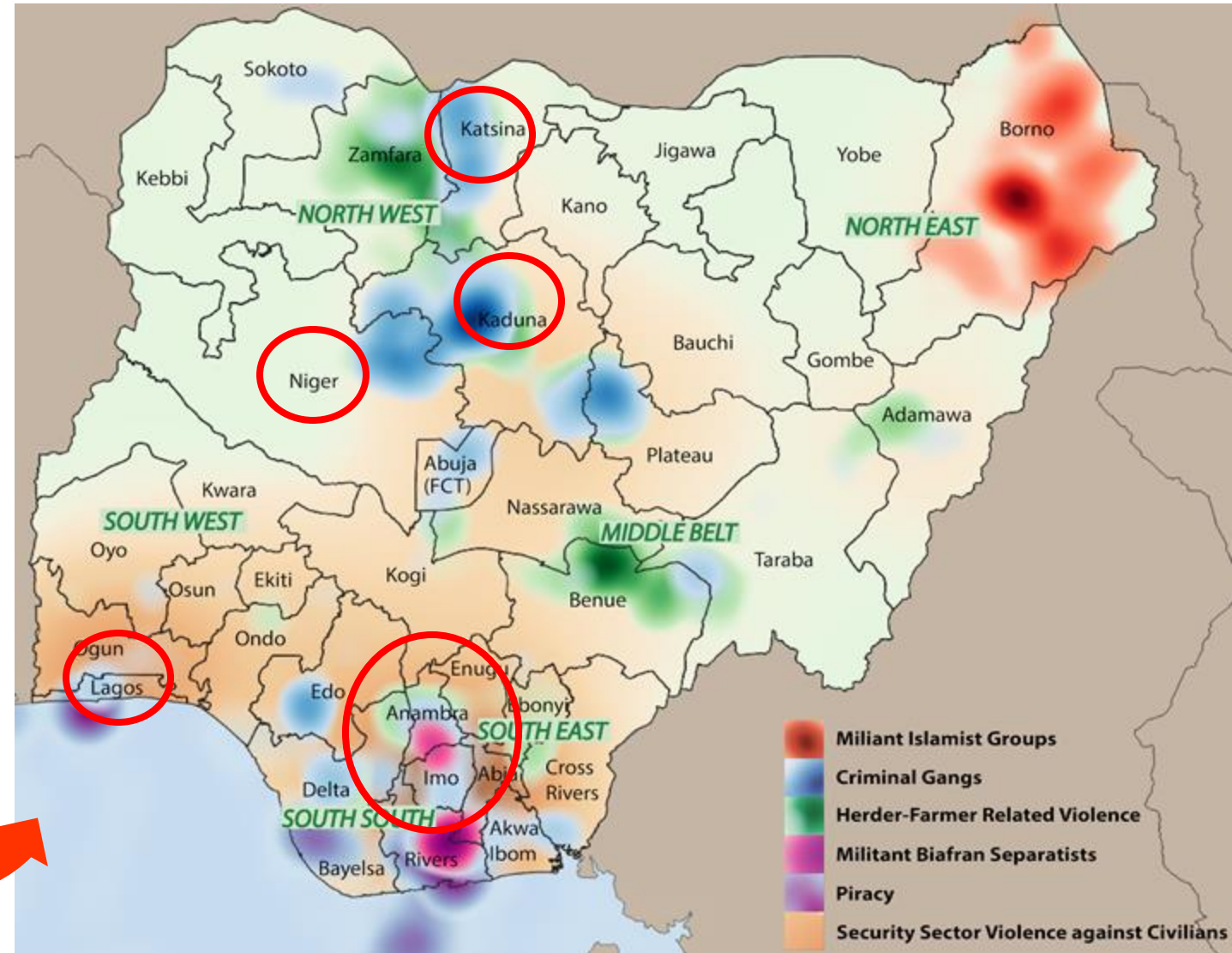
- Both provinces are located on the Mediterranean coast.
- Both are ending points of the Western Mediterranean route.
- **Alicante: Valencian Region (16)**
Population of 2,053,621 individuals, 513,048 were foreigners (25,0%) (INE, 2025).
Predominance of Tourism.
- **Almería: Andalusian Region (17)**
Population of 777,156, of whom 183,185 (23,6%) were foreigners (INE, 2025).
Intensive agriculture main economic sector.



Who are the respondents in Spain (I)

- **Places of origin:** States of Anambra (4), Edo (2), Imo (4), Enugu (2) other neighbouring states and Lagos (3). **(Total: 15/30).**
- **Age:** Between 25 - 58 years old, majority between 21 and 44.
- **Gender:** 22 men and 11 women. Most Nigerian women interviewed in Alicante;
- **Education:** Primary (7), H. Secondary (13), and Bachelor (11).

Figure 2: Security threats in Nigeria, 2021



Source: (Duerksen, 2021)

Who are the respondents in Spain (II)

- **Period of arrival:** The range of arrival years spanning from **1994** to **2024**.
- **Living in Spain:** **1 to 7 years (11)**, **7 to 19 years (16)**, **20 to 25 years (5)**.
- **Personal situation:** In a relationship or married (22) , divorced (2), and single (9).
- **Household:** Migrant and their children (11) or a brother (1). In couples (10) , with friends (7) whereas 4 live alone.
- **Employment:** (18) employed - Agriculture, hospitality and self-employment-; and (15) unemployed.



INSIGHT: We identify “newcomers” and “settlers”.

- **Useful to compare the transit routes towards Spain (longitudinal).**
- **Useful to compare their perception of the Nigerian development situation and the access to services in Spain.**

When Spain become a country of destination?

- Spain was not perceived as a country of destination. It is **along the journey** when **Social networks and family connections** determine the **change in the trajectory** of the interviewee.
- Most participants have relatives living abroad **(22)** and have family members in Spain **(10)**. Contact regularity: Weekly **(12)**, daily **(7)**, and monthly **(3)**.
- Provision of information on access to the labour market, migration policies, and social welfare—primarily education and healthcare.

INSIGHTS:

Is perceived as a “welcoming country”:

- **Easy access to regular situation (to get “the papers” in comparison to other EU countries - Italy, Germany or Switzerland -);**
- **The cost of living is more affordable in Spain than in other EU countries.**

Migration trajectories towards Spain

➤ In Alicante:

A major number of participants migrated directly from Nigeria to Spain. 3 of 16 transited another EU countries:

ES_01 travelled from **Bulgaria to Switzerland** and then **France**, ES_33 went through **Italy**, and ES_07 came from **the Netherlands**.

➤ In Almeria:

Most of the participants transited African countries, whereas arrived from another EU countries such as **Switzerland, Germany** or **the Netherlands**.

"So, we went to meet a man and the man said he's going to help us to Europe. He said, okay. So, the man prepared everything. It was during August period. The man was coming for vacation. He was going to France. So, and later the other guy said he's not going to France and he's coming to Spain. I said, Spain? Is Spain good? He said, yes, Spain is good. France is too cold. I said, okay". (ES_04)

"We met some travellers again. They said they were going to Morocco. We don't have anything. We had to beg them. We begged them that if it's good out there, let them help us. So going there, that place was even worse. Because it was like they want to sell us out. That's what they are doing there. They kept us in the house. No food. No, nothing". ES_12

Primary motivations to migrate

- In Alicante, the main reason to migrate is due to **economic reasons** to seek for a **"good life" and family reunification**.
- In Almeria, the primary reason is to escape the **insecurity and violence suffered by different sources**.

Also, the lack of freedom of speech and the lack of job opportunities and looking for a **"good life"**.

"So, since my father's family, they are forcing me to go into the marriage. So, I was crying and a friend of mine said, why are you crying? I said, I just want to run away. He said, okay, if you want to run away, me, I'm also planning to run away from Nigeria. I said, okay, so what we're going to do." (ES_04)

"The government, they are traitors. When you do not agree with them, that person's life is in danger. Either by one way or the other, they send people to go and assassinate the person. If you speak, no freedom of speech there [...] I was attacked, let me tell you the truth, I was attacked by a group of people due to the political something" ES_26.

Life in Spain, access to services

▪ The role of the family and social networks:

- When arriving in Spain, they become a **"support system"** for newcomers, providing accommodation and nourishment until their settlement, especially after securing jobs that enable them to become independent.
- Individuals associated with the **Church** or **Third-sector** organisations established by migrants serve as vital contacts upon their arrival.
- The importance of **community values**. Nigerians as brothers and family, even when they "do not share a blood relation".

"My life when I came here, I met a friend, he is the one that accommodated me in a small apartment, because then I don't have money, I have nothing, so he is the one who helped me, he is a friend, I live with him, you understand, because I don't have nothing, he helped me for house rent or whatever, food, stuff, the little one I have, I used to feed myself until I get a job". ES_23

INSIGHT:

Access to Health and Education vs housing and social inclusion
Secure environment vs lack of "desired" and non-precarious job opportunities

Migration aspirations in the future: the role of (non)migration policies

- **Clear predominance in staying in Spain.**

- **Welfare State:** availability of services (public healthcare (ES_31)(ES_31; ES_33; ES_30) and education).
- **The policy framework and the administrative situation:** Some individuals are 'waiting' for their "papers" (ES_31) or are in the process of fulfilling the requirements—such as the three years for the "arraigo"—to apply for a settlement permit (ES_10). Others have already obtained permanent residency, which reinforces their commitment to staying long-term (ES_09; ES_03).
- In summary, having or anticipating legal status encourages individuals to remain.

BUT the **lack of job opportunities and/or matching** their education is the only reason to reflect on migrating (to another Spanish city or to another country, but not returning to Nigeria).

"Because work here is very hard and the work is not stable. I need work to be stable. I think Barcelona is better than here. You will get a good job there".
ES_23

What have we learnt

1. Individuals seek a **good life** – achieve their **life aspirations** and become **migrants** when they perceive that is not possible to achieve them in their country of origin. Motivations to migrate linked to **economic** and **security** reasons.
2. Along the journey, **any country could become a country of transit or destination** due to life experiences lived (racism, violence, supporting network), etc.
3. Clear impact on migrants' **well-being**.
4. **(Non)migration policies** become relevant along the journey when migrants develop a consciousness of the role they play: a learning experience in each stop of the journey.

What have we learnt

“This is what is happening in Nigeria [pictures of death individuals in the street] This one is another one. You are seeing? So, our people is in tears. That is why you see people want to leave Nigeria. So, if your life is not protected, you have to leave and go where your life can be protected”. ALMJ14I.

Assailants kill at least 32 in north-west Nigerian villages, residents say

Residents who escaped violence tell of bandits riding in on motorbikes and shooting indiscriminately

Source: The Gardian. 15/02/2026.

How this knowledge could be included in designing (non)migration policies?

Thank you for your attention!