

# Foreign migrants move within Spain for employment reasons

May 7 2010

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Madrid and Barcelona have become the leading centres for redistribution of the foreign population over recent years. Credit: SINC

A team from the University of Cantabria (UC) has studied the contribution that internal migration by foreign people living in Spain made to the process of overall provincial convergence between 1996 and 2005. The main reasons for foreign migrants moving between regions were found to be primarily employment-related rather than to do with residential choice.

Between 1996 and 2005, the proportion of internal migrations in Spain made by foreigners grew from 3% to 26% of the total. By 2008, three out of every 10 changes in place of residence were being made by foreigners.

"Until the start of the 1980s, internal migrations were one of the major engines driving the process of provincial convergence in Spain. After this period, a change in migratory patterns saw this process slow down", María Hierro, lead author of the study and a researcher at the UC, tells SINC.

This new research study, which has been published in the journal *Papers in Regional Science*, shows that these internal migrations are primarily undertaken for work reasons rather than as a result of residential preference.

"Unless suitable policies are introduced to stimulate mobility, particularly from low-income provinces to high-income ones, internal [migration](#) cannot be expected to become an engine for convergence in Spain again", the expert explains.

## **35% of internal migrations are from Madrid and Barcelona**

Another study carried out by María Hierro in collaboration with Adolfo Maza, published in *Applied Geography*, shows that Madrid and Barcelona have become the leading centres for redistribution of the foreign population over recent years.

More than 35% of all internal migrations by foreigners are made from these two cities. "They move to provinces bordering these cities (where housing prices are more affordable) and also to non-neighbouring provinces where per capita income is lower but where there is a higher demand for labour, particularly in the domestic and services sectors", Hierro explains.

**More information:** María Hierro, Adolfo Maza. "Per capita income

convergence and internal migration in Spain: Are foreign-born migrants playing an important role?", *Papers in regional science* 89 (1): 89-107, March 2010.

María Hierro, Adolfo Maza. "Foreign-born internal migrants: Are they playing a different role than natives on income convergence in Spain?" *Applied Geography*. Feb 2010.

Provided by FECYT - Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology

Citation: Foreign migrants move within Spain for employment reasons (2010, May 7) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-05-foreign-migrants-spain-employment.html>

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