

Spanish women marry immigrants with more qualifications

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Exogamy is an indication of an immigrant's level of social integration. Credit: J. Charlet.

A team at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) has studied the marriage strategies of immigrants in order to determine the nature of endogamic (between people of the same nationality) and exogamic partnerships (between people of different nationalities) in Spain. The preliminary results indicate that, unlike Spanish men, Spanish women prefer immigrants with more qualifications.

"It caught our attention that human capital was more important in determining outmarriage amongst Spanish women but this is not the case in Spanish [men](#). In other words, it seems that Spanish women prefer to get married to an immigrant man who has a higher [educational](#)

[attainment](#). However, this preference does not exist amongst Spanish men when it comes to getting married to an immigrant woman," explains María Sánchez-Domínguez, investigator at the UCM and co-author of the study that was published in the *International Sociology Journal*.

The researcher and her team gathered data from the National Immigrant Survey of Spain (2007), which was carried out by the UCM's Population and Society Study Group (GEPS) and Spain's National Statistic Institute (INE). The survey acts as a unique source of information and can be used to understand the characteristics of immigrants in Spain since 2007.

Sánchez-Domínguez points out that "although it is from 2007, the survey contains both information on the current situation of those surveyed as well as their migration history. It is the only source of information that we can use to study the marriage strategies of immigrants and link them to integration processes. It is useful not just in understanding immigrant marriages in Spain but also those marriages that took place in the country of origin.

From these data, in an initial study, researchers analysed endogamic marriages in Spain and the relationship between marriage and migration strategies. The expert's main conclusion was that Moroccans are more prone towards endogamy, followed by Romanians and Ecuadorians.

64% of Moroccan men are reunited with their wife.

Sánchez-Domínguez states that "Moroccan men show strong endogamic tendencies and use marriage as a way of being reunited later on with their partner within Spain. The most common type of behaviour consists of a Moroccan single man coming to Spain. After a certain amount of time, he returns to Morocco where he gets marriage to a Moroccan woman and then returns to Spain without his spouse. Later on, he is reunited with his wife within Spanish society.

Some 64% of Moroccan immigrant men have employed this strategy. According to experts, religion as well as geographical proximity to Spain are key factors in explaining this phenomenon.

Exogamy is an indication of an immigrant's level of social integration. Those who have higher tendencies towards exogamy are Argentineans and Colombians. According to the researcher, linguistic and cultural proximity means that the number of marriages with the Spanish population is very high "because they see each other as equals."

Furthermore, it was observed that Brazilian, Dominican, Cuban and Colombian women display a high percentage of marriage with Spanish men within just a year of arriving in Spain. This is a phenomenon known as "imported brides".

Sánchez Domínguez highlights that "in general terms, endogamy decreases according to the amount of time that an immigrant spends in a country, which, in turn, is a clear indication of integration. On the other hand, endogamy is higher amongst immigrants with less educational attainment and exogamy is more prevalent amongst immigrants who have a university education."

Endogamy has been on the increase since the year 2000

Whether an immigrant has studied in Spain is also important in determining endogamic and exogamic tendencies. It was found that immigrants who have studied in Spain are less prone to marry a partner of the same nationality because they mix in a social setting with more Spaniards.

Another factor that influences endogamic marriage is whether the

immigrant has arrived before or after the year 2000. "In that year, [Spain](#) became an immigrant-receiving country," says the researcher.

"Endogamy is higher amongst those immigrants who arrived after this year. An explanation for this can be found in the size of the immigrant group: the bigger the amount of [immigrants](#), the higher the chance of endogamy, which is usually the preference, because there are a higher number of potential partners within a given ethnic community."

Those who do not have Spanish nationality at the time of [marriage](#) are also more prone to opt for endogamy.

More information: María Sánchez-Domínguez, Helga de Valk, David Reher. 'Marriage strategies among immigrants in Spain', Revista Internacional de Sociología (monográfico 1): 139 -166, 2011.

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