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Foreign migration in Barcelona: from the financial crisis of 2008 to the pandemic of 2020

Andreu Domingo. Centre for Demographic Studies, adomingo@ced.uab.es

Juan Galeano. University of Geneva, Juan.Galeano@unige.ch and

Jordi Bayona. University of Barcelona, jordibayona@ub.edu

Just before the collapse of migration as a result of Covid-19, Barcelona was witnessing a new international migratory boom, one that began in 2014. This recent dramatic growth was linked to the current economic cycle, but was substantially different to what had taken place during the first decade of the 21st century. It is not only a question of an increase in the foreign-born population, but also a change in terms of the origin, sex and age of the new arrivals, and also their level of education. In this paper we look at the main demographic changes that have taken place in the city from the onset of the financial crisis in 2008 to when the pandemic hit in 2020. Particular attention will be paid to the residential distribution of the recently arrived migrant population which is linked to the housing market and the effects of the economic crisis, and also the demographic composition of neighbourhoods and the challenges that the city will have to face in the coming years in order to guarantee social cohesion.

1. Introduction: growth in fits and starts

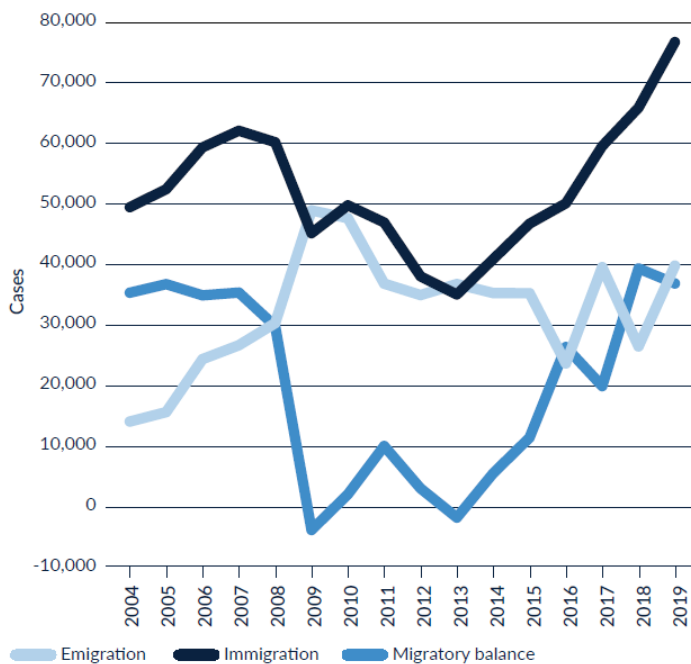
Just before the collapse of migration as a result of Covid-19, Barcelona was witnessing a new international migratory boom which had begun in 2014, with rates even higher than those at the beginning of the millennium, which had broken all historical records. This recent dramatic growth was linked to the current economic cycle, but was substantially different to the increase during the first decade of the century which reached its peak in 2007, before falling sharply due to the deep recession of 2008.

It is not only the increase in the number of our fellow citizens who are foreign born to a total of 461,000 people, but also a change in terms of the origin, sex and age of the new arrivals, as well as their level of education, details which can sometimes be passed over. This progression has been eclipsed by the forced unemployment imposed by the pandemic, which appears to have effectively frozen the image that we have in our minds of migration and population diversity, with the certainties and prejudices corresponding to the beginning of the 21st century being carried forward intact. But apart from taking into account variation in migration flows, attention must also be paid to what the distribution of the recently arrived migrant population by neighbourhood has meant for the population of Barcelona. These are residential patterns that need to be related to the housing market and the effects of the economic crisis, and also to the demographic composition of the different neighbourhoods. In other words, we must take into account the generational succession as a result of birth and mortality rates, as well as migratory movements between neighbourhoods, both within and outside the municipality.

2. International migration and the economic cycle: before the pandemic¹

In 2018 and 2019, just before Covid-19 appeared on the scene, the number of new registrations in the municipal register of residents of migrants from other countries reached a record high, with more than 61,000 in 2007, 65,134 in 2018 and 75,869 in 2019 (graph 1). The observed growth has been steady and sustained since 2013, when a low of 34,953 arrivals was recorded. 2013 and 2009 are the only two years when there has been a negative net migration rate, because of an increase in emigration, particularly in 2009, as well as a decrease in immigration, the lowest figure here being registered in 2013, due to the initial impact of the 2008 financial crisis. As a result, net migration, the difference between the number of immigrants (people coming into an area) and the number of emigrants (people leaving an area) throughout the year, reached the highest positive level since the beginning of the 21st century, a time when the recording of emigration was still extremely problematic.

Graph 1. International migratory flows. Evolution 2004-2019



Source: Original. Residential Variation Statistics, with data from the National Statistics Institute (INE).

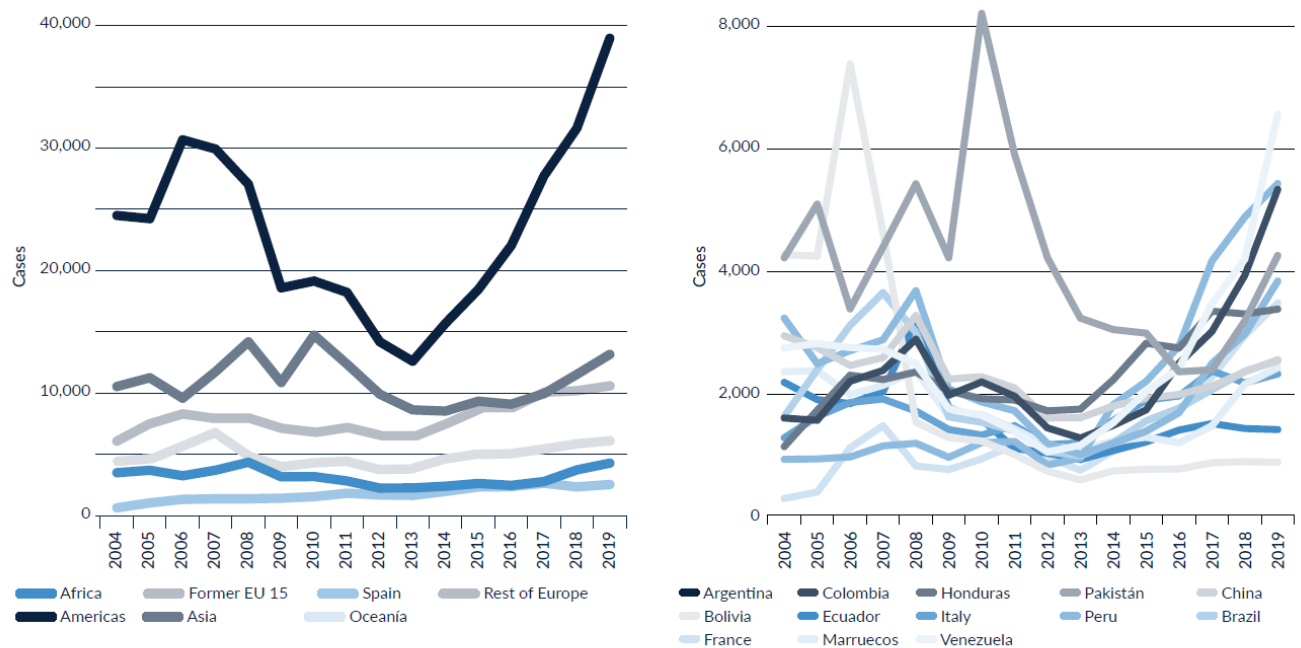
In terms of immigration from abroad, this has mostly involved people born outside Spain, the number of people born in Spain returning to the country being quantitatively insignificant. Thus, the extreme values in percentage terms of the emigration of people born in Spain was only 5.1% in 2015, 3.4% in 2019, and 2,581 people. In contrast, the proportion of those entering with Spanish nationality is considerably higher, both in absolute terms (a maximum of 6,128 in 2019) and relative terms (10.3% of entries in 2019).

1. In this paper, migration flows between the city of Barcelona and other countries are analysed on the basis of data from the Residential Variation Statistics (EVR). These are compiled by the National Statistics Institute (INE), and inform of changes in migration both within Spain and at the international level, as recorded in the municipal register of residents for a particular year. Given the difficulties associated with recording migration, the EVRs are not exhaustive; some migratory movements are recorded incorrectly (or not at all) in the municipal register, and therefore are not reflected in the EVR statistics. For similar reasons, data prior to 2004 is not presented in this paper, as migratory movements from abroad were recorded as registrations by default, as they originated outside the statistical system. These issues may affect the total volume of registrations, but not necessarily their basic characteristics.

With regard to country of origin, by grouping people according to continent of birth - a distinction has been made between the EU-15 area countries (before the enlargement to include Eastern European countries) and the rest of Europe - it can be seen that both now and since 2000 the greatest migration flow into the city is from the Americas (graph 2). The evolution follows the same pattern as that discussed above, with the migratory peak coming just before the crisis, with a total of 30,688 arrivals in 2006, which has been overtaken in the last two years, especially in 2019, when there were 38,993 arrivals. Its weight in terms of total international migration varies in the same way, from 52% in 2006 to a low of 36% in 2013, before rising to above 50% in 2019 (51.4%). Therefore, in addition to the preponderance observed, this is the flow that is most sensitive to economic fluctuations, and the one that ultimately determines the overall evolution. Over the 16-year period analysed, 375,000 new arrivals were registered in the city. Eight of the fifteen most common countries of origin are in Latin America. In this case, the periodisation of entries is very different, often responding to a dramatic economic, political and social situation in the place of origin. Among these countries, migrants from Argentina are the most numerous, with a total of 40,932 registrations being recorded. Over the years growth was strong and sustained, until in 2019 Argentina became the main country of origin of foreign migrants arriving in the city. In terms of recent arrivals, the number of Venezuelans and Colombians has also increased substantially, as has the influx of Peruvians and Hondurans.

In contrast, the number of people arriving from Ecuador and Bolivia is below the figures recorded a decade ago, when these countries were the main source of incoming migration.

Graph 2. International migratory flows. Evolution 2004-2019



Source: Original. Residential Variation Statistics, with data from the National Statistics Institute (INE).

The influx of migrants from Europe and Asia has also been considerable over the period studied, reaching a total of 198,000 (60% from EU-15 countries) and 175,000 respectively. The trend for Europeans is similar to that for people from the Americas; in the case of the EU15, the peak is from 2015 onwards, with inflows 25% higher than in the first boom. In contrast, the pattern for Asians shows a certain delay when examined in relation to the patterns previously described. Arrivals peaked in 2010, steadily falling until 2016 when numbers once again increased, although without reaching the level of the previous high.

Among the Europeans, the Italians and French stand out, evolving steadily over time, and also peaking in 2019. In terms of people originating from other countries, a fall in the number of arrivals

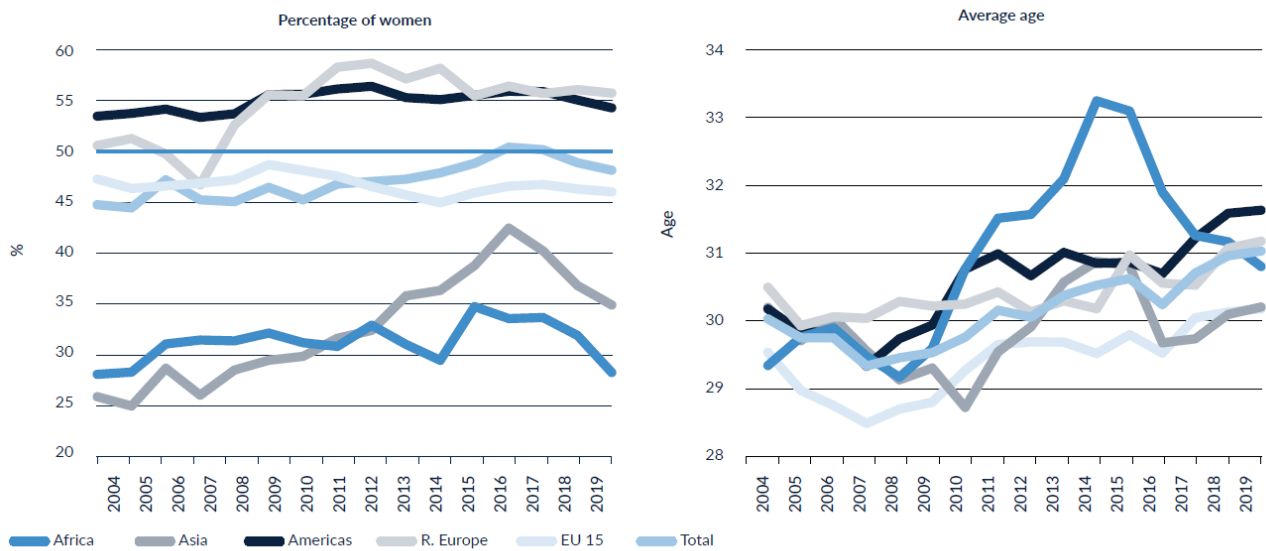
from Romania should be noted. During the migratory boom at the beginning of the millennium the number of Romanians arriving in Spain and Catalonia was considerable, whereas today it is insignificant. In recent years there has been a clear increase in the number of British and Irish migrants arriving in Barcelona. With regard to people of Asian origin, arrivals of people from Pakistan, China and India rose once again in 2019, although in the case of the first two countries, numbers were still much lower than those recorded in previous years. Lastly, arrivals from Africa follow a similar trend and were at the same level in 2019 as in 2008, although they are of considerably less significance from a quantitative point of view. These flows are primarily of people arriving from Morocco (55%) and other countries bordering the southern Mediterranean (70%: Algerians, Egyptians and Tunisians).

As well as having led to an increase in migration outflows and a decrease in inflows, the crisis has brought other changes, impacting on profile in terms of age and sex, above all in the case of incoming migrants who took the decision to stay in the country and embark on the process of family reunification. In populations where men had traditionally been extremely dominant, the crisis has led to a rise in the number of women. The same thing occurs when we look at age: in some cases the number of minors has risen, and in others the number of adults.

Migration from Latin America as a whole has been the least affected when it comes to composition in terms of sex, with women unquestionably in the majority. On the other hand, in the case of Africans and Asians where men predominate, there has been an increase in the number of women within these populations, particularly among Asians up until 2016, when the trend was reversed.

If we take a look at average age, in the first decade of the century it was under thirty; there were hardly any differences based on origin, and it was the migrants from the former EU15 who were the youngest on average. Evolution here is characterised by diversification and an increase in average age, which during this period stands at 31, and by profound disparities between different countries of origin (graph 3). The fall in immigration during the crisis has been accompanied by an increase in the average age of Africans and Asians, as fewer young people have arrived.

Graph 3. Migratory flows by age and sex. Evolution 2004-2019

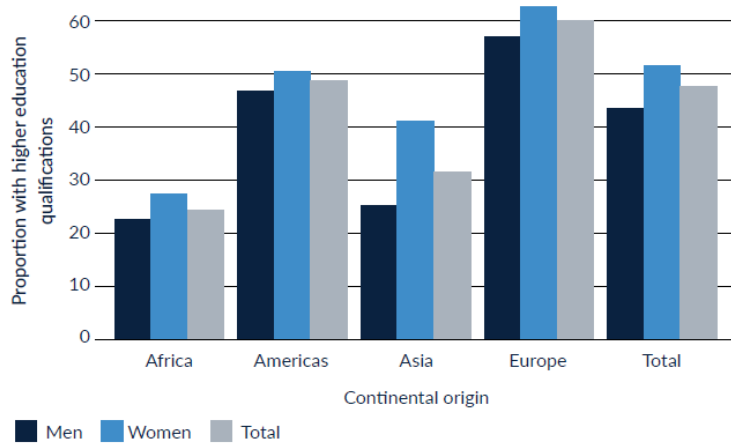


Source: original. Residential Variation Statistics, with data from the National Statistics Institute (INE).

Lastly, data from the municipal register of residents provides us with information on the level of education of those registered as migrants from abroad in the city of Barcelona. Data on this variable has only become available recently, so it has not been possible to reflect evolution over time. Data from 2018 shows that 47.7% of the migrants who arrived had completed some form of tertiary education, a significant statistic if we take into account the fact that in Spain only 46.4% of

25-29 year olds and just 29.2% of those over 16 have reached this level of attainment. These percentages are higher among women (51.7%) than men (43.7%), with sharp differences depending on continent of origin (graph 4).

Graph 4. Proportion of international migrants having studies at tertiary level, grouped by continent. 2018



Source: Original. Registration in the municipal register of residents in Catalonia, with data from the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT).

The highest values can be observed among European migrants (60.1%) and those from Latin America (48.9%), whereas for Africans and Asians the percentage is below the average (24.2% and 31.5% respectively). Women have a higher level of education than men, regardless of country of origin, and it is among Asians that this disparity is most pronounced (41.2% of women and 25.2% of men). The disparity between people from different countries of origin is very high. Among the most prominent groups, the percentage of Pakistanis and Hondurans with tertiary educational qualifications is very low, 9.2% and 12.6% respectively. At the other extreme are the Mexicans, 77.5% of whom have tertiary level studies, many of them coming to the city to continue their education, and the French (71%).

3. Residential patterns among the foreign-born population in Barcelona

Increased migration has led to an increase in the foreign-born population. In 2020 the figure was 461,960, which represents 27.76% of all the city's inhabitants. If we added the descendants of these migrants to this, the percentage would rise to a third of the population. Despite the fact that, due to the inertia in population growth, it may seem that the distribution by major continental origin of the immigrant population resident in Barcelona (Figure 1) has not undergone any substantial change over the last decade, it must also be noted that there have been significant migration flows from certain countries, particularly those most prominent in the second wave during the new millennium. This means that their proportional presence within the population of each neighbourhood will indeed have changed, as will the age and sex profiles of the inhabitants, and the precise impact will depend on migratory strategies and the demographic metabolism of the neighbourhood in question. Together with the proportional increase in the number of immigrants, diversity is key, as there are nationals from 15 different countries spread over Barcelona's 72 neighbourhoods. These people are from countries as diverse as Argentina (in Gràcia and in 16 more neighbourhoods), Pakistan (in El Raval and 3 more neighbourhoods), Morocco (in Torre Baró and 2 more neighbourhoods), France (in Pedralbes and 2 more neighbourhoods), the United States (in Tres Torres) and Russia (in Diagonal Mar and Frente Marítimo del Besòs), as can be seen in Figure 2.

Overall, the distribution of people of Latin American origin (227,338), who represented the largest migrant population in Barcelona in 2010 and also in 2020, may seem to be much the same, with Argentinians both then and now at the top of the list in general terms (with just over 30,000 residents throughout the city in 2020), and also in 17 of Barcelona's 72 neighbourhoods, with

Gràcia in the lead. Peru is second on the list in absolute terms; there are around 28,000 Peruvians living in the city, and they are the majority nationality in 15 neighbourhoods (headed by La Sagrera and Camp de l'Arpa del Clot). In third place are those of Colombian origin (26,500), resident primarily in two neighbourhoods, El Guinardó and Vall d'Hebron. However, in 2020 the numbers of migrants from countries that had previously been more or less absent from these lists rose significantly. For example, there are now almost 25,000 Venezuelans living in the city, and they now form the largest migrant population in 7 Barcelona neighbourhoods (Sagrada Família being first on the list), and 15,000 Hondurans. Although this is a substantially lower number of people, as they are concentrated in certain areas, they are the majority migrant nationality in 4 of the city's neighbourhoods - Horta, Porta, Les Roquetes and Verdun. But even among Argentinians who, as we know, are one of the 'oldest' migrant groups in Barcelona and for this reason are spread out over a wide range of neighbourhoods, we see that migration has been strongly influenced by factors in the country of origin (refugees fleeing the dictatorships of 1970s were the pioneers, and in the 21st century the *corralito* of 2001 are cases in point). A look at the varied composition of this group in terms of age gives an indication of what is changing. The number of people within this population over the age of 64 has risen, reaching 8.9% last year, indicating the existence of both older migratory flows and more recent migration driven by the neoliberal policies of former Argentinian president Mauricio Macri.

The rest of the migrant population is extremely diverse. The 111,956 Europeans who live in the city are in second place; 64.7% are from Western Europe, (72,422) from countries that have long-standing ties with the city. Currently the largest subgroups are Italians (21,490) French (17,505), followed by British (8,288) and German (7,423), many being grouped in the city centre - La Barceloneta, the old quarter, the Dreta de l'Eixample, Vila de Gràcia, and to the north of the city, with substantial numbers in the Pedralbes neighbourhood and the Sarrià - Sant Gervasi district. The composition of the Eastern European population (39,534) is mixed. Top of the list here are the 9,000 Russians who are concentrated in the wealthier neighbourhoods such as Pedralbes, Sarrià, Tres Torres and Bonanova, as well as Diagonal Mar where they are the majority nationality, followed by Romanians, Ukrainians and Georgians, primarily in neighbourhoods such as Besòs i el Maresme and Sant Martí de Provençals, reflecting their lower socio-economic status.

Among the 83,210 residents of Asian origin, there are almost 24,000 Pakistanis and around 20,000 Chinese, together with 13,400 Filipinos and 8,000 Indians. This variety explains why they are spread so widely across the city. Although a significant number of Pakistanis, Filipinos, Bangladeshis and Indians live in the El Raval, El Gòtic and El Poble Sec neighbourhoods, the greatest number are resident in Besòs i Maresme (in the Sant Martí district), where Pakistanis account for three in every four people of Asian origin, followed by those born in China.

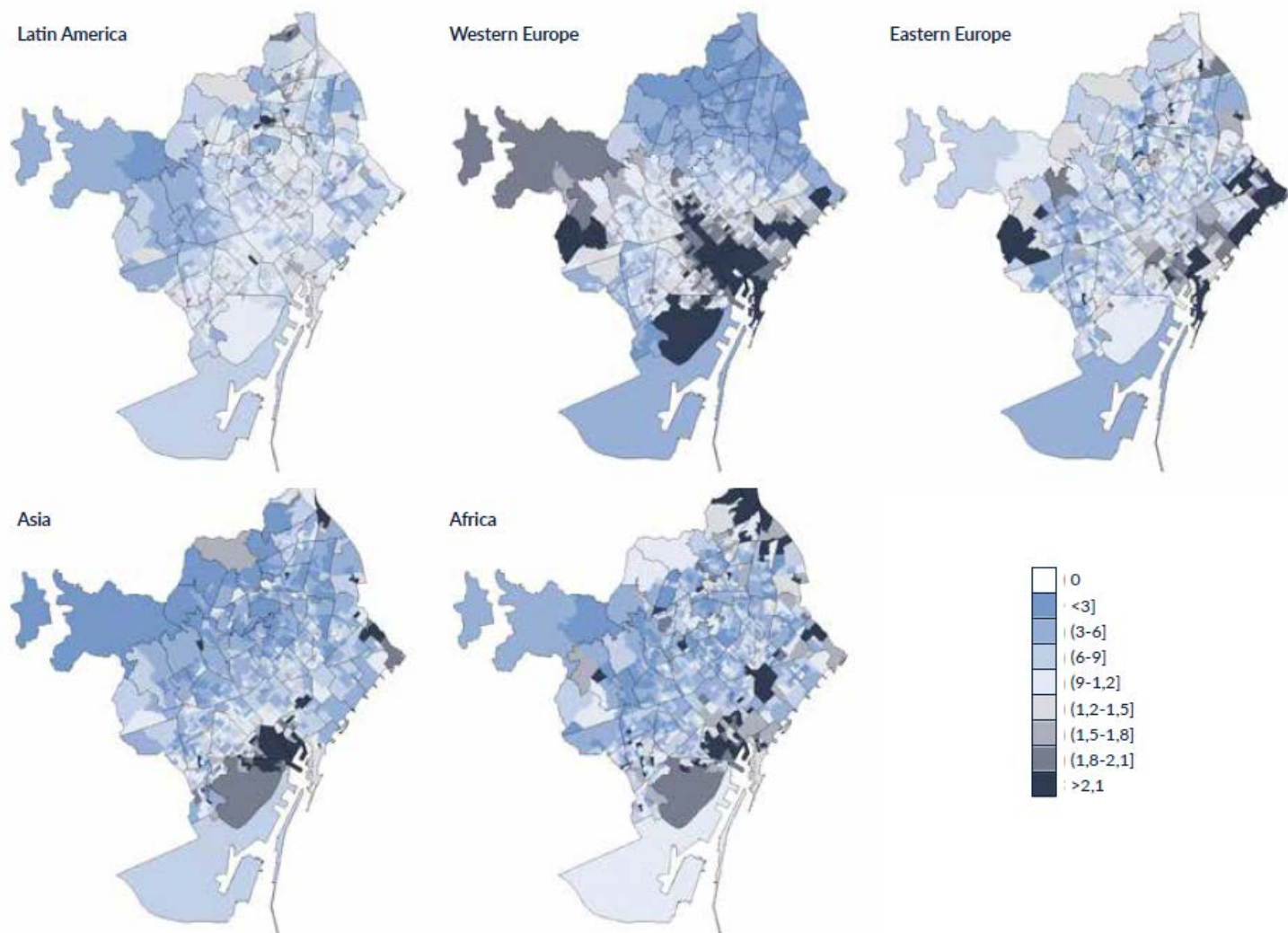
Lastly, there are 30,372 Africans. At the top of this list are the 19,000 Moroccans, who are grouped in the City's poorer neighbourhoods, in Ciutat Vella, Ciutat Meridiana, Torre Baró and Vallbona in the Nou Barris district as well as in Trinitat Vella, Baró de Viver and the upper part of the Sant Andreu neighbourhood in the district of the same name.

The neighbourhoods with the highest percentages of migrants in Barcelona are located in the central area, which has historically been the zone receiving and filtering the foreign-born population. The figures are as follows: El Gòtic has 67.2% (14,498) foreign born residents, El Raval has 60.9% (29,266), Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera has 53.2% (7,023). These are the neighbourhoods where migrants make up more than half of the resident population. (Figure 1). At the opposite end of the scale are neighbourhoods such as Canyetes, with only 10.3%, Font d'en Fargues with 12%, and Sant Andreu i les Tres Torres with just over 14%.

The foreign-born population has grown proportionally in all city neighbourhoods over the last decade, but in some it has tripled, as is the case of Torre Baró, or doubled, as in Can Peguera, Baró de Viver, Porta and Marina del Prat Vermell. Other neighbourhoods have experienced growth rates of around 10%, the lowest in the city. This is either because they are already crowded, or

because the age structure of the local population was not conducive to population renewal, as is the case of Turó de la Peira, el Putxet i el Farró or Bon Pastor.

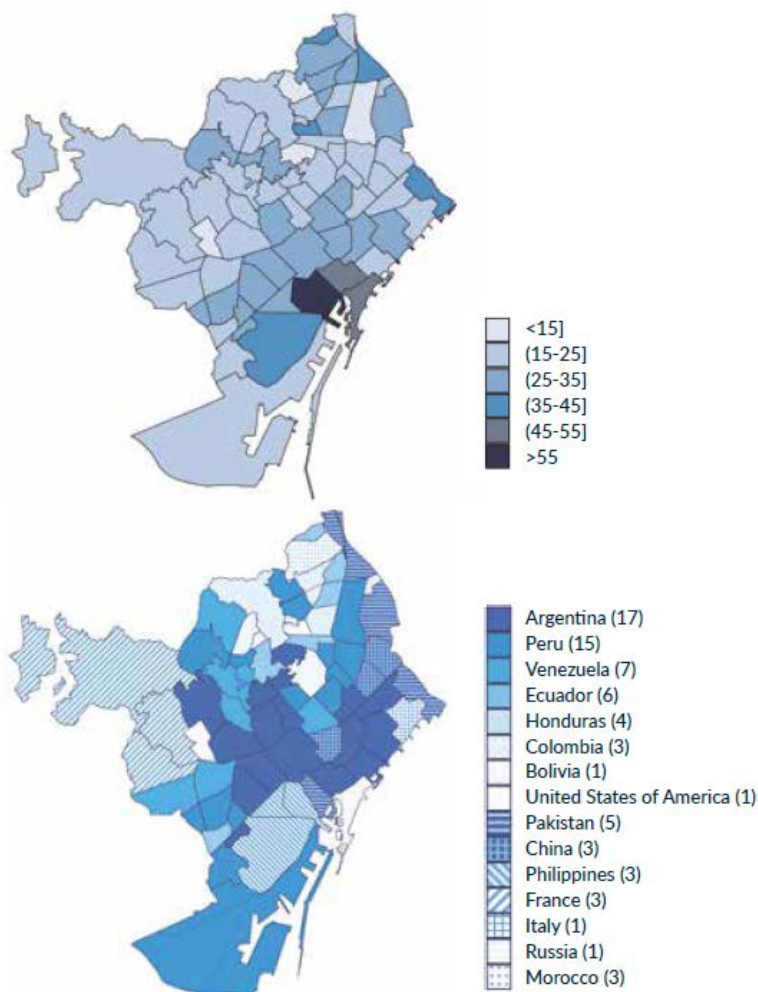
Figure 1. Distribution of the foreign-born population by major continental group. Census Barcelona, 2020



Source: Original. Municipal register of residents, 2020 (INE).

The volume of the migrant population expressed as an overall percentage can no longer capture the territorial impact produced as it once did, when migration began. Similar percentages can hide big differences; polarisation, weighted diversity, very different socio-professional profiles and uses of the territory, and family structures that correspond to disparate migratory phases, even when we are talking about the same place of origin. Thus, the growth of migration in the Besòs area, for example, has been slow compared to that of the historic centre, fuelled both by direct migration from abroad and new flows, such as those from other districts of the city. However, it stands out by virtue of its more family-oriented profile, with a higher proportion of women and children from groups (such as Pakistanis) that have largely been made up of pioneering young men in other districts (such as Ciutat Vella). The centre draws together a mix of working people including substantial numbers of certain nationalities, for example Filipinos and Pakistanis, 60% of the former being women, but only 23.3% of the latter. There are also people from other countries such as France and the UK, students and professionals whose presence is linked to the gentrification of the neighbourhood.

Figure 2. Barcelona neighbourhoods by percentage of foreign-born population, country of origin, and place of birth. 2020



Source: Original. Municipal register of residents, 2020 (INE).

4. From place to people

The foreign-born population has spread throughout the different neighbourhoods of Barcelona, following the dictates of the property market - homes for sale, although renting predominates - and the demographic evolution of the native population. Especially due to mortality, which frees up residential space, and mobility driven by the formation of new nuclear families. As we have seen, the 21st century migrant population, despite being broadly distributed, has become progressively more concentrated in the most vulnerable neighbourhoods where incomes are lower - where the 20th century migrant population from the rest of Spain often used to live - and coincides with the ageing and replacement of the population in these neighbourhoods. This is a process that is constantly evolving; some of the lower-income neighbourhoods built in the 1970s are still among those with the lowest percentage of migrants (Canyelles and La Guineueta, for example), while those located in the Besòs area are among those that have seen the highest growth in immigration in recent times. If at the beginning of the century El Raval and Ciutat Vella in general were held up as examples of diversity in Barcelona, to a greater or a lesser extent 'folklorised' and exotic, in 2020 diversity has become a part of everyday reality for all the city's inhabitants, and has become a fundamental characteristic of the younger generations.

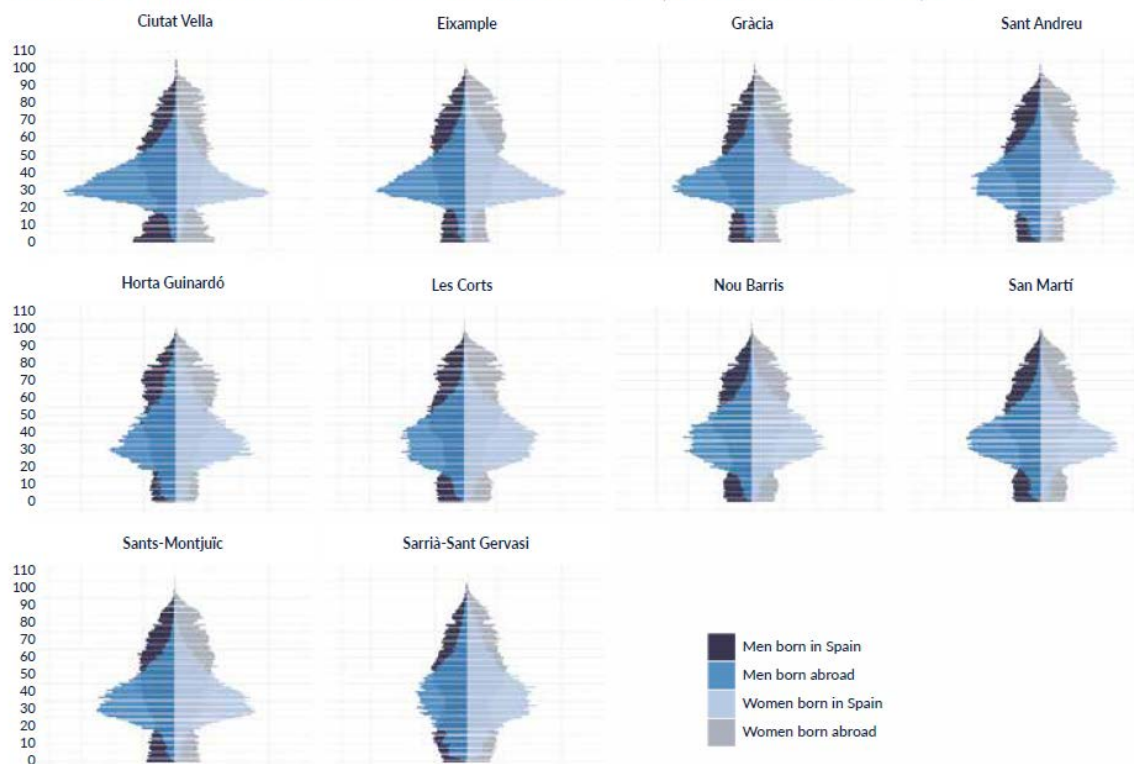
The structure of the population in terms of age and sex in the different districts of Barcelona will, if we take level of education into account, help us to grasp diversity generated by extremely heterogeneous populations sharing the same neighbourhood space, and to this additional

perspectives can be added, those of generation, gender and educational level. It will come as a surprise to no-one if we say that the Spanish born population is characterised by ageing - 27% of the population is over 64 years of age - and that the average age is 46, whereas the migrant population has a younger profile, with more people of working age; only 6% are over 64, and the average age is 38.

The highest proportion of older Spanish-born residents is no longer concentrated in the neighbourhoods that are a part of Ciutat Vella, especially in El Raval as it was only a decade ago, although this is the image we still carry in our minds: today it is focused in neighbourhoods where, until recently, those who arrived in the 60s and 70s were concentrated, such as the Nou Barris and Horta i Guinardó districts where more than a third of the Spanish born population is over 64 years of age, or others such as Eixample and the old Vila de Gràcia where the figure is 30%. As women tend to live longer than men, the districts with ageing populations are also characterised by having a higher proportion of women residents.

If we look closely at the pattern in the first two districts, apart from the higher proportion of older Spanish-born people, we can see that the age profile of international immigrants is not clearly concentrated in the younger group (25 - 34 year olds), although this is the case in other districts such as Ciutat Vella, where the group aged 35 to 40 (in the case of men, and slightly younger in the case of women) shares the leading role with the aforementioned lower age group, even exceeding it at times.

Graph 5. Population pyramids for the population of Barcelona neighbourhoods by sex, age and place of birth. Barcelona, 2020



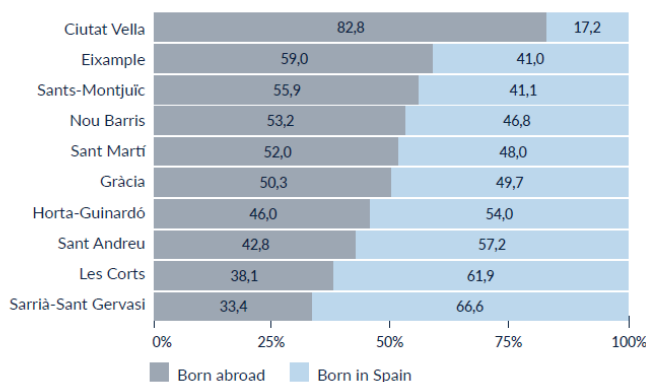
This is something that we see repeated in Sant Martí, Sant Andreu, and to a lesser extent in Les Corts: it suggests that foreign born nuclear families contribute to population growth - both those arriving directly from abroad and those that have moved from other districts within the city.

The distribution by sex of the migrant population is the second significant factor in some districts; there is a clear tendency towards masculinisation within the population of foreign-born residents in Ciutat Vella - with the exception of the Filipinos - which can be contrasted with feminisation in other

districts - especially those where people of Latin American origin predominate, such as Gràcia, Eixample, and also Sarrià - Sant Gervasi.

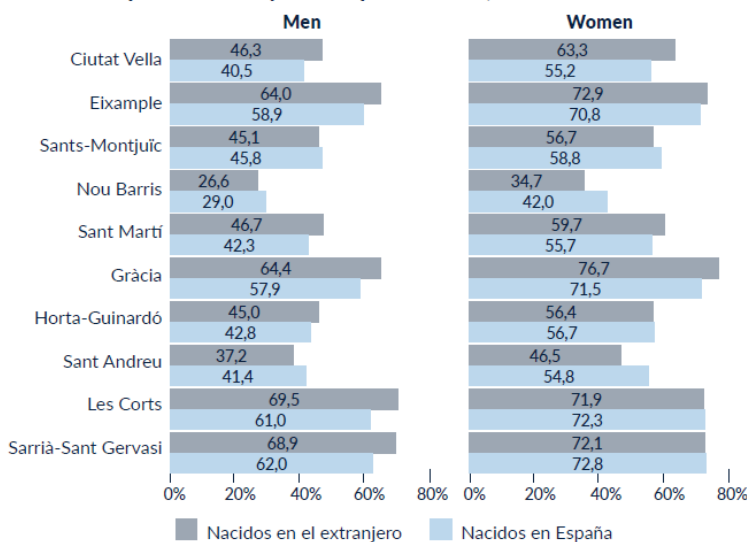
Finally, if we look at age structure, and specifically at the young population, those between 25 and 34 years of age, in terms of place of birth and level of education in different districts, we can overturn some of the prevalent stereotypes regarding the immigrant population and, above all, we can see the importance of the younger generations. Foreign-born people aged between 25 and 34 in 2020, who were born between 1986 and 1995 (the so-called millennials), already represent more than half of this group (graph 6a) in 6 of the city's 10 districts. The most extreme case is that of Ciutat Vella, where they represent 82,2% of the population. Intergenerational relations inevitably become intercultural relations, in this case with a clear split between digital (migrant) and analogue (Spanish-born) natives.

Graph 6a. Percentage of migrants in the 25-34 age group, and proportion of young people with tertiary education qualifications, by sex and country of origin. Barcelona, 2020



Source: Original. Municipal register of residents, 2020 (INE).

Graph 6b. Percentage of young people (25-34 years old) with tertiary education qualifications by sex and place of birth, 2020



Source: Original. Registration in the municipal register of residents in Catalonia, with data from the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT).

If we look at the weight of tertiary education (graph 6b), we can dispel many misconceptions. Although the majority of international migrants arriving in Barcelona will be employed in a highly segmented labour market in the unskilled jobs sector, the foreign-born young people of these generations, particularly women, account for more than half of the total, even outnumbering the

native-born young people. It is in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods that the percentages of young migrants with university degrees decreases, falling below the levels - also relatively low - of Spanish-born young people with degrees of the same generation. Examples are Nou Barris, where only 26.6% of the male migrant population has had the benefit of tertiary education, compared to 29% of the native population, and Sant Andreu, where the figures are 37.2% and 41.4% respectively. If we look at the neighbourhoods in detail in terms of differences in country of origin, these disparities become extreme, and not only because of the inclusion of Europeans selected for their high level of education. This is another reason why we must look again at the migrant population in Barcelona, particularly with an eye to the future.

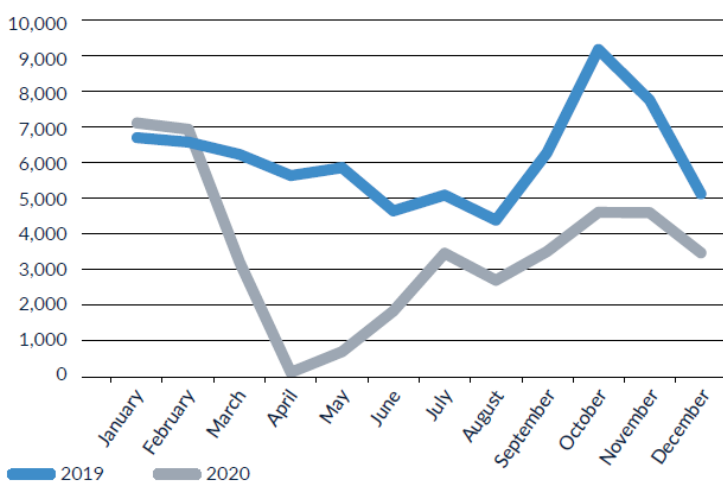
5. Early impacts of Covid-19 on migrations to Barcelona: *Post-scriptum*

5.1. International migrations: conjunctural drop

The dissemination on June 15, 2021 of the data corresponding to the Statistics of Residential Variations of 2020, has allowed us at the last moment to incorporate this brief section on the first impact of the Covid-19 both, international migrations and internal mobility.

As for international migration, the first expected effect has been the sharp drop in entries from abroad since it was decided on March 16 to close the Spanish borders as a preventive measure for the advance of the pandemic (Graph 7). Thus, the total loss in 2020 compared to the previous year was 42.3%, going from just over 73 thousand new arrivals to 42 thousand. The gradual recovery since May 2020, has followed the seasonality of these flows (with highs in October, but always maintaining levels below). In both relative and absolute terms, the continental origin that has been most affected by the decline has been the protagonist of the boom, Latin America with a decrease of 46.5% and 18,134 less new entries, which should not surprise us considering the cancellation Transatlantic flights. For the same reason, but with less volume, flows from Asia fell by 46.5% (mostly Chinese, Indians and Pakistanis). By contrast, the relatively low drop in Europeans by 28.9% hides an increase in British flows -1,679 high in 2020 compared to 1,529 the previous year, which plausible corresponds to registrations of people who already resided in the city.

Graph 7. Evolution of international migrations arriving in Barcelona monthly for the years 2019 and 2020.



Source: Original. Municipal register of residents, 2019 and 2020 (INE).

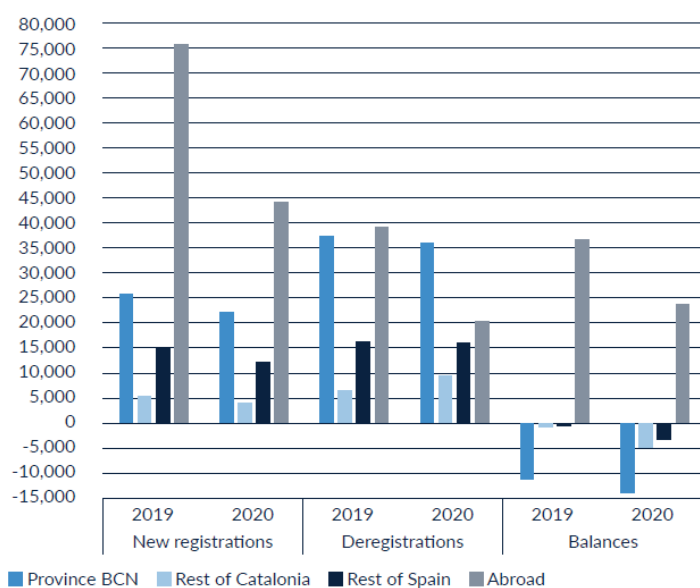
5.2 Internal migration: the spectrum of the exodus to rural areas

One of the most successful narratives has been to consider that the Covid-19 would have marked a change in trend in internal migration, with the new phenomenon of the mass departure of Barcelona to smaller municipalities, especially those we call of rural environment. Escaping the harshness of confinement and enjoying more friendly environments, measured in both home space

and landscape, as well as the extent of teleworking have been the main causes for this interpretation.

Indeed, during the year 2020, there were more departures from Barcelona city to the rest of Catalonia and Spain than arrivals, with a negative balance of 23,387 departures (Graph 8). Among these departures, the largest weight has corresponded to those that have occurred in the province of Barcelona itself with (14,294 departures), followed by municipalities in the rest of Catalonia, with a negative balance of 5,242 people, also highlighting the flows aimed at municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants: 9,941 departures, for only 3,447 arrivals, with a negative balance of 6,494 people with the smaller municipalities within Catalonia.

Graph 8. Recent evolution of the migratory movement in Barcelona. Evolution 2019-2020



Source: Own elaboration, Statistics of Residential Variations, 2019 and 2020 (INE)

However, we want to make two considerations: First, part of these losses may correspond to the decision to register the second residence as the first one. Secondly, even if a real home purchase has been made, staying in it once we are back to normal is a matter that will depend a lot on the life cycle and the adoption of telework (still to see the the degree of real implementation). That's why we lean towards lowering expectations about big trend changes that seem to have excited more than one.

6. Final note: impact of Covid-19, looking ahead

Basic categorisations classifying the population by place of birth or by nationality, age and sex at different geographical levels within the city are useful for providing us with a snapshot - albeit one that is a little blurred, given that categorisation necessarily implies a simplification of complexity - but they are inadequate for understanding the fluidity and the transformation at different speeds of individuals, generations, communities and the use made of local neighbourhoods by their residents, let alone for understanding the interactions between them, which are the very essence of neighbourhood life. The danger is that all of us, including those who manage the city's affairs, continue to look at the phenomenon of migration as if it were an old photo, fixed and unchanging, one that reflects a set of stereotypes - both positive and negative - and are unable to understand what is really happening, or the demands of a population that is equally fluid in its mutability.

Precisely the social interactions that take place between the foreign-born and Spanish-born populations - or the absence of such interactions - can be an indicator of social cohesion, one that goes beyond the process of intercultural integration, and in which both are transformed by their exposure to diversity. The imposition of social distancing and lockdown, which were the first

measures taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19, and above all the economic impact of the pandemic have meant taking a step backwards, often limiting relationships to those between people living in the same dwelling, who are generally members of the same community. Reliance on family and social networks in one's own community has led to a shutting off, and an involuntary turning away from others. The concentration of the migrant population in high-risk occupations, either because they were deemed essential workers - from care work to deliveries - or because they lost their jobs, together with increased use of public transport and more precarious housing conditions, has increased the likelihood of catching Covid-19 within this population, although the age profile means that these people were, in general, less at risk of suffering serious illness. The pandemic has also led to an increase in inequality between the Spanish-born and migrant populations, above all in the case of those of Asian or African origin. Conversely, while international migration decreased drastically, to the point of coming to a screeching halt during the first waves of the pandemic, mortality in older age groups has accelerated the demographic metabolism of neighbourhoods, and further decreased the proportion of the native population, leading to an increase in the migrant population in percentage terms, without there having been any new influx of migrants.