

Social Rights Monitor 2025 - Country Report - Spain



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About SOLIDAR

SOLIDAR is a European network of progressive Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to advance social justice through a just transition in Europe and worldwide. We represent over 50 member organisations based in 26 countries (19 of which are EU countries), among which national CSOs in Europe, as well as some non-EU and EU-wide organisations, working in one or more of our fields of activity.

The network is brought together by its shared values of solidarity, equality and participation.

SOLIDAR voices the concerns of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions by carrying out advocacy actions, project management and coordination, policy monitoring and awareness-raising across its different policy areas.

What is the Social Rights Monitor (SRM)?

The Social Rights Monitor assesses the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) at national level from a civil society perspective. The EPSR – also known as the Social Pillar – is a set of 20 principles that guide the action of the European Union in the realm of social affairs and policies. In other words, it is intended to be a compass guiding the EU towards a more social Europe. For too many people, however, the implementation of these principles at national and EU level is not yet a reality.

Thanks to the contribution of our members and their networks on the ground (the National Strategy Groups), SOLIDAR monitors the extent to which social rights are respected, upheld and promoted for all people living in the EU. The Social Rights Monitor also investigates the health of civic space and social and civil dialogue in the EU, as well as the extent to which a just transition is being pursued. Therefore, the thematic areas covered by the Monitor are the following: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market; Fair working conditions; Social inclusion and protection; a Just transition; and Civic space. The first three correspond to the three chapters of the EPSR, while the last two have been added to give a fuller picture of social justice in Europe.

Thanks to first-hand data gathered by national civil society organisations, the Social Rights Monitor constitutes a direct channel of policy recommendations between the national level and EU policymakers. It thus amplifies the voices and needs of the most marginalised groups. The Monitor dedicates a section to “advocacy messages” which result from the national-level analyses in each thematic area and are addressed to EU policymakers.

Countries are assigned a score for each thematic area out of a maximum of 100 points. This makes immediately visible how each country is performing in each area and enables comparison with other countries. The numerical scores originate from the National Strategy Groups’ (NSGs) assessments of national developments related to social rights, civic space and just transition. Negative developments in an area result in lower scores. NSGs rate these developments for each country by replying to Linkert-scale questions. This means that the score of a country’s thematic area is given by adding up all the rates given to the questions concerning that thematic area and expressing the score out of 100. The overall score of a country is the average of the thematic areas scores. Further details on the questionnaire and data gathering are provided in the section “About: What is the process?”

Since the SRM score reflects the NSG’s assessment of changes—either improvements or deteriorations—in each of the five areas over the past 12 months, it does not represent the overall status of these dimensions in absolute terms. Instead, it highlights recent trends. For example, a country with a historically strong welfare state might receive a low score if recent reforms have significantly weakened social rights or pose a risk of doing so. This does not imply that the overall situation is poor, but rather that recent developments are cause for concern and may undermine social standards over time.

Therefore, the SRM should not be used to compare the overall situation of social rights across countries—official statistics are more appropriate for that purpose. Instead, it serves as a tool to track short-term national trends and to understand the perspectives of civil society organizations (CSOs) on these developments.

What is the process?

The Social Rights Monitor is a tool that amplifies the voice of progressive civil society at national level. Its content is based on the inputs provided by the National Strategy Groups (NSGs) set up by SOLIDAR’s members and partners, which are active in the countries analysed. They consist of NGOs, associations, movements, trade unions, academia and thinktanks, ensuring that the perspective of civil society is mirrored in the Social Rights Monitor’s analysis. The Monitor reflects the experiences of these organisations, which are active on the ground, and the experiences are complemented by scientific data gathered through desk research.

The data elaborated in the Social Rights Monitor are gathered by SOLIDAR’s secretariat through a questionnaire distributed to the National Strategy Group Leaders (our national members) and completed with information produced by each group. From 2023, this questionnaire has been carried out online.

Based on the picture that emerges from the Monitor, SOLIDAR and the NSGs together devise policy recommendations for EU policymakers. These aim to make social rights, a healthy planet and an enabling, free, protected civic space a reality for all in Europe. The key recommendations stemming from the analysis are used as a basis for SOLIDAR's social affairs advocacy work.

The SRM is published every year, around the end of November/beginning of December and its findings cover the period going from June of the previous year to May of the year of the publication. This timeline is due to the fact that the NSGs submit their questionnaire by the end of May of the publication year.

How do we use it?

SOLIDAR's main role as a European-level civil society network is as a bridge between EU institutions and their policies on the one hand and our progressive members working at the national level on the other. The Social Rights Monitor is a valuable tool to gather information from the ground and bring it to policymakers' attention. This ensures that the voices of the most neglected social groups are duly taken into account. For example, the SRM complements the European Semester, by providing a more-complete assessment of Member State policies. Regrettably, the Semester is still too focused on countries' economic and financial performances and does not provide sufficient guidance on upward social convergence in the European Union.

SOLIDAR disseminates the findings of the Social Rights Monitor in various ways, including through the Social Europe Conference, an annual event at which it is presented, and which also explores a topic of priority for social Europe. More generally, the Monitor is one of the main ways through which the SOLIDAR network presents its positions on social affairs, so its findings are mainstreamed throughout our advocacy work.

Social Rights Monitor Overview

SCORE: 63

Thanks to the growth of its green economy, Spain improved noticeably several areas, in particular job security, vocational training and quality jobs in the green economy. However, challenges persist in other areas. While labour reforms have increased job security, they have not substantially improved occupational health and safety. Access to healthcare remains limited due to high costs and is impossible for certain groups. These groups are often of foreign origin, and they face barriers to access other essential services. Many young people continue to be particularly affected by the ongoing housing crisis. The young are also becoming the group most affected by poverty. Many families forsake spending on energy and transport, as they find it hard to justify the expense. One positive development is the continuing importance of civil dialogue in the policy design process.

The NSG for Spain was led by SOLIDAR's member [Movimiento por la Paz](#).



Equal Opportunities and Access to the Labour Market

SCORE: 72

Gender equality

After several years in which the gender pay gap narrowed, it stagnated at 19.6% in 2024, according to a 2024 report “Against the gender pay gap we cannot wait” by the country's largest trade union CCOO (Comisiones Obreras).[1] Nearly one in four salaried women earn the Minimum Interprofessional Wage (the Spanish statutory minimum wage) or even less, according to another 2024 report by the trade union UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores). One reason for this high rate is the overrepresentation of women in low-wage sectors and in precarious employment. Others are the high incidence of involuntary part-time work among women, the unequal distribution of care responsibilities between genders and between individuals and the state, and how the underrepresentation of women in higher-paying professions unequally affects the distribution and effects of wage supplements between genders. The UGT report highlights the effects of this gap on young women, migrant workers and workers in feminized sectors. It thus points to the persistence of structural inequalities in Spain's labour market.[2] Non-EU women face a particularly high gender pay gap, at of 36.1%. An intersectional approach is needed to address the specific issues and forms of discrimination these women face.

Both UGT and CCOO reports use an intersectional approach and propose specific regulatory changes. In the report of 2025, UGT called for the Social Security authorities to calculate the economic impact on salaries of care duties for workers. They also called for a review of the excessive use of part-time contracts, which penalizes almost two million women in Spain and for the transposition of the Pay Transparency Directive. They finally called for the Labour Inspectorate to introduce action plans on equal pay and allocate funds for their implementation.

Regulatory measures have sought to address some of these issues, but they have been largely ineffective. Mandatory equality plans apply to companies with more than 50 employees, but women in SMEs earn far less than their male colleagues. At nearly 23.2%, the gender pay gap in SMEs is higher than the overall average. Control and sanction mechanisms for gender measures are weak, according to the NSG. This is especially the case in SMEs, which often lack sufficient funds for training and implementation efficient funds for training and implementation.

Education, training and lifelong learning

Permanent education has an important role in Spain, and it was modernized and digitalized in 2022 through the adoption of the Lifelong Learning Law.[3] The law formally recognized the essential role of digital platforms in permanent education, such as the free and digitally available Educab platform, which had over 5 million registered users in 2024.[4] Permanent education also contributes

to the decrease in the school dropout rate. The early school dropout rate fell to a historic low of 13% in 2024, though this is still above the EU average of 9.3%.^[5] One factor in the decrease has been the modernization of vocational education training (VET) through blended learning, which combines in-person and online learning. The VET's direct link with the labour market provides a strong incentive to continue education. The VET model is currently being overhauled into a dual VET model. This contains a general option that is lighter on business participation and an intensive option under which companies assume between 35% and 50% of the training. However, even under the intensive option, financing for the student is funnelled through a scholarship or contract.

The promotion of VET has reduced the perception that it is a back-up option and given it an image as an alternative to higher education of equal quality. The VET Strategic Plan 2022-2025 identifies the reduction of the school dropout rate as a key goal and highlights lifelong learning as an important tool.^[6] The report by the State School Council acknowledges the importance of strengthening lifelong learning to reduce the number of students dropping out of school.^[7] Public adult-education schools, such as the Aula Mentor, exist for school dropouts too.^[8] The improvements in VET have a positive influence on socially excluded groups. Each additional year of adult education reduces the risk of social exclusion in vulnerable groups by 5%, studies by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) show.^[9] Adult education helps people from vulnerable social groups to develop employment skills, for example through the Adult Education Centres in marginalized neighbourhoods.^[10] It contributes to social integration by providing language courses and information on jobs and the legal and administrative environment. Programmes include "Learning by working", provided by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (Spanish Roma Foundation) and SEPE (Spanish Public Employment Services), which seeks to improve the employment chances of young Roma.^[11] VET helps in areas with high structural unemployment by increasing access to the labour market, such as through the "Much more than employment" project, led by the Cadiz League of Education and Popular Culture in collaboration with the La Caixa Foundation. VET also strengthens and rebuilds the social fabric through educational opportunities without economic restrictions, such as those provided by the Spanish Federation of Popular Universities.^[12]

Significant improvements have been made to modernize VET and match it to the needs of the labour market, the NSG reports. One is the dual VET model. Another is the replacement of the traditional work experience module by new modules with learning outcomes more attuned to the current needs of the labour market, such as professional English, sustainability and digital education. The VET offer has been expanded through 6 729 new vocational training programmes, and more than 7 500 are now available. The NSG highlights 5 432 micro-accreditations for workers to qualify and requalify and improve their employability.^[13] Among the offers is a new stream on artificial intelligence and data, which is in high demand from the students and the labour market.^[14] Lastly, several registries (such as the State Registry of Vocational Training, the State Registry of Accreditations of Professional Competences and the General Registry of Vocational Training Centers) have been created to help citizens obtain information about training courses and providers.

However, the NSG points to several obstacles and areas that need improvement. VET policies are not evaluated for impact, and fragmentation and bureaucracy interfere with training courses' continuity and coherence. Perhaps the most crucial need is greater wellbeing of teachers. Many reports work overload, working 43 hours per week instead of the established 37.5.^[15] Nearly half report emotional exhaustion or burnout. Their university training does not match the reality of the classroom, according to 76% of teachers surveyed by the CCOO's Teaching ^[16]. Some VET areas also lack teachers, in STEM areas. The Spanish Committee of Mathematics has expressed concern over the low level of mathematics competence among primary and secondary school teachers, due – at least partly inadequate training.^[17] There are also possible problems in access to VET training, as the increase in student enrolment at public centres the last decade was just a quarter of that in the private sector. As the public centres currently still enrol only 65.7% of all VET applicants due to insufficient capacity and resources, this could point to future difficulties providing equal access to VET training.^[18] This inequality in access is further exacerbated in some of the autonomous regions by a lack of adequate resources and active adult centres, caused at least in part by differences in VET financing and development.

NGOs and formal education institutions have been collaborating on numerous projects in global citizenship education.^[19] La Liga Española de la Educación y la Cultura Popular worked with the Spanish Ministry of Education over the past three years on the CIVES foundation, which introduces training and knowledge on democratic memory into school curricula.^[20] The Global Action Week for Education, organized by NGOs such as Entreculturas and Educo, seeks to increase students' awareness of the importance of education in crises, like natural disasters or wars.^[21] Educo also organizes projects with schools all over Spain to guarantee safe, quality education and to foster participation and citizen engagement. These have reached nearly 23 000 children.^[22]



Fair Working Conditions

SCORE: 61

Job security

Job security has improved significantly in Spain as a result of national labour reforms to reduce temporary employment and incentivize the creation of permanent positions. Employment reached a record high in the first quarter of 2024, with 65.7% of the working-age population in employment, OECD data shows.^[23] However, despite a steady decrease over the years, Spain's unemployment rate is still very high by OECD standards, at 11.2% in the third quarter of 2024.

Green-economy jobs have increased, with employment in the energy sector increasing by 13.3%, accounting for a total of 98 000 jobs in that sector by early 2024.^[24] These new jobs are often secure and high-quality, providing stable, long-term employment. Spain's green growth is also solidifying the country's central role in the EU's energy transition efforts.^[25]

Good practice:

At MPDL, the defense of labor rights is understood as a key element for both social integration and the protection of human rights. Building on this perspective, MPDL has developed a comprehensive approach that combines individualized support through active job search initiatives and occupational training programs with targeted advocacy in particularly vulnerable labor sectors. Domestic work, where excessive working hours, sub-minimum wages, and lack of social security contributions are common—especially among migrant women in administrative vulnerability—was identified as a priority area. In response, MPDL incorporated this sector into its rights advocacy work through three complementary lines of action: promoting legislative initiatives that strengthen legal protection for domestic workers; disseminating information on labor rights through flyers, short audiovisual materials, and a mobile app; and providing accessible legal advice both in person and remotely to reach those with restrictive schedules or live-in positions. This good practice has contributed to improving access to justice, increasing awareness of rights, and influencing policy measures that advance fairer and more inclusive labor conditions.

Occupational health and safety

Union statistics from 2024 show that occupational health and safety (OSH) did not improve in Spain. A total of 796 occupational fatalities occurred in 2024, representing an increase of 10.4% or 75 additional fatalities compared to 2023.^[26] In total, 1 181 202 Work-related accidents (WRAs) were registered in 2024, 628 300 of which led to sick leave, representing an increase of 0.5% from 2023. WRAs with sick leave during the workday decreased by 2.3%. Whilst these latter two statistics seems to be indicative of a slightly more positive evolution of OSH in Spain, the NSG points out that they are due to other factors.

Firstly, these statistics do not reflect improvements in OSH, but rather a change in work activities. Between 2019 and 2024, the workforce in Spain increased by nearly 1.9 million, and many of these jobs had low WRA incidence rates. This composition effect is visible in daytime fatal WRAs, as the rate in high-incidence professions is three times that in low-incidence professions. The effect is even more pronounced for WRAs leading to sick leave, for which the rate in high-risk professions is four times higher.

Secondly, while working conditions in each job type have not improved, Spain's economic growth has led many people to enter more-stable professions, often with better working conditions. Temporary contracts accounted for only 58% of all new contracts in 2024, compared to 90% in 2019. Initial permanent contracts – in other words, contracts that were concluded as permanent contracts from the start of someone's employment – accounted for 39%, compared to 6% in 2019. Often, permanent employees are more aware of the particular risks of a job and have greater experience in dealing with them. This is supported by the incidence rate of daytime WRAs, where sick leave is highest among the youngest workers and decreases with age.

Thirdly, Spain's outdated OSH legal framework does not allow for an adequate overview of OSH in Spain. The table of occupational diseases does not include any pathology related to psychosocial risks. Only 194 cases of mental disorders have been recognised as occupational diseases in 2024. Reporting of WRAs has improved since the Covid-19 pandemic, but the increase in reported incidents has been strongest in cases that did not cause the employee to take sick leave; the number in which they had to take sick leave increased only moderately. There also appears to be severe underreporting of diseases caused by carcinogens, as these make up only 0.4% of the reports – 106 in absolute terms, of which 33 with sick leave. These small numbers contrast with the more than 16,000 new cases of occupational cancer estimated to occur in Spain every year.^[27]

Lastly, these general statistics do not show how particular factors such as gender increase the likelihood of specific WRAs. For example, 76% of reports in service sectors concern female workers, as women in cleaning services sector, for instance, are more likely to suffer WRAs due to physical, biological and skin agents. In industry and construction, however, 64% of reports concern male workers, and men have a higher incidence of WRAs related to chemical agents and carcinogens. Regional differences also affect WRA reporting. The three autonomous regions with the highest active population ratios (Catalonia, Andalusia and Madrid) all report below-average incidences of WRAs, suggesting possible underreporting in these regions.



Social Inclusion and Protection

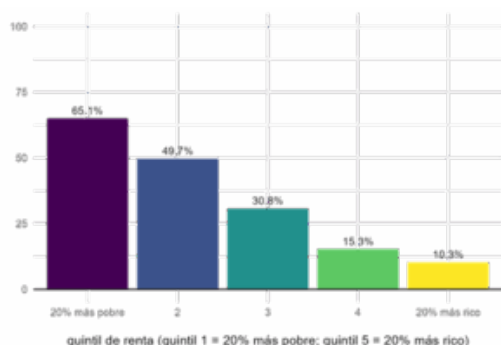
SCORE: 50

Housing

Housing continues to be a pressing and increasingly urgent problem, and younger people are particularly disadvantaged, the NSG reports. More than 4.6 million households experienced difficulties in accessing or maintaining housing in 2024. The chief difficulty was the excessive cost of housing and utilities, which in 2024 affected 14.1% of the population, or 2.7 million households.[28] The difficulties led to increases in precarious tenures, serious overcrowding, a deterioration in housing conditions and an inability to adapt housing to the needs of people with reduced mobility. Young people are particularly affected by the crisis for numerous reasons.

Households composed of young people need to spend more than 45% of their disposable income on rent, according to data from the Emancipation Observatory of the Spanish Youth Council. This significantly exceeds the OECD's 30% threshold above which rent becomes an excessive economic burden.[29] For ownership, the situation is worse still. A young salaried person wishing to buy a house would have to dedicate over 75% of the gross average national salary for 15 years to purchase a house at market prices as of mid-2024. This is in stark contrast to earlier generations, as shown by data from the Bank of Spain. Over 80% of people born between 1945 and 1965 owned their main home at 42. For those born between 1975 and 1985, the percentage dropped to 67%.

Figure 1: Percentage of young households that devote more than 40% of their disposable income to paying for their usual residence, by income group.



Source: NSG's own elaboration based on the Living Conditions Survey, by INE (2023).

The NSG identifies two main trends underlying this consistent decrease in young people's purchasing power for housing in Spain. The first is the growing polarization of access to housing.[30] The cost of home ownership has pushed young people into renting, and this demand has sent rents higher. Around 70% of young people in Spain live in rented properties, according to the report "A problem like a house" by the Spanish Youth Council. Moreover, 87% of them share an appartement – usually among three or four people – in order to divide up the rent. Nearly 30% of young people need financial support from their parents to pay rent; 35% have a monthly net income of less than €1 000; and 40% indicate that they cannot save more than €100 per month. More than 65% of the poorest quintile of young households spend more than 40% of their income on housing, compared to 10.3% of the richest quintile, according to Spanish Youth Council data.[31]

The second trend which the NSG identified, is Spain's increase in wealth inequality. Home ownership has been an important historical wealth indicator in Spain, representing the main form of savings and long-term security for many families. But this model has become increasingly untenable, as home ownership becomes very difficult to achieve for many young people. In its place, familial wealth has taken a central role. The "A problem like a house" report showcases this through statistics on the impact of parents' housing situation on young people. Nearly seven out of 10 young people who grew up in rental housing go on to be renters themselves, and only two

out of 10 become homeowners. Of those who grew up in owner households, four out of 10 become homeowners, and four out of 10 live in rental housing. The other two fall under the "regimen de cesión"[32] that allows young people to live in a dwelling without owning it, often owned by a family member or the state. [33]

These figures thus showcase the extent of the housing crisis in Spain, and how gravely it affects young people's ability to pay for housing.[34] The crisis also severely affects the rate at which young people in Spain are able to emancipate themselves. Currently, the youth emancipation rate (the rate of people being financially independent from the family of origin and able to leave the parental home) in Spain is its lowest ever, at 14.8%.[35]

Figure 2: Housing tenure regime of young emancipated persons according to the type of housing regime of their parents.

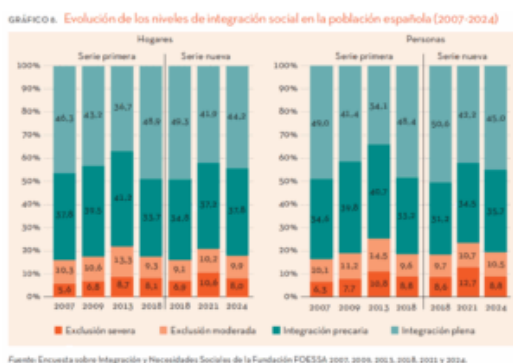


Source: NSG's own elaboration based on the Living Conditions Survey, by INE (2023).

Poverty eradication

Spain's social exclusion rate has improved since the Covid-19 pandemic and its lockdowns. But it is still significantly higher than the rate in the years before the financial crisis that started in 2008, the Survey on Integration and Social Needs by the FOESSA Foundation shows (see graph below).

Figure 3: Evolution of the levels of social integration in the Spanish population (2007-2024).



Source: Survey on Integration and Social Needs by FOESSA Foundation 2007, 2009, 2013, 2021 and 2024.

The number of socially excluded households decreased by 13.9% from 2021 to 2024, while that of socially excluded individuals fell 17.5%. But of socially excluded individuals are 17.7% above what they were in 2007. In absolute terms 9.4 million people are experiencing social exclusion, of whom 4.3 million are in severe social exclusion; [36] 25.8% of the population were at risk of poverty and social exclusion and 8.3% were experiencing severe poverty and social exclusion in 2024[37]. In order to meet the Spanish target under the EPSR Action Plan, Spain should lift out of poverty over 2.8 million people of which over 700,000 children. [38] This shows that social exclusion is a structural problem in Spain, which intensifies the negative impact of crises, the NSG points out. It also means that, for the most vulnerable, periods of prosperity do not sufficiently offset the heightened impact of crises.

The employment exclusion rate fell 10.7 percentage points from 2021 to 14% in 2024. Long-term unemployment and total household unemployment nearly halved over that period. However, one in 10 workers are still socially excluded and doing jobs with highly demanding conditions, such as street vending, day labour, domestic work or waste collection. Jobs without social security contributions – as is the case with informal work – were far more common in 2024 than before the Covid-19 crisis. And one in three of the unemployed experience severe social exclusion. More than eight out of 10 families whose main breadwinner is unemployed face social exclusion, and more than half of these face severe social exclusion.

The age gap in severe social exclusion is increasing, the Survey on Integration and Social Needs reports. Social exclusion among pensioners dropped to 8.2% in 2024, and the severe social exclusion rate of pensioners older than 65 is extremely low, at 2%. That

makes pensioners the most protected and least vulnerable age group. But the severe social exclusion rate more than doubled to 15.4% for children from 2007 to 2024, and it significantly increased for young people to 11.4%. This raises grave concerns over the future of the younger generation of the Spanish population, as the long-term effects of social exclusion are likely to be damaging.

Social exclusion is still predominantly an urban phenomenon, the survey shows, as 54.6% of socially excluded households are in urban environments, and just 10.5% are in rural settings. However, social exclusion is rising in rural areas too, the NSG points out: The share of rural households experiencing severe social exclusion increased to 11% in 2024. Household structure plays an important role. For single-parent households, the social exclusion rate is 29%. For families with children under 24 and families with a member who has a disability, it is 24%.

Access to quality healthcare

Vulnerable groups continue to experience difficulties in accessing healthcare in Spain. A new law on the universality of the National Health System has been proposed, but its legislative process has been stalled since May 2024. That has left the problems of the current healthcare framework – set out in Royal Decree-Law 7/2018 (RDL) – unchanged. The 2018 RDL discriminates against refugees without legal residence, and the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has warned that it prevents recognition of their right to access healthcare. The RDL did not correct the faults of the law it replaced, and it also introduced two new requirements for these migrants. The first new requirement is that there can be no third party is obliged to pay. The second is proof of at least 90 days' residency in Spain. Almost all autonomous regions, however, link this residency to a requirement to register for the census. This linking causes 23.7% of documented cases of barriers to healthcare. Elderly people who arrive in Spain through a family reunification process are also excluded on the basis of the residency requirement, which also causes them to not be able to access healthcare, leaving them without any protection.

Applicants for international protection sometimes face another form of healthcare discrimination: They are made to go through two separate procedures – one to apply for international protection and another to access healthcare. They often have to do this even though the status of applicant for international protection already theoretically grants them access to healthcare. The "III Report on barriers to the National Health System in vulnerable populations" by Médecins du Monde points out that other obstacles for migrants include procedural differences as well as difficulties – in addition to those faced by other women in Spain – in accessing to sexual and reproductive health services.[39] Access to these health services is an issue for women in Spain in general, but it particularly affects migrant women in irregular situations.

Vulnerable groups face many other barriers to healthcare. Nearly a tenth (9.4%) of all barriers documented are of a physical nature, such as the distance to access healthcare and restricted opening hours of healthcare centres, according to a report by Médecins du Monde. Physical barriers can lead to economic barriers, which make up 14.3% of documented barriers. One example are bills for emergency care, which tend to be higher based on the distance the patient needs to be transported. Receiving care often means missing a day's work and perhaps losing income. However, the main economic barrier remains the high cost of treatments that are not covered by the national healthcare system. But costs can still be high for treatments that are covered. The Spanish co-payment system is not proportional to income and thus requires patients to pay 40% of the price of medicines, which affects people with a low or precarious income more than others. Information barriers make up a fourth of all those documented. They include erroneous information provided at administrative points, wrongful refusal of applications and unavailability of translation. Sometimes outright xenophobia is a problem. Finally, cultural barriers – when the health system does not sufficiently account for the cultural differences of certain social groups – can dissuade members of vulnerable groups from relying on public healthcare. Cultural barriers make up 10.5% of documented cases, according to the Médecins du Monde report.

Access to essential services

Vulnerable social groups continue to experience administrative barriers and discriminatory practices when they try to access essential services, the NSG reports. A central obstacle is registration for the municipal census, which is a right for all inhabitants. But people in an irregular administrative situation often cannot exercise this right, as it usually requires either identification documents or a rental contract.[40] This creates additional obstacles for migrants trying to access social and health benefits or applying for residency or international protection. Migrant women are in a particularly vulnerable situation, as are sex workers and victims of trafficking or sexual exploitation.[41]

People with an irregular administrative status often experience obstacles in opening basic payment accounts, which can lead to social exclusion. These include the linking of the opening of the accounts with the purchase of financial products and persistent stigma and discrimination based on nationality, administrative status, country of origin or country of provenance. Sex workers and victims of trafficking or sexual exploitation are among the groups that face several barriers to opening these accounts due to their irregular work situation, according to the Médecins du Monde report.[42]

The Spanish government and autonomous regions established a system in 2022 to make it easier for victims and survivors of trafficking or sexual exploitation to access resources and services that offer care and help with recovery. However, this procedure

does not provide victims with the opportunity for redress. Another major problem is significant regional differences in the system's application.



Civic Space

SCORE: 83

The CIVICUS monitor classifies Spain's civic space as "Narrowed", a status which has not changed since 2018.^[43] This classification means that whilst civil society can still operate with relative ease, and civic rights are still able to be exercised, restrictions and violations are possible. For example, Spain saw several cases of journalists being harassed or even attacked whilst reporting on protests, as well as the arrest of climate protesters.^[44]

Civil dialogue

The main institution for civil dialogue in Spain continues to be the Commission for Civil Dialogue, which facilitates permanent dialogue between the General State Administration and civil society, as represented by the Third Sector Platform (PTS). The Commission, created in 2013 and legally consolidated in 2017 is chaired by the Minister of Social rights, who appoints nine of its members. The 11 other members are representatives of PTS. Several autonomous communities have also created – or are in the process of creating – civil dialogue commissions or roundtables with functions and goals aligned with those of the state-level commission. These dialogue spaces were quite successful in 2024, playing important roles in coordinating with the autonomous administrations and in the regional organization of response and assistance work in case of emergencies like natural disasters, the NSG reports. Nevertheless, challenges remain in the dialogue between PTS and public administrations, as stable and effective frameworks for civil dialogues are not in place. One question is whether or not to continue the Framework Agreement between PTS, Agenda 2030 and the Ministry of Social Rights, which is currently scheduled to expire in 2025. The agreement aims to strengthen collaboration and recognize the essential role of civil society in public policy. Discussions over extension are ongoing between the three parties.

The Commission for Civil Dialogue and PTS have been involved in several legislative initiatives that are of particular importance to Spanish civil society, and they have maintained active dialogue with various ministries. They have contributed to topics including health, migration and the social economy. PTS was also involved in discussions on the development of the Sustainable Development Council, an advisory and collaborative body that allows civil society to participate in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It was also a part of the Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia's Monitoring Commission of the Agreement to Cooperate Institutionally against Racism, Xenophobia, LGBTIphobia and other forms of intolerance.



Just Transition

SCORE: 56

Quality jobs in the green transition

Spain has become a European hub for renewable energy, with 56% of its energy mix in 2024 produced through solar and wind power. The national PINEC (National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan) 2021-2030 Strategy estimates that between 242 000 and 348 000 jobs will be created in the sector of renewable energy[45]. There is high potential for job creation in renewable energy, building renovation, and waste management according to a 2023 report by Fundación Biodiversidad Office for Climate.[46]

Several developments in 2024 contributed to green job creation. The Just Transition Strategy (2020-2024) has promoted quality jobs in the green economy while embedding gender equality.[47] Thanks to gender clauses in public tenders, specific vocational training programmes and entrepreneurship support, 42% of the green energy jobs created between 2019 and 2021 were taken up by women [48] compared to 33% employment rate of women in the (non-green) energy sector[49]. Spain's economic growth in 2024 also helped green job expansion, as did labour reforms that aim to make the transition inclusive and socially just. In addition, new migration policies were adopted in 2024, that facilitate the regularization and integration of up to 300 000 migrants a year into the Spanish labour market, greatly increasing the available workforce for green industries.

The NSG identifies the shortage of key green professionals as an important challenge. The demand for forest technicians and ecological restoration experts greatly exceeds the supply, for example, showing a clear skills mismatch. Professionals such as environmental consultants and energy efficiency specialists need to upskill and transform to stay relevant. Many of the available positions demand higher education and digital skills, so workers over 49 may need to upskill to fill them. Nevertheless, sectors such as green hydrogen and electric-vehicle assembly are expanding, creating more-traditional jobs.[50]

Green jobs are unevenly distributed across Spain, the European Commission notes in its Cohesion Report.[51] Cities such as Madrid and Barcelona benefit from high-tech green industries, whilst rural areas encounter difficulties in transitioning away from traditional sectors. Regions that already had strong industrial bases, such as Asturias and the Basque Country, can create thousands of jobs by undergoing low-carbon transformations.

Good practices:

Several initiatives have been launched to promote sustainability and green employment. Public initiatives include green employment training courses being created, €73 million worth of funding grants being issued by the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge for sustainability and employment projects and the Empleaverde+ Program.[52] This Program funded over 64 projects of over 126 entities, that were focused on urban renaturalization and regenerative agriculture. These projects benefited over 13,000 people, particularly vulnerable groups such as rural women, at-risk youth, and workers in transitioning sectors. In addition, complementary public and third sector initiatives were also created in 2024, including through the support of the RRF. Many of these projects, such as the EmpleáTe Verde program, the Global Green Employment platform and the Hub Empleo Verde project, aim to promote employment by offering training possibilities in green sectors, respectively for vulnerable groups including rural women, youth and neighbourhoods with high unemployment rates. Other initiatives, such as the Traperos de EMAÚS and the Cooperativa L'Oliviera, offer inclusive job opportunities for people with disabilities.

Access to energy and energy poverty

The Report on Energy Poverty Indicators in Spain 2023, developed by the Chair of Energy and Poverty at Comillas Pontifical University, shows a mixture of positive and negative developments.[53] Delayed payments increased slightly, from 9.2% in 2022 to 9.6% in 2023, showing that these remain a substantial problem. The indicator of inadequate temperature increased significantly, from 17.1% to 20.7%. That translates to an additional 1.7 million households experiencing difficulty in – for example – sufficiently heating their homes during winter.

Absolute indicators, however, show improvements. As energy prices grew more moderate in 2023 and income increased, the MIS (Minimum Income Standard) indicator, decreased by 0.4 percentage points. The MIS considers households to be energy poor if, after subtracting the minimum standard income (which includes all non-energy household expenses necessary to meet basic needs) from their actual income, they do not have enough resources left to cover their energy bill. These changes were mainly important for the most vulnerable people in the first income deciles.

Access to sustainable mobility and mobility poverty

Access to affordable transport remains a substantial problem in Spain. Transport accounts for more than 10% of household expenditure, making it the third largest item after housing and food, and it equals or even exceeds households' spending on energy, according to a study by the Working Group on Social Inequalities in Transport.[54] Between 1.3 million and 1.8 million people in Spain experience severe vulnerability regarding transport, the study estimates. For 2 million, transport costs constitute an excessive burden. There are significant differences among regions that have an impact on transport poverty. In urban centres, public transport is easy to access but might not be affordable for many households, according to the study "Characterization of households in transport poverty

in Spain" by OTEA (Observatory for the Energy Transition and Climate Action).[55] Rural areas often have only limited access to public transport, so people rely on private vehicles and have to pay the associated costs.

This picture seems to be confirmed by data from the Basque Centre for Climate Change (BC3), which identifies six profiles of people with the highest propensity to suffer transport poverty. Three – elderly rural couples, rural poor couples with children and rural couples with children – make up 63% of the total. The other three groups are mortgaged households, migrants and single-parent families.

Several government measures aim to reduce transport prices for families, including free train season tickets for Renfe and discount tickets for Cercanías, Rodalies or Media Distancia. The Spanish government subsidized 30% of the 50% discounts introduced by autonomous communities for regular passengers and the region the remaining 20%. Season and multi-journey tickets for state bus services received a 100% discount. The measures have been successful. Monthly metro, bus, commuter and medium-distance trips were up 12% in 2024 from 2019 and up 33% from 2022. Long-distance rail transport even increased 47% from 2019. In another affordable-transport initiative, the Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility is currently drafting a Strategy against Transport Poverty in Spain. This will receive some of the roughly €9 billion Spain is expected to spend from 2026 to 2032 in the framework of the EU's Social Climate Fund.

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