

Attitudes towards immigration and immigrants in Spain: A typology

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Abstract

Studies of attitudes towards immigration have become a recurring theme in social research in host countries, largely due to the rise of restrictive political positions in some pluralistic democracies. Developing typologies makes it possible to categorise the population into groups based on their attitudes towards immigration and immigrants: “seeing the wood” and understanding it, as opposed to seeing all the trees (survey items on different aspects) that hinder a global vision. In Spain, this typological work was previously conducted annually by the CIS-OBEXAXE survey reports, but its most recent edition was as long ago as 2017. This paper proposes new profiles of attitudes towards immigration and immigrants in Spain, developed from a national dedicated survey conducted in the autumn of 2020 ($N = 2,344$), subsequent to the emergence of the political party Vox. This study proposes methodological changes that offer a typology that is better adapted to the object of study, allowing greater precision by capturing five attitude profiles, compared to just three in previous typologies. Three of these five profiles reflect unfavourable attitudes, but they are based on different arguments and relate to different socio-demographic and ideological characteristics, so their differentiation has important implications for potential policy interventions.

Keywords: attitude profiles; racism; intergroup competition; public resources; labour market; perceived impacts; immigration policies

Resumen. *Las actitudes hacia la inmigración y los inmigrantes en España. Una tipología*

Los estudios sobre las actitudes hacia la inmigración se han convertido en una constante en la investigación social de los países de acogida, en buena parte por el auge de posiciones restrictivas en algunas democracias pluralistas. La elaboración de tipologías nos ofrece la posibilidad de captar la división de la población en grupos en función de sus posiciones ante la inmigración y los inmigrantes: “ver el bosque” y entenderlo, frente a la suma de árboles (ítems de encuesta sobre diferentes facetas) que impiden una visión global. En España, esta labor tipológica se venía realizando anualmente en los informes encuesta del CIS-OBERAXE, pero su edición más reciente data de 2017. El presente trabajo propone nuevos perfiles de las actitudes hacia la inmigración y los inmigrantes en España elaborados a partir de una encuesta monográfica de ámbito nacional realizada en otoño de 2020 ($N = 2.344$), posterior por tanto a la irrupción de Vox en las instituciones. Nuestro estudio propone cambios metodológicos que conducen a una tipología más adaptada al objeto de estudio y ofrece una mayor precisión al recoger cinco perfiles actitudinales frente a los tres contemplados por tipologías anteriores. Tres de esos cinco perfiles recogen posturas desfavorables, pero se sostienen sobre diferentes argumentos y se relacionan con distintas características socio-demográficas e ideológicas, de modo que su distinción tiene implicaciones importantes para posibles intervenciones políticas.

Palabras clave: perfiles actitudinales; racismo; competencia intergrupal; recursos públicos; mercado laboral; impactos percibidos; políticas migratorias

Summary

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Introduction | 6. Conclusion |
| 2. Context and precedents | Financial support |
| 3. Data and method | Acknowledgements |
| 4. Typology of attitudes | Bibliography |
| 5. Discussion of results, consistency and limitations | |

1. Introduction

Studies of attitudes towards immigration have become a recurrent theme in social research in host countries, and have generated a considerable amount of information and analysis. This great interest in the subject is linked to its increasing presence among the issues on which political parties compete in pluralist democracies. In many countries, a large proportion of the population harbour restrictive attitudes towards immigration and asylum seekers, making immigration policymakers well aware of the limiting influence of public opinion in creating possible solutions (Ruhs, 2022).

Nevertheless, studying attitudes towards immigration presents specific difficulties, due to the polymorphic nature of the phenomenon of migration, the range of impacts it has on the host society and the heterogeneous nature of those involved – the migrants – as well as the different reactions that their presence arouses, which depends on variables such as their level of education and

occupational profile, their relative degree of wealth or poverty, their original nationality, and their physical, religious and cultural characteristics.

The same people who view the influence of immigration as positive for the economy might view it negatively if asked about its impact on public security, or might believe that immigrants receive more from the State than they contribute. Similarly, attitudes towards economic migrants are usually different to those towards refugees or asylum seekers (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017). As a result of this multiplicity of the real or imagined consequences of immigration, as well as the range of types of migrants – skilled, unskilled, from poor or rich countries, Christian, Muslim, atheist, economic migrants, asylum seekers, etc. – it is impossible to distil an “attitude” towards immigration in a single variable. Added to this is the social desirability bias that affects all surveys that deal with issues for which there is a social norm on what is acceptable, a bias which, in the case of immigration, has shown itself to be very powerful. (Janus, 2010; Creighton et al., 2015; Rinken et al., 2021).

Spain, a country seen by many analysts as exceptional in its degree of acceptance of immigration (Arango, 2013), continues to deserve to be seen as *welcoming* in comparative terms, according to the latest data from the European Social Survey (ESS), ESS-10.¹ Nevertheless, such aggregated and general data obscure major internal differences, not just between people – according to socio-demographic and ideological variables – but also between issues – depending on which aspect of immigration is being addressed.

This exceptional situation is being questioned due to the appearance for the first time of an anti-immigration party on the Spanish political landscape. The electoral success of the party Vox and its access to the great platform that representative and government institutions provide is transforming the field of public debate around immigration (Barquero et al., 2020; Mariscal-de-Gante & Rinken, 2022). This new political situation makes it more necessary and urgent, if that were possible, to understand what attitudes the Spanish public have towards immigration, what elements have the greatest impact on negative attitudes, and what types of individuals – defined by shared characteristics – we can find in Spain today in terms of their opinions and attitudes towards immigration.

For this reason, given the diversity of raw empirical evidence and heterogeneous findings that specific surveys offer on the issue, it is necessary to create typologies that enable individuals to be grouped according to their attitude profiles, based on their answers to different items that are shown to be statistically interrelated. Creating such typologies offers the possibility of using cluster analysis to divide the population into groups according to their attitudes to immigration and immigrants. In short, grouping by type allows us to “see the wood”, as opposed to all the trees that prevent an overall vision.

Nevertheless, in Spain, the last typology was formulated in 2017, before the COVID-19 pandemic and the irruption of Vox onto the political scene

1. ESS-10 can be accessed at <<https://ess-search.nsd.no/en/study/ccd56840-e949-4320-945a-927c49e1dc4f>>

at the Andalusian regional elections of 2018 (and their subsequent electoral consolidation). This typology was based on the latest survey by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (CIS) [Centre for Social Research] and the Observatorio Español del Racismo y la Xenofobia (OBERAXE) [Spanish Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia], after which there was a hiatus of three years. In 2020, a new national survey was carried out, *Explicando Actitudes Sosegadas hacia los Inmigrantes en España (EASIE)* [Explaining Attitudes Towards Immigrants in Spain], with a sample of 2,344 people. And in 2021 there was a further national survey, with 619 respondents (OBIMID-IUEM-Comillas, 2022). For its part, the standard ESS questionnaire includes few items on immigration (six questions in Round 10 of the survey, which had been planned for 2020 but was delayed in Spain until 2022); the last time a more extensive module was included was in 2015 (Round 7).

This paper therefore proposes a typology of attitudes towards immigration based on the national EASIE survey mentioned above, which took place in Spain in autumn 2020. By basing the paper on a single dataset, we are unable to trace the evolution of these types, or to measure, in the strictest sense of the word, the effects of specific contextual events on these attitudes (or vice-versa). Data collection took place following the irruption of Vox onto the political scene, and in the aftermath of a global health crisis with wide social and economic repercussions, events that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

The typology proposed here divides the population into five groups. Three of the groups, the *hostile*, the *aggrieved* and the *reluctant*, have negative attitudes towards immigration, although for different reasons and with different social and ideological characteristics. The other two groups, labelled *ambivalent* and *welcoming*, are similar to one another in ideological, demographic and social terms, but show significant differences of degree in their favourable attitudes towards immigration.

The article is structured as follows: 1. Introduction. 2. Context and precedents. 3. Data and method. 4. Typology of attitudes. 5. Discussion of results. 6. Conclusions.

2. Context and precedents

2.1. Attitudes towards immigration as a research topic in Spain

The first public opinion data on attitudes to immigration and immigrants in Spain can be found in a CIS survey carried out in 1989 (CIS study no. 1841, General Population Survey), which included five questions on the subject. A year later, CIS carried out its first dedicated survey on immigration (CIS study no. 1882). These surveys identified: some belief that there were too many “immigrant workers” (36% of respondents, the most frequent response, CIS study no. 1882); widespread agreement with measures aimed at limiting the entry of immigrant workers (67%, CIS study no. 1841); and very unfavour-

able opinions regarding Arabic and African immigrants compared to immigrants from Latin America. This was at a time when the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) [National Statistics Institute] recorded just 353,000 foreigners living in Spain, more than half of them Europeans from wealthy countries (INE, 1991; López de Lera, 1995), but the media were reporting on the arrival of illegal immigrants by sea from Morocco and on Peruvians being turned back at Spanish airports. Indeed the effect of the media on Spanish opinions could already be seen in the difference between the reality of immigration from Morocco (barely 30,000 Moroccans in the 1991 census) and the fact that 42% of respondents in 1990 thought that Moroccans formed the majority of immigrants in Spain (CIS study no. 1841). This characteristic has continued for many years: Moroccan immigration is the main mental image Spanish people have in mind when they answer general questions about immigration – and this is changing only gradually.

This first dedicated survey of 1990 played a key role, because a large number of its questions were repeated in subsequent surveys, so it was possible to carry out a longitudinal analysis. From 2007 to 2017 CIS collected information on this subject almost annually, either with a specific module in its regular opinion polls² or through dedicated surveys in collaboration with OBERAXE. Since then, the suspension of the largest study of public opinion on immigration represents a major problem in terms of lack of up-to-date information, and combines with another problem: the fast-changing nature of immigration.

It is difficult to study public attitudes towards any phenomenon that is changing fast: it becomes impossible to measure to what extent changes in responses are due to changes in opinions or to changes in the object itself. It must be remembered that the spread of immigration in Spain happened at an extremely accelerated rate, the fastest in the EU and the OECD in the 21st century; and that the country has gone from an almost total lack of immigration at the end of the 1980s to around 16% of the population today, a percentage that rises to 27% for the population aged 25 to 39 (Padrón Continuo [Continuous Register], INE, January 2022). These percentages place Spain above France, Italy or the United Kingdom in terms of the demographic proportion of the immigrant population (defined by the Population Division of the United Nations as people who live in a different country to the one where they were born).

These high levels of immigration in Spain are also geographically widespread: initially, immigration was concentrated in various Mediterranean areas, so national surveys were researching the views of a population that, for the most part, had no contact with immigrants. The increase in the number of immigrants has been accompanied by a process of territorial expansion, spreading outwards from its original nuclei until it now covers almost the whole of Spain, with the exception of the most depopulated and ageing areas. Given this

2. For more on these surveys in the final decade of the 20th century, see Vallés et al. (1999) and Rinken (2015).

evolution, it cannot be assumed that the object being referred to, ‘immigration’, was the same for respondents in 1989 as it is today.

2.2. Principal characteristics of Spanish public opinion towards immigration

Taking the results of the national and international surveys that have included attitudes towards immigration in Spain in the last ten years (ESS, CIS-OBERAXE, IUEM, Eurobarometer, EASIE), it is possible to extract some of the main characteristics of Spanish public opinion towards immigration.

1. Immigration is not seen as a major problem in Spain. Only a small minority mention it – in either first, second or third place – in the spontaneous response question that CIS usually includes in its regular opinion polls. (Between January and June 2023, only between 4% and 5% of respondents mentioned immigration.) This suggests a very low level of concern, in contrast with levels that were reached in the 2000s. In 2006, 59% of respondents mentioned immigration as one of the three main problems (CIS study no. 2640), while 31% mentioned it in 2005 (CIS study no. 2618), both times coinciding with periods of massive illegal immigration in the Canaries, Ceuta and Melilla. Nevertheless, events of similar size and nature that have occurred recently (such as the arrival of some 10,000 immigrants in Ceuta in May 2021, and of 23,000 immigrants in the Canaries in summer 2020) have not led to an increase in concern about immigration as a problem, as reflected in CIS surveys immediately afterwards (4.7% in CIS study no. 3326, and 3.4% in study no. 3292).

2. According to Eurobarometer data (Special Eurobarometer 519, 2021), Spain is among the European countries that oppose the integration of immigrants the least, coming third among EU Member States, with results that are almost identical to Portugal and Ireland, which head the list. This is a characteristic that had already been identified at the start of the Spanish immigrant experiment: when Eurobarometer measured the willingness of Europeans to live alongside people of other races, religions and nationalities in 2000, Spain returned extraordinarily positive results, well above the European average (EBS 138, 2000).

3. Using the question that evaluates the impact of immigration on the country as an indicator,³ the average attitude towards immigration in Spain is lightly positive (5.9 on a scale of 0 to 10, where 5 represents a neutral response), with a typical deviation of 2.62 points, and therefore with a large spread of responses (ESS-10, 2022). Using this item as the principal indicator, Spain occupies a high position in terms of accepting immigration in comparative terms. Only 19% choose negative responses to this question (0–4), com-

3. The question, included in all editions of the European Social Survey and also in the EASIE survey, asks: “Is [Spain] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?” (from 0 = much worse to 10 = much better).

pared to an average of 31% in the other 28 countries of Europe that ESS-10 examines.

4. The correlation between ideology and opinion on the impact of immigration on the country has grown in recent years, which indicates a greater distancing between individuals on the right and left on this issue. This greater polarisation could be related to the presence of Vox in public institutions, leading to a reduction in social desirability bias among people with right-wing views (as Vox makes it acceptable to express opinions that were previously concealed) and to the stigmatisation by the left of any opinion that is close to those of the radical right (González-Enríquez & Rinken, 2021).

5. As well as ideology, a large part of the variation in responses is explained by educational level. The higher the level of education (which is a *proxy* for a higher level of income and, in general, a higher position in the social structure), the less the rejection of immigration. This is a relationship that has been detected since the very first quantitative studies of attitudes towards immigration in Spain (and in other countries). A university education means less competition for employment with immigrants, who are concentrated in areas of employment with lower educational requirements. It also means a greater probability of living in neighbourhoods with more expensive housing and few immigrants, and where the relationship with immigrants is through use of their services (domestic work, catering, delivery services, retail, tradespeople, etc.), and not as work colleagues or, even less, employers. Similarly, the cultural capital accumulated through the education process encourages welcoming attitudes and penalises the expression of unfavourable ones (Janus, 2010; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Creighton et al., 2015). The greater prevalence of non-acceptance of immigration by groups with lower levels of educational qualifications is consistent with the theory of intergroup competition for scarce resources, such as employment or the provisions of the welfare state, which conceptualises this (perceived) competition as the main driver of anti-immigration attitudes (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

6. Many Spanish people favour more restrictive immigration policies. 34% of respondents consider that the current laws on immigration in Spain are “too” tolerant (another 28% say they are “quite” tolerant), compared to just 19% who consider them to be correct, and 16% who think they are strict or very strict (EASIE survey, 2020, Q13). Although it is obvious that the great majority of Spanish people are not familiar with the laws that affect the entry and stay of immigrants in Spain, this is a good indicator of a widespread dissatisfaction with how immigration is managed in the country.

7. Although this negative view of immigration policies is widespread, Spain continues to be exceptional in Europe in terms of the limited extent to which immigration is an issue in electoral campaigns. Unlike most countries in the European Union, in Spain, apart from Vox, no other national or politically significant party dedicates significant attention to immigration. As a result of this ‘monopoly’ that Vox has around the issue, in May 2023 22% of Spanish

people believed that Vox was the most competent party on immigration, the only area in which it achieved a higher percentage than its score for voting intention, which is currently at 14% (Junquera, 2023).

8. The impact of immigration on security, competition for jobs, and conditions of pay, and the belief that immigration negatively affects access to certain services (education and health) or public resources (subsidies, positive discrimination regarding access to jobs, grants etc.) for native Spanish people are the five main areas where CIS opinion polls and CIS-OBEXAXE studies have detected negative views specifically associated with immigration. One of these areas, relating to security (petty crime and terrorism), is no longer included in CIS surveys, and returned (predominantly) negative responses in the first decade of the century. In addition to these aspects, qualitative studies, some carried out at regional level, have identified other issues that affect the integration of native Spanish people and immigrants, the perception of “otherness”, the creation of stereotypes, and the role of subjective social class (Colectivo IOÉ & Pérez Molina, 1995; Pérez-Díaz et al., 2001; Rinken, 2011; GEA 21, 2019; Buraschi & Godenau, 2020; Mariscal-de-Gante & Rinken, 2022). Some of this research concerns areas with high concentrations of immigrants, and its results are not applicable more widely, but it offers very significant pointers to how social integration of immigrants occurs and how society reacts to immigration (Terrén, 2003; González-Enríquez & Álvarez-Miranda, 2005; Rinken & Pérez Yruela, 2007; Herranz de Rafael, 2008; Torres & Gadea, 2010; Checa et al., 2010; OPAM, 2019).

2.3. Constructing typologies

So far we have identified, in very general terms, the most significant results from the literature and from polling sources regarding attitudes towards immigration in Spain. Given these findings, which show the complexity of the attitudes in question, the present study pursues a line of thought already begun by other studies, based on the CIS-OBEXAXE survey (cf. Pérez Yruela & Desrues, 2007; Cea D’Ancona & Valles, 2015; Fernández et al., 2019): namely, the construction of a typology that makes it possible to identify the views of the Spanish population on this issue in a way that is easy to comprehend, avoiding the ambiguity that arises from the use of mean values that conceal internal differences, and making it possible to understand the significance of different factors in the ascription to one or other of the types established.

In contrast to these earlier studies, this article: 1) updates the information on which the typology is based, by using more recent data; 2) suggests changes that offer a typology that is better adapted to the object of study, by excluding attitudes towards the Roma population from the model; and 3) makes it possible to visualise the differences between negative attitudes with different characteristics and origins, in line with a compelling current of international research (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Dixon et al., 2018; Carter & Lowles, 2022).

3. Data and method

The typology presented here is based on data from the nationwide EASIE survey (Rinken et al., 2023) carried out in October 2020 ($N = 2,344$), with a population consisting of Spanish residents aged over 18 born in Spain and with Spanish nationality (the native population, excluding immigrants). The survey was principally carried out through on-line questionnaires (1,965), complemented in parallel by telephone interviews (379) for age groups less likely to use the internet (aged 45+). The corresponding quotas were established based on official statistics from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE).⁴

The telephone subsample was selected using random dialling of fixed-line and mobile telephones, with control of quotas by sex and age. The on-line subsample was generated by random selection, according to quotas of sex, age group and level of education, from panellists of polling company EMOP, whose participants were recruited probabilistically based on phone interviews using random dialling.⁵ The results were weighted to improve alignment of our data with population parameters. Despite the rigorous nature of these processes (for further information, see Rinken et al., 2023), extrapolation to the study population was subject to greater uncertainty than in a fully probabilistic survey (whose nominal margin of error would amount to a maximum of $\pm 2.35\%$ for a confidence interval of 95%). Given that our priority here is not to quantify exactly the social spread of each type, but to propose an up-dated and relevant typology, we prefer to avoid a distraction that could arise from the inferential risk alluded to (Couper, 2017); for this reason, the percentages we report below refer to the sample.

As well as a wide range of sociodemographic and explanatory variables, the questionnaire includes a total of fourteen items relating to antipathy towards certain groups of immigrants depending on their origin, as well as to opinions on the impact of immigration in Spain and the evaluation of policies in this area. These items include some that appear either in the dedicated studies by CIS or in the European Social Survey. These data were processed in two phases: first, exploratory factor analysis was used to synthesise the information contained in this set of items; then, the latent variables obtained were subjected to cluster analysis to differentiate nuanced types of attitudes to migration, to estimate the size of each type, and lastly to explore certain characteristics of each attitude type profile. In applying both techniques we combined formal criteria with an evaluation of the internal and external coherence of the results, in line with the exploratory and highly substantive proposition of the study, and in line, too, with the analysis of attitude segmentation that has been carried out in recent years in many nearby countries (e.g., Dixon et al., 2018; Carter & Lowles, 2022).

4. Padrón de Habitantes [Register of Residents], 2019; and Survey on ITC access and use in the home, 2019.

5. EMOP limits participation to a maximum of two surveys per month. The questionnaire was completed by 42% of the panellists contacted.

Factor analysis allows a series of variables to be grouped together according to a correlation matrix; specifically, the categorical analysis of principal components allows for numerical and ordinal variables, something that is necessary in this case (Molina & Espinosa-de-los-Monteros, 2010; Linting & Van der Kooij, 2012). To determine the minimum number of components to retain, Kaiser's rule (1960) was applied, to select the components with eigenvalues greater than 1. Kaiser's rule maximises the variation explained by each component, prioritising the synthesis of information. Nevertheless, when studying complex social phenomena, the most simple solution may conceal major nuances (Preacher & MacCallum, 2003; Osborne & Costello, 2009). In our case, minimising the number of components that were used as *input* can lead to less capacity to distinguish profiles later; thus we complemented Kaiser's rule with a more nuanced factor solution.

In line with specialised studies that recommend prioritising the interpretability of exploratory results (Afifi et al., 1997; Worthington & Wittaker, 2006; Molina & Espinosa-de-los-Monteros, 2010), solutions with a growing number of components were calculated, and their intelligibility and coherence then evaluated. We did this with up to seven components (half the original number of items), selecting the four-factor version for its interpretability and substantive relevance. As could be expected, the eigenvalues for the basic solution (5.57 and 2.36) are higher than for the nuanced version (5.71, 1.48, 0.95 and 0.76); in contrast, the latter improves the variation explained (72.4% vs. 56.7%). Both solutions show a high degree of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha: 0.941 and 0.968 respectively). Next, we created additive indices for the items grouped in each factor. These indices were standardised on a scale from 0 to 100, with higher values expressing more positive attitudes towards immigration (see details below).

Once the structure of the variables had been explored, a typology of attitudes was developed through cluster analysis. This descriptive technique classifies cases (in contrast to factor analysis, which groups variables) according to scores of the different indices: individuals showing similar values are identified as belonging to the same group or profile. Specifically, the *k-means* method groups n cases into k clusters: it classifies the objects by minimising the sum of distances from the central value of the nearest group (Everitt et al., 2011). To determine the number of clusters, a procedure similar to that used in the previous step was employed, gradually increasing it to then assess the proportional reduction of error and the substantive consistency of each attitude profile and of the typology overall.

To improve the robustness of the analysis, we used listwise exclusion and removed outlier cases (Everitt et al., 2011). The elbow method (Thorndike, 1953) reveals that the error substantially decreases up to five clusters, while a higher number does not significantly improve the model.⁶

6. The error is the square of the distance between the object and the nearest centroid: the case in question and the central point of a set of cases represented on a Cartesian axis.

High values of the F -statistic ($F = 2271.01 - 27.25$) indicate a good performance of the five clusters solution (with intergroup variability being 27.25 times greater than intragroup variability), and the ANOVA statistic (p -values = 0.000) indicates that the five groups are well differentiated, with regard to the four attitude dimensions (indices). The relatively balanced size of the resulting groups (range: 210-400 respondents) can be interpreted as further support of this analysis. Finally, we examined the socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, educational level), economic characteristics (employment status, subjective social class) and socio-political characteristics (ideology, national identity, authoritarianism and egalitarianism) of each cluster, henceforth referred to as *attitude profile*.

4. Typology of attitudes

The results of the factor analysis with the application of the two criteria discussed reveal complementary results. Kaiser's rule results in a very concise solution that clearly differentiates two overarching types of attitude: those relating to immigration on one hand, and those referring to immigrant people on the other. As Table 1 shows, the two major constructs obtained by the basic solution are clearly differentiated: attitudes towards the phenomenon of immigration itself, its perceived impacts, and preferences regarding its management on one hand, and attitudes towards immigrants, regardless of their origin, on the other. In addition to the intuitive nature of its content, the factor scores are above 0.7 in all cases, except for two items (complementary workforce and antipathy towards Latin Americans).

The detailed solution develops this basic structure, offering greater precision regarding attitudes towards different aspects of immigration. The first type of attitude (relating to immigration) is divided into perceptions of its impact on one hand, and evaluations of immigration and redistribution policies on the other; while the second type concerns emotional responses (degree of antipathy or sympathy) to different groups of immigrants.⁷ Both groupings, whether basic or detailed, are consistent with the most authoritative literature reviews available in this area of research. For example, Ceobanu and Escandell (2010: 311) point out that one of the weaknesses of the literature is precisely the confusion between attitudes towards "immigration" and "immigrants": the former includes evaluations of impact and public policies, while attitudes

7. Two variables were eliminated in this solution as they were necessarily reduced to single variables (cf. Section 3), both with high factorial loadings (>0.9). This behaviour seems consistent with the basic solution and with pre-existing evidence. Latin American immigrants, due to their cultural similarity, have been the most highly rated group ever since the first CIS surveys, so the variable lacks the capacity to differentiate. Employment complementarity ("Immigrants do the jobs that Spaniards don't want") has been a predominant narrative in Spain over the last few decades (e.g., CIS no. 2131, 1995, Q 29); Pérez Yruela & Desrues, 2007; Fernández et al., 2019), as reflected in our data (EASIE survey, Q 20): 80% of respondents affirm this opinion.

Table 1. Factor scores for the basic and detailed solutions*

Ítems	Basic		Detailed			
	Immigración	Immigrants	Impact	Policies	Salient	Inconspicuous
Economic impact	0.856	0.129	0.866	0.277	0.152	0.079
General impact	0.823	0.137	0.865	0.236	0.126	0.099
Cultural impact	0.783	0.131	0.756	0.262	0.229	0.055
Job competition	0.725	0.047	0.612	0.382	0.118	0.030
Immigration from poor countries	0.719	0.143	0.596	0.326	0.297	0.085
Fiscal balance	0.806	0.081	0.426	0.757	0.154	0.056
Immigrant policies	0.797	0.091	0.440	0.719	0.167	0.058
Comparative grievances	0.749	0.069	0.275	0.833	0.186	0.039
Complementary workforce *	0.424	0.086	–	–	–	–
Moroccan	0.114	0.787	0.158	0.290	0.807	0.190
Sub-Saharan African	0.218	0.707	0.288	0.092	0.842	0.069
Eastern European	0.059	0.781	0.051	0.078	0.203	0.828
Chinese	0.042	0.738	0.097	0.011	0.011	0.872
Latin American**	0.088	0.630	–	–	–	–

Source: Own elaboration

* The wording of the questions that make up these items, as well as the response options and the descriptive results can be found in Rinken et al. (2023)

** Items disregarded to avoid univariable components.

towards different groups may vary greatly (Ford, 2011). Dražanová (2022) notes that perceptions of impact are not equivalent to evaluations of public policies (they are not perfectly consistent or correlated), whereas Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) focus their literature review exclusively on the latter, suggesting they are not interchangeable with other types of opinions.

With regard to attitudes towards immigrant people, the detailed solution distinguishes between African immigrants and others (Eastern European and Chinese, excluding Latin American immigrants in order to avoid a single-variable component). Sub-Saharan Africans and especially Moroccans tend to be commonly perceived as “different” for cultural, religious and/or ethnic reasons, as suggested by a wide range of literature (Terrén, 2003; González-Enríquez & Álvarez-Miranda, 2005; Herranz de Rafael, 2008; Torres & Gadea, 2010; Checa et al., 2010; OPAM, 2019). As noted above, the recurring and much documented migratory crises at the borders between Africa and Europe make this group much more conspicuous. For example, 65% and 48% of respondents stated that they think of Moroccans or sub-Saharan Africans respectively when they think of “immigrants”. Consequently, the factor *salient* refers to attitudes towards these African immigrants, while the factor *inconspicuous* refers to attitudes towards groups that go relatively unnoticed (Eastern Europeans and Chinese).

In summary, exploratory factor analysis reveals that the set of variables is divided into two main constructs, attitudes towards immigration and atti-

tudes towards immigrants. These in turn can be disaggregated into more detailed dimensions: opinions on the impact of and evaluations of immigration policies on one hand, and attitudes towards different immigrant groups on the other. It is worth noting that both factor solutions are complementary: the more cognitive component (evaluations of impact and policies) and the more emotional one (sympathy or antipathy towards immigrants) can be perfectly identified in the four-component version.

For the next step of the analysis, the detailed structure was chosen, as it maximises the retention of differences and nuances between groups, allowing for a more detailed analysis of attitude profiles. The items belonging to each factor were added together to construct additive indices that synthesise between two and five *input* variables. These were then rescaled to comprise values between 0 and 100, as scale equivalence is a requirement of cluster analysis (Table 2).

Results of the cluster analysis reveal five types of attitudes towards immigration and immigrants. These have been labelled *hostile*, *aggrieved*, *reluctant*, *ambivalent* and *welcoming*. Table 3 shows the scores, on a scale of 0 to 100, for the four dimensions for each profile, based on the average responses of those grouped within it. Higher scores show more favourable responses to immigration and immigrants.

As Table 3 shows, three of the groups exhibit negative attitudes (values below 50 for all factors) and account for 52% of the sample. Those in the group labelled *hostile* (16%) are the only ones that combine very negative assessments of the impact of immigration, its regulation and the distribution of public resources on one hand, and overt rejection of immigrants

Table 2. Latent variables derived from the nuanced factor solution

Dimension	Item	Variable type	Original scale	Index (rescaled)	Rescaled mean
Impacts	Immigration from poor countries*	Ordinal	1-4	0-20	60.16
	General impact	Numerical	0-10	0-20	
	Economic impact	Numerical	0-10	0-20	
	Cultural impact	Numerical	0-10	0-20	
	Job competition	Numerical	1-4	0-20	
Policies	Fiscal balance	Ordinal	1-5	0-33.3	36.74
	Comparative grievances*	Ordinal	1-5	0-33.3	
	Immigrant policies	Ordinal	1-5	0-33.3	
Salient	Moroccan	Ordinal	1-5	0-50	45.59
	Sub-Saharan	Ordinal	1-5	0-50	
Inconspicuous	Chinese	Ordinal	1-5	0-50	50.57
	Eastern European	Ordinal	1-5	0-50	

Source: Own elaboration

Notes: The full wording of the items is documented in Rinken et al. (2023). Higher index values represent more favourable positions. Items inverted with respect to the original scale are marked with an asterisk.

Table 3. Median scores and size of each attitude profile in the sample

Factor	Welcoming	Ambivalent	Reluctant	Aggrieved	Hostile
Impact	71.84	58.65	49.60	24.63	32.19
Policies	68.55	44.79	19.16	10.24	9.24
Salient	51.70	47.63	45.66	46.06	14.47
Inconspicuous	50.30	48.94	47.91	41.78	40.76
%	18	29.50	25.80	11	15.70

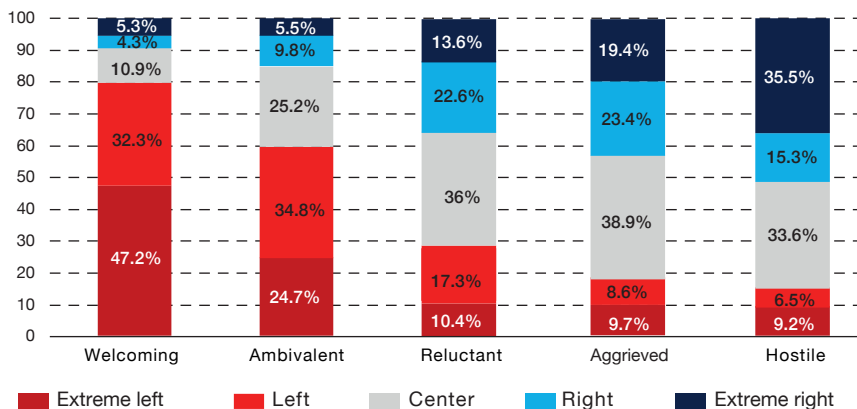
Source: Own elaboration

Note: $N = 1.741$. The colours express intensity (0–100) and differences between profiles. Cases with no response to any of the twelve questions and outlier cases have been excluded.

(specifically of African origin) on the other. Those in the *aggrieved* group (11%) also display markedly negative attitudes towards the impact of immigration and towards public policies, but maintain neutral attitudes towards immigrants. Those in the *reluctant* group (26%) hold an unfavourable position on immigration and redistribution policies, although less intensely than the previous groups, and do not express negative views towards either immigrants or the impact of immigration on the country. Thus, those in the *hostile*, *aggrieved* and *reluctant* groups present notable differences in terms of the object and intensity of their views. On the other hand, those in the *ambivalent* group (30%) feel neutral towards immigrants and immigration policies, while their assessments of the impacts of immigration are cautiously positive. Lastly, those in the *welcoming* group (18%) have very positive views of the impact of immigration and public policies, and neutral views towards immigrants.

Given that the main feature that the three unfavourable profiles have in common is their low score in the *policy* factor, it is worth breaking down the most relevant items here: the three profiles almost unanimously consider that the rules that regulate immigration are either too lenient or quite lenient (99% of the *hostile* group and 98% of the *aggrieved* and *reluctant* groups) and that immigrants receive more from the State than they contribute (98% of the *hostile* group and 96% of the *aggrieved* and *reluctant* groups). The perception of comparative grievance (e.g., that institutions treat immigrants better than native Spanish people) is also almost unanimous among the *hostile* and *aggrieved* groups (91% and 90%) and slightly lower among the *reluctant* group (78%). Several national and regional quantitative and qualitative studies (Rinken & Pérez Yruela, 2007; Rinken et al., 2011; Cebolla & González, 2016; Torres et al., 2018; Buraschi & Godenau, 2020; Mariscal-de-Gante & Rinken, 2022; Ikuspegui, 2022), including the most recent survey (OBIMID-IUEM-Comillas, 2022, with fieldwork from 2021), highlight this perception of comparative grievance as one of the main factors fuelling negative attitudes towards immigration in Spain.

Studying the socio-demographic, economic and political characteristics of these attitude profiles enables us to examine the features that differentiate

Figure 1. Political ideology of each attitude profile

Source: Own elaboration

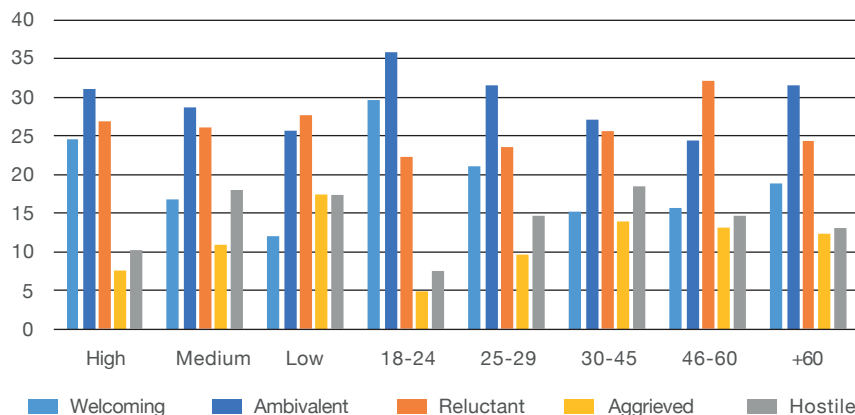
Note: The ideological self-positioning on a scale from 0 to 10 has been classified as 0 to 2 (far left), 3 to 4 (left), 5 (centre), 6 to 7 (right), and 8 to 10 (far right).

them, and to compare them with certain existing profiles. As expected, and as is consistently indicated in the literature (McLaren, 2001; Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Haimueller & Hopkins, 2014; Schmidt-Catran & Czymara, 2023), ideological position is the individual element that reveals the clearest differences: the scale that ranges from maximum rejection to maximum acceptance follows the same path as the one that goes from extreme right to extreme left (Figure 1). Among those in the *welcoming* and *ambivalent* groups, left-wing positions are clearly predominant, while right-wing positions are the majority among those in the *hostile*, *aggrieved* and *reluctant* groups, with one third of the *hostile* group (35.5%) positioned at the extreme right.

Attitudes also vary according to age group: the most negative attitudes are concentrated among the middle-aged (30 to 60 years old), which suggests a link between an individual's stage in life – specifically the period when they are most actively involved in the labour market,⁸ the search for housing and raising children – and more negative attitudes towards immigration (Figure 2). The most negative profiles (*aggrieved* and *hostile*) are much less common among more educated people, possibly because, in accordance with the theory of intergroup competition, in Spain they rarely compete with immigrants in the labour market, due to their higher educational level and the specific sectors they occupy (FUNCAS, 2023).

Women and men are distributed differently among the attitude profiles: men are more numerous in the *hostile* group (54% men, 46% women) and, to

8. On the influence of employment on the ideology and public policy preferences of young people, see Demel et al. (2019).

Figure 2. Distribution of profiles for each educational level and age group

Source: Own elaboration

Note: The educational level distinguishes between basic compulsory education (low), non-obligatory secondary education including Professional Training (medium) and university education (high).

a lesser extent, in the *ambivalent* group (52% and 48%). The opposite occurs in the case of the *aggrieved* group (44% men, 56% women). Gender differences are not significant in the other two profiles, *welcoming* and *reluctant*.

Associations with other demographic or contextual variables are much weaker. There is no clear relationship with the percentage of immigrants in the respondent's local area (the density of immigrants in an area does not increase or decrease the level of rejection or acceptance) or with the perception of belonging to a social class or employment status. However, the data do show a link with certain normative orientations: attitudes become increasingly unfavourable as authoritarianism (measured as a preference for a strong State) and the strength of national identity (pride in being Spanish) increase and egalitarianism decreases, findings that are in line with previous studies (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Oyamoto et al., 2012; Ramis-Moyano et al., 2023). In summary, *welcoming* individuals are younger, have higher levels of education, are more left-wing, less authoritarian, more egalitarian and less nationalistic than the other groups. At the other extreme, *hostile* individuals are more often middle-aged (30 to 60 years old), have medium to low levels of education, are ideologically right-wing (especially the extreme right), more authoritarian, less egalitarian, and have a stronger Spanish national identity.

While the two most positive profiles (*welcoming* and *ambivalent*) are relatively similar to one another (the difference being one of degree, except for the *policy* dimension), it is important to note that the negative profiles present significant differences: their attitude of rejection is based on different perceptions and reasoning, except for the common denominator which is their markedly unfavourable assessment of immigration policies in the widest sense (including fiscal policy and other redistributive policies). It is important to

bear this in mind in order to understand what fuels these negative positions, which account for 52% of respondents. Rejection in the *hostile* group is more emotional (including declared antipathy towards immigrants) and is linked to their ideological characteristics, close to the far right in a context of political polarisation. Among the *aggrieved*, material considerations dominate: they perceive conflicts of interest regarding the impact of immigration and public policies, but do not demonstrate anti-immigrant attitudes. On the other hand, the *reluctant* group exclusively criticise political-governmental handling of the immigration issue, but do not perceive a negative impact of immigration on the country and do not express anti-immigrant attitudes. It should be noted that a significant proportion of these *reluctant* individuals (28%) identify with the left. The differences in attitudes between the *aggrieved* and the *reluctant* are consistent with their different material situations: the *aggrieved* are more often unemployed (22% vs. 14%) and have a lower level of education, which favours the perception of competition for jobs (Mayda, 2006; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). In short, in addition to diverging opinions on immigration and immigrants there are differences in the socio-demographic, economic and ideological characteristics of these three groups.

5. Discussion of results, consistency and limitations

The attitude profiles presented here continue a line of research that started over two decades ago (Cea D'Ancona, 2002) and build on work previously published in Spain by OBERAXE.⁹ The studies by Cea D'Ancona and Vallés (2015), who directed this survey from 2009 to 2014, distinguished between *reluctant*, *ambivalent* and *tolerant* individuals (see Cea D'Ancona, 2002), while Fernández et al. (2019), who directed it from 2015 to 2017, spoke of *mistrustful*, *distant* and *multicultural* attitudes. In comparison, on the one hand the results of this study provide an update, as they are based on fieldwork carried out in 2020, and therefore reflect attitudes towards immigration in Spain in the wake of significant events such as the emergence of Vox in public institutions, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the substantial increase in the number of immigrants in the country since the 2017 survey.¹⁰ On the other hand, this typology refers exclusively to attitudes towards immigration and immigrants, unlike Fernández et al. (2019), whose types also include attitudes towards the Roma population. This group often receives more negative responses than any of the immigrant groups, so their inclusion decisively affects the overall results, leading to a typology of attitudes regarding ethno-cultural diversity, and not just regarding immigration.

9. Reports available at <<https://inclusion.seg-social.es/oberaxe/es/ejes/analisis/informes/index.htm>>.

10. According to data from the Padrón Continuo [Continuous Register] (INE), the number of residents in Spain born in other countries increased by 1,240,000 between 1 January 2017 and 1 of January 2021.

Compared to previous studies, the typology presented here, consisting of five attitude profiles, provides a higher level of definition and offers more information about the type of reasoning and underlying opinions. This makes it possible to differentiate between different negative profiles depending on various opinions and perceptions, something that was not possible with the three-group typologies discussed above.

This study is part of an ongoing current of recent research (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; Helbling et al., 2017; Dixon et al., 2018; Carter & Lowles, 2022) in countries such as Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, among others, which seeks to untangle the complex knot of public opinions in this area, beyond the simple dichotomy of *for* or *against* (plus an intermediate category of neutral positions). The exact configuration of these nuanced typologies varies depending on the specific context of each country and the range of items available in each case, but they all aim at a better understanding of “mixed” or “intermediate” attitudes, i.e. those that do not take a single position, whether positive or negative, towards all aspects of immigration. The perceptions and preferences of the population holding these “intermediate” attitudes (which are usually the social majority, according to the studies noted above) are diverse, thus the typologies mentioned identify up to seven attitude profiles (Dixon et al., 2018). A notable finding from these studies is the distinction between different negative profiles: from those that are entrenched in (seemingly) irrecoverable anti-immigrant animosity to others who may respond positively to well-formulated political-governmental arguments and interventions. In Spain, the closest precedent for the typologies suggested here may be the four attitude types (*hostility*, *grievance*, *functionalism* and *solidarity*) identified in Andalusia by the OPIA study (Rinken & Pérez Yruela, 2007; Rinken et al., 2011; also see Gualda et al, 2023).

In addition to being consistent with previous studies, the results of this study also appear to be internally consistent: attitudes are congruent in their object and intensity with socio-demographic characteristics, particularly with political ideology. This is especially remarkable at a time of extreme polarisation, when attitudes are more volatile in response to the public positioning of political leaders with extremist views. The results are also consistent with the literature’s findings on objective variables (e.g. education and place in the labour market) which affect attitudes towards immigration and immigrants (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Dražanová, 2022).

Two limitations of this research should be mentioned: the typology presented here was developed from a survey whose sampling procedures represent a higher inferential risk regarding extrapolation of results to the entire study population than a survey with simple random selection of participants. This caveat does not diminish the significance of the attitude profiles identified here, but rather emphasises the need to re-establish a regular (ideally annual) survey of this issue that is guaranteed to be fully representative. Furthermore, our dataset distinguishes between specific immigrant groups based on a funda-

mental criterion: their country or region of origin. It is worth noting that there are manifold additional criteria or characteristics that influence the attitudes of native Spanish people towards immigrants, such as educational level, gender, occupational profile, religious orientation, and many others. In this sense, “the immigrant population” is a construct that is both imaginary and opaque.

6. Conclusion

Given the range of empirical evidence provided by public surveys on immigration and immigrants, the development of typologies is a necessary tool to capture the attitudes of the native population. This in turn enables identification of the socio-demographic and ideological profiles that characterise different types, and locates them within the country’s social and political divisions. Prior to this study, the last similar study in Spain dated back to 2017, before the irruption of Vox into public institutions, a development that has transformed the landscape of public discourses on immigration, and before the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis that underscored the essential role of immigrant labour in sectors such as healthcare and the food industry.

This article presents a new typology based on a national survey conducted in the autumn of 2020. In addition to being based on more current data, this typology has two advantages compared to previous studies. Firstly, it deals exclusively with attitudes towards immigration, without mixing them with attitudes towards the Roma population. Secondly, it allows for greater analytical precision, as it identifies five profiles, as opposed to the three-step continuum (*favourable-undecided-unfavourable*) considered in previous studies. In this way, our typology reflects the different perceptions and reasoning on which different attitude profiles are based. Given the complexity and range of attitudes an issue such as immigration engenders, capturing these nuances is of fundamental importance.

The attitude profiles we have identified demonstrate significant differences, especially when it comes to negative attitudes. Three of the five attitude types identified here are negative, but they are based on different arguments (and are related to different socio-demographic and ideological characteristics). Differentiation between *hostile*, *aggrieved* and *reluctant* groups shows that a large proportion of those expressing unfavourable views on immigration are not rejecting (or at least are not expressing rejection of) immigrant people; rather, they perceive negative impacts of immigration and/or they disapprove of public policies that affect it in some way (including not just the regulation of immigration flows but also redistribution policies of various types). This suggests that it is not racist or xenophobic prejudices that predominantly drive negative attitudes towards immigration, but instead negative opinions regarding the impacts of immigration and the policies that manage it. Secondly, among such opinions, immigration and redistribution policies are the primary objects of rejection, rather than the perception of the impact of immigration on society or the economy. In fact, the two most common types, labelled here

as *reluctant* and *ambivalent*, are distinguished by their evaluation of public policies. Thirdly, according to the results of this study, those with either *hostile* or *welcoming* attitudes – the two groups whose diametrically opposed views may be unmovable – account for barely a third of the sample, while two-thirds of the sample have less decided views, and therefore may potentially be susceptible to reconsidering, depending on the events, opinions and arguments they are exposed to in the future.

Apart from the academic interest that these findings may arouse, they have significant implications for the interventions of government authorities and agents of political and social debate in a context of pronounced ideological polarisation. Unlike antipathy towards immigrant people, which seems to be limited to a rather small minority of the Spanish population, immigration policies in the broader sense generate widespread unease by fuelling perceptions of comparative grievance in a large proportion of the native population. It can be inferred that, in the coming years, the evolution of attitudes towards immigration and immigrants in Spain will not depend on attitudes towards immigrant people (or attempts to influence such attitudes, either positively or negatively), but on the perception of public policies affecting immigration itself in terms of sustainability, viability and fairness.

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