



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK **ES**

POVERTY WATCH SPAIN 2022

AUTHOR: GRACIELA MALGESINI REY

EAPN SPAIN

Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en el Estado Español (EAPN-ES)

C / Tribulete, 18 Local, 28012 Madrid

+34 91 786 04 11 - eapn@eapn.es

www.eapn.es

Title:

POVERTY WATCH SPAIN 2022

Author:

Graciela Malgesini Rey

Independent Consultant

Edition:

European Anti-Poverty Network, EAPN SPAIN

September 2022

The total or partial reproduction of this document is allowed as long as the sources are cited, respecting the content as it is edited without any misrepresentation or change.

SUMMARY	5
1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
2. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY POVERTY?	6
3. KEY DATA ON POVERTY FROM EU SURVEY OF LIVING CONDITIONS (SILC).....	7
3.1. AROPE – AT RISK OF POVERTY AND/OR EXCLUSION.....	9
3.1.1. SEX.....	9
3.1.2. AGE.....	11
3.1.3. NATIONALITY	12
3.1.4. EDUCATION	12
3.1.5. OCCUPATION	13
3.1.6. HOUSEHOLD TYPE	13
3.2. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION	14
3.2.1. AROPE BY AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES AND CITIES.....	14
3.2.2. AT RISK OF POVERTY	15
3.2.3. SEVERE MATERIAL DEPRIVATION	17
3.2.4. LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH LOW WORK INTENSITY (FROM 0 TO 59 YEARS OLD).....	21
4. WHAT IS HAPPENING TO POVERTY? WHAT ARE THE GROUPS MOST AFFECTED?.....	23
4.1. WEALTH CONCENTRATION AND INEQUALITY KEEP INCREASING	23
4.2. PEOPLE IN POVERTY	24
4.3. ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY.....	25
4.4. CHILD GUARANTEE PLAN.....	25
4.5. LAW ON THE RIGHT TO HOUSING	26
4.6. NATIONAL STRATEGY AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY.....	29
5. LABOUR MARKET REFORM.....	32
5.1. A LONG-STANDING DEMAND	32
5.2. WOMEN ARE STILL BEHIND	34
5.2.1. ACTIVITY GAP	34
5.2.2. EMPLOYMENT GAP.....	36
5.2.3. UNEMPLOYMENT GAP	36

6. PEOPLE ON BENEFITS: KEY CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES	38
6.1. MINIMUM INCOME: 'INGRESO MÍNIMO VITAL' A YEAR AFTER	38
6.2. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE THE 'INGRESO MÍNIMO VITAL'	39
6.2.1. SLOW PACE OF PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS AND DIFFICULTIES IN THE PROCESS OF RECTIFICATION ..	40
6.2.2. LACK OF INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY	42
6.3. COVERAGE.....	42
6.3.1. ACCESSIBILITY OBSTACLES AND NON-TAKE-UP	42
6.3.2. DIGITAL DIVIDE	43
6.3.3. LACK OF INTERNET ACCESS	44
6.3.4. LACK OF SUPPORT NETWORKS	45
6.3.5. DIFFICULTIES WITH THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION	46
6.3.6. LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCEDURES.....	47
6.3.7. OTHER DISINCENTIVES TO APPLY	47
6.4. PROFILES OF PEOPLE IN EXTREME POVERTY WHO DO NOT ACCESS THE IMV	47
6.4.1. ROMA POPULATION	48
6.4.2. HOMELESS POPULATION	49
6.4.3. YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 23 YEAR-OLD	49
6.5. IMV RECIPIENTS AND TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION.....	50
6.6. ADEQUACY OF IMV AMOUNTS IN POVERTY REDUCTION	51
6.6.1. SUPPLEMENTARY CHILD ALLOWANCE.....	53
6.7. TESTIMONIES OF IMV RECIPIENTS	55
6.7.1. BUREAUCRATIC LABYRINTH	56
6.7.2. PROTECTION PROVIDED BY THE IMV	57
6.7.3. LABOUR AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION PATHWAYS	58
6.7.4. EAPN RECOMMENDATIONS	59
6.8. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE IMV	60

SUMMARY

Spanish society has made unprecedented social progress in recent decades. People are healthier, better educated and more connected than ever before. However, this progress is uneven and high rates of poverty persist. Economic and social inequality are chronic. Across the Autonomous Communities and Cities, many individuals and groups face barriers that prevent them from participating fully in economic, social, and political life due to their disadvantaged situation.

In this context, inclusion and shared prosperity emerged as central aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A central commitment contained in the 2030 Agenda is to ensure that no one is left behind and to see that all goals and targets are met for all sectors of society, striving to reach the worst-off first.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic widened the social and economic gap in Spain. Data from the Survey of Living Conditions published by the National Statistics Institute (INE) in June 2022 show an increase of both poverty and inequality. In 2021, the Spanish population at risk of poverty or social exclusion increased to 27.8%, eight tenths more than in 2020. In this sense, it is the worst figure since 2016.

In 2022, the at-risk-of-poverty threshold for one-person households - calculated using 2021 income data - stood at €9,535, 0.9% lower than estimated in the previous year. For households comprising two adults and two children under 14 years of age, this threshold was 20,024 euros. Regarding the average income per person, referring to 2021, it reached 12,269 euros, 0.2% less than the previous year.

The Survey confirms that there is a before and after the pandemic and that just over one million people have fallen into poverty in the last two years. In 2019, 25.3% of the population was at risk of poverty; now it is 27.8%.

According to the S80/S20 ratio which measures income inequality by comparing the sum of the incomes of the 20% of the population with the 20% of the population with the lowest income, its value reached 6.2 in 2021, an increase of four tenths of a percentage point from the previous year.

Another indicator to analyse inequality is the Gini Index. It is a measure of inequality that takes the value zero in the case of perfect equality and 100 in the case of maximum inequality; the Gini index rose by nine tenths in 2021 to 33.0.

‘Leaving no one behind’ is not only a fundamental moral imperative; poverty and social exclusion also have significant economic and social costs associated with

forgoing the contribution of individuals and groups who cannot access education systems, economic production, or the labour market. Poverty and exclusion also have political costs, as they reflect and fuel social tensions and are at the root of many conflicts. They also interact with environmental risks: excluded individuals and groups, especially those living in poverty, often inhabit areas that are more vulnerable to natural hazards and disasters and, as a result, are disproportionately harmed by those. Poverty and exclusion make societies not only less cohesive, but also more fragile, less secure, and less productive.

1. Introduction

EAPN is a network dedicated to the fight against poverty. Our aim is to work together to achieve a reduction of poverty, through an effective integrated antipoverty strategy based on participation, at national and EU level. Monitoring trends on poverty is part of this process, holding governments to account, and raising awareness to the general public.

The proposal of the National Poverty Watch Reports is to give priority to members' own assessment of what is happening to poverty in their country, drawing on the lived experience/voice of people experiencing poverty.

This Report Objectives are:

- a. To monitor key trends and policy on poverty and social exclusion in Spain.
- b. To raise awareness about priority issues and impact/reality for people experiencing poverty
- c. To propose concrete recommendations backed by experience and evidence.

This Report is directed to:

- a. National and EU decision-makers
- b. United Nations representatives
- c. National stakeholders
- d. Research Centres
- e. Activists
- f. General public

This 2022 Poverty Watch aims to combine an **assessment of overall situation and trends on poverty, focusing on the situation of people on benefits, and make proposals for the future.**

2. What do we mean by poverty?

In Spain, the different manifestations of poverty and social exclusion are a shortage of income, lack of decent housing, material deprivation, more difficult

6

educational and healthcare paths due to hardships, poverty of families living in disadvantaged environments, and limited or truncated access to basic services.

The Poverty Watch 2022 describes the key characteristics of poverty and social exclusion in Spain, including the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, focuses on the situation of people on benefits and presents recommendations for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.

On March 3rd, 2010, the European Union presented the Commission Communication entitled "Europe 2020, a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth", with common headline targets for economic and social development. To meet these targets, Member States made specific commitments and generated reform programs to achieve them. Within these commitments, for the period 2009-2020, the Spanish government adopted the objective of *"reducing between 1,400,000 and 1,500,000 the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, according to an aggregate indicator that includes people who live below the poverty line (relative poverty); people who suffer severe material deprivation, and people who live in homes with low or no employment intensity. The reduction of child poverty would be carried out in a proportion similar to the reduction of poverty in general"*.¹ **This main objective was never achieved.**

The Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan became the new framework for tackling poverty and social exclusion, although the new poverty reduction targets do not seem to be either binding or even "visible" in Spain. However, during the pandemic and recovery, the Government launched new legislation to cover different EPSR principles, which is a step in the good direction. One of them, number 14, refers to the right to a Minimum Income, which is addressed in this Report.

3. Key data on poverty from EU Survey of Living Conditions (SILC)

¹ Programa Nacional de Reformas de España 2011. Madrid: Ministerio de sanidad, servicios sociales e igualdad. EUROSTAT set up the AROPE (*At Risk of Poverty and / or Exclusion*) indicator, including and combining the three abovementioned sub-indicators, as well as a standardized methodology for its annual calculation in each of the EU countries.

In 2022, **more than 13,091,454 million people live at risk of poverty and social exclusion (27,6% of the population)², 571,100 households did not have any income³ and there are 703,200 households whose reference person is unemployed and has no income.⁴** The rates of inequality, unemployment, precarious or atypical employment, risk of poverty and / or exclusion, gender inequality, educational and housing deficits are all above the European averages. Poverty is territorialized (geographically concentrated in southern Autonomous Communities and Cities: Extremadura, Andalusia, the Canary Islands, Murcia, Ceuta, and Castilla La-Mancha). Poverty is chronic (it is persistent over time and not flexible with respect to the recovery of the economic cycle). It affects more women than men (28.3% of women and 27% of men are in AROPE in 2022).⁵ It is increasingly 'ethnicized' (although it affects mostly the Spanish population, it affects 66.1% of non-EU population, while Spaniards' rate is 23,4%⁶; it is also very high among the Roma community⁷). It is concentrated in children and young population (32.5% of children are in AROPE; 33.5% of young people aged 16 to 29; the elderly has the lowest rate, 19.8%)⁸ and overcharges families with children (having children is "a risk factor for poverty"), particularly single-parent households (there are 1,944,800 single parent households -10.37% of the total; 81.35% are headed by women; 54.6% of single-parent households are at risk of poverty and/or exclusion).⁹

² Spanish population in 2022: 47.432.805 Source: National Statistics Institute, INE, <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=31304>. AROPE: 27.6% INE, <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10005>

³ National Statistics Institute, INE, second term, 2022, available at <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=4183>

⁴ National Statistics Institute, INE, second term, 2022, available at <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=4184>

⁵ National Statistics Institute, INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10005>

⁶ National Statistics Institute, INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10009>

⁷ De la Rica, Sara; Gorjón, Lucía; Miller, Luis and Úbeda, Paloma (2018), Estudio comparado sobre la situación de la población gitana en España en relación al empleo y la pobreza (Comparative study on the situation of the Roma population in Spain in relation to employment and poverty). ISEAK, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, available at: https://iseak.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Estudio-comparado-sobre-la-situaci%C3%B3n-de-la-poblaci%C3%B3n-gitana-en-Espa%C3%B1a-en-relaci%C3%B3n-al-empleo-y-la-pobreza_presentacion.pdf

⁸ National Statistics Institute, INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10005>

⁹ National Statistics Institute, INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10010>

Given that income from work constitutes the main source of financing for most households, not having a job leads to a situation of insufficient income that prevents the acquisition of the basic products and services necessary to maintain a decent life. In the fourth quarter of 2017, the unemployment rate was 16.55%, 14.45% in 2018, 13.78% in 2019, 16.13% in 2020, 13.33% in 2021 and 12.48% in 2022.¹⁰

The consequences of living without income or with low income extend to the entire family unit, affecting children and adolescents in the home. Although employment is a decisive element in the process of social integration, having a job is not a sufficient condition to guarantee the absence of poverty and social exclusion, due to the precariousness or job instability that affects 16% of the employed population.

The data from the Living Conditions Survey show a worsening of financial insecurity associated with the increase in poverty and social exclusion. Economic poverty is manifested in the high rate of households that do not have the capacity to face unforeseen expenses, which was 37.3% in 2017 and lays at 33.6% in 2022¹¹, and the percentage of households that reach the end of the month with some type of difficulty, 52% in 2017 and 43.7% in 2022.¹² The rate of households that have been late in paying expenses related to the main home (mortgage or rent, gas bills, community...) in the last 12 months has gone from 7.4% in 2017 to 11% in 2021.¹³

In the following chapter, we will go through the key data related to the Survey of Living Conditions published in 2022 analysing the changes that are exposed by the most recent data.

3.1. AROPE – At risk of Poverty and/or Exclusion

3.1.1. Sex

¹⁰ National Statistics Institute, INE, Active Population Survey, Historical Series, available at https://www.ine.es/prensa/epa_tabla.htm Data for 2022 corresponds to the second term of the year.

¹¹ National Statistics Institute, INE, Survey of Living Conditions, available at <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?t=9974&L=0>

¹² National Statistics Institute, INE, Survey of Living Conditions, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9992>

¹³ National Statistics Institute, INE, Survey of Living Conditions, available at <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9974>

Not only did the AROPE rate grew from the last year, 2021. The data -once again- show a feminization of poverty and social exclusion: 28.7% of women and 27% of men, that is a difference of 1.7 percentage points against females.

'At Risk of Poverty' is the main indicator of the AROPE indicator, with a 21% of the population affected; the rate for women is 21.7%, while that of men is 20%. The rate for women is.¹⁴

The indicator of 'low work intensity' reaches 9.9% of the population, a slight descent from 2020 when it was at 10.8%. This can be attributed to the extensive measures taken by the Government to protect jobs during 2020. Breaking the data by sex, it is 10.1% for women, while it is 10% for men.

Thirdly, 7% of the population suffers from "severe material deprivation", a significant raise from the 4.7% of 2020. Again, the indicator raises to 7% for women and 6.9% for men.

Table 1. Components of the AROPE indicator, by sex

	Women		Men		Difference between women and male in pp	
Year	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
AROPE	28.3	27.2	27.0	25.6	1.3	1.6
At Risk of Poverty (income in the year prior to the interview)	22.2	21.7	21.1	20.2	1.1	1.5
Severe Material Deprivation	7.4	7	7.2	6.9	0.2	0.1
Living in homes with low work intensity (from 0 to 59 years old)	12.1	10.1	11.3	9.7	0.8	0.4

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2021.
<https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10005>

¹⁴ The poverty threshold is the monetary amount that defines whether a person is considered poor or not based on the net income received. It is calculated annually as a percentage of the national median income per consumption unit. Depending on the degree of poverty to be measured, one percentage or another is applied. The two most used thresholds are the one corresponding to 60% of the median, by which the risk of poverty is defined, and the one corresponding to 40% of the median, which defines the limit of what is considered severe poverty. The study of thresholds is important because annual changes in median income produce changes in the threshold. In other words, what is considered poverty varies every year depending on the median income of the total population. If the median income increases, then the poverty line grows, and the opposite happens in case of reduction.

3.1.2. Age

32.5% of children are in AROPE (31.7% in 2021), an increase of 1.3 percentage points. The proportion of people in AROPE is also high among young people, at 33.5% (30.3% in 2021), an increase of 3.2 pp, the highest peak by age group.

Those aged 30-44 also increase their AROPE rate by 1.7 pp, while those aged 45-64 grow, but at a lower level, only 1.2 pp.

Older persons have the lowest rate at 19.8% (20.5% in 2021), i.e. a decrease of 0.7 pp.

Table 2. AROPE and component indicators by age groups, in percentages

Age groups	AROPE		At Risk of Poverty (income in the year prior to the interview)		Severe Material Deprivation		Living in homes with low work intensity (from 0 to 59 years old)	
	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021
Below 16	32.5	31.2	28.7	27.6	8.6	9.1	8.8	7.0
16-29	33.5	30.3	24.8	22.7	9.9	9.3	13.7	10.5
30-44	27.3	25.6	21.1	19.4	7.5	7.5	9.6	8.0
45-64	27.6	26.4	19.7	19.2	7.2	6.7	14.2	3.13
65 +	19.8	20.5	17.5	18.8	4.4	3.2	-	-

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2021 and 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10005>

There are outstanding differences by sex and age in the AROPE indicator. In the case of children, there is a slight difference in favour of boys, regarding girls, of 0.4 percentage points. With respect young people, the AROPE rate for men raised significantly from 2021, from 29.7% to 32.9%. The rate also goes up to 34.2% in 2022 (33.8% in 2021) in the case of young women. Differences between females and males are above 1 percentage point in the rest of age groups, with the greatest among the elderly, with 4.2 percentage points.

Table 3. AROPE by age groups, by sex, in percentages

Age groups	Men		Women		Difference W-M in pp	
Year	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021
Below 16	32.7	28.2	32.3	32.1	-0.4	3.9
16-29	32.9	29.7	34.2	33.8	1.3	4.1

30-44	26.6	24.4	28.0	25.2	1.4	0.8
45-64	26.7	25.3	28.5	27.0	1.8	1.7
65 +	17.5	15.7	21.7	15.8	4.2	0.1

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, available at <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10005>

3.1.3. Nationality

Foreigners, both EU and non-EU, have a high probability of being at risk of poverty and exclusion. This probability increased during the first year of the pandemic.

The historical trend is confirmed in 2022. with an AROPE rate for the non-EU population nearly triples that of the Spanish (66.1% and 23.4% respectively). The AROPE rate of the EU population living in Spain is higher than the Spaniards' by 16.9 percentage points.

Table 4. AROPE by nationality, in percentage

Nationality	2022	2021	2020	Variation 2022-2021 pp
Total	26.7	25.5	24.4	1.2
Spanish	23.4	22.6	21.7	0.8
Foreign EU	40.3	43.4	46.2	-3.1
Foreign Non-EU	66.1	58.0	54.2	8.1

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10009>

3.1.4. Education

In Spain it is striking that having a secondary education level does not protect individuals from being poverty and/or excluded. As shown in the table, individuals who attained primary and secondary (compulsory) education have the highest AROPE rates, with 37.2% and 34.4%. Having university studies only reduces the AROPE rate with respect to the average by 15.1 percentage points in 2022, with a remarkable increase from the year before; therefore, this factor is not working as a strong barrier against poverty.

Table 5. AROPE by educational attainment, in percentages

	2022	2021	2020	Variation 2022-2021 in pp.
Primary education or lower	37.2	36.0	31.6	1.2
Secondary education first stage	34.4	32.5	31.7	1.9
Secondary education, second stage	27.1	26.0	23.7	1.1
University education	15.1	13.7	13.7	1.4

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10007>

3.1.5. Occupation

57.1% of the unemployed (54.7% in 2021) and 40% of the inactive (38.6% in 2021) are in AROPE. It is important to note that **18.1% of the people who work (15% in 2021) are at risk of poverty and social exclusion**. The main interannual variation corresponds to the retired, whose AROPE rate increased by 3.1 percentage points.

Table 6. AROPE by occupation status, in percentages

	2022	2021	2020	Variation 2022-2021 in pp.
Total	27.6	25.5	24.4	1.1
Occupied	18.1	15.0	15.3	3.1
Unemployed	57.1	54.7	56.9	2.4
Retired	16.0	16.7	14.0	-0.7
Other inactive	40.0	38.6	37.0	1.4

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10008>

3.1.6. Household type

The worse situation of single parent households should be highlighted again, as in the previous years. The percentage of single parent households who are in AROPE (an adult and dependent children) reaches 54.6% (49.1% in 2021). The situation is also bad for the type 'Other households with dependent children' (meaning the parents are not there and there are other adults in replacement), where nearly 4 out of 10 are in AROPE. The highest increase happened to single-person households, with an interannual variation of 5.5 percentage points.

Table 7. AROPE by type of household, in percentages

	2022	2021	2020	Variation 2022-2021 in pp.
--	------	------	------	----------------------------

Total	27.6	26.4	25.3	1.2
One person household	33.6	31.9	26.1	1.7
2 adults without dependent children	20.5	20.9	20.3	-0.4
Other households without dependent children	21.0	22.1	21.9	1.1
1 adult with 1 or more dependent children (single parents)	54.6	49.1	46.8	5.5
2 adults with 1 or more dependent children	27.8	24.4	25.2	3.4
Other households with dependent children	37.1	37.8	33.4	-0.7

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10010>

3.2. Geographic distribution

3.2.1. AROPE by Autonomous Communities and Cities

With respect to 2021, only 5 territories improved their AROPE rate; these are the autonomous city of Melilla, and the autonomous communities of Cantabria, Galicia, Asturias, and Catalonia. The rest of the regions have worsened their level of poverty and social exclusion in one year, up to 5 percentage points in the case of the Region of Murcia, 4.2 pp. in the Autonomous Community of Navarre and 3.6 in the Autonomous City of Ceuta. The Autonomous Communities with the highest AROPE rates are Ceuta (42.4%), Andalusia (38.4%), the Canary Islands (38.3%) and Murcia (34.7%).

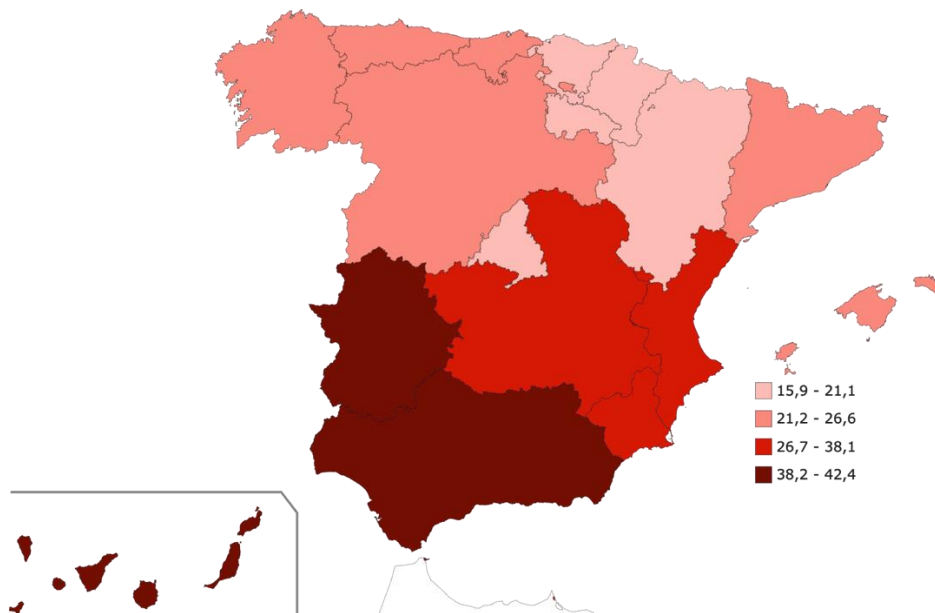
Table 8. AROPE by Autonomous Communities and Cities, in percentages

	2022	2021	Difference 2022-2021 in pp
01 Andalucía	38.4	35.1	3.3
02 Aragón	20.3	18.5	1.8
03 Asturias, Principado de	26.6	27.7	-1.1
04 Balears, Illes	24.5	22	2.5
05 Canarias	38.3	36.3	2.0
06 Cantabria	21.6	23.7	-2.1
07 Castilla y León	22.4	19.8	2.6
08 Castilla - La Mancha	31.4	29.8	1.6
09 Cataluña	22.1	22.8	-0.7

10 Comunitat Valenciana	30.3	29.3	1.0
11 Extremadura	39.1	38.7	0.4
12 Galicia	24.5	25.7	-1.2
13 Madrid, Comunidad de	21.1	20.9	0.2
14 Murcia, Región de	34.7	29.7	5.0
15 Navarra, Comunidad Foral de	16.6	12.0	4.6
16 País Vasco	15.9	13.9	2.0
17 Rioja. La	20.1	19.0	1.1
18 Ceuta	42.4	38.8	3.6
19 Melilla	38.1	42.4	-4.3

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10011>

Map 1. AROPE by Autonomous Communities and Cities



Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10011#!tabs-mapa>

3.2.2. At Risk of Poverty

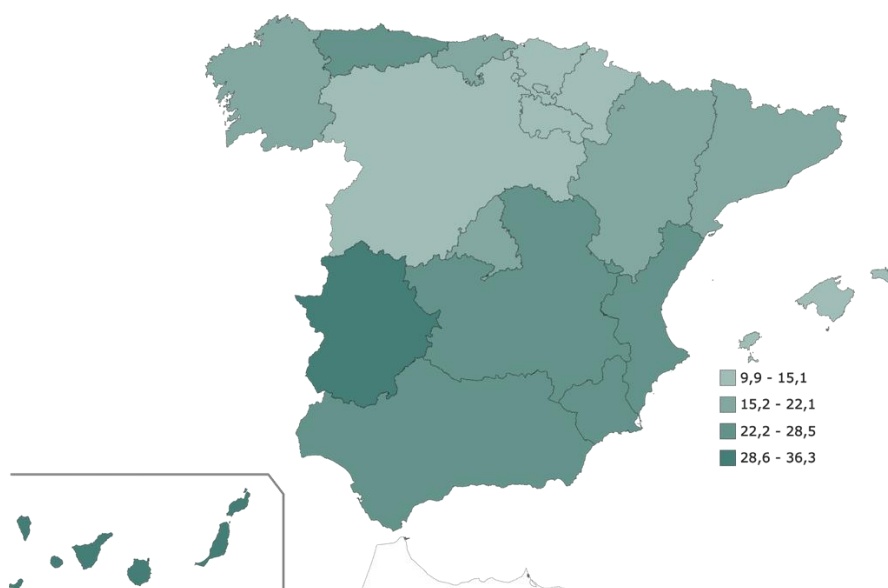
Between 2022 and 2021, the at-risk-of-poverty rate decreased in 10 out of 19 autonomous communities and cities, while it worsened in 9. The most remarkable increase happened in Andalucía and the Balearic Islands.

Table 9. At risk of Poverty Rate by Autonomous Communities and Cities, in percentages.

	2022	2021	Difference 2022-2021 in pp
TOTAL	21.7	21.0	0.7
01 Andalucía	32.3	28.5	3.8
02 Aragón	15.8	16.0	-0.2
03 Asturias. Principado de	20.4	22.2	-1.8
04 Balears. Illes	17.6	14.1	3.5
05 Canarias	28.4	29.9	-1.5
06 Cantabria	15.4	18.0	-2.6
07 Castilla y León	17.9	15.1	2.8
08 Castilla - La Mancha	27.4	25.1	2.3
09 Cataluña	14.8	16.7	-1.9
10 Comunitat Valenciana	25.1	24.6	0.5
11 Extremadura	32.2	31.4	0.8
12 Galicia	20.2	22.1	-1.9
13 Madrid. Comunidad de	15.2	15.4	-0.2
14 Murcia. Región de	27.7	25.0	2.7
15 Navarra. Comunidad Foral de	9.8	9.9	-0.1
16 País Vasco	12.2	10.0	2.2
17 Rioja. La	16.1	15.0	1.1
18 Ceuta	32.3	35.3	-3
19 Melilla	30.1	36.3	-6.2

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10011>

Map 2. At risk of Poverty Rate by Autonomous Communities and Cities



Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10011#!tabs-mapa>

3.2.3. Severe Material Deprivation

In the Living Conditions Survey published in 2022, a methodological change was introduced that particularly affects the "Severe Material Deprivation" Indicator. For reasons of ease of comparison, in 2022 we continue to use the traditional calculation methodology. The new calculation method will be incorporated in the Poverty Watch 2023.

Considering the severe material deprivation, only 5 autonomous communities reduced their rates, while the average increased by 0.7 percentage points. The highest rate corresponds to Ceuta, which 17.2%. The lowest rate corresponds to La Rioja, which 3.8%.

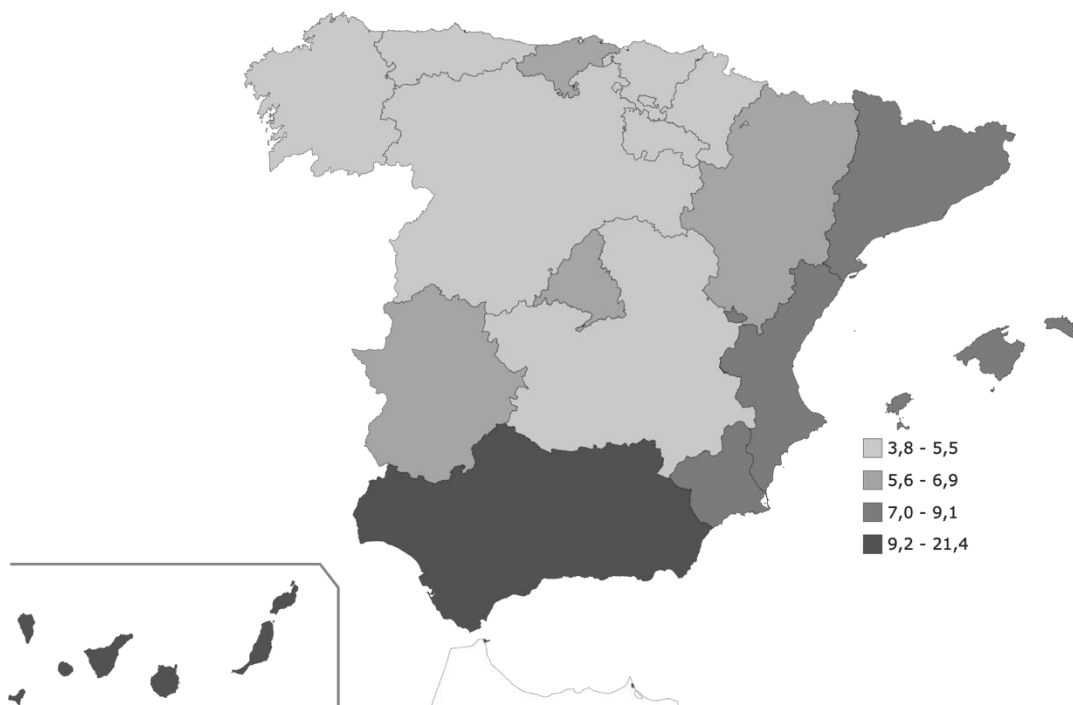
Table 10. Severe Material Deprivation Rates by Autonomous Communities and Cities, in percentages

	2022	2021	Difference between 2022-2021 in pp.
Total	7.3	7.0	0.3
01 Andalucía	10.2	8.0	2.2
02 Aragón	5.6	1.7	3.9
03 Asturias. Principado de	5.5	4.5	1.0
04 Balears. Illes	8.5	6.9	1.6
05 Canarias	13.5	10.7	2.8

06 Cantabria	5.7	4.4	1.3
07 Castilla y León	3.8	3.6	0.2
08 Castilla - La Mancha	5.1	3.1	2.0
09 Cataluña	7.3	6.2	1.1
10 Comunitat Valenciana	7.1	11.5	-4.4
11 Extremadura	6.9	8.8	-1.9
12 Galicia	3.8	5.2	-1.4
13 Madrid. Comunidad de	6.0	6.9	-0.9
14 Murcia. Región de	9.1	7.6	1.5
15 Navarra. Comunidad Foral de	5.5	6.2	-0.7
16 País Vasco	5.2	5.0	0.2
17 Rioja. La	3.8	2.3	1.5
18 Ceuta	21.4	6.4	15.0
19 Melilla	17.2	13.9	3.3

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10011>

Map 3. Severe Material Deprivation Rates by Autonomous Communities and Cities



Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10011#!tabs-mapa>

3.2.3.1. Food deprivation

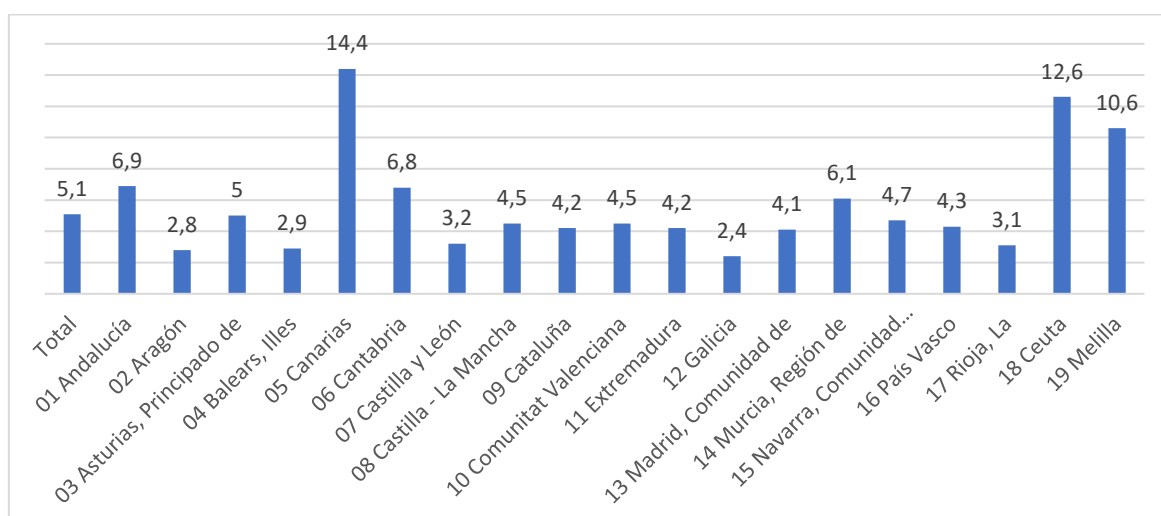
Food insecurity is a manifestation of extreme poverty. Unfortunately, in Spain, the proportion of the population living at risk of poverty and exclusion has remained chronically above 23% and today it affects 27.6% of the entire population, that is, just over 13 million people.

The statistical indicator offered by the Survey of Living Conditions is the tip of the iceberg. Food insecurity raised in the last year and in 2022 in particular, due to inflation. In Spain, prices have risen most notably since the beginning of 2021: 56% for oil, 17% for cereals, 16% for dairy products and eggs, and 10% for meat, according to a recent report by the Bank of Spain.¹⁵

According to the latest published data, the proportion of people who cannot buy and consume a meal of meat, chicken, fish or its vegetarian equivalent has doubled since 2015. Today it reaches 4.8% of women and 4.7 % of men. Children and youth, immigrants and single-parent households are the most affected sociodemographic groups.

Social policies, including food safety, are transferred and are the responsibility of the regional governments. The Graph shows great territorial inequality in access to the right to food. The Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla have the highest rates of food deprivation, while Galicia, Aragón and Balearic Islands have the lowest.

Graph 1. Food deprivation rate by autonomous communities and cities



¹⁵ Borrallo, F; Cuadro, L y Pérez, J. (2022), "El aumento de los precios de las materias primas alimenticias y su traslación a los precios de consumo en el área del Euro". Banco de España, Boletín Económico, 3/2022, available at: <https://www.bde.es/f/webbde/SES/Secciones/Publicaciones/InformesBoletinesRevistas/ArticulosAnaliticos/22/T3/Fich/be2203-art23.pdf>

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9975>

3.2.3.2. Financial exclusion

The term refers to the inability or difficulty of access and / or use of financial services and products in the general market, which are appropriate to their needs and allow them to lead a normal social life in the society to which they belong. Due to the difficulty of accessing a job with a living wage and the high costs of housing, many are unable to meet the costs of utilities, basic needs, and food.

The Survey of Living Conditions provide three variables that indicate a situation of financial exclusion: "not being able to face unforeseen expenses", "reaching the end of the month with great difficulty" and "having delays in the payments for the main housing". In total, 43.7% of the households suffer some degree of difficulty in making ends meet. The rate scales up to 66% in the case of single parent households.

Table 11. Households suffering a degree of difficulty in making ends meet

	With great difficulty	With difficulty	With some difficulty
Total	8,6	12,3	22,8
One person households	10,4	12,9	22,5
2 adults without dependent children	5,7	9,2	21
Other households without dependent children	6,6	12,5	23,9
1 adult with 1 or more dependent children (single parents)	17,2	21,7	27,1
2 adults with 1 or more dependent children	8,6	13	22,9
Other households with dependent children	12,9	16,2	27,9

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9992>

The set of policy measures known as the 'Social Shield' mainly protects a certain type of 'vulnerable households' who can document their circumstances, but many people who live in poverty, with high debts, in precarious housing or homeless are not in the list or they have no means to prove their hardships. Immigrants and locals working in the black economy cannot prove their income has fallen or their jobs have been lost, so they survive on food aid and casual precarious work. The labour market continues to take its toll on women, as analysed afterwards. Once again, when a new crisis comes, it is even worse for women and gender equality is facing a setback.

Table 12. Households in financial distress

	Do not have the capacity to meet unforeseen expenses		Have had delays in the payment of expenses related to your main residence (mortgage or rent, gas bills, community fees, etc.) in the last 12 months.	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
Total	33.4	35.4	12.6	12.2
Men	32.6	34.1	12.8	12.5
Women	34.2	36.5	12.3	11.9
Difference women-men in pp.	1.6	2.4	-0.5	-0.6

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9967>

3.2.4. Living in households with low work intensity (from 0 to 59 years old)

Only 6 autonomous communities reduced their rate of households living with low work intensity, while the other 13 worsened with respect 2021.

Melilla, Canary Islands and Ceuta suffer from the worst situation regarding this indicator, with 26.5%, 32.3% and 20.4% respectively. The regions with the lowest rates are La Rioja, País Vasco and Madrid, with 6.1% , 7.0% and 8% respectively.

Table 13. 'Living in homes with low work intensity' by Autonomous Communities and Cities

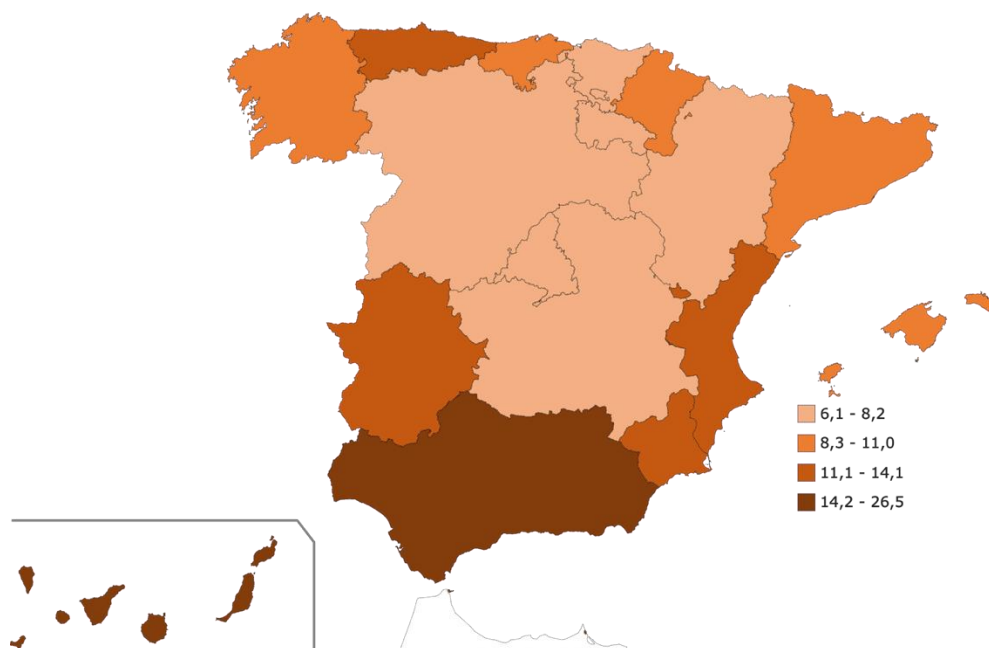
	2022	2021	Difference between 2022-2021 in pp
--	------	------	------------------------------------

21

Total	11.7	9.9	1.8
01 Andalucía	18.0	13.5	4.5
02 Aragón	7.6	6.1	1.5
03 Asturias. Principado de	14.1	17.8	-3.7
04 Balears. Illes	9.1	4.5	4.6
05 Canarias	21.3	15.3	6.0
06 Cantabria	11.0	7.8	3.2
07 Castilla y León	8.2	7.9	0.3
08 Castilla - La Mancha	8.2	8.0	0.2
09 Cataluña	9.5	9.8	-0.3
10 Comunitat Valenciana	11.2	11.3	-0.1
11 Extremadura	13.7	11.9	1.8
12 Galicia	9.9	8.5	1.4
13 Madrid. Comunidad de	8.0	6.0	2.0
14 Murcia. Región de	12.8	9.2	3.6
15 Navarra. Comunidad Foral de	8.9	7.5	1.4
16 País Vasco	7.0	7.4	-0.4
17 Rioja. La	6.1	6.0	0.1
18 Ceuta	20.4	22.5	-2.1
19 Melilla	26.5	28.2	-1,7

Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10011>

Map 4. 'Living in homes with low work intensity' by Autonomous Communities and Cities



Source: INE, Survey of Living Conditions, 2022, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10011#!tabs-mapa>

4. What is happening to poverty? What are the groups most affected?

4.1. Wealth concentration and inequality keep increasing

The richest 1% account for 17% of national income. The poorest half of the population had not yet recovered the pre-crisis income level of 2008 when the pandemic broke out, according to the "EsadeEcPol" report.¹⁶

The findings for Spain are as follows:

- The weight of capital income (25% of the total) did not grow as much with respect to labour income (75%) compared to other developed countries.
- The levels of income inequality are higher than those obtained in previous studies based on surveys or tax data. The top 1% earn between 13 and 17% of national income (rather than 10 or 11% according to previous estimates).
- Income inequalities narrowed during the years of the housing boom but have increased since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008, mainly due to rising unemployment, wage cuts and the growth of financial rents among the top income groups. The share of the top 1% in national income has increased from 13% in 2007 to 17% in 2019.
- Tax revenues increased during the 1980s (from 15 to 26% of national income) and have remained relatively constant since then. However, the composition of tax revenues by type of tax has changed significantly. Corporate income tax became more important than personal income tax during the real estate boom, but with the arrival of the financial crisis its share fell significantly.
- The system of taxes and transfers, as well as public consumption in health and education, make it possible to reduce part of the income inequalities. In 2019, the poorest 50% had 14% and 17% before and after redistribution, respectively. However, patterns of inequality do not change substantially through the state's redistributive action. The progressivity of the tax system fell since the 2008 financial crisis.

These results show that inequality is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, which needs to be tackled through different approaches and policies. The most important of these are outlined below:

- There is a need to improve education policies to close education gaps, as well as to move towards reducing high unemployment and temporariness to improve the incomes of middle and low incomes. These changes should be accompanied by the promotion of a new productive model that generates new

¹⁶ Artola, Miguel; Martínez Toledano, Clara and Sodano, Alice (2022), **Desigualdad de la Renta y Redistribución en España: Nueva Evidencia a partir de la Metodología del World Inequality Lab**. ESADE. Available at: <https://www.esade.edu/ecpol/es/publicaciones/desigualdad-de-la-renta-y-redistribucion-en-espana-nueva-evidencia-a-partir-de-la-metodologia-del-world-inequality-lab/>

- jobs and greater added value with the help of new technologies in sectors in which the country has a comparative advantage.
- Excessive exposure to housing perpetuates a brick-based production model, increases systemic risks (given the lack of asset diversification) and inevitably concentrates corporate profits among the wealthiest. Financial education policies, incentives for asset diversification and employee shareholding in companies are needed.
 - On taxation, it is key to increase the redistributive nature of the system. The most urgent measure lies in the reform of corporate taxation in order to recover the effective levels of tax pressure prior to 2008. Likewise, harmonisation of property taxation should be sought, in particular property taxes (IBI, Wealth Tax and Inheritance/Donation Tax) with a view to increasing the system's progressivity.

The concentration of wealth and the increase in poverty should not happen in the post-pandemic reconstruction. To avoid this, it is essential to increase social investment, extend and improve the effectiveness of the 'Social Shield', with firm commitments against poverty and inequality. The Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, in addition to getting off on the right foot, should contribute to guaranteeing this rights approach, especially for women and groups living in poverty and social vulnerability.

4.2. People in Poverty

People are considered to live in poverty when they cannot have the material, cultural and social resources necessary to satisfy their basic needs and, therefore, are excluded from the minimally acceptable living conditions for the country or region in which they live.

With this extremely scarce budget, people must cover all their needs: housing, food, clothing, education of their children, health, energy, leisure, and others. As that is impossible, they try to ensure the most strictly basic needs. However, many cannot. Their main difficulty is to resolve the **permanent obligation to choose**, to make a gradation between indispensable needs; between food and heat, between culture and diapers, between computer and shoes, and so on ...

People in poverty are subjects to many stereotypes and prejudices. These prejudiced ideas create biases and limit the ability to propose efficient rights-based solutions. For example, poverty is identified with immigration, homelessness, lack of education, or unemployment. However, none of these characteristics corresponds to the profile of the majority. With respect to the general population, people in poverty live much worse, have greater difficulties in dealing with any negative event. If something bad happens, it causes more serious consequences and it is very difficult for them to escape from that situation on their own.

Despite the set of policy measures adopted, some with great impact, others with limited coverage and some yet to be implemented, the statistics on poverty and inequality show a deterioration of social cohesion in Spain. The recovery that was to unfold after the pandemic started strongly, especially in economic sectors such as tourism which is central to the Spanish economy. However, this recuperation is now facing a new economic and energy crisis, partly attributable to the effects of Russia's war against Ukraine.

4.3. Anti-poverty Strategy

The **National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2019-2023** was approved on March 22, 2019, aimed at combatting poverty, and reducing inequality in income levels. The Strategy has been under review since 2020, due to the changes in the poverty situation and the need to act rapidly against economic shocks. The EPSR Action Plan motivated the Government to open a political debate, with the participation of the civil society organisations. The idea to set up ambitious goals in poverty reduction was mentioned, but it was not put into practice. As most of the competences regarding social affairs rely under the competence of the autonomous communities, this should be a joint effort everywhere through, and especially by those regions with the highest poverty rates.

4.4. Child Guarantee Plan

Spain is one of the EU countries with the highest rate of child poverty, after Romania and Bulgaria. This is the result of a combination of three factors: a poor distribution of the wealth generated in the country; labour relations that generate exclusion and an underdeveloped system of social protection for children and families. The consequences for children are a limitation in the enjoyment of rights and opportunities in the present, and a disregard for their talent caused by the lack of equal opportunities in the future.

The European Child Guarantee is a recommendation of the European Council, approved by the Member States on 14 June, which aims to prevent and combat the social exclusion of children by providing effective access, regardless of income level, to six services essential for children's development.

In July 2022, the Council of Ministers approved the **State Action Plan for the implementation of the Child Guarantee**. The Plan distinguishes 3 services that must be free of charge: early childhood education and care; out-of-school education and activities; and at least one free healthy meal at school. In addition,

it sets out 3 other services that must be affordable: healthy nutrition, health services and adequate housing.¹⁷

The President Sanchez indicated that, with this Plan, "we can say that Spain is moving towards a much fairer and more dignified country". He insisted that the Government "is committed to improving the situation of children and adolescents in our country", as reflected in the different measures it has adopted. He highlighted as a "fundamental milestone" the deployment of the Minimum Vital Income and the Child Support Supplement, with 3,022 million euros dedicated to financing these benefits: "Never before has such an investment been dedicated to the fight against child poverty", he stressed.

He also referred to the programme for family protection and attention to child poverty with 199 million euros in 2022, more than double that of 2018; the investment in first cycle education from 0 to 3 years of age, "free and of quality", with an investment of 671 million euros; the programme for Educational Guidance, Advancement and Enrichment PROA+, which will have a budget of 360 million euros, the Personal and Family Accompaniment and Guidance Units for educationally vulnerable students, with 125 million euros; the digital skills programme for children and adolescents at risk of digital exclusion, with a budget of 222 million euros.

Sánchez highlighted other important policies such as scholarships, the expansion of services such as oral and dental care in the National Health System, and the approval of the first National Strategic Plan for the Reduction of Childhood Obesity, as well.¹⁸

These are new policies and therefore there is no evaluation available, which remains to be done in future Poverty Watch Reports.

4.5. Law on the Right to Housing

The rising housing prices has a great impact on low-and-middle-income families. The EAPN ES study published in December 2021 on this issue explains the problem of the high percentage of salary spent on buying, renting, and paying for utilities, due to the tight market and the lack of social housing alternatives

¹⁷

https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/referencias/Paginas/2022/refc20220705_cc.aspx#Infantil

¹⁸

<https://www.comisionadopobrezainfantil.gob.es/es/el-presidente-del-gobierno-la-ministra-de-derechos-sociales-y-agenda-2030-y-el-alto-comisionado>

(especially social rental and/or affordable, below market prices).¹⁹ **There is a consensus that housing has gone from being a social good to a consumer good, a market good.**

The people interviewed point out that the housing problem must be tackled, not from the perspective of the property market or as a material good, but from the perspective of the home as the space where the people who live there develop:

- "That is exactly what is being raised right now in the debate, access to housing as something more than a roof over one's head, but a space of security from which to start building." (*Fatima, 53 years old, Spanish, has a single parent and a large family, lives in a social housing project in Melilla*).

Another case is that of Tania, who is about to be evicted from her home for non-payment of rent, due to the fact that her Minimum Living Income was suspended and not replaced by other income. She must leave her home and has no alternative housing: the Social Services do not offer her any kind of resource.

- "...there are people who have their parents, and they can stay at home, even if it is only for a while. But me... Look, my mother is worse off than me, she has a house, yes, but a brother of mine lives with her who is married and has a little girl, all in one room. I have another brother who has three grown-up children who are in the same situation as me, who can't find a flat. (...) Even if they want to help me, they can't. I see myself on the street, I can't find a place to live. I see myself on the streets because I don't know where to go. If you have a brother who has an empty room, if you have your mother ... at least you can stay in her house for a while. But I don't have anyone to help me! Because they are almost the same or worse. They are bad too." (*Tania, 40 years old, Spanish, single parent with two dependent children, Spanish Roma, victim of gender-based violence. Currently living in a rented flat in the process of eviction in Castilla y León*).

The interviewees experience many situations in which housing "is just a roof over their heads" and not a place where people can feel secure to develop a life project. Facing the costs of housing is a major constraint on their already precarious economies and, in many cases, does not allow them to cover their most basic needs.

Prices are inflated by the touristic residential market and the speculation in the real estate, leading to abusive pricing of rented accommodation. The requirements for access to rental housing exclude many of the people that are assisted by civil society organisations. In addition to these factors of economic

¹⁹ Malgesini, Graciela (Dir), González, Sara and Gracia, Eva (2021), **El derecho a la vivienda. La perspectiva autonómica.** EAPN España, December. Available at: <https://www.eapn.es/publicaciones/490/el-derecho-a-la-vivienda-la-perspectiva-autonomica>

exclusion and lack of social housing alternatives, there are also processes of racism, xenophobia, and multiple discrimination, such as aporophobia.

One aspect that stands out is the substandard housing to which people in situations of poverty and exclusion have access, often in the form of rented rooms in shared flats, without any regulation that guarantees minimum conditions of habitability. Another issue highlighted is the presence of architectural barriers (ageing, unrehabilitated housing stock) in many of them, which condemns thousands of people to an extremely limited or isolated life. This is a key factor in the specific exclusion of people with reduced mobility, causing or aggravating unwanted loneliness on many occasions.

According to researcher Jesús Leal, it would take at least two decades to reach a reasonable level of housing resources (with 1.23 million more rental housing units) and to reach 9% of the social housing stock adapted to the economic capacity of the most vulnerable households.²⁰

In February 2022, the Government submitted the draft **Law on the Right to Housing** to the Spanish Parliament for urgent parliamentary processing. One of the most important measures concerns the public social housing stock. This is subject to permanent protection "so that it cannot be sold off, as has happened in the past". It imposes a compulsory reserve of 30% of any social housing development and that, of that 30%, 15% must go to social renting. It is hoped to gradually build up a public housing stock in line with European countries (in France, he gave as an example, there is seven times more social housing than in Spain, and in the Netherlands the number is twelve times higher than in Spain).

The law will improve the regulation of evictions in situations of vulnerability. From now on, social services will coordinate more effectively with judges to be able to offer housing solutions to those affected. The law will guarantee that the housing alternative sought for these families will be a home as such, and not a shelter, as is currently the case in some autonomous communities.

The competent administrations will be able to declare, for a limited period of time, "stressed residential market areas" and establish measures to prevent abusive increases in rent and achieve a reduction in prices, either by reducing the cost of rent or by increasing supply. In these areas, the envisaged tax incentives are designed to make it more profitable for landlords to lower rental prices.

²⁰ Evaluation by Jesús Leal, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the Complutense University of Madrid, in his presentation at the Round Table "The right to housing" at the EAPN-ES Annual Seminar, held on 29, 30 November and 1 December 2021 in Palma de Mallorca, under the theme "The reconstruction of social Europe in times of pandemic".

With regard to empty homes, the law envisages that local councils can levy a surcharge of up to 150% on the Property Tax (IBI) levied on them, in order to get them onto the rental or sale market.

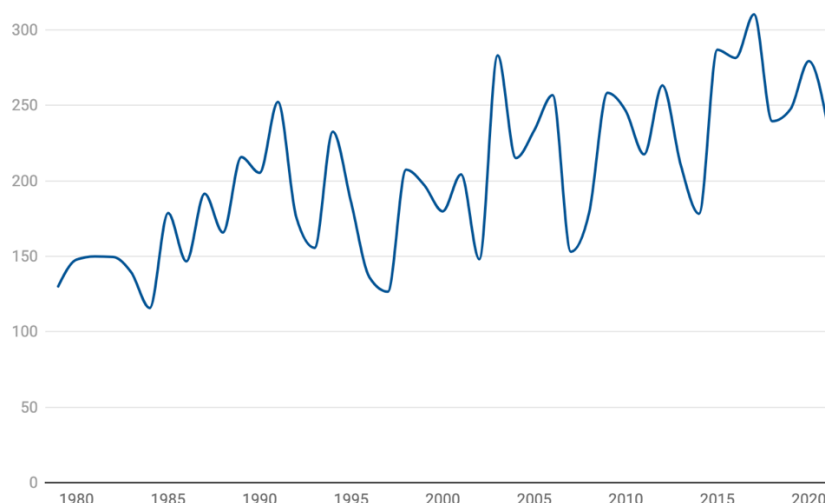
4.6. National Strategy against Energy Poverty

Heat waves and extreme temperatures caused by the climate crisis highlight summer energy poverty in Spain. There are three main causes: low household income, high energy prices and the energy inefficiency of housing due to its poor construction quality.

In June 2022, with thermometers reaching and even exceeding 40°C in several parts of the peninsula, Spain is already experiencing its first major heatwave in 2022 before the summer has even begun and in a context of unprecedentedly high energy prices. In fact, this is the worst heat wave in June in 20 years and can only be explained in a climate change scenario.

Cooling degree (CDD) days vary across the EU. Annual averages across 42 years, from 1979 to 2021, show that Cyprus had the highest CDD (577), followed by Malta (574), Greece (272) and Spain (200). The lowest values for this index were calculated for Ireland (0.03), Sweden (0.37) and Denmark (0.91). This means that for a given building, the need for cooling (or air conditioning) in Ireland, Sweden and Denmark were negligible between 1979 and 2021. In Spain, the following Graph shows that more and more we need to put the air conditioning on.

Graph 2. Annual evolution of the heat severity indicator in Spain. Measured in cooling degree days (CDD).



Source: EUROSTAT. The use of indicators or indexes such as Heating degree days and Cooling degree days can contribute to the correct interpretation of energy consumption for cooling and heating buildings. Heating degree days (HDD) and cooling degree days (CDD) are weather-based technical indexes designed to describe the energy requirements of buildings in terms of heating (HDD) or cooling (CDD). https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Heating_and_cooling_degree_days_-_statistics

In addition to the impact of this high temperature of the land and seas, rainfall and harvests, there are also consequences for people's health. Extreme heat particularly affects the more than 3 million people in Spain who live in energy poverty, which represents 16.8% of the population.

The risk of mortality is primarily explained by the level of household income. The impact of climate change is more accentuated in disadvantaged social groups, according to a study on the socioeconomic factors involved in the impact of heat waves carried out by the Carlos III Institute of Health (ISCIII).²¹

Frozen in winter and scorched in summer. When the good weather arrives, the two million households suffering from energy poverty in Spain tremble, but with fear. Keeping their homes at the right temperature is an added difficulty to their economic problems, and if they can do so, it is at the cost of choosing between turning on the air conditioning or buying a variety of foodstuffs. 14% of Spaniards are unable to keep their homes at 26 degrees during heat waves, according to data from the INE's Living Conditions Survey and the Foessa Foundation, the Caritas organisation specialising in the country's social situation.

In many cases, these are homes without air conditioning or fans, but having these cooling devices does not guarantee freedom from the heatwave either. To simply switch them on, without luxury, Foessa estimates that a family of four will spend 25 euros a week, about 100 euros a month. The amount is less than what is required in winter, when it takes 40 euros a week - 160 euros a month - to keep the house at 21 degrees, but it represents a huge outlay in these households.²²

Therefore, families are at a crossroads. Even if houses have an air conditioner, the first element to combat extreme heat, low-income people tend not to use it

²¹ López-Bueno, J. A.; Díaz, J., Sánchez-Guevara, C.; Sánchez-Martínez, G.; Franco, M.; Gullón, P.; Núñez Peiró, M.; Valero, I.; and Linares, C. (2020), "The impact of heat waves on daily mortality in districts in Madrid: The effect of sociodemographic factors," **Environmental Research**, Volume 190, ISSN 0013-9351, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2020.109993>.

²² Alvaro Soto, "Mantener una vivienda a 26 grados en verano cuesta cien euros al mes", *Diario Sur*, July 19, 2022, available at: <https://www.diariosur.es/sociedad/mantener-vivienda-26-grados-gasto-cien-euros-mes-20220719181934-ntrc.html>

even if they are suffering. The inability to use the appliance even if it is available, still little explored, is potentially a very relevant facet of fuel poverty.

Along with vulnerable people and the elderly and dependent persons, another of the most affected groups is children, who must face the end of the school year in schools and kindergartens built before energy efficiency criteria were in place and are therefore not adapted to cope with these heat waves.

Given this reality, there is an urgent need to adapt and refurbish homes with criteria based on energy efficiency, to improve insulation and enclosures, since the cheapest energy is that which is not consumed, combined with the replacement of equipment with more efficient ones and the integration of renewable energies that allow homes to be cooled in a clean and affordable way. To this, energy-saving habits should be added, such as ventilation early or late in the day; the use of curtains, blinds and awnings to avoid direct sunlight; the use of fans instead of air conditioners (as they consume up to 20 times less electricity) or, if the latter are used, not lowering the temperature below 26 °C. Each degree lower than this means 7% more energy consumption.²³

Improving the insulation of roofs and façades, changing windows, using passive ventilation techniques, installing air-conditioning equipment, installing photovoltaic panels for community energy self-consumption, or increasing vegetation in playgrounds to create shaded areas and cool them are some measures that should be generalised to cope with early and extreme summers.

Due to the importance of the rate of households that could not maintain the adequate temperature in their home, close to 10%, the Government of Spain passed **the National Strategy against Energy Poverty 2019-2024**.²⁴

The Spanish government has boosted the use of the 'Bono Social Eléctrico', a 25% discount on electricity bills for those considered 'vulnerable consumers', in order to alleviate energy poverty. In 2022, other measures were adopted in order to contain energy prices, although they do not seem to have been sufficient in the face of the crisis generated by Russia's war against Ukraine. The discount on the Bono will be 60% until 31 December 2022.²⁵

²³ The civil society organisation ECODES develops the programme "Not a Single Home without Energy" ("Ni Un Hogar Sin Energía") to tackle energy poverty, helping more than 10,000 families since 2012. More information available at <https://ecodes.org/sala-de-prensa/notas-de-prensa/la-pobreza-energetica-una-realidad-al-alza-tambien-en-verano>

²⁴ The indicator also known as "Energy poverty" showed rates of 8.3% households in 2017; 9.6% in 2018; 7.7% in 2019 and 11.1% in 2020, according to the Living Conditions Survey, available at <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9974>

²⁵ <https://www.bonosocial.gob.es/#quees>

5. Labour market reform

5.1. A long-standing demand

In December 2021, the Labour Reform, a long-standing demand from social partners and civil society organisations, was approved.²⁶ This reform is not the full repeal of the 2012 reform, carried out in the midst of the economic crisis and austerity policies. However, the 2021 reform incorporates several significant changes that will improve the working conditions of workers with precarious contracts.

The regulation modifies several articles of the current Workers' Statute, especially with regard to contracts and collective bargaining. The goal is to popularise permanent contracts and limit temporary ones, and to give back to workers the bargaining power lost with the 2012 reform.

Before the 2021 reform, there were 4 types of employment contracts in Spain: permanent, temporary, training and internship. The main problem was the abuse of temporary contracts. Spain was the EU country with the highest rate of temporary workers, 24.7% in 2020. The European average was 13.6%.²⁷ Labour precarity is directly related to in-work poverty. Therefore, an improvement in this area would bring a reduction of this issue (to be confirmed with 2022 data).

The first results for 2022 are consistent with the objectives pursued by the labour reform: There are more permanent contracts than ever before. From 132,431 in January 2021 to 316,841 in February 2022 (139.2% compared to the same month in 2021). This type of contract already represents 22% of all contracts signed and has a positive impact on Social Security (temporary contracts are still the majority, standing at just over 1,100,000).

Some economists argue that this trend towards permanent contracts may be due to the post-pandemic economic recovery rather than the labour reform. But the plummeting number of one-day 'express contracts' in January 2022, just after the labour reform, can be attributed to this change in legislation.

Since the new labour reform came into force on 31 December, every time companies terminate a contract that lasted less than 30 days, they must pay a

²⁶ Real Decreto-ley 32/2021, de 28 de diciembre, de medidas urgentes para la reforma laboral, la garantía de la estabilidad en el empleo y la transformación del mercado de trabajo. - Boletín Oficial del Estado de 30-12-2021, available at: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2021-21788>

²⁷ <https://www.businessinsider.es/estas-son-claves-acuerdo-nueva-reforma-laboral-985489>

penalty of 26 euros per dismissed employee. "The proportion of one-day contracts out of the total number of contracts signed in January is 38.4% on average between 2017 and 2020. In January 2022 it is 29.5%," said the Minister for Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, José Luis Escrivá.²⁸

One of the most striking figures is that of permanent-discontinuous contracts, the star contract of the labour reform. These are the type of contract that the government wants to promote for more seasonal activities, such as tourism, where companies used to resort to temporary contracts. 2022 has started with 74,014 employees who have signed permanent-discontinuous contracts, a modality that until now was residual.

This Royal Decree also includes measures to facilitate the use of temporary employment procedures (ERTE), as an alternative and priority formula to redundancies, to meet exceptional needs of a macroeconomic or sectoral nature that justify the adoption of adjustment and temporary protection measures ("RED Flexibility and Employment Stabilisation Mechanism").

The report "First effects of the labour reform of 2021. A blow to temporary employment and improvement of rights", prepared by the UGT Confederal Research Service, points out that the labour reform has led to a sharp increase in permanent contracts, thus significantly reducing the rate of temporary employment and increasing the weight of stable employment, and benefiting more some of the population groups and branches of activity that traditionally had more precarious contractual conditions.²⁹

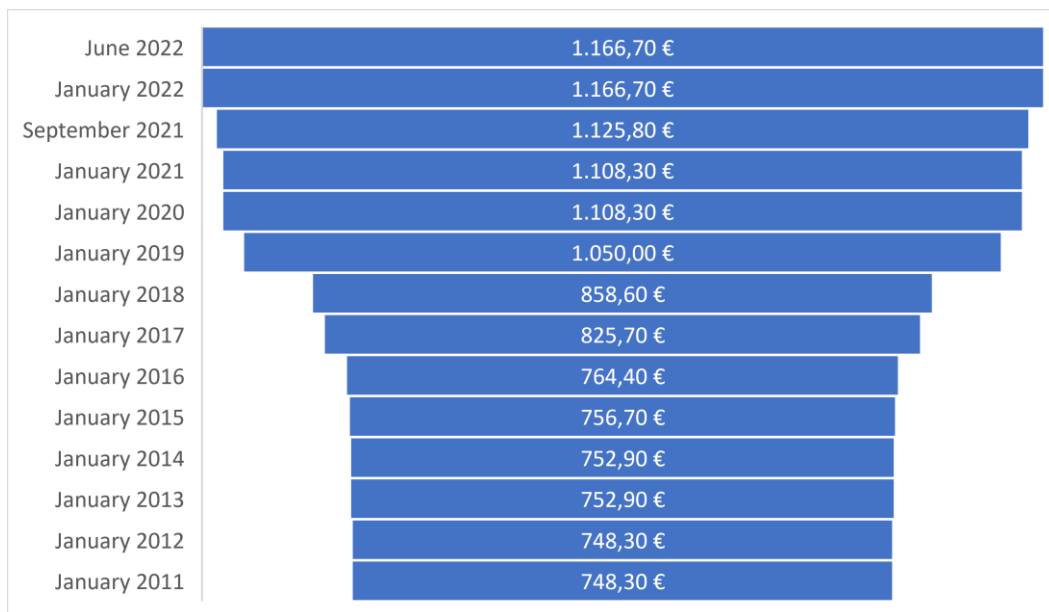
In a scenario marked by the economic slowdown and uncertainty in the international context, the UGT union highlights that the percentage of collective dismissals fell by 61.7% in the first four months of 2022, compared to the previous year, while there has been a certain increase in the use of ERTE mechanisms.

Moreover, in terms of wages, the reform has already improved the conditions of many workers in multiservice companies, with increases that could be between 1,000 and 7,000 euros per year, depending on the agreement in question.

Graph 3. Minimum Wage in Spain, 12 monthly payments

²⁸ <https://www.businessinsider.es/huellas-reforma-laboral-6-graficos-demuestran-efectos-1021873>

²⁹ UGT (2022), Primeros efectos de la reforma laboral 2021. Available at: https://www.ugt.es/sites/default/files/no_40_-_220718_primeros_efectos_de_la_reforma_laboral.pdf



Source: <https://datosmacro.expansion.com/smi/espana>

5.2. Women are still behind

The post Covid-19 economic recovery is resting on two areas, digitalisation, and energy transition. Both draw on a male-dominated workforce, given that these are sectors with the largest gender gaps, especially in the ICT sector. By the end of 2021, 0.2% of the labour force was engaged in the "Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products", some 36,000 people. Of these, 22,500 (62.5%) are men and 13,500 (37.5%) are women.³⁰ In addition to the employment gap, there is also a gender pay gap. On the other hand, automation is affecting certain jobs performed mainly by women, with low-skills and income.³¹

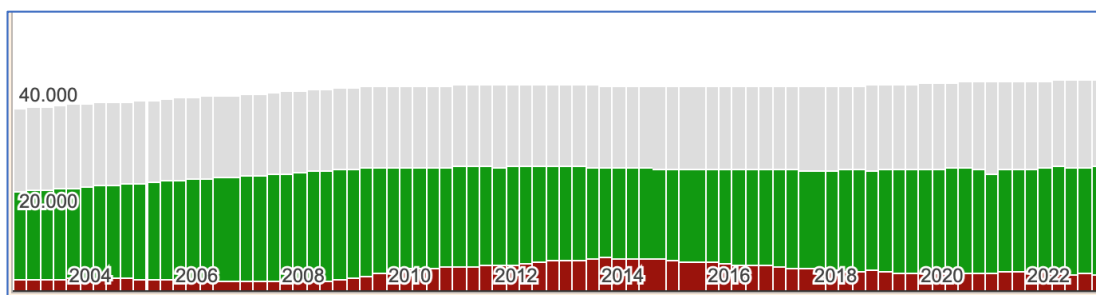
5.2.1. Activity gap

As shown in the following Graph, except for 2020, the level of occupied persons increased in the last years, even despite the pandemic. This is due to the fall of unemployment. The level of inactive population is nearly stagnated in the last decade.

Graph 4. Evolution of unemployed, occupied, and inactive population

³⁰ INE, Survey of Economic Population, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=4878>

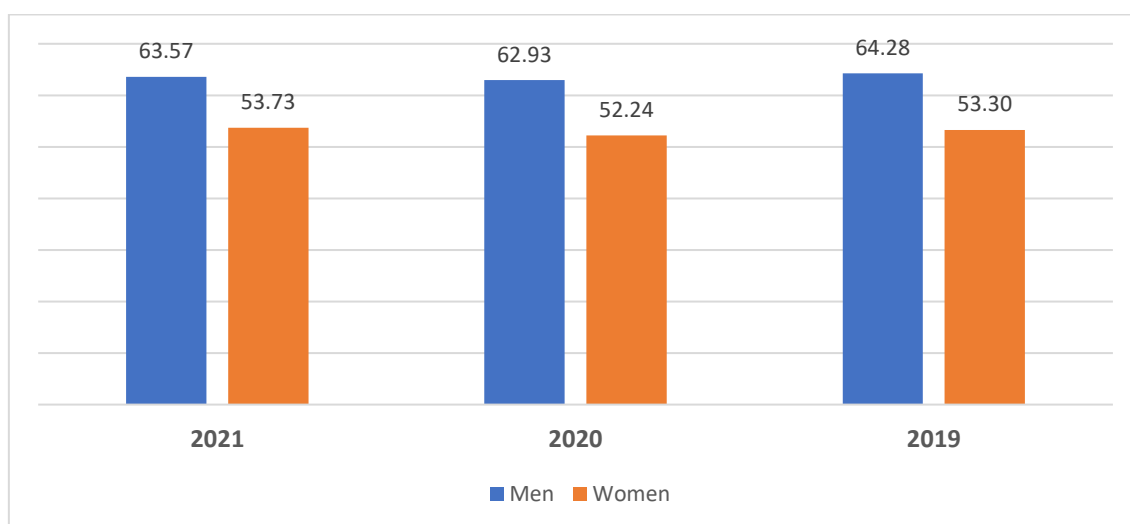
³¹



Red: unemployed; Green: occupied; Grey: Inactive. Source: Economic Population Survey.

The differences between men and women activity rates deepened with the pandemic. In 2020, women had an activity rate that was 10 points lower than that of men (53.5% and 63.3% respectively). In 2021, it only 'recovered' up to the pre-pandemic level (53.7%).

Graph 5. Activity rate by sex



Source: INE, Economic Population Survey, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=4734>

The small improvement is uneven within the autonomous communities. The cities of Melilla and Ceuta, and the regions of Cantabria, Madrid, and Murcia showed a more than 1 percentage point increase in the female activity rate in 2021, with regards 2019. The rest remained at the same pre-pandemic level or even worsened.

Table 14. Female activity rate by autonomous cities and communities

2021	2020	2019	Difference between 2021
------	------	------	-------------------------

				and 2019 in percentage point
01 Andalucía	50,89	48,63	50,43	0,46
02 Aragón	53,99	53,02	53,18	0,81
03 Asturias, Principado de	46,48	46,23	46,91	-0,43
04 Balears, Illes	59,05	56,92	59,39	-0,34
05 Canarias	54,7	53,08	55,19	-0,49
06 Cantabria	50,56	48,74	49,33	1,23
07 Castilla y León	49,08	48,42	49,08	0
08 Castilla - La Mancha	52,43	49,94	51,51	0,92
09 Cataluña	57,27	55,82	56,99	0,28
10 Comunitat Valenciana	52,69	51,4	52,1	0,59
11 Extremadura	49,16	48,99	48,98	0,18
12 Galicia	48,26	47,71	49,07	-0,81
13 Madrid, Comunidad de	59,58	58,13	58,36	1,22
14 Murcia, Región de	53,02	51,38	51,94	1,08
15 Navarra, Comunidad Foral de	54,76	51,96	53,94	0,82
16 País Vasco	52,36	51,42	52,15	0,21
17 Rioja, La	55,37	53,37	55,03	0,34
18 Ceuta	50,39	47,96	48,8	1,59
19 Melilla	57,31	55,47	53,75	3,56

Source: INE, Economic Population Survey, available at:
<https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=4939>

5.2.2. Employment gap

The employment rate, as the ratio of employed persons to the working-age population, is a basic social indicator that provides insight into the situation of advantage or disadvantage in employment on the basis of age or gender.

The gender gap in employment rates is the difference in percentage points between male employment rates and female employment rates. In 2020, the gap was 10.4 points. In 2021, there was a slight betterment, with a reduction of the gap by 0.8 points, and by 1.2 points since 2019.

Table 15. Gender employment gap, population aged 15-64

2021	2020	2019	Difference between 2021-2019
9.6	10.4	10.8	-1.2

Source: INE, Economic Population Survey, available at:
<https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=10883>

5.2.3. Unemployment gap

Female unemployment is almost 4 points higher than male unemployment. This gap is very steady throughout the 2019-2021 period. The 2021 female unemployment rate descended from the 2020 rate but did not reach the pre-pandemic rate yet. This means that male unemployment reduced more (-0.82 point) than female (-0.72).

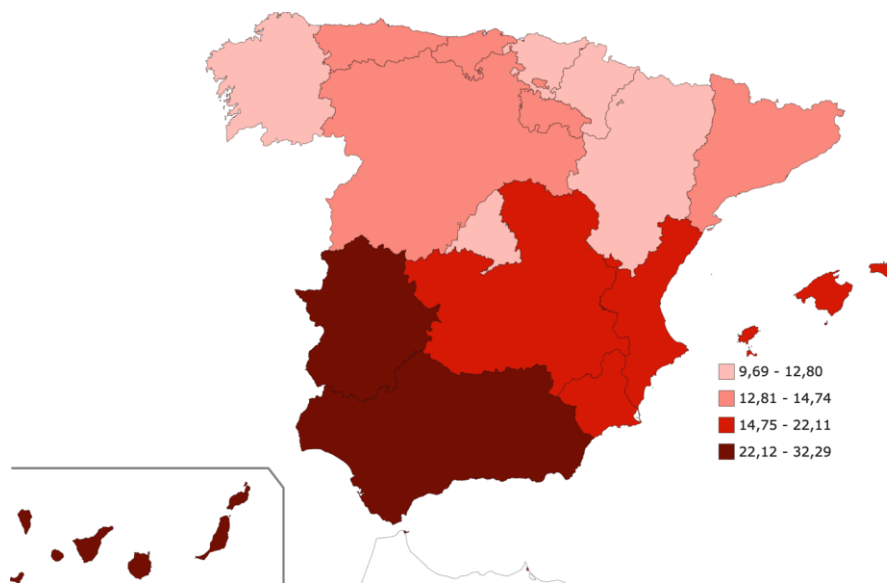
Table 16. Unemployment rate by sex

Sex	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Year	2021	2021	2020	2020	2019	2019
Unemployment Rate	13.05	16.71	13.87	17.43	12.45	15.99
Gender Unemployment gap	3.66		3.56		3.54	

Source: INE, Economic Population Survey, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=4887>

The worse female unemployment rates were registered in Ceuta, Melilla, Canary Islands and Andalucía, with regional economies devoted to services and tourism. The lowest rates could be found in the País Vasco, Navarra, Cantabria, Galicia and Madrid, with more diversified economies and labour market.

Map 5. Female unemployment rates in 2021



Source: INE, Economic Population Survey, available at: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=4966#!tabs-mapa>

In 2022, the unemployment rate kept lowering in average, but this is the effect of the men's rate reduction, although the gender unemployment gap is currently

3.20 points in total. This gap is higher among the 25-to-54-year-old group. The only difference favouring women belongs to the group under 20 years old.

Table 17. Unemployment rates by sex, second trimester 2022

		Men	Women	Women-Men unemployment gap
Unemployment rate	12.50%	11.00%	14.20%	3.20%
Unemployment under 25	28.50%	27.80%	29.40%	1.60%
Unemployment over 24	11.30%	9.70%	13.00%	3.30%
Unemployment under 20	48.70%	49.40%	47.80%	-1.60%
Unemployment between 20 and 24 years old	24.10%	22.90%	25.50%	2.60%
Unemployment between 25 and 54 years old	11.20%	9.50%	13.00%	3.50%
Unemployment over 54 years old	11.70%	10.40%	13.20%	2.80%

Source: INE, Economic Population Survey,
<https://www.ine.es/daco/daco42/daco4211/epa0222.pdf>

6. People on benefits: Key challenges and priorities

6.1. Minimum Income: ‘Ingreso Mínimo Vital’ a year after³²

Until 2020, Spain was the only EU country that did not have a state-wide Minimum Income scheme, equivalent to the ultimate safety net to fight severe poverty and social exclusion. This deficit was compounded by the existence of high levels of extreme poverty in comparison with our reference framework, reaching 7% of the population (percentage of households below 30% of median income), double the EU average and three times that of countries such as Germany. For these reasons, the implementation of such a programme was a recurrent recommendation of the European institutions, especially since 2014.³³

³² This analysis is based on the Report directed by Graciela Malgesini, with the collaboration of Eva Gracia Vega and Sara González Servant. Malgesini Rey, Graciela (Director) (2021), **El Ingreso Mínimo Vital un año después. La perspectiva autonómica**. Serie Sociedades #1, December, EAPN Spain, available (in Spanish) at: <https://www.eapn.es/publicaciones/452/el-ingreso-minimo-vital-un-ano-despues-la-perspectiva-autonomica>

³³ Seguridad Social, “Aclarando conceptos sobre el Ingreso Mínimo Vital”, June 8, 2020, available at: <https://revista.seg-social.es/2020/06/08/aclarando-conceptos-sobre-el-ingreso-minimo-vital/>

In the last twenty years, EAPN Europe had called for the need for a European Minimum Income scheme, based on three criteria: "adequate, accessible and enabling". In 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights advanced in this line of social policy in its principle number 14 "Right to a Minimum Income".

Although minimum income schemes exist in all Member States, they vary significantly in their adequacy, coverage, assimilation, and articulation with labour market activation measures and enabling goods and services. There are not only wide variations between countries in terms of benefit levels and coverage, but also in terms of importance and role in the overall social protection system. They are often the ultimate safety net and serve to guarantee a basic level.

On 29 May 2020 the 'Ingreso Mínimo Vital' was approved by the Council of Ministers. This decree was produced in the framework of the actions against Covid-19, the so-called "Social Shield", but the proposal for a living minimum income was already included in the Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty approved in March 2019 by the previous government, in the electoral proposals of the Socialist Party -PSOE- and 'Unidas Podemos', as well as in the Agreement of the Coalition Government.

The endorsement process received a boost in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the "Social Shield" measures put in place to mitigate it. The pandemic put the jobs and incomes of millions of people at risk and clearly showed the strong links between having low incomes and various forms of vulnerability. In this sense, the pandemic "punched a hole" in existing social protection safety nets, leading to increased poverty and material deprivation.

6.2. Challenges faced by the the 'Ingreso Mínimo Vital'

The 'Ingreso Mínimo Vital' (hereinafter IMV) is presented as the recognition of a new citizens' right. The text of the Royal Decree specifies that "This benefit was created with the main objective of guaranteeing, through the satisfaction of minimum material conditions, the full participation of all citizens in social and economic life, breaking the link between the structural absence of resources and the lack of access to opportunities in the labour, educational or social spheres of individuals. The benefit is therefore not an end in itself, but a tool to facilitate the transition of individuals from the social exclusion imposed on them by the absence of resources to a situation in which they can develop fully in society.

On the other hand, the IMV is initially conceived as a living benefit, giving great importance to the evaluation of the measure in order to adjust it to reality, taking into account both self-evaluation and external evaluation by other social agents.

In this sense, article 30 of the Royal Decree includes the creation of a IMV Monitoring Commission and article 31, the creation of a IMV Advisory Council as a consultation and participation body with civil society organisations, trade unions and employers' organisations.

The implementation of the IMV also generated intense advocacy activity from the civil society organisations to defend the rights of people living in poverty to an adequate benefit. In the months following its enactment, there were several amendments to the decree, while the bill attracted a great deal of parliamentary debates.

The confinement and lockdown situation of Covid-19 was a handicap for the accessibility of the most vulnerable people to the benefit. The lack of information, attention, and support for people with fewer digital skills, problems of access to the internet and low levels of education meant that many vulnerable families had been left behind, especially in the early stages. There were many obstacles blocking the access of people experiencing poverty to the benefit.

One of the great challenges facing the implementation of the 'Ingreso Mínimo Vital' is that of reaching the proposed coverage targets. The latest data provided by the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration (March 2022) indicated that the IMV had reached 428,043 households. Considering that the forecast was to reach 850,000 households, this means that just 50.3% of the target declared by the government in June 2020 when it announced the launch of the benefit was reached. The State is having problems responding to the large number of applications received. On the other hand, as the IMV is considered as the 'base benefit', people in poverty must apply for it (even though they know that they do not meet some of the requirements) in order to be able to apply for the 'regional minimum incomes' for which they do fit, once they get rejected from the former. This activity generates unexpected traffic in the Social Security administration and the resulting delays in access to basic resources for the neediest.

6.2.1. Slow pace of processing of applications and difficulties in the process of rectification

Due to its recent creation and the crisis generated by the security measures in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, the implementation of the IMV faced the lack of a specific administrative infrastructure for its management, which resulted in significant delays in the processing of applications. The IMV logically requires a process and time for implementation, but implementation is proving particularly difficult for a number of reasons.

- a) There was no single database of potential beneficiaries or cohabitation units.

- b) The responsible public administration had not been previously trained on the nature and content of the IMV, nor on the characteristics of the profiles of the applicants.
- c) There was already a system of regional minimum incomes, active in most of the Autonomous Communities, whereby income transfers were made to households with very low incomes, within the framework of basic social services and, on occasions, as part of regional social inclusion plans. The basis for linking these systems had not been established, which gave rise to a variety of coexistence modalities at the regional level.
- d) The closure of the physical offices of the public administrations "rushed" the process to their forced digitalisation, without a prior assessment of the real response capacity to circumvent problems such as incomplete, poorly prepared, duplicated applications, etc., which add to the already huge workload already foreseen.
- e) The lack of "automatic filters" in the processes of data transfer from the Autonomous Communities to the National Institute of Social Security means that an individual analysis of each file is necessary, which generates delays and defencelessness for applicants, who in many cases see their minimum incomes suspended while they await the resolution of the National Institute of Social Security.
- f) The complexity of the "proofs" requested lengthened the procedures for each file. Instead of following the good practice of the Tax Office (AEAT), whereby the person authorises the agency to access their personal data, the IMV asked people to search for and provide documentation that is already in the possession of the administration, with the time and effort involved, and with the offices closed for security in the face of the pandemic.
- g) Because the IMV is the "basic" benefit, those who decide to apply for the regional minimum income must first apply for the IMV and in a second step, having already had their refusal documented, are in a position to apply for the regional appeal. This requirement adds difficulties and delays to the process.

These factors have generated uneasiness among people in severe poverty who did not see a positive resolution of their situation of need. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient, clear or well-founded explanations in cases of refusals led to numerous appeals in addition to the pending procedures.

People who have applied for the IMV and have not yet received a response must still find resources to survive during the months of waiting, but it must be borne in mind that those who have applied for the IMV cannot always apply for the regional minimum income (in communities where the subsidiary nature is maintained), nor for other structural aid, blocking, for the moment, the coverage of the most basic needs of the most vulnerable people and causing a situation of social emergency that is not being addressed.

In this sense, at the end of 2020, in some Autonomous Communities, such as Cantabria and Galicia, cash cards or extraordinary aid were put into operation to try to alleviate this problem to a minimum.

The delay in the management and processing may cause additional problems since, if the IMV is granted retroactively, the people currently receiving the autonomous income will have to return the autonomous incomes they have received during the months of administrative silence (in some cases they are claiming amounts of €2,000) as they are incompatible with this type of income, with the risk of becoming debtors of the public finances as they are people with many needs.

6.2.2. Lack of information and transparency

At the beginning of 2022, there are still no face-to-face consultation procedures for IMV applicants by any means (neither by telephone, email or face-to-face appointment). This disconnection place applicants in a situation of helplessness and uncertainty about their situation, which conditions the application for aid that would allow them to meet their basic needs.

The lack of information or clarification of decisions, both on refusals and amounts granted, is another of the problems detected, and also a source of defencelessness. Situations were detected in which the status of applications on the website not been updated, or the messages are not clearly explained and are not well understood as they are named with the administration's technical labels ('Cancelled', 'Denied due to inadmissibility', 'Duplicity study', 'Document modification capture', 'Pending denial output'...). In short, the final criteria taken into account for decisions and the amounts granted are not easily understandable.

Many applicants receive requests for documentation, but others do not receive them because the e-mail addresses used are from the consultants or the NGO that helped them upload the application, or because they do not have access to the Internet. Eventually, this results in the application being cancelled for failure to provide the documentation. On the other hand, the administrative deadlines for requests are in many cases not viable enough to guarantee the processing of the requested documentation (10 days, at risk of being denied the benefit, with most of the offices for direct face-to-face attention closed, or long waiting lists).

6.3. Coverage

6.3.1. Accessibility obstacles and non-take-up

According to the territorial data of the IMV monitoring in the different Autonomous Communities carried out internally by EAPN in December 2020 , in

which the civil society organisations were asked about the degree of IMV resolution, the following aspects were considered to explain both the non-take-up and lack of access to the IMV as well as the refusals of thousands of applications: the digital divide affecting applicants; the educational and/or language skills gap, which prevents them from understanding or leads them to make mistakes when completing the online forms; the lack of clear information on the processes and access from reliable or correctly informed informants; the impossibility of having the required documentation or not being able to provide it; the difficulty of accrediting the situation of the cohabitation unit (including the irregular situation of one of the members); not having a home/dwelling clearly associated with the cohabitation unit/family, and a broad casuistry on the problems of census registration; not appearing as job seekers in the public employment database; exceeding the maximum income and/or assets in the year prior to the application, despite being in extreme poverty at the time of the application; not fitting into the age range, despite being emancipated (not having the capacity to prove it), among other excluding requirements. Some of these aspects are explained in more detail below.

6.3.2. Digital divide

The mechanisms for accessing benefits continue to be a challenge for many families living in severe poverty.

The complexity of processing a benefit online for those with a greater digital divide, whether due to difficulties in accessing the internet, a computer or smartphone, or a lack of digital skills and a lower level of education, is one of the reasons why people do not apply for the benefit, even if they meet the requirements. As data from the National Institute of Statistics show, 41.4% of people with a very low level of education have no or very low digital skills. This percentage rises to 44% of those earning less than 900 euros per month. 21% of people with a low level of education have no information skills, 28.3% have no resolution skills and 40.1% have no computer skills. In the cases of households earning less than 900 euros per month, these percentages are somewhat lower with respect to information, communication, and resolution skills, but higher with respect to lack of computer skills.

Table 18. Digital divide of individuals according to some of their socio-economic characteristics, in percentages, 2021, in percentage

DIGITAL SKILLS: No Skills	INFORMATION SKILLS: None	COMMUNICATION SKILLS: None	RESOLUTION SKILLS: None	COMPUTER SKILLS: None
---------------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------------

	and Low level				
Education completed: Illiterate and incomplete primary education	41.4	21.4	16.4	28.3	40.1
Net monthly household income: Less than 900 euros	44.1	13.6	9	20.7	42

Source: INE, *Utilización de productos TIC por las personas. Personas de 16 a 74 años*, en: <https://www.ine.es/jaxi/Datos.htm?tpx=32731>

Telematic processing requires knowledge of office automation, ICT, availability of a computer and internet access, which is often lacking among the most vulnerable people and those at risk of social exclusion. In this sense, both the processing of applications and the requests for refusals or corrections made online without direct attention are often the most frequently reported obstacles. At the beginning, accessibility to the IMV proved extremely difficult, perhaps due to the large number of users on the website, with constant access crashes and forcing the user to start the process and fill in the forms several times from the beginning. The requirement to send documentation in digital format and in PDF extensions in a box that had little or inadequate capacity for the purpose were also obstacles for groups of people who had little or no knowledge of the use of digital media, lack of digital means (computers, scanners, etc.), digital poverty (no access to networks from home at the time of quarantine) and energy poverty. In short, vulnerable people over 40 years old without digital training and without their own network and terminals to make applications were initially the most limited in terms of access.

6.3.3. Lack of Internet access

Many households in poverty lack access to the Internet because they do not have a broadband connection. Only 58.1% of households with an income of less than 900 euros per month have some kind of computer, compared to 97.4% of those with an income of more than 2,500 euros per month, i.e. a gap of 39.3 percentage points.

Table 19. Availability of computing and telephony devices in dwellings according to income level, 2021, in percentages

	Total Dwellings	Dwellings with some kind of computer	Dwellings with Internet access	Dwellings with broadband connection	Dwellings with landline telephone	Dwellings with mobile phone
Net monthly household income: Less than 900 euros	2,695,328	58.1	77.9	77.4	57.9	95.5
Net monthly household income: From 900 to less than 1,600 euros	4,952,780	76.7	90.5	90.2	70.1	98.4
Net monthly household income: 1,600 to less than 2,500 euros	3,267,361	91.9	97.4	97.2	81.5	99.7
Net monthly household income: 2,500 or more euros	2,765,923	97.4	99.2	99.1	89	99.9
Difference between those earning 2,500 euros or more and those earning less than 900 euros (percentage points)		39.3	21.3	21.7	31.1	4.4

Fuente: INE, Resumen de datos de Viviendas por tamaño del hogar, hábitat, tipo de hogar, ingresos mensuales netos del hogar y tipo de equipamiento, en: <https://www.ine.es/jaxi/Datos.htm?tpx=32664>

6.3.4. Lack of support networks

If the solution to the lack of connectivity, probably intersecting with the digital divide, is face-to-face care, this was virtually impossible during the pandemic, not even at the information level. The increasing provision of public services digitally is effectively excluding many rural people: "The digitisation of health and learning services in the wake of the pandemic may be exacerbating pre-existing rural inequalities in access to and quality of these services, particularly

disadvantageous for older people. In addition, the low take-up of Internet-based information and communication services in rural areas may become an important factor of social exclusion, given the increasing presence of the supply of such services through digital means".

A major disincentive to claiming the benefit is the lack of a local support network that could help with the process. Community Social Services could have channelled or supported applications but were not trained or called into the process. In addition, they have funding and human resource deficits, which are compounded by the fact that face-to-face care was not offered for many months. On the other hand, in the event that they could provide this support in person, the social services are not connected with the people who handle the files at the National Institute of Social Security, which also generates insecurities among the workers themselves.

With regard to the social organisations, which are very present in the territory, with more investment of resources and higher levels of face-to-face attention, the situation of lack of prior training in the IMV, as well as the non-existence of rapid consultation mechanisms with the National Institute of Social Security to clear up doubts, have also generated many problems when it comes to helping to process applications, generating processes of desistance on the part of potential candidates for receiving it.

Distance from information centres, social security offices, organisations and social services is another factor that discourages people who live in rural areas and/or who have to incur costs in order to obtain information from them from the centres.

6.3.5. Difficulties with the required documentation

The provision of the required documentation is sometimes complicated by time limits and/or overly bureaucratic and unwieldy procedures. Issues such as census registration, accreditation of the composition of the family unit, not having residence documents in order, can be complex for homeless people, extended Roma families, immigrants, several cohabitation units in a single dwelling, unmarried couples, etc.

One of the most important deficiencies in documentation is the lack of a bank account. This is due to the fact that banks do not facilitate the opening of a 'basic account', but also because many of these people have had their previous accounts seized, are in legal proceedings, have high levels of indebtedness, or have no way of providing the minimum level of income required.

6.3.6. Lack of understanding of instructions and procedures

Not having language competence in Spanish is a huge obstacle for immigrants. So is having an intellectual or developmental disability, significant mental health problems, or other serious disabling illnesses: these people face barriers that may be insurmountable for them. Many full-time carers of dependent persons also do not find the time to inform themselves about the resource and the technicalities of the application.

6.3.7. Other disincentives to apply

Among the factors that discourage people from applying for the IMV are those related to the more "attractive" or "secure" nature of the regional minimum incomes. In the cases of those Autonomous Communities where people can choose, there are people who prefer them to the IMV, as it is a known benefit, managed by the Social Services, or because it contains support actions within a socio-occupational insertion itinerary (such as canteen supplements and school support, housing support, etc., which are not currently offered in the national framework).

Another group of people may be discouraged by the 'imitation effect', because they know applicants who, being in the same or a worse situation than theirs, were refused the application for the IMV. Because of this effect, they consider that they would not be granted it either, so they give up applying for it.

Sometimes, there is uncertainty about the obligations of the beneficiaries when receiving the benefit, so it is essential to provide clear information about the considerations, obligations, and assumptions for the recipients.

6.4. Profiles of people in extreme poverty who do not access the IMV

The most prominent group of people who do not qualify for the IMV are those in "severe poverty", defined as those with an income **of 40% or less of median income**, as calculated by EUROSTAT, the EU's statistical office. The government targeted households whose annual income in the year preceding the application puts them **at 30% or less of the median income**. With respect to this group of people, the text of the Royal Decree-Law also refers to those in "severe poverty" or "extreme poverty", which creates confusion, because it does not follow the European criteria, but concentrates its action only on some 850,000

47

households alone. **Between using 40% or 30% of the median, there is a difference of 875,000 households that are left out.**

There are population groups that are excluded from the requirements for obtaining the IMV. Among them are:

- Immigrants in an irregular situation (it is enough for there to be one person of the applicant's family or 'cohabitation unit' in an irregular situation for the administration to deny the IMV to everyone),
- Refugees,
- People under 23 years of age without children,
- People who have a recent cohabitation unit,
- People who live in institutions,
- People who have property that is in their name but that they can neither use nor sell (it appears as "patrimony" and is valued as if it were really liquidable),
- People living in shared housing,
- People living in settlements and other forms of homelessness, who find it difficult to register.

In addition to these, there are all those who do not have the documents proving some of the requirements available, or are waiting to obtain them, even from the public administration.

6.4.1. Roma population

The guarantee of the right to a Living Minimum Income among Roma families is fundamental, considering that this is a group with a high incidence of extreme poverty with a pronounced educational and digital gap, low participation in the labor market, who often reside in shantytowns and highly vulnerable neighborhoods.

The Report of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano on 8,042 applications for the IMV by Roma people as of December 2020, concluded that the vast majority of applications were still in process or not resolved, leaving most of the applicants without basic economic coverage and in a complicated situation.

Only 1 out of every 10 Roma applicants was granted the IMV, 7.5% of the applications were denied and the rest were pending resolution. Compared to the national data of the same period, a lower percentage of Roma families were granted the IMV.

In summary, two clear limitations were observed for access to the right on the part of the Roma:

- The IMV criteria do not consider other very common casuistry in the Roma community in terms of their family complexities (extended families in the

same household), problems of over-occupation of households, non-updated registration situations or unregistered marriages.

- Barriers of helplessness and access, including the digital divide and the lack of knowledge and information for applicants to understand the resolutions and procedures. All of this leads to uncertainty and fear of losing other benefits or expecting compensations and obligations caused by the collection of the IMV, which sometimes leads to the rejection of jobs for fear of incompatibility.

6.4.2. Homeless population

Civil society organizations that work with homeless people are particularly concerned that the coverage of the IMV should reach this group. Before the IMV, barriers were identified in the functioning of the regional minimum income schemes, and there is concern that the IMV excludes homeless people in practice as well. According to the organization 'Hogar Sí', the fundamental obstacles that exclude this right are the following:

- Using census registration ('registro del padrón municipal') as a way of accrediting residence, which is a IMV requisite. Although the Government issued instructions recalling the obligation of the municipalities to register and communicate changes in the census to people regardless of their residential situation, in practice this bureaucratic requirement works as a barrier for homeless people. In the same sense, registering as a job seeker is also a complex bureaucratic procedure, since it depends on being registered with the Social Security, a sometimes-complex hurdle for the homeless group.
- The excessive weight of telematic mechanisms for the application for the IMV deepens the digital divide and the limitations of internet access of this group.

6.4.3. Young people under 23 year-old

Data from the Living Conditions Survey highlights the high figures of severe material deprivation and severe poverty for the group of young people between 18 and 30. However, the IMV does not cover those below 23-year-old.

Civil society organisations such as the Youth Council of Spain consider that the IMV is an unconstitutional instrument because it "arbitrarily discriminates" against young people. On top of the age limit fixed on 23, people between 23 and 30 years of age are to prove three years of independent living', as opposed to the one year required from the age of 31. This is a paradoxical requirement, since the younger group has greater difficulty in becoming emancipated: The average age of emancipation in Spain is 29 years and to have been living emancipated for at least 3 years is a requirement that excludes most of the vulnerable youth.

The text denounces that the IMV, since its entry into force, "has barely reached young people, as can be seen from the data of the Ministry of Inclusion". In fact, young people recipients under 23 were only 3,310 in May 2021 (1.3%, of the benefits). In the next age bracket, 19.7% of the benefits were paid to persons between 24 and 35 years of age.

6.5. IMV recipients and territorial distribution

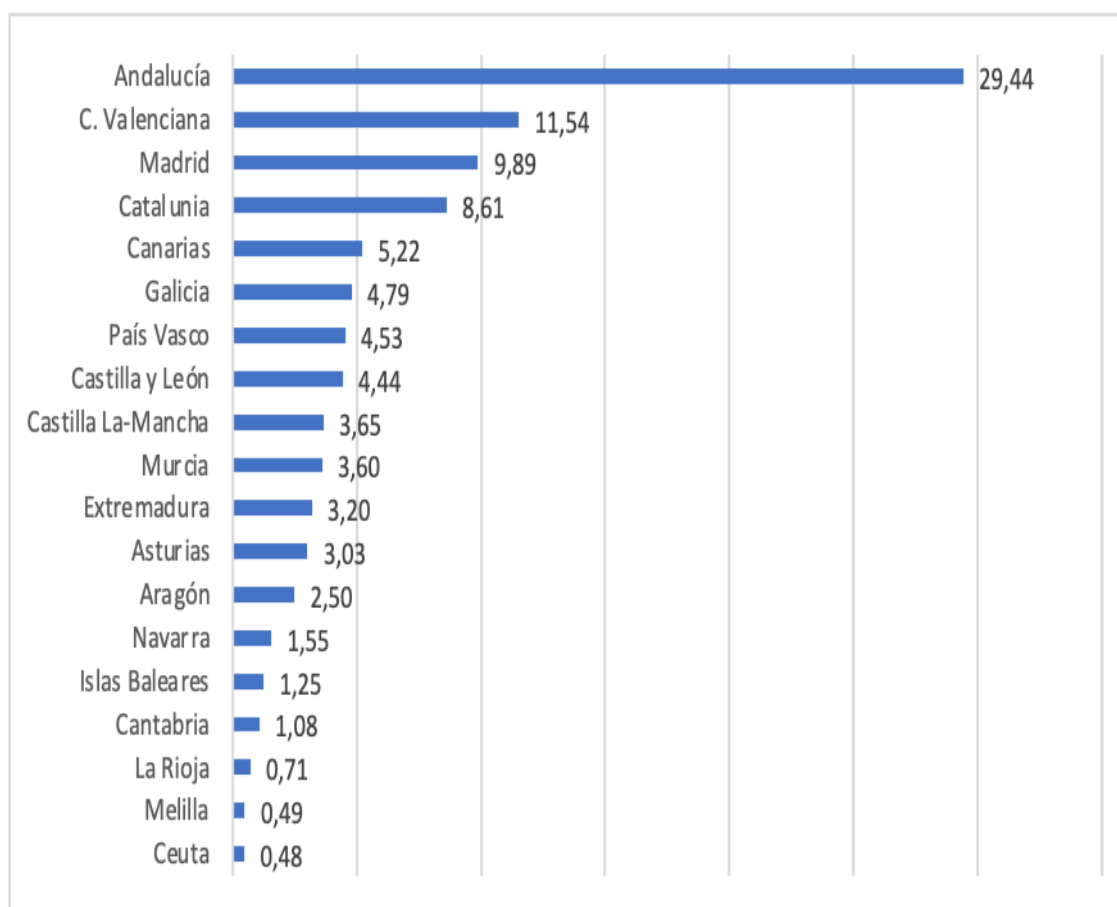
Official IMV processing data for September 2021 showed that, of 1,453,652 applications submitted, 1,332,904 were valid, (91%) and 1,244,029 of the applications submitted were processed (85.5%). 98.5% of the applications processed were resolved and 1.5% are in the process of being rectified. Only 35.8% of the 2.3 million people initially planned are receiving the IMV, two years after its entry into force.

According to an official update of 29 March 2022, the IMV reached 428,043 households, benefiting a total of 1.06 million people since it was launched. Of these, 43% are minors, with a total of 456,000 children, which shows the impact that the benefit is having on reducing child poverty. The number of adult recipients of the Minimum Living Income exceeds 600,000. Of the total number of beneficiary households, more than 200,000 are also beneficiaries of the "child support supplement", an allowance of 100 euros per household per month for children aged 0 to 3; 70 euros per month for each child aged 3 to 6, and 50 euros per month for each child aged 6 to 18, which came into effect on 1 January. Since the implementation of the benefit, the National Social Security Institute (INSS) has received more than 1.7 million applications, of which 150,000 were duplicates. Of the total number of valid applications, more than 92% have been processed.³⁴

Territorial differences were remarkable. In 2022, the implementation of the Minimum Vital Income is uneven among the regions, with only three of them exceeding 15%. The autonomous community with the highest coverage is Andalucía, 29.44%. Behind it, the ranking places the Comunidad Valenciana, 11.54% and Comunidad de Madrid, 9.89% and Cataluña, 8.61%. At the bottom of the table, and therefore with a lower degree of coverage -below 1 per cent- are the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and the community of La Rioja.

³⁴ Source: La Moncloa, available at: <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/inclusion/Paginas/2022/290322-ingresominimo.aspx>

Graph 6. Distribution of IMV recipients by Autonomous Communities, March 2022, in percentage



Source: *La Moncloa*, available at: <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/inclusion/Paginas/2022/290322-ingresominimo.aspx>

6.6. Adequacy of IMV amounts in poverty reduction

The text of the Royal Decree-Law clarifies that the "main objective of the IMV will be the reduction of poverty, especially extreme poverty, and the redistribution of wealth. By ensuring a certain level of income regardless of place of residence, this social security benefit will promote the effective equality of all Spaniards". Article 3 states that "the benefit guarantees a minimum level of income by covering the difference between the sum of the economic resources of any kind available to the individual beneficiary or, where appropriate, to the members of a cohabitation unit, and the amount of guaranteed income for each case under the terms of Article 10".

To calculate the amount to be received by the IMV, the difference between the minimum income guaranteed by the IMV and the total income of the beneficiaries must be taken into account. Thus, the amounts of the IMV for 2021, depending on the different cohabitation units, are as follows:

Table 20. IMV amounts by composition of the living unit, in 2021

	Euros per year	Euros per month
One adult person	5,639.20	469.93
One adult and one child	8,571.58	714.30
One adult and two children	10,263.34	855.28
One adult and three or more children	11,955.10	996.26
Two adults	7,330.96	610.91
Two adults and one child	9,022.72	751.89
Two adults and two children	10,714.48	892.87
Two adults and three or more children	12,406.24	1,033.85
Three adults	9,022.72	751.89
Three adults and one child	10,714.48	892.87
Three adults and two or more children	12,406.24	1,033.85
Four adults	10,714.48	892.87
Four adults and one child	12,406.24	1,033.85

Source: Social Security

The benefit is therefore targeted at people in extreme poverty, defined as those living in households whose income per consumption unit is less than 30% of the national median income. That is, with incomes below €4,813.02 per year or €401 per month by 2020. The proposed floor is insufficient to guarantee coverage of basic needs, especially if housing and utility costs are to be met with these amounts.

The adequacy for people in severe poverty is low unless it is complemented by other types of assistance or support for families. The average IMV income in the May 2021 payroll was €448.67 for a family unit comprising an average of 2.6 persons. However, there are marked territorial differences. The regions with the lowest average income IMV are Extremadura, the Canary Islands and Castilla La Mancha. On the other hand, Madrid, Navarra and Asturias are the Autonomous Communities that have an IMV above €500.

To assess the level of adequacy, it is necessary to consider the number of beneficiaries per benefit, i.e. the composition of the "cohabitation unit" (as the Royal Decree-Law calls it). 448.6 for an average household of 2.6 people means that the average monthly benefit for each person **is 172.5 euros**, which is insufficient to cover the most basic needs if there is no other income or support.

Due to the impact of the crisis in Ukraine and the increase in inflation, **in 2022 the government updated these amounts** (to be reviewed in next year's Poverty Watch). For 2022 the monthly amounts are: 747.28 euros for a single-parent household consisting of one adult and one child. 894.77 euros for a single-parent household consisting of one adult and two children. 1,042.26 euros for a single-parent household consisting of one adult and three minors.³⁵

6.6.1. Supplementary child allowance

One of the main novelties included in the recent Minimum Vital Income Law (IMV)³⁶ is the entry into force of the new supplementary allowance for children. This allowance is intended for households with dependent minors and low incomes, even if they are not recipients of the IMV, and is presented as "an instrument to combat child poverty".

It is available to recipients of the IMV and to low-income families, even if they do not meet the requirements of the IMV but are 'cohabitation units' that are part of the 'Family Protection Programme'³⁷ or that receive the old child allowance ('prestación por hijo a cargo'), which this new supplement replaces.

The amount is established considering the number of underage children in the cohabitation unit, and according to the age on 1 January of the corresponding year, in accordance with the following brackets (applied for the year 2022):

- Under three years of age: 100 euros per month.
- Over three years of age and under six years of age: 70 euros per month.
- Over the age of six and under the age of 18.50 euros per month.

³⁵ Seguridad Social, available at: <https://www.seg-social.es/wps/portal/wss/internet/Trabajadores/PrestacionesPensionesTrabajadores/65850d68-8d06-4645-bde7-05374ee42ac7/cuantias#Cuantias>

³⁶ Ley 19/2021, del 20 de diciembre de 2021, por la que se establece el Ingreso Mínimo Vital. Available at: <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2021/12/20/19/dof/spa/pdf>

³⁷ Defined as "beneficiaries of the financial allowance for a dependent child or minor without disability or with a disability of less than 33%, whose living unit is made up exclusively of the members appearing in the 'dependent child benefit file', provided that they meet the necessary conditions for access to the child support supplement, and that the amount is equal to or greater than the amount they have been receiving, and they must opt for one of the two benefits."

Those cohabitation units that include minors among their members, fulfil all the necessary requirements for the concession of the minimum vital income (IMV) and those established with respect to the maximum limits on computable income, net worth and assets test may be entitled to this allowance. The supplement is available to cohabitation units that meet two requirements:

- They do not exceed 300% of the guaranteed income of the Minimum Vital Minimum Income (IMV), and
- They do not exceed 150% of the assets' threshold corresponding to their type of household (number of persons and age of those making up the household), without taking into account the habitual residence, provided that it meets the limit of non-corporate assets established for the cohabitation unit.

In terms of income, these requirements are specified in the following thresholds:

Table 21. Threshold for child allowance: 300% of the IMV guaranteed income according to household composition

Number of cohabitation unit's members		Scale of increments	Threshold: 300% of Guaranteed Income (one adult alone 17,698.80 euro/year)
2	One adult and a child	1.3	23,008.44
3	One adult and two children	1.6	28,318.08
4	One adult and three children	1.9	33,627.72
5 or more	One adult and four or more children	2.2	38,937.36
3	Two adults and one child	1.6	28,318.08
4	Two adults and two children	1.9	33,627.72
5 or more	Two adults and three or more children	2.2	38,937.36
4	Three adults and one child	1.9	33,627.72
5 or more	Three adults and two or more children	2.2	38,937.36
5 or more	Four adults and one child	2.2	38,937.36

5 or more	Others	2.2	38,937.36
------------------	--------	-----	-----------

Source: Social Security

The above limits will be increased by 22% in the case of single-parent households and/or with members suffering from disabilities.

Table 22. Threshold for child allowance: 150% of the net worth threshold corresponding to the composition of the household.

	Scale of increments	150% of the net worth threshold
One adult and a child	1.4	37,167.48
One adult and two children	1.6	47,786.76
One adult and three children	2.2	58,406.04
Two adults and one child	1.8	47,786.76
Two adults and two children	2.2	58,406.04
Two adults and three or more children	2.6	69,025.32
Three adults and one child	2.2	58,406.04
Three adults and two or more children	2.6	69,025.32
Four adults and one child	2.6	69,025.32
Others	2.6	69,025.32

Source: Social Security

The calculation is hard to do. To find out if a family is entitled to this supplement, if they are not receiving the IMV, they must prove that they are "in a situation of economic vulnerability". To do this, the person concerned can use the same IMV online simulator provided by the National Social Security Institute (INSS): <https://imv.seg-social.es/>

6.7. Testimonies of IMV recipients

These interviews were conducted during November and December 2021, 18 months after the first Royal Decree on the Ingreso Mínimo Vital.

6.7.1. Bureaucratic labyrinth

With regard to the application, a recurring theme is the "bureaucratic labyrinth" among non-contributory benefits to be navigated. People experiencing poverty have expressed the need for support in order to be able to apply for the IMV. This support has usually been provided by civil society organisation in order, among other things, to be able to know and understand the issue of 'compatibility':

- "I went to the Social Security last year to ask them to please give me any explanation about why I was receiving that amount, or what they think belongs to me... But they told me 'No'. That everything had already been said. That I didn't need to do anything more, and that I would have to wait until I got the amount I was entitled to, for a person on my terms". *Daniela, 42 years old, separated with three dependent children, lives in Burgos, Castilla y León.*

The implementation of the IMV may give the impression of greater protection for people in severe poverty, but due to the existence of an overlapping of benefits, the opposite may be true as well. **The IMV generated a labyrinth of red tape and incompatibilities that confuses potential recipients.** The long delays (several months) generate confusion and unease, they do not know if they are really going to receive the benefit or not, generating a situation of defencelessness.

In this sense, the difficulties in accessing benefits increased due to the restrictions on face-to-face assistance generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, preventing claimants from carrying out face-to-face applications. **Some particularities, such as the change of residence between Autonomous Communities, have further exacerbated the problem:**

- "It has been difficult when it comes to accessing the IMV, because of the documentation they ask for, which is absurd. It took a long time to present it, a long time to wait, and then they (the public administration) stated that you were missing a piece of paper.... I'm telling you, they told you 'No', just when you needed it the most. This makes you dizzy". *Consuelo, woman, 33 years old, family with five children (one daughter with 66% disability), La Rioja.*

Regarding the lack of information for citizens, people in poverty interviewed by EAPN Spain coincided in the fact that "the chaos in the social services generated confusion and insecurity". Information about the possibility of getting the IMV came to them through support networks or family members (often inaccurate or even wrong).

- "But not because of the difficulty we had in presenting the documentation, but because of the way they handled it, the 'bad service'. You go to ask, and nobody knows, they send you from one to another and nobody knows. And

56

the people answering the available telephone numbers, each one gives you a different answer; there isn't one way to follow. I went (to the social services) to ask when the first payment arrived because I didn't understand the amount, where that amount came from, and not even at the Social Security were able to give me an explanation. They told me that they would call me back and informed me of the amount, but I am still waiting for the call". *Consuelo, woman, 33 years old, family with five children (one daughter with 66% disability), La Rioja.*

- "(...) My cousin was the one who told me, but I didn't know that the Mínimo Vital was for ever, I thought it was an emergency help in the COVID section. But no, it was, it took away the 'ICASS' (regional minimum income of Cantabria). And they substituted the 'ICASS' for the 'Vital' (IMV). And it also substituted what it is for dependent children, I didn't know that either."
- "So... nobody informed you? only your cousin?" (Interviewer)
- "No, only my cousin because she saw it on the panel, but nobody gave me any information about these things". *Pilar, woman, 30 years old, with a dependent child and a single-parent household, Cantabria.*

In addition to misinformation, **there is a lack of information on the part of the administration to manage the IMV**, paralysing the management of the former benefits and leaving some applications blocked without the applicants having the information to be able to solve the situation.

- "Yes, and they (the administration) didn't send me anything. I went to ask what was going on, why I was not receiving the amount that was allocated to people under my conditions and so on... That was when they looked at it and told me that 'here we have a DNI (personal identification document) that needs to be fixed', which is that of my youngest child. That was two years ago. *Daniela, 42 years old, separated with three young children, lives in Burgos, Castilla y León.*

6.7.2. Protection provided by the IMV

Among the persons interviewed, there are a number of different cases:

- **Recipients who do not cash the benefit for fear that they will have to pay it back.** This is the case of an interviewee from Extremadura, aged 43, with a dependent child, who receives the IMV via the 'passerelle' with the regional minimum income. She is granted 585 euros but decided not to use it for "fear of being fined or being sued", as she is currently living on a lower amount of unemployment benefit.
- **Recipients who receive less than they expected:**

- A woman with three dependent children, victim of gender-based violence, in Castilla y León. She expected an amount of 900 euros and received 677 euros. Currently, the IMV is her only source of income, plus 100 euros every two months from the father of her eldest child as a pension.
- A 54-year-old man from Ceuta, unemployed, with a wife and 2 children, who -according to the simulator- was entitled to 876 euros and ended up receiving 108 euros. The IMV is the same for him as the dependent child allowance he received before.
- A 30-year-old woman from Cantabria, with a dependent child, who receives 671 euros of IMV, a lower amount than the regional income she received before.
- A 33-year-old woman from La Rioja, married, with 5 children, who receives 667 euros of IMV, when she expected to receive between 900 and 1,000 euros (they are a large family). She waited 8 months for the benefit. During this time, the regional government stopped the regional minimum income, so she became incomeless.

The protective intensity of the Minimum Vital Income is insufficient for the families interviewed. In general, they had higher expectations of the benefit. The Social Security does not explain the reason for the amounts granted, but it is assumed that, in addition to possible errors, they are due to the calculation of the income of 'a year ago' and do not correspond to the situation of vulnerability that the families are currently living in.

6.7.3. Labour and social integration pathways

There is a general lack of knowledge among IMV recipients as to whether or not they are on an integration pathway. Some say they do not even know what this is. The "tangle" of services and resources means that they do not clearly identify what is compulsory or what is not, or even who (local, regional, national administration) is responsible for it. The differences between the additional resources in the different autonomous communities make it hard to know the real support from the administration. The following dialogue shows how hard it is for an individual to identify the source of the aid and, at the same time, the way to get different types of it.

- "No, the Red Cross has helped me to buy glasses for my children, to buy textbooks and school materials."
- "Have they helped you, have you not asked for the Red Cross programme?" (Interviewer)
- "Not until today, they gave me the aid once."
- "From social services, are you receiving food?" (Interviewer)

- "Yes, from the Food bank; they had given me food last year, also clothing. ¿Am I getting the IMV? Yes, yes. Clothing and basic needs for the children? Yes.". *Mario, two children, Ceuta.*

When asked about other benefits or aid, they usually mention the services they receive from civil society organisation to pay for their housing utilities, education or food needs, among others. Families do not seem to identify "the administration" as a support or companion in their situation of vulnerability, but simply as a provider of resources and benefits. Sometimes, this is not accurate.

- "I have been here for a year I have a 'social rent' that 'Burgos Acoge' (a CSO) helped me to process. Because in 2018 I entered a 'system' -well it sounds very ugly- for women suffering from gender-based violence... And there I applied for housing, but so far I haven't had a response either. So... I don't know. I received this benefit". *Daniela, 42 years old, separated with three dependent children, lives in Burgos, Castilla y León.*
-
- "We have an educator and a job because we have requested it, for work and curriculum reasons, so that the children can go to leisure groups and have guidance on what to do. But not because they imposed it, but because we asked for it ourselves. It was not offered to us, but we asked for it because of the situation with our big teenage son. We asked for help, and we got help for the whole house. The social worker accompanies us". *Consuelo, woman, 33 years old, family with five children (one daughter with 66% disability), La Rioja.*

6.7.4. EAPN recommendations

The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, referred to the IMV as "a great example of how to develop an inclusive approach to tackling poverty and inequality". He indicated that "It is essential that the scheme is designed to reach as many people in need as possible" and that, to do so, "eligibility conditions should not exclude particularly vulnerable people, such as undocumented or newly documented migrants, newly emancipated youth formerly in public care, homeless or permanently homeless people, or people with 'uncertified' disabilities who are unable to work". De Schutter warned that bureaucratic hurdles could be a major obstacle for people in poverty who depend on government assistance for their survival and finally proposed that "developing a robust scheme that allows sufficient flexibility when

people experiencing extreme poverty cannot easily comply with all documentation requirements".³⁸

According to the document of the Council for the Approval of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan for Spain, legislation to reorganise and simplify the system of non-contributory cash benefits is scheduled to come into force in the last four months of 2023: "The reform will reorganise and simplify the system of non-contributory cash benefits. The aim of the reform is to incorporate those main non-contributory benefits provided by the Social Security to the IMV, in order to reorganise and simplify the system of non-contributory financial benefits in line with the objectives of the Plan ". This commitment document stated that by 31 March 2024 "the effectiveness of integration pathways for people receiving the minimum living income" should be completed. This is currently going on through 18 pilot projects, which will then be analysed for their effectiveness. Civil society organisations -among them EAPN Spain, EAPN Castilla La-Mancha and EAPN Canarias- are be involved in some of these projects.

6.8. Recommendations regarding the IMV

1. Extend the coverage and increase the amounts

EAPN Spain stresses the need to extend the target group to people in severe poverty, extending the calculation from 30% of median income to 40% of median income, as calculated by EUROSTAT. This will imply the inclusion of more than 875,000 households in severe poverty.

The protective intensity and benefit amounts should be further extended to adapt them to these population groups. The amounts should also be updated in line with rising inflation and the cost of public services. In 2022, some positive steps were taken in this direction.

2. Improve the application process

EAPN Spain recommends that the IMV application and proceedings incorporate clear information, in simplified terminology, aimed at both potential applicants and recipients. This information should refer to rights and obligations (to reduce the anxiety produced by the lack of knowledge and the fear of possible

³⁸ UN expert urges Spain to expand coverage and eligibility for minimum living income, 3 June 2020, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25921&LangID=S>.

sanctions). Training should also be provided to social services and civil society organisations' workers, who are dealing with vulnerable groups and who are likely to claim the benefit.

There is an urgent need to review accessibility so that the benefit is truly inclusive and does not leave families in poverty behind precisely because of social exclusion factors such as lower educational attainment, lack of digital skills and access to digital resources, difficulty in documenting their situation at the administrative level.

3. Take positive and proactive actions to minimise the digital divide

The digital divide does not disappear spontaneously, it is necessary to carry out educational actions targeted at the groups that suffer most from it and adapted to their circumstances. The use of technical language, the assumption of prior knowledge, etc. is unreasonable because the statistics rightly indicate that almost half of the people targeted will not understand or will understand incompletely. For this reason, the accessibility of the main telematic channel should be reviewed, so that it respects the criteria of "easy reading" established, for example, in portals such as Discapnet³⁹ or similar.

It is necessary to establish free online training for access, with language that is accessible and adapted to the digital divide, i.e. without taking any terms, concepts or procedures for granted.

Additional walk-in application points in Social Security offices should be reinforced until at least 80% of the expected quota of applications has been reached.

With regard to rural areas, the social measures included in Axis 8 of the Government's Plan of Measures to Meet the Demographic Challenge should be fully developed, allowing for the reinforcement of the social network, the fight against the digital and educational divide, and the promotion of access to rights for residents, especially in the most vulnerable situations, to benefits such as the IMV: the creation of a network of small municipalities and areas at demographic risk for equal treatment, inclusion and diversity; the plan for support and long-term care (deinstitutionalisation, equipment and technology) and, in particular, the Plan for the modernisation of social services, based on technological

³⁹ <https://www.discapnet.es/vida-independiente/accesibilidad-de-comunicacion>

transformation, innovation, training and reinforcement of childcare, "leaving no one behind".⁴⁰

4. Extending access to other groups in severe poverty

There are some population groups that are still not included in the requirements for obtaining the IMV, such as immigrants in an irregular situation, refugees, people under 23 years of age without children, etc. In addition, it should be remembered that the application requirements have been tightened for people who do not form a cohabitation unit and for unmarried couples. These groups have higher risks of being at severe poverty and EAPN Spain recommends that are included within the IMV.

In order to include homeless people, EAPN Spain recommends that, in order to access the benefit, the housing solutions that vulnerable people find to cope with their situation of residential exclusion should be taken into account, with a flexible and realistic perspective.

5. Making processing more agile and transparent

As a clear recommendation arising from the study published by EAPN Spain in December 2021, it is essential to streamline the processing of the IMV quickly and transparently, avoiding unnecessary delays and complexities.

6. Facilitating access to alternative income in the event of a refusal to grant IMV

It is necessary to improve the application and award systems, achieving shorter deadlines and increasing the level of transparency and information with regard to the amounts allocated, especially in the case of transfers of Autonomous Community Income, the reasons for refusal and the provision of complaints processes, while promoting accessible and understandable language in line with the socio-economic profile of applicants and beneficiaries.

EAPN Spain recommends that speeding up the granting of the IMV with realistic timeframes that do not further expose the most vulnerable population to risk situations should be a priority.

⁴⁰ Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico, **Plan de Medidas del Gobierno ante el Reto Demográfico**. Eje 8, (BIENESTAR SOCIAL Y ECONOMÍA DE LOS CUIDADOS), página 100. Disponible en: https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/reto-demografico/temas/medidas-reto-demografico/plan_recuperacion_130_medidas_tcm30-524369.pdf

7. Steps forward

During 2021 and the first half of 2022, EAPN Spain has been advocating for a wider territorial coverage of the IMV; the calculation of the current family income (not the previous year's income) to access the benefit; the extension of the child allowance to combat child poverty; and the updating of the benefit's amounts. All these requests have been achieved, which is a step in the right direction on the part of the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, on which the IMV depends.



EUROPEAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK ES

El INGRESO MÍNIMO VITAL



1 año después

El IMV es una buena noticia, un derecho subjetivo para la ciudadanía.

Pero no está llegando a toda la población que lo necesita...

PROBLEMA → SOLUCIÓN

El IMV llega a **menos del 40%** de hogares

del total previsto, en septiembre de 2021

1 Ampliar el grupo objetivo de la prestación (pobreza extrema) a las personas en situación de pobreza severa.

Pobreza extrema: 850.000 hogares

Pobreza severa: + 875.000 hogares

PROBLEMA → SOLUCIÓN

Problemas importantes de cobertura:

- ✗ Hogares con alguna persona en situación irregular;
- ✗ Personas refugiadas, menores de 23 años;
- ✗ Personas que están en pobreza hoy, pero **no en el año anterior** (como valora el Real Decreto);
- ✗ Personas que tienen un patrimonio superior al límite que marca el Real Decreto, pero **no lo pueden vender o disponer de él** (por ejemplo, un embargado);
- ✗ Personas que están en 'pobreza severa', pero están por encima del umbral fijado por el Real Decreto (875.000 hogares se quedan fuera).

2 Ampliar perfiles a personas de 18 años y mayores de 65 años en situación vulnerable.

• Flexibilizar el concepto de unidad de convivencia para que refleje la diversidad real de las situaciones.

• Incorporar a las personas en situación irregular.

3 Articular la comisión de Seguimiento y hacer transparente los datos más desagregados por perfiles (discapacidad, etnia gitana, personas migrantes...) para saber el nivel de cobertura en la población más vulnerable.

RED EUROPEA DE LUCHA CONTRA LA POBREZA Y LA EXCLUSIÓN SOCIAL EN EL ESTADO ESPAÑOL




Our Networks and Member Organisations

19 Regionall Networks

EAPN-Illes Balears-Xarxa per la Inclusió Social • Red Andaluza de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social • Red Aragonesa de Entidades Sociales para la Inclusión • Red Europea contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en Castilla y León • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión social en Asturias • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social de Canarias • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en Castilla-La Mancha • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en Euskadi • Red Madrileña de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social • Red de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social de la Región de Murcia • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social de Extremadura • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social de Melilla • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en Cantabria • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en Ceuta • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en el Estado Español de la Comunidad Autónoma de Galicia • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en La Rioja • Red Navarra de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social • Taula d'Entitats del Tercer Sector Social de Catalunya • Xarxa per la Inclusió social de la Comunitat Valenciana

And 21 National Organisations:

Accem • Acción Contra el Hambre • Cáritas Española • Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR) • Confederación de Centros de Desarrollo Rural (COCEDER) • Confederación Española de Personas con Discapacidad Física y Orgánica (COCEMFE) • Cruz Roja Española • Federación de Mujeres Progresistas (FMP) • Fundación ADSIS • Fundación CEPAIM • Fundación Cruz Blanca • Fundación Esplai • Fundación Secretariado Gitano • Hogar Sí • Movimiento por la Paz (MPDL) • Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) • Plena Inclusión • Provivienda • Red Acoge • Unión Española de Asociaciones y Entidades de Atención al Drogodependiente (UNAD) • YMCA

