

OBETS. Revista de Ciencias Sociales

Vol. 16, nº 2, 2021, pp. 331-344

ISSN: 1989-1385

<https://doi.org/10.14198/OBETS2021.16.2.07>

## NON-EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION, SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND DYNAMICS OF INCLUSION IN SPAIN. DO IMMIGRANTS CONSUME A DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE OF SOCIAL SERVICE BENEFITS?

INMIGRACIÓN NO EUROPEA, PRESTACIONES SOCIO-ECONÓMICAS Y DINÁMICAS DE INCLUSIÓN EN ESPAÑA. ¿ACAPARAN LAS PERSONAS INMIGRANTES LAS PRESTACIONES DE SERVICIOS SOCIALES?

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**Cómo citar / Citation:** Jaraíz, G.; Caravaca, F. & González, A. (2021) "Non-European Immigration, socio-economic benefits and dynamics of inclusion in Spain. Do immigrants consume a disproportionate share of Social Service benefits?". *OBETS. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 16(2): 331-344. <https://doi.org/10.14198/OBETS2021.16.2.07>

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Recibido: 15/06/20. Aceptado: 18/01/21

### Abstract

The problematisation of migration has intensified in Europe over the last decade, as the Financial Crisis of 2008 dealt a major blow to social welfare instruments. This context has reinforced the idea that immigrants would consume a disproportionate share of socio-economic resources available through social services, thus displacing the local population. This article examines the case of Spain, analysing the dynamics of accessing socioeconomic inclusion policies developed by public Social Services among immigrants and non-immigrants at risk of social exclusion, based on different secondary sources. The paper shows that there is no evidence that social services resources are being displaced for the socio-economic inclusion of the immigrant population.

**Keywords:** Immigration; social inclusion; social services; social resources; social exclusion.

### Resumen

La problematización del fenómeno migratorio se ha intensificado en Europa en la última década, al mismo tiempo que las salidas a la Gran Crisis de 2008 dejaban unas sociedades más debilitadas en sus instrumentos de acceso al bienestar. Este contexto ha reforzado la idea de que las personas inmigrantes acaparan la mayoría de recursos socioeconómicos disponibles en los sistemas de servicios sociales, desplazando a la población local. Este artículo aborda el caso español, analizando las dinámicas de acceso a las políticas para la inclusión socioeconómica de los Servicios Sociales públicos en personas inmigrantes y no inmigrantes en riesgo de exclusión social, basándose en distintas fuentes secundarias. El trabajo demuestra que no existen evidencias de que los recursos de servicios sociales estén siendo desplazados para la inclusión socioeconómica de la población inmigrante.

**Palabras claves:** Inmigración; inclusión social; servicios sociales; recursos sociales; exclusión social.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1. Migration and debates around welfare

The management of migration is a complex issue and one that is increasingly important on the European and Spanish political agendas. It is also a phenomenon that presents different interacting dimensions (social, economic, cultural and political) that are frequently contradictory. Although Spain needs immigration to compensate for low birth rates and an ageing population, the process of immigration itself is called into question (Torres López, 2010). Although the research largely supports the positive global impact of immigration on the economy and favourable fiscal balance in relation to maintaining the Welfare State, discourses that point to immigration as the cause of unsustainability in the Welfare State are, at the same time, gaining traction (Fuentes & Callejo, 2011).

In Europe, these perceptions have become particularly entrenched in Mediterranean countries, which were more seriously affected by the Financial Crisis of 2008 (Ayala, 2010), largely shaped by the resulting economic model of that Crisis and its erosion of inclusivity (Laparra & Pérez-Eransas, 2012; Taylor-Gooby, Leruth, & Chung, 2017). The most relevant impacts with regard to the model of inclusion affect the precariousness of the labour market and a decline in the State's capacity to act as a safety net (Martínez Virto & Sánchez Salmerón, 2019), factors that have led to a traumatically slow recovery, stagnation of wages, and mass unemployment among the young population (Papademetriou & Banulescu-Bogdan, 2016; Tubakovic, 2019).

The above has given traction to populist and far-right movements that disseminate their rejection of immigration based on the idea that immigrants are consuming a disproportionate share of social benefits, displacing nationals from the processes of socioeconomic inclusion (Kaya, 2017; Zapata, 2007). Although in Spain this rejection appeared later than in other Mediterranean countries (Fundación FOESSA, 2014; López-Sala & Oso, 2018), over the last five years, the consolidation of certain political movements such as VOX<sup>1</sup> have put this issue firmly on the political

agenda, making it the main cause for concern among the local population with regard to immigration (Monge, 2019). According to this position, welfare states, with their systems to guarantee rights (education, healthcare, etc.), and their mechanisms of economic protection, attract immigration and, consequently, are then required to bear the additional costs associated with such social welfare. According to this theory, the management of migration in a way that guarantees civil liberties is an example of the incapacity of States to protect themselves from the undesired effects of globalisation (Boswell, 2000).

However, the debate about the so-called magnet effect of welfare that social protection may have on specific migratory projects pre-dates the crisis. Previous research, such as the papers written by Borjas (1999) and Castles (2013), emphasise the relevance of this factor. In contrast, other studies (Giulietti, Guzi, Kahanec, & Zimmermann, 2013) point out the lack of empirical evidence that would attest to this idea. The predominant academic stance (De Giorgi & Pellizzari, 2009; Warin & Svaton, 2008) does not refute the existence of a certain magnet effect, although it minimises and relativises the intensity of this effect in relation to other variables, chiefly those related with the attraction of the different economic sectors (Oliver, 2006) and those that affect people's life cycles (De Haas, 2011). This latter position emphasises the integrative and proactive nature of public welfare policies as tools that produce social normalisation (Rodríguez Cabrero, 2003).

### 1.2. Immigration, social rights and inclusion

The issue described above raises a series of questions. What are the formal objectives of welfare policies and, specifically, of social inclusion policies? Is the integration of immigrants a task of this public policy space?

In terms of political application, the level of cover afforded to immigrants within the social security benefits systems of European welfare states is contingent upon the balance between two criteria: 1) duty of reciprocity and 2) the right of access (Efthymiou, 2019). Depending on the weighting given

<sup>1</sup> VOX is an ultra-conservative political party that obtained institutional representation for the first time in 2018.

It is currently the third largest political force in the General Parliaments.

to either criteria, different degrees of social support and cover are afforded to immigrants.

The criterion of reciprocity understands that social and economic cooperation systems developed within different national public policy frameworks aim to provide a safety net to citizens who participate in the generation and production of those systems (Sangiovanni, 2013). Based on this premise, it could be argued that immigrants should not immediately become entitled to full social and economic protection, at least until certain considerations of reciprocity have been generated in the host society (Efthymiou, 2019). However, other contrasting theoretical works argue that this condition should not deter host countries from fulfilling their duty in terms of social justice (Miklós, 2011; Shachar, 2011), which must be practised with all citizens, regardless of their national origin.

A country's duty of social justice is expressed through the so-called right of settlement, which means that the purpose of mechanisms of social and economic cooperation, beyond the function of reciprocity, is to facilitate the integration of people in social and productive life, regardless of whether they are immigrants or not. These systems, or at least a part thereof, would, therefore, play a proactive (Aguilera-Izquierdo, 2006) or activating (Pérez-Eransus, 2009) role with regard to the immigrant population.

According to Rodríguez Cabrero (2009), inclusion policies are one of those parcels of public policy that connect the protective and proactive functions. These functions become effective in two ways: 1) access to the social space, and 2) support in the productive space, thus becoming facilitators of development that will eventually benefit the whole of society. This perspective follows the lines drawn by the European Commission in the Europe 2020 Strategy, which views policies of inclusion as policies geared towards social investment (European Commission, 2013).

In the different Plans of Social Inclusion<sup>2</sup> passed by the Spanish government since the year 2000, the immigrant population is recognised as a specific beneficiary collective of these policies. However, in line with the Spanish model of integration (Pérez-

Eransus, Zugasti Mutilva, & Martínez Sordoni, 2019), these plans do not develop differentiated actions for immigrants, opting to incorporate them into the framework of services and programmes developed for the population as a whole.

### 1.3. Inclusion: labour, earnings and social dimensions

The European Union understands social inclusion as “a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live” (European Commission, 2013, p. 1). This definition has attained a certain degree of consensus among the member states, allowing joint targets to be drawn up, resulting in the definition of the so-called Social Investment Package, which seeks to “ensure that social protection systems respond to the needs of people” (Martínez et al, 2019:5).

Frazer and Marlier (2014) define three lines of inclusive action here: 1) adequate protection by means of a guaranteed income system; 2) the development of Social Services programmes; and 3) the adaptation of inclusive employment policies. However, operational strategies for inclusion have frequently prioritised access to employment, leaving to one side the effective promotion of the other two lines (Ferrera, Matsaganis, & Sacchi, 2002). This is also influenced by a dichotomic vision, which posits that socioeconomic inclusion measures can deter people from actively seeking employment (Aguilar, Gaviria, & Navarro, 1995). In this regard, the European Union highlights the need to promote sufficient guaranteed income mechanisms and proactive social support policies (European Commission, 2013). In the case of Spain, this dual task is assigned to the Public Social Services System (Manzanera-Román, Carbonero, Hernández, & Raya, 2019).

The three lines proposed by Frazer and Marlier (2014) also have a different protective effect. Various studies have shown how guaranteed income and social support measures have a greater impact on collectives in situations of more severe exclusion, whereas employment access measures are more useful for collectives in situations of more moderate exclusion or vulnerability (Martínez and Sánchez,

<sup>2</sup> *National Social Inclusion Plans* have been developed in all European Union countries since the year 2000 as a result of a common commitment.

2019b). This fact, which affects immigrant and non-immigrant beneficiaries in the same way, underscores the importance of specifically socioeconomic measures in terms of balancing and activating the population in greatest need.

In the case of Spain, as mentioned previously, Social Services are the central institutional structure responsible for managing socioeconomic inclusion measures. Operationally, each region has the authority to manage these policies<sup>3</sup>. This organisation has generated substantial diversity, since each region drafts its own legislation and intervention frameworks, although as a whole these regulations are grounded in a very similar model of action, comparable throughout the State as a whole<sup>4</sup> (González & Jaraíz, 2016) wherein socioeconomic inclusion is pursued by means of three principal elements (Jaraíz & González, 2019).

- Guaranteed income benefits, understood as a regulated right and conditioned by at least one of two premises: 1) having been previously employed for a sufficient period of time so as to entitle the recipient to economic protection (unemployment income guarantee), or 2) meeting a series of social, economic and residency requirements (minimum insertion income).
- A series of economic emergency programmes and welfare benefits granted *ex gratia*, promoted by regional and municipal administrations and managed by municipal Social Services. These are also economic benefits, but they are granted under specific circumstances and not for extended periods of time.
- A public network of local Social Services present in all municipalities within the State, endowed with professionals and technical provisions for social support as well as cooperation mechanisms with third sector entities.

We can point out that, although the intervention model is quite comparable for all regions, the practical differences are often important between regions. For instances, although all regions have an RMI coverage, in regions such as the Basque Country or Navarra

the proportion in relation to the population at risk of poverty is 15 times higher than the coverage of region as Andalusia or 10 times higher than the coverage of Region of Murcia (Jaraíz & González, 2019).

#### 1.4. Social Services and their proactive role in socioeconomic inclusion

Local Social Services are the nearest institutional space to people and/or families in situations of exclusion, regardless of whether they are immigrants or not, and accordingly they play a vital role in the entire socioeconomic inclusion strategy, since they are responsible for: 1) the administrative management of socioeconomic resources; 2) providing social support for people and families in situations of exclusion; and 3) boosting workplaces by means of other public or third sector resources (Prieto-Lobato, Rodríguez-Sumaza & Rosa-Gimeno, 2019).

Inclusive intervention is carried out, therefore, through the combination of technical-professional provisions and economic or material provisions (Pérez, 2009). However, the essential contribution of local Social Services resides in the technical-professional aspect (Casado, 2007) that manages the proactive task defined in all regional laws<sup>5</sup> on account of its preventive, promotional and anticipatory nature (Alemán, 2011; Casado, 2007). The main technical provision provided by these Services is support, whereby professionals from this system (working in collaboration with other actors) offer support to immigrants, normally by drawing up route maps for their social inclusion (Gonzalez, Dominguez & Muniategui, 2015).

Social support is provided by means of five programmes common to all local social services: 1) Information, assessment and guidance, 2) Home help, 3) Cohabitation support, 4) Alternative accommodation, and 5) Prevention and social reinsertion<sup>6</sup>. These five programmes are aimed at the population as a whole, geared towards different collectives in accordance with their needs. In the case of immigrants and their needs for socioeconomic inclusion, programmes 1 (information,

<sup>3</sup> The Spanish State is organised into 17 self-governing regions and two self-governing cities.

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of the Basque Country and Navarra, which have their own legal frameworks on account of their individual legislation and taxation systems.

<sup>5</sup> Each region has its own legislation governing Social Services.

<sup>6</sup> *Plan Concertado de Prestaciones Básicas de Servicios Sociales*. Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality. Government of Spain.



assessment and guidance) and 5 (Prevention and social reinsertion) are the most important. However, in terms of economic provisions, there are two types, which differ in their intensity and nature and which impact on the efficiency of inclusion targets, gearing them more towards work in progress methodologies or towards more one-off or social emergency responses.

The first provision is a form of Guaranteed Minimum Income (*Renta Mínima de Inserción* in Spanish; hereinafter RMI). This is the most ambitious provision, since it offers sustained support over specific periods of time. Furthermore, beneficiaries can often sequence their benefits, moving from jobseekers' allowance to RMI (Jaraíz & González, 2019), thus accumulating extensive periods of time (from 6 to 36 months), during which the professional support of Social Services in their search for an autonomous solution is more effective (Martínez, 2014). This first route is more demanding in its entitlement criteria. For example, applicants must have been registered as residents of the municipality for a certain period of time, normally 12 months, before submitting an application, although this varies according to the region. As a result, this route is hard to access for some of the immigrant population who have been residing in Spain for a shorter period of time (Moreno & Aierdi, 2018).

The second route is based on what is known as *Ayudas de Emergencia Social* (social emergency welfare benefits; hereinafter AES), and it is much weaker and more precarious since it is based on a one-off economic guarantee, the continuity of which is not defined. This issue, together with the urgent nature thereof, is the focal point of support for immediate problems, thus it has a negative impact on the activation of more prolonged and efficient processes.

## 2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The first objective (O1) of this research is: verify whether the demand for social and economic support of the non-European immigrant population explains the weakness of Spanish socio-economic inclusion policies and contributes to the displacement of the local population. For such a displacement to exist, the existence of demand from immigrants is not in itself enough (we understand that, based on the analytical and legal framework set out here, this group is by law

a specific object of these policies based on criteria of settlement and social inclusion). Rather, there must be disproportionate access and use of these resources by this collective. The second objective (O2) is to ascertain the way in which the use of different socio-economic resources impacts on the development of inclusion strategies, from a comparative perspective between the national and non-European immigrant population.

We have chosen to focus our analysis on immigrants from non-EU countries because people from the EU enjoy a different and broader framework of protection, and, therefore, discourses about the displacement of the local population with regard to social provisions focus particularly on non-European immigrant groups.

These objectives will be developed on the basis of three research questions used to set out our findings below: (RQ1) Are immigrants disproportionately accessing socio-economic inclusion provisions with regard to Social Services? (RQ2) Are immigrants displacing the local population from social support programmes? (RQ3) Are similar conditions of inclusion afforded by socio-economic provisions for immigrants and non-immigrants alike?

## 3. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned previously, concern regarding this issue, in the case of Spain, has been tackled chiefly through qualitative research (Alemán, 2011; Rodríguez Cabrero, 2009; Moreno & Aierdi, 2008; Moreno & Braguetas, 2011; Laparra, 2003), and there is, as far as we know, no statistical data to specifically back up this subject of study. Hence, the research strategy applied here is to compile and analytically compare data from different secondary sources. These data are taken from three types of sources:

1. Official statistical sources, in particular the Living Conditions Survey (ECV) conducted every year by Spain's National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018). This Survey includes the AROPE indicator (At Risk Of Poverty and/or Exclusion), which measures levels of poverty/exclusion, differentiating between immigrant and non-immigrant population groups, carried out approximately in 13,000 household survey and 35,000 people with a margin of error of  $\pm 0.5\%$ .

2. Technical reports drawn up by public administrations. We have used two main sub-sources here: the first is the Minimum Income Report that analyses the situation and distribution of economic provisions within the whole of the State, stipulating the origin of the beneficiaries for some of the items. Since the year 2011, this Report has been published every year by Spain's Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare (2013-2018a). The second source is the Report of the Agreed Plan for Basic Social Services Provisions, drafted by the same Ministry (2013-2018b), also annually, describing the impact of five common programmes run by local Social Services in the State as a whole. This Report also identifies the levels of access of immigrants and refugees to the different programmes.
3. The FOESSA Report 2018 on Exclusion and Social Development in Spain drawn up by Cáritas Española. This report establishes the FOESSA Index, which also provides differentiated data about demand for provisions. FOESSA Report 2018 were conducted among a sample of approximately 11,500 households surveys enrolling 30,000 people, with a margin of error of  $\pm 0.9\%$  for households and  $\pm 0.6\%$  for individuals.

By compiling and comparing these data, we have been able to create a specific composition for the purposes of this research. Table 1 indicates the utility of the different sources in terms of verifying the research objectives and questions set.

In the presentation of our findings, we have worked with mean values for the series of each value, and in some cases with data from the most recent year (2018). Finally, when identifying the population at risk, we have used two key sources: 1) The AROPE indicator, which considers people to be at risk of exclusion if their income is lower than 60% of the National Disposable Income (NDI), or if they live in households with low work intensity or in a situation of severe material deprivation; and 2) the FOESSA Index, which establishes two different categories of exclusion: moderate exclusion affects people with an income less than 60% of NDI, and severe exclusion where their income is less than 30% of NDI. This second index provided more precise information.

#### 4. RESULTS

##### 4.1. Are immigrants disproportionately accessing socio-economic inclusion provisions within the Social Services system?

Table 2 provides relevant information for this question. At first glance, we see that during the period analysed, the access percentage for immigrants (mean 5.74) (Sequence 2.1) is clearly lower than the population weight of the foreign population (Sequence 2.3). For the year 2018, the access percentage for immigrants was approximately half (11.77 and 5.01, respectively).

Table 1. Secondary sources, objectives and research questions.

Source	Specific Data	Objective	Research Question
Living Conditions Survey.	ARPE indicator. Absolute and relative data about the population at risk of poverty/exclusion. Data differentiated by origin.	O1- O2	RQ.1 -RQ.2
Basic Income Report.	Absolute and relative data about immigrant and non-immigrant beneficiaries of RMI benefits. General data about the population benefitting from AES benefits.	O1	RQ.1
Report of Agreed Social Services Plan.	Absolute and relative data about the immigrant and non-immigrant population served by local Social Services programmes.	O1-O2	RQ.2
FOESSA Survey 2018.	FOESSA Index. Data (by means of a survey conducted in the home) regarding use of and access to Social Services and demand for economic provisions (emergency assistance, minimum guaranteed income, and job seekers' allowance).	O1-O2	RQ.3

Table 2. Immigrant population and use of social services.

SEQUENCE 2.1. % IMMIGRANT BENEFICIARIES OF SOCIAL SERVICES / % IMMIGRANT POPULATION.							
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Mean
% DEMAND FROM IMMIGRANTS	6.29	5.75	5.18	5.71	5.19	5.71	5.74
SEQUENCE 2.2. % IMMIGRANT BENEFICIARIES OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMMES:							
Information and Guidance	7.58	6.51	5.87	6.19	5.78	6.07	6.33
Home Help	0.45	0.45	0.4	0.32	0.32	0.61	0.43
Cohabitation Support	6.31	5.54	4.54	4.84	4.56	4.98	5.13
Accommodation	12.76	3.24	3.36	4.53	1.28	2.57	4.62
Prevention and Reinsertion	6.94	5.02	4.8	6.01	4.81	6.66	5.71
SEQUENCE 2.3. % FOREIGNERS OVER THE WHOLE POPULATION:							
General	10.13	9.82	9.92	10.14	10.74	11.77	10.42
EU Foreigners	3.83	3.82	3.96	4.18	4.40	5.01	4.20
Non-EU Foreigners	6.30	6.00	5.96	5.97	6.34	6.76	6.22
SEQUENCE 2.4. AROPE INDICATOR FOR RISK OF POVERTY-EXCLUSION:							
Spanish	23.5	25.6	25.5	24.7	23.4	23.1	24.30
Non-EU Immigrants	60.30	62.7	63.9	60.1	58.7	56	60.28

Source: Authors' own based on data from the Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare, and INE. (2013-2018).

Furthermore, there are two particularly striking aspects. Firstly, this is a global figure for the immigrant population from within and outside the EU. Hence, beneficiaries at risk of exclusion are not marked out in any way, even though we know empirically that the population served by the Social Services system is largely an excluded population. Sequence 2.4 shows how the risk of exclusion in Spain is on average 35.98 points higher for non-EU immigrants, which means that an immigrant is 2.47 times more likely to be excluded; therefore, the general proportion of use of these Services is 1/4.7 in favour of the local population. Hence, in general, the immigrant population makes considerably less use of Social Services in relation to the population as a whole and in relation to the proportion at risk of exclusion.

This comparison yields particularly striking results when analysing the percentages of immigrants who

benefit from each of the five programmes provided by Social Services (Sequence 2.2). Here we can see how, in all of these programmes, the percentage of immigrant beneficiaries is substantially lower than their population weighting.

Having analysed the general use of Social Services, Table 3 focuses specifically on access to the two economic protection resources managed by these services: 1) RMI and 2) AES. Both provisions are tools to support inclusion, although, as explained in the introduction and theoretical framework, they have a very different protective capacity. The Spanish Government offers very unequal information about these two programmes. We can access immigrant population data for RMI, but AES only provides global data about beneficiaries.

Table 3. Beneficiaries of economic provisions.

SEQUENCE 3.1. BENEFICIARIES OF RMI							
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Mean
Spanish	202,903	202,524	233,416	233,092	303,808	205,722	230,244
Immigrants	55,505	59,783	74,826	73,041	115,331	70,044	74,755
Total	258,408	262,307	308,242	306,133	419,139	275,766	304,999
% Immigrants	21.48	22.79	24.28	23.86	27.52	25.40	24
SEQUENCE 3.2. BENEFICIARIES OF AES (EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)							
Total population	411,155	475,944	575,536	488,142	119,715	438,966	418,243

Sources: Authors' own based on Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare (2013-2018).

Without the necessary contextualisation, we can see at first glance how, for RMI provision, the proportion of immigrant beneficiaries is 13.58 points higher than their real population weighting (Sequences 3.1 and 3.3). This figure is often used as a political and media argument by anti-immigration political movements. The imbalance persists even if we just analyse the population at risk of exclusion. For example, according to the AROPE indicator for 2018, one out of every five people in a situation of exclusion is an immigrant, whereas Sequence 3.1 shows how they represent approximately one out of every four beneficiaries of RMI provisions (24% on average for the series; 25.4 in the year 2018).

However, this greater proportion does not exactly reflect the reality of the situation in terms of the percentages of the immigrant and non-immigrant excluded population accessing these subsidies. This is so because, in practice, RMI benefits have a very restricted protective capacity. Taking once again as a reference the data for AROPE, only one out of every 52.39 people at risk of exclusion would access this provision. Practically speaking, RMI benefits are not available to all the population at risk of exclusion, only those who are experiencing a situation of intense exclusion as indicated by the Association of Social Services Directors and Managers (2019), which points out that barely 8% of the most excluded population accesses these benefits. The AROPE figure is, therefore, too general, and we need more precise data.

Another source, the FOESSA Index, provides more precise information, since this survey divides the population at risk of exclusion into two different groups: 1) moderate exclusion, and 2) severe exclusion. This second category (severe exclusion) certainly encompasses the entire population that receives RMI benefits, which offers a more refined analysis. However, the drawback of the FOESSA Index is that measurements are taken every five years, rather than annually, since it is an impact survey. However, we have data published for the years 2013 and 2018, which allows us to assess the start and end years of the reference series for this study.

Analysing these data we see that, in 2013, 25.5% of the total population in a situation of severe exclusion were immigrants from outside the EU. This figure changed slightly in 2018, increasing to 25.7% (FOESSA, 2019). Hence, the percentage of immigrants benefitting

from this minimum income guarantee is, for both reference years, slightly lower than their population weighting in the category of severe exclusion.

#### **4.2. Are immigrants displacing the local population from social support programmes?**

Whereas in the previous section we focused on access to economic resources, we are turning our attention now to technical resources. To examine this issue in greater depth, we must remember that not all Social Services programmes are specifically designed to support inclusion. Of the five programmes available, the Information, Evaluation and Guidance programme is general in nature and aimed at the entire population. The Home Help Programme is chiefly aimed at dependent elderly people. The Prevention and Reinsertion Programme directly pursues objectives that would support inclusion, working in conjunction, when required, with the Accommodation Programme when there are situations of homelessness, and the Cohabitation Programme when there are situations of family conflict.

Sequence 2.2 shows that the highest volume of immigrants is concentrated in the following programmes: Information, Evaluation and Guidance (6.33%) and Prevention and Reinsertion (5.71%). This latter programme, as mentioned previously, is aimed directly at the excluded population. Personalised Pathways are usually designed, which are the technical tool used to direct professionals in their support of inclusion processes. The data regarding access to this Programme shows that the proportion of Non-EU immigrants using this resource is below their general population weighting (6.22%).

#### **4.3. Are similar conditions of inclusion afforded by socio-economic provisions for immigrants and non-immigrants alike?**

Finding an answer to this third question is somewhat more complex and merits its own specific analysis. However, we have decided to tackle it here in a somewhat more preliminary fashion. The data indicate the existence of differentiated socio-economic inclusion strategies for the immigrant and non-immigrant populations.

The FOESSA 2018 asks, within a broader panel of questions related with survival strategies, about



applications for specific economic assistance and aid in recent years. It should be noted that respondents are asked whether they have applied for specific provisions, but no information is provided regarding the percentage of approved applications. Hence, these data are not useful for a direct comparison, although they offer information about a general trend. Below (table 4) is the information pertaining to the two economic provisions analysed here:

**Table 4. Comparison in the use of social services.**

Variables	Moderate exclusion		Severe exclusion	
	Spanish	Non-EU immigrant	Spanish	Non-EU immigrant
Have you ever applied for RMI?				
Yes	12.7	13.6	29.2	26.0
Have you ever applied for AES ?				
Yes	12.7	14.3	26.2	29.2

SOURCE: Authors' own based on FOESSA, 2019.

Table 4 provides information about RMI applicants, as shown whereas for the category of moderate exclusion, among immigrants applicants is 0.9% percentage point higher. In the category of severe exclusion, non-immigrant applicants are 4.2 percentual point higher. It should be remembered that almost all the provisions granted are concentrated in this second category. If we look at applications for AES, we see that the percentage of immigrants applying for this emergency financial assistance is higher in both categories of exclusion.

These results allow us to infer, however, that, in spite of the findings shown in Sequences 3.1 and 3.2, the population in situations of exclusion is more likely to apply for AES benefits (418,423) than RMI provisions (304,999), regardless of whether or not they are immigrants. The fact that, for the two categories of exclusion, the proportion of immigrants applying for AES is higher than non-immigrants allows us to establish as a premise that, even though the excluded population as a whole accesses AES more than RMI, the percentage of this provision is even greater for immigrants, and it is possible that, for this type of economic aid, the percentage of beneficiary immigrants is higher than their population weighting, although in no case is it a significant proportion. This factor might

affect the conditions whereby support for inclusion is provided, since, as mentioned previously, both provisions are very different in terms of their amount<sup>7</sup> and characteristics.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although one of the missions of Social Services is to guarantee the access rights of immigrants, the data show that, in actual fact, this right is conditioned by differentiated reciprocity (Carens, 2013; Sangiovanni, 2015) since there are more exacting conditions for this population group. Hence, the comparison data from statistical sources and official reports show that immigrants do not disproportionately use Social Security resources for socio-economic inclusion, from the perspective of institutional access or the use of provisions. This more restrictive reciprocity is coherent with the opinion of Spanish society regarding the type of coverage that should be provided to immigrants. 70% of citizens are favourable to providing access to these services for immigrants, although 30% of them consider that there should be additional differentiation requirements with regard to the local population (Monge, 2019). We can conclude, therefore, that there is no abuse of resources for inclusion of either an economic or technical nature. Furthermore, we could add that, if we compare the immigrant and non-immigrant populations in situations of severe exclusion, there is also no overuse with regard to access to minimum income benefits.

This finding discredits political discourses that claim abuse of Social Services by immigrants population. It also realigns certain perceptions that, at the other extreme, claim these services are being underused by this collective. Analysis of the sources used shows that the access of immigrants to benefits of a technical nature is clearly unfavourable, in those of an economic nature this imbalance persists, although in a more proportionate manner.

Beyond this, the results presented here also flag up the weakness of Social Services socio-economic inclusion policies for people enduring situations

<sup>7</sup> The average amount for RMI in 2018 was 5,510 euros/year. While AES were 431 euros/year.

of social exclusion, regardless of whether they are immigrants or not. An attempt has been made to compensate for the scant development of RMI programmes, a RMI provision designed to favour support (Mingione & Benassi, 2019), by means of the AES emergency financial assistance, although this latter provision is aimed more at crisis situations than at providing continued support. This inadequateness of income resources in reality limits the efficiency of inclusion policies and public Social Services policies, which end up being more palliative forms of relief aid (Jaraíz & González, 2019; Casado, 2007). This predominance of relief measures has intensified with the crisis (Manzanera-Román et al., 2019), making it hard to achieve employment activation (Pérez, 2009).

Faced with the declining capacity of Social Services to provide a safety net, people at risk of exclusion have developed various strategies, chiefly by combining public sources with the support of family and local networks (FOESSA, 2013; Martínez, 2014). To such an extent that Social Services have frequently focused their attention more on the articulation of the family support system than the inclusion of the beneficiaries themselves (Sánchez, 2017).

However, this is more difficult for immigrants due to the fragility of their local family networks and institutional limitations. This population group generally turns to two key sources of support before going to Social Services: mutual peer support networks (Martínez-García, García-Ramírez, & Maya-Jariego, 2001; Méndez, 2012); and pro-immigration private social organisations and social welfare charities (Ciriano, 2009). These two resources act as container walls for immigrant demand for public services, partly compensating for their lower use thereof. By way of an example, immigrants represented almost 40% of beneficiaries at *Cáritas*, the Spanish charity organisation that has the largest welfare assistance capacity. Even so, this charity helped a higher proportion of non-immigrants (*Cáritas Española*, 2018).

Another factor that impacts on this lower demand is related with cultural aspects. Moreno and Aierdi (2018) point to two major functions of Social Services: as a final safety net, characteristic of beneficiaries who use the system continuously, joining and leaving the

different programmes; and as a means of achieving social ascension, characteristic of beneficiaries who use the system as a resource to embark on their project for autonomy. Various studies have highlighted that the bulk of the immigrant population arrives with a social ascension project (Alemán, 2011). In some ways, one characteristic of this collective is that, beyond technical resources, they use the resources available to construct their own route map more independently than many of the traditional excluded profiles (Laparra, 2003). This greater willingness to develop its own and more autonomous strategies for social advancement (inclusion) in relation to public support systems has an impact on the intense naturalisation/nationalisation process of a considerable part of the immigrant population, which now reaches approximately one in three immigrants (Iglesias, Rua & Ares, 2020).

Both groups of factors condition the type of relationship immigrants establish with Social Services. The existence of more demanding institutional requirements and the welfare relief orientation of Social Services on the one hand, and the different configuration of support networks and preference for social ascension strategies on the other, influence the more limited use of Social Services by immigrants.

Finally, the approach taken in this paper highlights the difficulty of accessing comparable statistical data that would allow the use of and access to Social Services to be studied. The first difficulty encountered pertains to the existence of different statistical criteria; in some cases we found sources that provided data about immigrant populations without stating their origin (EU or non-EU). A second limitation was the different frequency and duration of the statistical series, a question that in this case was resolved by analysing the period from 2013 to 2018, since all the sources consulted offer data for this period, and it also recognised as the period in which Spain started to emerge from the financial crisis. Thirdly, with regard to the data offered by private sources such as the Foessa Report (2018), by focusing on behaviours in the last year or previous years, the percentages tend to converge owing to the vagueness of the question, which makes it hard to draw direct comparisons with the data offered by the administrations, although they are still useful to use to observe the coincidence of certain trends.

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