

# Leaving Home for a Better Life? Occupational Mobility of Skilled Immigrants: Some Empirical Comments from Spain in Light of the Current Economic Crisis

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to study the occupational mobility experienced following migration by migrants who are university graduates or postgraduates who completed their studies before their arrival in Spain. To do so, we compared the first job they obtained in Spain with the last one held before leaving their country of origin. We identify three different types of mobility: downward mobility, lateral mobility, and upward mobility. Finally, we used logistic regression models to identify the strongest predictors of the three types of mobility previously classified. The empirical analysis was carried out using data from the Spanish National Immigrant Survey (ENI) of 2007, including information about some 15 000 individuals. Our attention will be focused on the 2 425 skilled migrants from this survey.

*Keywords:* 1. brain waste, 2. occupational mobility, 3. labor market, 4. migration, 5. Spain

## ¿Dejar el hogar para mejorar? Movilidad ocupacional de inmigrantes cualificados: Algunas observaciones empíricas desde España, antes de la crisis económica actual

## RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es estudiar la movilidad ocupacional experimentada por los inmigrantes que completaron sus estudios universitarios (de grado y postgrado) antes de su llegada a España. Para ello hemos comparado la primera ocupación que tuvieron en España con la última que tuvieron antes de dejar su país de origen. Hemos identificado tres tipos diferentes de movilidad: movilidad descendente; movilidad lateral y, finalmente, movilidad ascendente. Por último, hemos usado modelos de regresión logística para identificar los predictores más importantes de estos tres tipos de movilidad. El análisis empírico se hizo utilizando información aportada por la Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes (ENI) de 2007, que tiene información de unos 15 000 individuos. Nuestra atención se centra en 2 425 inmigrantes cualificados.

*Palabras clave:* 1. fuga de talentos, 2. movilidad ocupacional, 3. mercado de trabajo, 4. migraciones, 5. España

## *Introduction*

Globalization processes have led to the development of a huge labor market, and companies have taken on global dimensions, all of which certainly offer people the opportunity to move more or less freely from one country to another. It is thus possible to move to countries where one's aspirations and expectations are more likely to be met, and where one has more opportunities. On the other hand, the existence of political and commercial agreements between different countries can favor or restrict the migratory flow. European Union (EU) countries have invested considerable time and effort in creating an area that is intended to achieve economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress by guaranteeing the free circulation of people. To this end, international agreements such as the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) and the Lisbon Agreement (2000) have been signed. The latter, in particular, is intended to develop the European knowledge economy. In other words, the EU had the strategic objective of becoming "a more competitive economy in the world on the basis of knowledge, which is capable of growing economically in a sustainable way, with more and better employment and greater social cohesion." In 2010, the European institutions and member states embarked on a new debate to define a new strategy. This is known as "Europa 2020" and is intended to reinforce the social dimension, particularly in the field of economic growth and employment, without ignoring issues such as sustainable development or climate change.

As far as employment is concerned, we should ask whether such agreements have provided an adequate response to the needs from which they arose. In particular, it would seem to be essential to research how well-qualified immigrants have been incorporated into EU countries, and how the member states have provided access to these human resources, giving them the opportunity to contribute to socioeconomic development. Often, especially if we take into account what happens with migratory movements into the Mediterranean countries in the EU, we will see that many immigrants (including those with the highest qualifications) have grave

problems gaining recognition for their academic qualifications. Most of these people have to accept jobs at the lowest end of the labor market before being able to work in professions more appropriate to their level of training (Ambrosini, 2005). This often leads them to the entrepreneurial arena. In many cases, the process of upward mobility happens only slowly, as they acquire new experience and skills in the country to which they have migrated (Barberis, 2007; Ambrosini, 2009). This is particularly the case with men from Africa, who may be engineers or technicians, but who during their first years in the EU can only gain access to intensive labor sectors (such as building or agriculture). Over time, they are able to show that they have superior skills in disciplines related to their university studies. In other words, according to some authors, in the medium to long term they can gain recognition for their skills, and the downward social movement that they suffer on arrival seems not to affect them (Reyneri, 2006). As far as women are concerned, the story is more mixed: Once they arrive in the host country, they often change their activity completely, and they only rarely succeed in their former professions (Ortolano and Luatti, 2007; Colombo and Sciortino, 2008).

Our aim in this article is to analyze the employment possibilities of highly qualified immigrants in Europe. The article is organized as follows: First, we will review the main findings of demographic and economic research on the subject of labor mobility. Then we will present a descriptive framework related to the presence of highly qualified migrants, using data from the Workforce Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa, EPA) carried out by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE). Then we will evaluate the professional fate of the qualified immigrants who are currently working in Spain, using the data from the National Immigrant Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes, ENI) carried out by the INE in 2007. Even though this was the year before the current financial crisis set in, our research contains a large amount of information on the demographic, social, and labor situation of immigrants in Spain. In short, we shall try to identify the main occupational mobility patterns among these migrants and

to understand, using a binary logistic regression model, which factors are most influential within the dynamics of this situation.

Between 2000 and 2010, scholars were able to demonstrate that being a skilled immigrant does not necessarily lead to either an improvement in an immigrant's employment conditions or to a more rapid integration into the host country's labor market (Boeri et al., 2012; Matto, Neagu, and Özden, 2008; Batalova, Fix, and Creticos, 2008; Sanromá, Ramos, and Simón, 2008 and 2011; Chiswick and Taengnoi, 2007). However, it was a widely held opinion in the 1990s that this specific group of immigrants managed to achieve better jobs compared with others due to their tendency to continually invest in their own "human capital" (Chiswick 1978; Borjas, 1985; Friedberg, 2000; Powers and Seltzer, 1998). Almost paradoxically, it has in fact been noted that skilled immigrant workers undergo a relatively more marked deterioration in their employment conditions when compared with unskilled immigrants immediately after migrating (Raijman and Semyonov, 2005; Barberis, 2007; Bernardi, Garrido, and Miyar, 2011; Chiswick, Lee, and Miller, 2003; Ambrosini, 2005; Reyneri, 2006; Garrido, Miyar, and Muñoz, 2010; Miguélez *et al.*, 2012, Redstone, 2006; Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2011, González *et al.*, 2013). Domingo and Houle (2005) have demonstrated, for instance, that the registered unemployment rate in Spain among skilled immigrants from Argentina, Cuba, and Venezuela is higher than the rate seen among immigrants without a high level of training from Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the occupational trajectories of skilled immigrants in Spain,<sup>1</sup> a country which, almost at the same time as Italy was recently transformed from a country of emigration to a host country receiving immigrants in search of better job opportunities. An effort will therefore be made to identify the main typologies of such immigrants' occupational mobility in order to single out the most influential characteristics within this process by using a binary logistic regression model. The methodol-

<sup>1</sup> In fact, we do not investigate the immigrants' trajectory, since we only examine information about two points in time.

ogy used was adapted from the work of Stanek and Veira (2009) on occupational mobility among migrants as a whole. This paper is an improved extension of a previous paper by Albano (2011).

*Aims, data sources, and methodologies used for the research*

In order to carry out this study, the National Immigration Survey (*Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes*, or ENI)—a survey conducted by the INE (Spanish National Statistics Office) since 1997—was used as the single source of data. Though that year preceded the crisis, the ENI provides a large amount of information on immigrants residing in Spain and allows one to make comparisons between their socio-economic conditions before and after leaving their native countries.

The objectives of the survey—each of which corresponds to a specific section of the same—were to look into the histories of foreigners residing in Spain by gaining further knowledge about the family context they belonged to and/or came from, their training, and the work experience they had acquired prior to migrating. The ENI is a valuable tool for any social researcher wishing to conduct a comprehensive study on the foreign population in Spain since it allows one to know migratory trajectories by specifically shedding light on social aspects and analyzing material living conditions and relationship networks in Spain, in order to come to an understanding of what these migrants' level of integration within Spanish society may be like. Furthermore, it is also possible to study their inclusion in the Spanish labor market and find out about the respondents' expectations and plans for the future. Particularly relevant is the attention paid to the issue of the proper use of the competencies of skilled immigrants residing in Spain in the workplace, and to issues connected with the recognition of academic qualifications and gaining access to professions. The full use of immigrant workers' intellectual capacity is an essential topic of interest for any highly developed country, as well as for people personally undergoing a migratory experience, because immigrant workers' qualifications are often underutilized (in such cases we can speak of "brain waste").

This survey therefore provides useful information on immigrants in Spain for two different time periods: the period preceding migration and that subsequent to it. The total number of respondents amounts to 15 257 individuals, 7 965 (52.2 % of the total) of whom were males and 7 292 (47.8 %) females. All of them were over 15 years of age, were born abroad, and had been in Spain for at least a year at the moment the interview was conducted. If their stay had been less than a year, any who stated they wanted to remain in Spain for at least a year from the moment of the interview were included in the survey. For the purposes of this analysis, 2 425 immigrants were in fact selected, 1 190 of whom were males (49.1 %) and 1 235 females (50.9 %). They already had an undergraduate degree and possibly postgraduate degrees before arriving in Spain.

The aim of this paper is to verify whether there are any immediate changes in the employment conditions of skilled immigrants who had decided to remain in Spain for at least a year. By comparing their employment situation prior to migration and the employment situation they managed to achieve after migration, three types of mobility were identified: downward mobility, if the job obtained in Spain was less skilled than the job they held in their countries of origin; lateral mobility, if the job obtained in Spain was equivalent to the job they held prior to leaving their countries of origin; and upward mobility, if the job obtained in the Iberian peninsula was more skilled than the job they held in their countries of origin. The ENI, however, does not provide exact details concerning the timing of these different situations. Longitudinal statistical methods cannot therefore be used to conduct an empirical analysis. Consequently, a matrix will be constructed (or better said, two matrices according to gender) based on the last job immigrants had prior to leaving in order to identify the aforementioned “trajectories.” Lastly, an effort will be made to identify the variables exerting the greatest influence on these “pathways.” In order to achieve this aim, three different binary logistic regression models will be used whose dependent variables will be the likelihood of downward, upward, and lateral mobility. The set of independent variables is based on an analysis of the literature on the topic of occupational mobility which, though extensive, has seldom shed light on the occupational trajectories of highly qualified foreigners in host countries.

*Descriptive analysis**Sociodemographic characteristics*

The skilled immigrants in Spain taken into consideration for the purposes of this analysis mainly come from other European countries and Latin America. A comparison of distributions by gender in these two cases reveals a slight predominance of females. Around 82.8 percent of these immigrants come from Europe and Latin America. Gender differences turn out to be hardly relevant, though Latin American women when compared with their countrymen account for 57.4 percent of the sample as against 42.6 percent for males. With regard to Europeans, there are slightly more women than men. Women account for 50.7 percent of the sample, whereas men constitute 49.3 percent. A difference between the sexes can also be noted in the case of skilled Asian immigrants. In this case, however there are more men, who account for 64 percent of the sample as opposed to the 36 percent comprised by women (Table 1).

*Table 1.* Some Demographic Characteristics of the Immigrant Population  
*Appendix 1.* Some demographic characteristics of the immigrant population

Origin	Number of respondents		
	Total	Men (%)	Women (%)
Europe	1081	49.3	50.7
Latin America	929	42.6	57.4
Asia	198	64.0	36.0
North Africa	217	69.9	30.1
Total	2425	49.1	50.9

*(continues)*

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## Age of Arrival (Data in Percentage)

Age of Arrival	Total	Men	Women
20-24	17.1	7.5	9.6
25-34	45.1	21.3	23.8
35-44	19.7	10.3	9.4
45-54	9.8	4.7	5.1
55-64	6.4	4	2.4
65>	1.8	1.3	0.5
Total	100	49.1	50.9

Immigrants' Age Structure  
(Data in Percentage)

Age	Men	Women
20-24	3.1	2.8
25-29	10.6	14.2
30-34	15.8	19.6
35-39	16.8	15.8
40-44	13.6	14.3
45-49	12.2	10.1
50-54	6.6	6.1
55-59	5.8	5.3
60-64	3.5	5
65-69	6	3
70-74	2.7	1.9
75-79	1.5	1
80-84	.6	.2
85+	.3	.7

Source: Drawn up based on ENI data (INE, 2007)



Most of the individuals that make up our sample (around 46.3 % of males and 52.5 % of females) are under 40 years of age and only 27 percent of males and 23.2 percent of females are over 50 years of age. However, an analysis of their age pyramid reveals a slight difference in the male and female age distributions: while the modal class for the former is the age group between 35 and 39 years, the class associated with the largest number of observations for women is the age group between 30 and 34 years.

In terms of the age of skilled immigrants upon arrival in Spain, the highest percentage of men and women arriving in Spain can be found in the 25-34 age group: the former comprise around 15 percent while the latter account for 20 percent. Arrivals in Spain of skilled individuals fall significantly as age increases. Accordingly, men in the 55-64 age group constitute about 5 percent and women in the same age group account for 3.5 percent. Finally, 55 percent of skilled immigrants residing in Spain arrived in the country after 2000. 30 percent stated they had arrived in the preceding decade (1990-2000), while only 15 percent said they had arrived prior to 1990.

More than half of the people interviewed (58.6 %) were married. Such status is more common among men (52.1 %) than among women (47.9 %), probably because women are younger on average. Most respondents (66.4 %) stated they had children, especially women (51.3 %).

### *Training and work experience*

Due to the choice of analysis, the sample includes 2 425 individuals who had degrees or other postgraduate qualifications. What they had in common is that they had all obtained such qualifications prior to their arrival in Spain. The ENI does not provide information on the types of degrees and/or qualifications they had. Hence, it is impossible to classify these immigrants on the basis of subject areas (degrees in the humanities, science, law, political and social science, etcetera).

The academic qualifications of these individuals are therefore specialized degrees (bachelor's degrees) and more rarely a master's degree or a research doctorate. The fact that these qualifications were obtained before their arrival in Spain leads one to consider that these individuals comprise a group of people who did not use their university studies as a channel to facilitate or complete their migration to Spain. This condition, however, is a common feature of skilled migration to The United States, United Kingdom, or Australia (Brandi, Caruso and Cerbara, 2010).

The most significant push factor for both skilled men and women is looking for work in keeping with their training and skills. Most of the men (48.8 %) and women (52 %) were employed in the "technicians, professionals, and intellectuals" sector. Significant differences between the sexes in favor of males can be found in the following sectors: Those who were managers in their home countries constituted 11.8 percent of the total number of men and 6.1 percent of women. Even service providers were mainly men, 9.5 percent as against 2.3 percent of women. There were more women among administrative staff and skilled workers, who in the former case accounted for 12.1 percent of the total number of women in our sample and 11.4 percent in the latter. The percentage of those who were unemployed was low: 12.5 percent in the case of males and 14.2 percent in the case of females.

Those who managed to find employment once they were in Spain were distributed in the labor market as follows: 38.4 percent of women and 28.6 percent of men were employed as managers. Compared with the situation described above, there was an appreciable fall in the number of technicians, professionals, and intellectuals as well as an increase of more than double in the number of administrative staff, a category which accounts for 26.1 percent of skilled males and 20.3 percent of skilled females. Particularly worthy of note when compared with the employment situation in the country of origin is the situation of service providers and laborers. While the former account for 16.3 percent of women, who presumably dedicate themselves to providing care and assistance to the elderly and the needy, the latter account for 13.5 percent of men who managed to find a job in construction and other labor intensive industries. This evidences the well-known difficulties that

many immigrants continue to encounter once they arrive in the host country despite holding higher education degrees, namely a condition of “subsistence.” Even in this case, the percentage of unemployed men and women turned out to be high: 13.3 percent of women and 18.2 percent of men were jobless (Table 2).

*Table 2.* Employment history of the immigrant population.  
Job Held in the Country of Origin (Data in Percentage)

	Men	Women
Managers	11.8	6.1
Technicians, professionals and	48.8	52
Skilled workers	5.1	12.1
Administrative staff	7.4	11.4
Service providers	9.5	2.3
Workers	2.9	.7
Unskilled workers	2.1	1.1
Unemployed	12.5	14.2

Job Obtained in Spain (Data in Percentage)

	Men	Women
Managers	28.6	38.4
Technicians, professionals and	9.9	3.1
Skilled workers	26.1	20.3
Administrative staff	3.2	6.8
Service providers	7.2	16.3
Workers	13.5	1.2
Unskilled workers	3.4	.8
Unemployed	8.2	13.3

Source: Drawn up based on ENI data (INE, 2007)

### *Occupational mobility*

The situations described so far can only provide a snapshot with regard to two different time periods: the period preceding migration and that subsequent to it. Migration often constitutes an important watershed for whoever has to undergo it. If we focus on workers, it is highly likely that such an event heralds changes, particularly with regard to the quality of employment. Obviously, it is not always the case that such changes are necessarily for the better nor is it certain that they will be. Thus, it is important to ascertain which directions the occupational mobility of migrants may take after migration in order to assess whether migration is the most effective instrument for individuals who wish to leave their own country in order to find better opportunities abroad. We therefore have to proceed to a comparison of the employment situation of skilled migrants before they left with the situation they managed to achieve once they had arrived in Spain. It is therefore necessary to draw up a matrix containing the distribution of individuals that make up our sample by type of job held before leaving in rows and by type of job found in Spain in columns.<sup>2</sup> The percentages of those who did not undergo any kind of change after leaving their home country can be found in Table 3, along the matrix's diagonal marked in bold type. It can be said that there is an absence of mobility for these individuals. The percentages that can be found below the above-mentioned diagonal are drawn from individuals who saw their professional status improve after migration and have therefore undergone upward mobility. On the other hand, the percentages of individuals who have undergone downward mobility can be found above the diagonal. In other words, these individuals have found jobs in Spain that require fewer skills than those they held in their home countries.

Individuals who have not undergone any experience of mobility amount to 28.5 percent<sup>3</sup> of the total number of respondents.

<sup>2</sup> The order used to classify professions is anything but coincidental, as it follows the European Socio-Economic Classification scheme prepared by Eurostat. According to this classification, the social and economic positions of individuals within market economies are identified by the type of job they hold.

<sup>3</sup> This percentage was obtained by dividing the number of qualified people who found a job in Spain requiring the same level of qualifications as their job in their country of origin by the total number of people in the study.

However, if we clean up our analysis by removing any “scaling effects,” the “unemployed” category has the greatest robustness with regard to permanence. In other words, almost 38 percent of skilled immigrants who lacked a job in their own country continued to be unemployed once they were in Spain. The data on individuals who had undergone de-skilling in their work (downward mobility) appear to the right of the above-mentioned diagonal, and their overall total weight among respondents amounts to 54.1 percent,<sup>4</sup> constituting more than half of all respondents. The category of “technicians, professionals, and intellectuals” is the category that has undergone the most drastic fall toward unemployment. About 35 percent of those who belonged to this category in their own country of origin have failed to find any kind of job in Spain. Lastly, the percentage of the skilled immigrants who saw an improvement in their employment situation (upward mobility) after their arrival to Spain can be found to the left of the diagonal. These account for 17.4 percent<sup>5</sup> of respondents. The most significant relative change compared with others was the change undergone by qualified individuals who were workers in their own country who found a job in the “skilled workers” sector once they were in Spain.

Regarding gender differences, in overall terms 48.3 percent of men suffered downward mobility as opposed to 43.3 percent of women. The latter however, are at a disadvantage when compared with the former if upward mobility is taken into consideration. Only 16.3 percent of women managed to find more skilled jobs than the jobs they held in their country of origin, while 20.2 percent of men managed to do so. Lastly, women also stood out with regard to the absence of mobility: 40.4 percent of women and 31.5 percent of men found the same kind of job in Spain as they had left behind in their country of origin. It can be noted that the “technicians, professionals, and intellectuals” category for men is the one that suffered the highest degree of downward mobility to less-skilled categories and

<sup>4</sup> This percentage was obtained by dividing the number of qualified people who found a job in Spain requiring lower qualifications than their job in their country of origin by the total number of people in the study.

<sup>5</sup> This percentage was obtained by dividing the number of qualified people who found a job in Spain requiring higher qualifications than their job in their country of origin by the total number of people in the study.

especially to unemployment. As regards women, on the other hand, it can be observed that 51 percent of women who held skilled jobs in their home countries found themselves to be unemployed in Spain. Greater downward mobility percentages for the “unskilled worker” category can be seen in the case of women for the first three occupational categories (“managers,” “technicians, professionals, and intellectuals,” and “skilled workers”) in the country of origin than in the case of men. Such a substantial difference seems to suggest that the “dual labor market” (Piore, 1979) theory may apply to immigrants in Spain, even though they are skilled.

Last, from the standpoint of upward mobility, the “technicians, professionals, and intellectuals” category was made up of different types of workers depending on their gender. Males who belonged to this category in Spain were administrative staff, service sector workers, and unemployed in their own country of origin. On the other hand, women who tended to be employed in the service sector in their country of origin now hold jobs as workers or do not hold any jobs at all.

*Table 3.* Comparison between the last job held in country of origin and the first job found in Spain. Data in percentage.

Last job held in country of origin	First job held in Spain (TOTAL)								
	Managers	Technicians, professionals and intellectuals	Skilled workers	Administrative staff	Service providers	Workers	Unskilled workers	Unemployed	Total
Managers	25.0	19.4	5.1	2.3	7.9	1.4	4.2	34.7	100
Technicians, professionals and intellectuals	4.7	29.8	4.8	3.4	10.4	2.2	9.7	34.9	100
Skilled workers	3.5	7.8	36.2	0.0	9.9	2.1	9.9	30.5	100
Administrative staff	4.2	11.3	6.6	20.8	17.0	1.4	11.8	26.9	100
Service providers	4.4	14.5	4.8	5.7	21.1	1.3	18.0	30.3	100
Workers	0.0	4.7	27.9	9.3	14.0	2.3	23.3	18.6	100
Unskilled workers	2.6	10.5	7.9	2.6	10.5	10.5	21.1	34.2	100
Unemployed	5.2	25.0	4.3	4.0	10.8	1.9	11.1	37.7	100

*(continues)*

*(continued)*

## First job held in Spain (MEN)

Last job held in country of origin	Managers	Technicians, professionals and intellectuals	Skilled workers	Administrative staff	Service providers	Workers	Unskilled workers	Unemployed	Total
Managers	31.4	20.0	6.4	1.4	6.4	2.1	3.6	28.6	100
Technicians, professionals and intellectuals	7.4	35.0	9.1	2.2	5.9	4.0	5.0	31.4	100
Skilled workers	4.4	9.7	43.4	0.0	7.1	2.7	7.1	25.7	100
Administrative staff	6.6	16.4	23.0	16.4	11.5	1.6	9.8	14.8	100
Service providers	9.2	14.9	6.9	6.9	18.4	2.3	20.7	20.7	100
Workers	0.0	2.9	35.3	11.8	5.9	2.9	23.5	17.6	100
Unskilled workers	4.2	12.5	12.5	4.2	8.3	12.5	12.5	33.3	100
Unemployed	8.1	27.0	9.5	1.4	4.7	3.4	13.5	32.4	100

## First job held in Spain (WOMEN)

Last job held in country of origin	Managers	Technicians, professionals and intellectuals	Skilled workers	Administrative staff	Service providers	Workers	Unskilled workers	Unemployed	Total
Managers	25.0	19.4	5.1	2.3	7.9	1.4	4.2	34.7	100
Technicians, professionals and intellectuals	4.7	29.8	4.8	3.4	10.4	2.2	9.7	34.9	100
Skilled workers	3.5	7.8	36.2	0.0	9.9	2.1	9.9	30.5	100
Administrative staff	4.2	11.3	6.6	20.8	17.0	1.4	11.8	26.9	100
Service providers	4.4	14.5	4.8	5.7	21.1	1.3	18.0	30.3	100
Workers	0.0	4.7	27.9	9.3	14.0	2.3	23.3	18.6	100
Unskilled workers	2.6	10.5	7.9	2.6	10.5	10.5	21.1	34.2	100
Unemployed	5.2	25.0	4.3	4.0	10.8	1.9	11.1	37.7	100

Source: Drawn up on the basis of ENI, 2007 data

### *Multivariate analysis*

In order to single out the factors that exert the greatest influence on occupational mobility among skilled immigrants residing in Spain at the time the survey was conducted, this section introduces three binary logistic regression models, one for each type of employment “trajectory” (downward mobility, no mobility, upward mobility), considering men and women separately in order to underline the diversity of occupational mobility that involves migrant women (Molpeceres, 2012).

#### *Variables used in the models*

The aim of these models is to identify the predictors, that is to say the independent variables exerting the greatest influence on the value “1” of each of the dependent variables. The first model was built considering the likelihood of an individual finding a less-skilled job than the one he/she held in the country of origin ( $\text{dummy}_1 = 1$ ) or not ( $\text{dummy}_1 = 0$ ) as the dichotomous dependent variable. In the second model, the dichotomous dependent variable has the value “1” ( $\text{dummy}_2 = 1$ ) if the individual has found the same kind of job in Spain, whereas otherwise it has the value “0” ( $\text{dummy}_2 = 0$ ). In the third model, if the individual turns out to have found a more skilled job than the one he/she held in his/her country of origin, the dichotomous dependent variable will be equal to one ( $\text{dummy}_3 = 1$ ), otherwise it will be null ( $\text{dummy}_3 = 0$ ).

Regarding the independent variables, a set of variables were singled out which, in the light of the available literature, exert a greater influence on the integration of immigrants into the labor market. They relate to four areas corresponding to the most commonly used theoretical approaches: individual characteristics, human capital, social capital, and the host country’s structural conditions.

Concerning individual characteristics, the origin of such migrants in terms of the macro-region of origin is considered first. Family characteristics, such as marital status and whether or not they had children, belong to the same section. The basic assump-



tions are that immigrants who come from Latin America are more likely to find similar or more qualified work in Spain when compared with the last job they held prior to their departure due to the advantages arising from their linguistic and cultural similarities with Spain. Similarly, it is expected that the immigrants who are married and/or with dependent children at the time of migration are relatively more likely than single and/or childless immigrants to accept less-skilled jobs than those they held in country of origin once they are in Spain.

The approach regarding human capital is based on the assumption that the most-skilled immigrants are relatively more successful than others when it comes to entering the host country's labor market (Chiswick, 1978). Despite this, however, it should be borne in mind that migrants gain knowledge and skills in their country of origin, but only a part of this human capital can be spent in the host country's labor market. Hence, such individuals inevitably encounter downward occupational mobility. However, with the passage of time and thanks to a longer stay in the host country, migrants gain experience, learn new concepts, acquire more skills, and above all they learn the host country's language, thus helping them to find better jobs within the labor market compared with when they first arrived. The independent variables in our models connected to this theoretical approach are as follows: the type of job held prior to arriving in Spain and the age of arrival in Spain. Our basic assumption is that a change in the level of employment implies a significant loss of human capital with a consequent increase in the odds of experiencing downward mobility. It should be stated that there is a heated debate in the literature about whether the "age upon arrival" variable should be considered as part of "human capital." However, some authors (Chiswick, Lee, and Miller, 2003; Wilkins, 2003) sustain that the years of residence in the host country serve to enrich immigrants' experiences in such a way as to enable them to work their way up the employment ladder more quickly.

As regards social capital, it could be considered as the set of contacts, networks, and relationships immigrants have prior to their arrival in the host country (Portes, 1998). Some scholars (Massey

et al., 1998) affirm that precisely this kind of knowledge constitutes an incentive to migration. Since it ensures quicker access to a richer range of information, logistic support, accommodation, and financial assistance at times, social capital is considered by scholars who subscribe to this line of thought as a factor that reduces the costs (economic and otherwise) connected to migration and insertion into the host country's labor market (Espinosa and Massey, 1999; Palloni et al., 2001). However, some authors (Ganovetter, 1973; Lin, 2000; Ooka and Wellman, 2006) point out that the specific benefits resulting from social capital that can be obtained in the labor market depend on the nature and characteristics of the contacts linking the migrant to the host country. As a matter of fact, migrants with looser ties with friends and relatives in the country of destination often record better employment performance. Such situations have led this extensive group of scholars to set out the theory of the "weakness of strong ties," a play on words that relies on an oxymoron that explains that a bond too close to someone—a relative, a friend or sometimes even groups of people—who has previously undergone a migratory experience can also lead to the dissemination of erroneous or otherwise altered information, thereby preventing the migrant from entering the host country's labor market. It is therefore preferable to opt for the "strength of weak ties," since an excessive reliance on personal ties which are too "uniform" (due to culture, ethnicity, family, and traditions) can lead immigrants (including skilled immigrants) to ignore employment niches, particularly among groups having scarce economic and human resources, thereby placing their occupational mobility at risk (Fernández-Kelly, 1995; Smith, 2000). For the purposes of our model, the variables relating to the theory of social capital refer to the circumstance of having contacts with employers and/or friends and relatives, at least prior to arriving in Spain.

The last area of analysis is the area that seeks to explain the occupational mobility of immigrants through structural factors. In other words, such an approach focuses on conditions beyond the immigrant, that is to say the macroeconomic characteristics that exert an influence on the possibility of achieving better integration

into the labor market, as well as the possibility of finding a job that is different from the one that was left before leaving the country of origin. From this perspective, the variable of the year of arrival to Spain was used as a proxy to obtain a measure, albeit indirectly, of the specific economic situation's effects on the occupational mobility of skilled immigrants.

### *The models' results*

In order to facilitate the analysis, the models' results will follow the scheme set out as follows. The various kinds of mobility will be considered in a "cross-sectional" way depending on the areas the independent variables belong to and, for each one of them, the most significant results for both men and women will be set out. The regression coefficients' significance will be measured in terms of p-value.

It can be affirmed from a careful reading of Table 4 that the area of origin has a strong impact on the probability of undergoing both downward as well as upward mobility. European immigrants, both males and females, seem more likely to find less-skilled jobs than the ones they left behind in their country of origin as compared with all other groups. The regression coefficients relative to all other regions of origin other than European countries turn out to be notably significant, particularly for males. All these coefficients are negative (consequently, their odds are less than one). This means that immigrants from Latin American, Asian, and African countries relative to those from European countries are less likely to undergo de-skilling in their jobs once they arrive in Spain. Those who are further away from such risk seem to be Asians. Their chance of undergoing a process of downward mobility (odds = 0.280) is the lowest, followed by Latin Americans (odds = 0.379) and North Africans (odds = 0.517).<sup>6</sup> The situation is mirrored if we focus on the results of the upward mobility model. The coefficients of these

<sup>6</sup> In statistics, the odds ratio is one of three main ways to quantify how strongly the presence or absence of property A is associated with the presence or absence of property B in a given population. It is a measure of effect size, describing the strength of association or non-independence between two binary data values. This indicator has values between 0 and 1.

variables are all greater than one and the highest odds in this case correspond to Asians (4.864) once again, followed by Latin Americans (3.726) and lastly by North Africans (2.526). These results are not surprising since European immigrants are the most qualified in Spain. According to the ENI, they mainly come from countries that do not belong to the EU-15. The fact that Asians relative to Latin Americans are less susceptible to undergoing professional de-skilling and more open to the possibility of finding a better job than the last one they held in their country of origin suggests that linguistic similarity in this case does not offer any kind of guarantee to Latin Americans of gaining an advantage over immigrants of other nationalities in terms of occupational mobility.

Even the geographic origin of women throws up some interesting results. Judging by the regression coefficient of skilled immigrants from Latin America countries, it can be noted that they are situated further away from the risk of finding a less-skilled job than the one they left in their country of origin once they are in Spain relative to Europeans and in a more significant manner with regard to other groups. The fate of women from North Africa, however, seems to be the opposite. Their likelihood of undergoing a process of downward mobility exceeds that of European women. The data on upward mobility for Asian women is likewise significant. Compared with their European counterparts, they have a higher likelihood of finding a better job in Spain than the one they left in their country of origin.

A significant gender difference can be noted regarding marital status. Particularly significant are the coefficients for married men, who have a greater likelihood of suffering a downgrading of employment than unmarried men. This experience affects both men with children as well as those without them in equal measure. Marital status and family characteristics on the contrary throw up significant results for women in the models for absence of mobility and upward mobility. In the former case, the circumstance of not having children places women further away from chance of finding the same kind of job in Spain as the one they left behind at home. The latter however, produces results that seem to be more in line with the dynamics usually seen for unskilled immigrants concerning women undergoing downward

mobility. Unmarried and childless women have a better chance of working their way up the employment ladder.

The part of the model that looks into the impact that so-called “human capital” has on occupational mobility shows no notable differences of emphasis between men and women, apart from a few exceptions. For both the former and the latter, having held an unskilled job in their country of origin notably increases the odds of the downward mobility model and renders the regression coefficients negative relative to the other two models.

A significant gender difference can be appreciated with regard to the age of arrival in Spain. For men, arriving in Spain at the age of 35 or greater is more disadvantageous than arriving between the ages of 25 to 34. Men who arrived in Spain over the age of 55 turn out to be at a particular disadvantage. Exactly the opposite seems to hold for women. Women who arrived between the ages of 35 and 44 and between 44 and 54 years of age seem to move further away from risk of undergoing downward occupational mobility when compared with women who came to Spain at a younger age (e.g., between 25 and 34 years of age).

Probably the most interesting results have to do with social relationships. Regarding men, the model clearly shows that not having contacts with employers reduces the risk that skilled immigrants will remain in the same kind of employment conditions they had before leaving their country of origin. On the contrary, the lack of contacts with friends and relatives makes the regression coefficients negative and ensures that the odds for this group’s upward mobility are less than one. The results for women turned out to be highly significant, especially in the downward mobility model. Women who lack contacts with employers turn out to be more advantaged than those who have them, while not having friends and relatives in Spain seems to make women more vulnerable—relative to those who have such contacts—to downward mobility.

Finally, in regard to the period of arrival in Spain, it can be stated that those who came after 1990 had a better chance of finding a more skilled job than the one they held at home relative to immigrants who arrived to Spain before 1990. This result is particularly significant for men, more so than for women.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Coefficients for the Occupational Mobility of Skilled Immigrants in Spain, 2007

		OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY (MEN)									
		Downward mobility			No mobility			Upward mobility			
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES		$\beta$	Odds.	Sig.	$\beta$	Odds.	Sig.	$\beta$	Odds.	Sig.	
INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS	Civil status	Unmarried (ref.)	1.476	**	-0.276	0.759	-	-0.173	0.841	-	
		Married									
	Children	Yes (ref.)	1.460	**	-0.116	0.890	-	-0.294	0.745	-	
		No									
	Area of origin	Europe (ref.)	-0.971	0.379	***	-0.293	0.746	-	1.315	3.726	***
		Latin America, Asia, North Africa	-1.274	0.280	***	-0.361	0.697	-	1.582	4.864	***
		Asia, North Africa	-0.680	0.517	***	-0.123	0.884	-	0.927	2.526	***
		North Africa									
	Job in the country of origin	Skilled job (ref.)	1.128	3.090	***	-0.501	0.606	**	-0.841	0.431	***
		Unqualified job									
HUMAN CAPITAL	Age at arrival in Spain	25-34 (ref.)	0.540	1.717	***	-0.110	0.896	-	-0.388	0.678	**
		35-44	1.002	2.723	***	0.132	1.142	-	-1.292	0.275	***
		45-44	2.729	15.324	***	-0.942	0.390	***	-2.645	0.071	***
		55+									
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	Contacts with employers and relatives	Yes (ref.)	0.451	1.213	-	-0.623	0.350	***	0.884	2.420	**
		No									
STRUCTURAL FACTORS	Year of arrival in Spain	Yes (ref.)	0.378	1.550	-	0.780	1.451	-	-1.309	0.270	**
		No									
		Before 1990 (ref.)	-0.708	0.492	***	-0.931	0.823	-	1.072	2.920	***
	1990-2000	-0.731	0.481	***	-0.450	0.960	-	0.980	2.660	***	
	After 2000										

(continues)

(continued)

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY (WOMEN)											
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES		Downward mobility			No mobility			Upward mobility			
		$\beta$	Odds.	Sig.	$\beta$	Odds.	Sig.	$\beta$	Odds.	Sig.	
INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS	Civil status										
		Unmarried (ref)	-0.091	0.913	-	0.070	1.073	-	-0.311	0.733	**
		Married									
	Children	Yes (ref) No	0.341	1.406	-	-0.706	0.491	***	0.306	1.358	*
Area of origin		Europe (ref)	-2.088	0.124	***	0.056	1.057	*	0.492	1.635	***
		Latin America	-0.192	0.825	-	-0.917	0.400		0.830	2.292	**
		Asia	1.344	3.836	**	0.293	1.340		-0.114	0.893	-
		North Africa									
HUMAN CAPITAL	Job in the country of origin	Skilled job (ref) Unqualified job	0.794	2.369	***	-0.064	0.938	-	-0.973	0.378	***
	Age at arrival in Spain	25-34 (ref) 35-44 45-44 55+	-1.178	0.308	**	-0.282	0.754	*	0.140	1.150	-
			-2.697	0.067	**	-0.046	0.955		0.321	1.379	-
			-19.546	0.000	-	-0.814	0.443		-1.819	0.162	***
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	Contacts with employers	Yes (ref) No	-1.781	0.168	***	0.104	1.109	-	0.619	1.856	*
	Contacts with friends and relatives	Yes (ref) No	1.244	3.468	**	0.883	2.417	**	-1.489	0.226	**
STRUCTURAL FACTORS	Year of arrival in Spain	Before 1990 (ref) 1990-2000 After 2000	-0.153	0.858	-	-0.021	0.980	-	0.331	1.392	-
			-1.081	0.339	***	-0.288	0.750		0.488	1.629	**

Significant levels: \* 0.1, \*\* 0.05; \*\*\* 0.01

Source: Drawn up based on ENI data (INE, 2007).

### *Concluding remarks*

The analyses conducted up to this point have led us to reflect on various points. In spite of the fact that Spain has played an important role in the planning of job creation strategies and integration processes for immigrants within the institutions of the European Union, it does not yet seem to have a labor market capable of attracting skilled individuals from other areas of the globe.

If we compare the employment situation of skilled immigrants in Spain before and after migration, one might legitimately imagine that these individuals had undergone a dramatic improvement in their employment situation once they arrived in Spain since the high demand seen in sectors such as qualified managers or administrative staff seems to attract a large number of workers who were employed in other jobs in their own countries (Albano, 2011). In fact, such an improvement is only apparent from the very moment the results of our matrices (Table 3) reveal that the Spanish labor market is still failing to ensure appropriate professional correspondence among skilled migrants who chose Spain as their country of destination (or of transit) in their migratory adventure.

More specifically, individuals who held jobs falling within the categories requiring skills and abilities of a higher level in the scope of our classification prior to migrating constitute 65.3 percent of our total sample.<sup>7</sup> This percentage dropped to 37 percent following migration. In addition to this drop, there was a significant rise in the percentage of skilled immigrants who failed to find a job in Spain. The percentage of unemployed individuals prior to migration accounted for 13.3 percent of the sample. Once in Spain, this percentage reached 33.5 percent. This increase turned out to be greater for women; their unemployment rate increased by 24 percentage points while the rate of unemployed men rose by 16.1 percentage points. Marked gender differences were also found to exist in the redistribution of qualifications. Among men, there is in fact a greater degree of permanence in the first two employment sectors (“managers” and “technicians, professionals, and

<sup>7</sup> Managers; technicians, professionals, and intellectuals; and skilled workers.



intellectuals”) than among women, while the only employment sector in which women underwent a degree of upward mobility greater than that of men was in the service sector.

The coefficients obtained from the logistic regression models lead one to “re-read” some important contributions of the demographic and economic literature in the field of occupational mobility among immigrants. Concerning marital status, these results confirm that married skilled immigrants in Spain, be they men or women, do not seem to be destined to improve their employment conditions. Compared with other groups, Asians seem to have a better chance of working their way up the employment ladder despite the fact that immigrants from outside the EU encounter greater difficulties in entering the Spanish labor market relative to EU citizens due to Spain’s immigration policies and EU regulations on the free circulation of workers. It can also be observed that previous employment experience appears to carry considerable weight in the trajectories of skilled migrants. Those who labored in sectors for less qualified workers of their respective countries’ labor markets have fewer opportunities to undergo upward mobility once they arrive in Spain. Probably the most interesting results have to do with “social capital.” Its presence does not increase the risk of professional downgrading among skilled immigrants and does not consequently seem to restrict their access to the Spanish labor market, as is the case among unskilled immigrants. The coefficients obtained show that it would be more advantageous to have contacts with friends and relatives already in Spain prior to leaving their own countries. This situation leads to an increase in the odds on upward mobility. Therefore the models presented herein lead to a refutation of the theory that postulates the so-called “weakness of strong ties” for the sample under study.

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Date of receipt: June 11, 2013

Date of acceptance: March 20, 2014