

# World Report 2025 - Spain

Increasing numbers of migrants and asylum seekers died at sea trying to reach Spain, and government coordination to receive, relocate, and integrate arriving people was insufficient. Poverty increased marginally and overly broad exclusions from key social security programs persisted despite some improvements. Promises to create sexual violence crisis centers nationwide, improve access to abortion, and establish an independent anti-discrimination body were slow to be realized.

## Migration and Asylum

According to the [United Nations refugee agency \(UNHCR\)](#), by [mid-November](#) almost 54,200 migrants and asylum seekers had arrived irregularly by sea to Spain (the majority, almost 53,800, arriving in the Canary Islands), and around 400 people by land. A migrant rights group [estimated](#) that 5,054 people, including 50 children, died at sea between Africa and Spain during the first five months of the year. This represented a five-fold increase in deaths compared to a similar period in 2023.

The increase in people arriving by sea contributed to tensions between regional authorities in the Canary Islands and the central government. In July, negotiations [broke down](#) on reforming the Law on Foreigners to require regional authorities to accept migrant children and young people relocated from the Canary Islands. In September, a court [provisionally suspended](#) a [new protocol](#) announced by regional authorities that the regional prosecutor's office had [argued](#) could place children at increased risk of rights violations.

Spain's human rights ombudsperson [expressed concern](#) about the lack of school places for migrant children arriving in the Canary Islands, with local authorities [saying](#) that they were overwhelmed by demand. A June [decision](#) by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child found administrative processes impeding school registration in Melilla constituted *de facto* discrimination. Investigative journalists [found](#) multiple municipalities in Catalonia made it difficult for migrants to register with local authorities, affecting access to health care and education.

In September, governing coalition parties [revived efforts](#) to regularize the legal status of some 500,000 undocumented migrants.

## Poverty and Inequality

Official [data](#) published in February showed 26.5 percent of the population was “[at risk of poverty or social exclusion](#)” in 2023, with 9 percent facing “[severe material or social deprivation](#).” Both rates increased in relation to the previous year. Detailed [analysis](#) showed that single-parent households, third country nationals, and unemployed people were most likely to be at risk of poverty, and found a persistent regional divide with southern regions and the Canary Islands experiencing higher rates.

The government improved the Minimum Vital Income (IMV) social security program by taking a [more inclusive approach](#) to application processes, making a child-related complementary benefit easier to access, and [raising](#) levels of support. The Inclusion Ministry also [launched](#) a plan, working with civil society intermediaries, to improve advice to people eligible for the IMV. The program continued to exclude most [people aged 18 - 22](#) and people without one year's continuous legal residence. [Research](#) showed [low take-up](#) among eligible *gitano* (Roma) people.

The [independent financial authority](#) and [unions](#) alike criticized the government for insufficiently addressing “non take-up,” or the gap between people eligible for a benefit and those claiming and receiving it. One NGO [filed a complaint](#) with the European Committee of Social Rights on the IMV’s non-compliance with Spain’s social rights obligations.

An estimated 4,500 people, including 1,800 children, remained [cut off from electric supply](#) in the Cañada Real informal settlement near Madrid. The European Committee of Social Rights reached a decision on their complaint [in September](#), but had not made it public at time of writing.

## Women’s Rights

The 2022 so-called “Yes Means Yes” law reforming sexual consent legislation continued to have mixed effect. In June, the Supreme Court [ruled](#) in a key case that “[stealththing](#),” or removing a condom during sex without the partner’s knowledge, constituted a crime of sex without consent.

Courts continued to reduce sentences for some people convicted of sexual offenses through a controversial loophole in the 2022 consent law. [Reports](#) indicated that as many as 1,400 people had sentences reduced by March, [including](#) a man convicted in a 2016 gang rape case that sparked national outrage and prompted the legal reform.

Despite dedicated central government funding for 24-hour crisis centers for people experiencing sexual violence, [reports](#) in June indicated that only 10 of the planned 52 centers nationwide had opened. Subsequently, the Equality Ministry [set a year-end deadline](#) for all of Spain’s autonomous communities to set them up.

Despite a [2023 law](#) removing obstacles to accessing abortion, [research](#) showed that several autonomous communities still did not provide abortion services in public health centers, or only did so under restrictive circumstances.

## Rule of law

The main governing and opposition parties [agreed a deal](#) to renew the Council of the Judiciary and appoint new members, [ending a five year impasse](#) that had been criticized by the European Commission.

In May, Parliament [passed a law](#) granting amnesty to acts between 2012 and 2023 relating to criminal, administrative, and accounting offenses in the context of Catalan independence. Although the law ended investigations and prosecutions of arguably protected acts of expression and assembly, it also provided an amnesty to politicians accused of financial impropriety and to most [law enforcement officials](#) accused of excessive use of force. Concerns remained about its [inconsistent implementation](#) by the judiciary.

The government [revived modest plans](#) to reform the [widely-criticized 2015 public security law](#) which restricts freedoms of expression and of assembly, unjustifiably penalizes some vulnerable groups, and enables rights-violating pushbacks at Spain’s borders. The proposed reforms however, appear, [limited](#) to offences related to expression.

In September, an investigating judge [shelved](#) a complaint of torture in 1975 under the Franco dictatorship. The case was the first real test of how a 2022 legal reform might unblock a 1977 amnesty for crimes under the dictatorship.

## Right to Life

More than 2,000 people [died](#) due to extreme temperatures. More than 95 percent of those deaths occurred among people aged 65 and older, but despite [updating](#) its heatwave action plan setting out key actions for public health and social services bodies, the government did not collect data on extreme heat's impacts on people with disabilities. It remains unclear how many of those who died from extreme heat were people with disabilities.

Flash flooding in October left [more than 220 people](#) dead, raising grave concerns about authorities' emergency preparedness and protection or evacuation plans, including for older people and people with disabilities. As of mid-November, [official data](#) showed that 63 percent of those killed were 60 or older. No data was provided on people with disabilities.

## Criminalization of Sex Work

Spain continues to criminalize many activities associated with sex work, prompting human rights organizations to push for full decriminalization of consensual adult sex work.

## Disability Rights

In January, parliament approved a [constitutional amendment](#) on the rights of people with disabilities, [long advocated](#) for by disability rights groups. The change [replaced outdated language](#) about people with disabilities with a legal framing centered on personal autonomy and inclusion. The government [followed up in May](#) with broader public consultation to harmonize national law with the constitutional amendment.

## Racism, Discrimination, and Intolerance

Civil society groups [urged](#) the government to establish without delay an Independent Authority for Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination, promised in a [2022 law](#). The government [informed](#) the European Commission that it would be in place by end of the year.

Anti-racism campaigners and civil society organizations called for more concerted action to [tackle racism](#) in football matches, and address the [ongoing use](#) of "blackface" in nativity and Epiphany [celebrations](#) in various parts of the country.

Research [showed](#) persistent structural discrimination against members of the *gitano* ethnic group in education, housing, and access to online government services.

Victims and [campaigners drew attention](#) to relatively [high levels](#) of racial profiling by Spanish police. One [police force](#) shared findings from a [pilot project](#) to address the abusive practice.