

Abstract

During the last decades, population aging has become both one of the main research areas in Social Sciences, and a topic with an increasing media presence that has built a growing interest in the public opinion. In spite of this –or maybe as a consequence–, a distorted vision of aging as a ‘risk’ or even as a ‘menace’ for the society has been spread. Far from this apocalyptic considerations, aging population is the result of a convergence of several historical and demographic processes that has been shared for all advanced societies: progressive decline in mortality, significant gain in life expectancies, and the arrival of increasingly larger cohorts at more and more advanced ages. This process has been more accelerated in Spain, so Spanish population has become a paradigmatic case of study with one of the highest life expectancies at birth and a rising rate of the elderly population.

Although Andalusia has a less aged population structure than the national average, it is also experiencing a ‘global aging’ process, so several questions arise: how has the aging population process developed in Andalusia in recent decades? Are there gender differences within Andalusia? Is the Andalusian population closing the ‘longevity gap’ regarding to the Spanish population? How is the relationship between the aging process and the territorial imbalances in Andalusia?

Given this context, the objective of this study is to analyze the trends of the main longevity and aging indicators of the Andalusian population from 1975 to present. On one hand, we focus on the relevance of gender gap of life expectancy to understand the demographic and socioeconomic implications of the aging population. On the other hand, we show a comparative of the aging dynamics between Andalusia and Spain, and we study the inter-territorial differences both at a provincial and local level within Andalusia.

Population data came from Institute of Statistics and Cartography of Andalusia (IECA) and Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE); life expectancy data were obtained from life tables (INE); and mortality data came from the death statistics according to cause of death (INE).

Our results show, first, that old-age population groups are the principal leads of the mortality transition in Andalusia, although with a slight delay compared to the Spanish population, Second, there has been a continuous increase of life expectancy whose main contributors have been the reduction of mortality at (very) women at very advanced ages and men between 40-79 years-old, and the recovery of young men mortality after the 1990’s setback. Third, aging and longevity patterns are clearly different between the eastern regions –with a more aged population and higher life expectancies–, and the western regions –with a youngest population structure and lowest life expectancies and longevity.

In conclusion, this Documento Actualidad offers to the readers a comprehensive framework of the dynamics of the changes in longevity, life expectancy and aging population process in Andalusia and its consequences in the population structure, and it sets out the main demographic challenges that Andalusia will face in the near future.