

# **Portuguese emigration: methodological issues and main trends and patterns**

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The right to leave a country of residence does not correspond to the immediate right to enter a country other than that of nationality, resulting from this, an asymmetry on international migration. Consequently, as a rule, there are no records of exits (emigration), but only of entries (immigration). The best way to estimate and characterise a country's emigration is, therefore, to compile data on the entry and stay of emigrants in the countries of destination, the so-called "mirror statistics". These are the statistics that the Emigration Observatory collects, assesses and analyses in order to characterise both the flows of Portuguese emigration, and the population of migrants born in Portugal that live abroad and that is what this presentation discusses on a first point, the methodological issues involved in the study of statistics on international migration.

There are, therefore, some problems when using statistics from the destination country and not from the country of origin: comparability issues on flows because of the variety of definitions on “permanent emigration” and, on stocks and its classifications since the majority of this is collected on census. There are other limitation especially on when it comes to the relative significance of the emigration at destination and the invisibility of trajectories since most countries do not ask questions like education level and profession. Although, by using mirror statistics – using inflows and an indirect indicator of

outputs – there is a much more accurate collection and analysis of the real number of Portuguese emigrants living abroad since, especially when it comes to the EU (main continent of Portuguese emigration) there isn't a necessity of applying for visas since the Schengen agreement. Therefore, there exists no need for the Portuguese population to inform its country of origin that they are leaving, creating a false number concerning emigration.

On a second point of this study are presented and debated the data compiled by the Emigration Observatory to analyse the main trends and patterns on the evolution of Portuguese emigration in the 21st century. There are some myths on what concerns Portuguese emigration, such as: it grew due to the 2008 economic crises; it is more global; is mainly qualified. The facts are:

- Portuguese emigration has grown since the beginning of the century, decreased during the global financial crisis (2008-10) and grew (more) between 2010 and 2013 having been decreasing since then;
- the development of emigration is mainly linked to the development of employment and unemployment;
- Portuguese emigration is increasingly regional (European);
- The majority of emigrants continue to have low educational qualifications, however, the number of skilled emigrants has grown more than that of unskilled emigrants and emigration to the Anglophone and Nordic countries is already mostly composed of graduates.

When it comes to the structures of the Portuguese emigrant population it is possible to affirm that Portuguese emigrant populations of great volume are divided in three points:

- aging and declining (America: Brazil, Venezuela, USA, Canada);
- aged but growing (France, Germany);
- young and growing (Switzerland, United Kingdom, Spain, France, Germany).

And concerning its qualifications structures, in six:

- of very low qualification (Luxembourg, France);
- old low-skilled (Canada, USA);
- very low qualification (Switzerland);
- recent low qualification (Spain);
- former medium/high qualification (Sweden);
- recent medium/high qualification (United Kingdom, Ireland, Nordic, United Kingdom, Ireland).

When putting in perspective with other countries, Portugal is considered a country of emigration. In 2017, the United Nations released new estimates confirming the trend towards growth in the proportion of Portuguese emigrants living in Europe, which reached 66% in 2017 (4% more than in 2015). According to these, Portugal is, in cumulative terms, the European Union country with the most emigrants as a proportion of the resident population (considering only countries with more than one million inhabitants), with a slight increase in the number of emigrants born in Portugal, although

much lower than between 2010 and 2015 (approximately 3%). According to the United Nations, there would be more than 257 million migrants worldwide in 2017, 3.4% of the world's population. The same organization estimated that of these 257 million migrants, 2.3 million would be Portuguese. In other words, in 2017, Portuguese emigrants would represent 0.9% of the total number of emigrants, a percentage seven times higher than the weight of Portugal's population in the world population. In contrast, Portugal is one of the countries with a share of immigrants in the resident population below the EU average (8.5%). The combination of high emigration and low immigration, in cumulative terms, places Portugal in the group of European countries of repulsion, where Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland are also located.