DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

DP20591

# THE FIRST NUMBERS OF THE AMERICAS

Leticia Arroyo Abad and Jose-Antonio Espin-Sanchez

DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS AND ECONOMIC HISTORY

CEPR

ISSN 0265-8003

# THE FIRST NUMBERS OF THE AMERICAS

*Leticia Arroyo Abad and Jose-Antonio Espin-Sanchez*

Discussion Paper DP20591
Published 25 August 2025
Submitted 18 August 2025

Centre for Economic Policy Research
187 boulevard Saint-Germain, 75007 Paris, France
2 Coldbath Square, London EC1R 5HL
Tel: +44 (0)20 7183 8801
www.cepr.org

# THE FIRST NUMBERS OF THE AMERICAS


## Abstract

This paper presents the first numbers on Spanish migration to Spanish America for the colonial period (1492-1830). We analyze quantitative patterns, geographic origins and destinations, gender, and migrant human capital. Drawing on a wide array of primary and secondary sources, we provide the first comprehensive dataset covering for the entire colonial period. This dataset opens new avenues for research on migrant networks, elite formation, social mobility, and the links between migration and long-run economic development.



JEL Classification: F22, J61, O15, N36, N33

Keywords: Migration networks, Human capital



Leticia Arroyo Abad - leticia.abad@qc.cuny.edu
*CUNY and CEPR*

Jose-Antonio Espin-Sanchez - jose-antonio.espin-sanchez@yale.edu
*Yale University*



Acknowledgements
We thank Miguel Ángel Lafuente Navarro and Fernanda Serna Godoy for their help with this project. We also thank Kevin Pometti, Luis Cumplido, and Samir el Moussaoui for their help transcribing some of the archival sources. Arroyo Abad and Espín-Sánchez acknowledge financial support from NSF award # 2121697, and MacMillan Center and Economic Growth Center at Yale University.

# The First Numbers of the Americas*

Leticia Arroyo Abad† José-Antonio Espín-Sánchez‡

August 18, 2025

**Abstract**

This paper presents the first numbers on Spanish migration to Spanish America for the colonial period (1492-1830). We analyze quantitative patterns, geographic origins and destinations, gender, and migrant human capital. Drawing on a wide array of primary and secondary sources, we provide the first comprehensive dataset covering for the entire colonial period. This dataset opens new avenues for research on migrant networks, elite formation, social mobility, and the links between migration and long-run economic development.

## 1 Introduction

Starting with Columbus, thousands of men and women crossed the Atlantic Ocean changing both the course of their own history and the course of history.[1] Despite the thousands upon thousands of pages devoted to describe, explain, and analyze the conquest, colonization, and settlement of the Americas, we know little about the migrants themselves.

*We thank Miguel Angel Lafuente Navarro and Fernanda Serna Godoy for their help with this project. We also thank Kevin Pometti, Luis Cumplido, and Samir el Moussaoui for their help transcribing some of the archival sources. Arroyo Abad and Espín-Sánchez acknowledge financial support from NSF award # 2121697, and MacMillan Center and Economic Growth Center at Yale University.

†CUNY and CEPR Leticia.Abad@qc.cuny.edu

‡Yale University jose-antonio.espin-sanchez@yale.edu

[1]For a global and long-run view on transcontinental migrations and social formation of Latin America, see Moya (2018).

Fifty years ago, the monumental two volumes of *The First Images of America* explored how Europeans perceived, represented, and understood the New World during colonial times (Chiappelli et al., 1976). "The First Numbers of the Americas," turns to the demographic dimensions of colonial transatlantic migration. The last large-scale undertakings—the *Catálogo de Pasajeros a Indias* and Boyd-Bowman's *Índice geobiográfico*—required four decades of effort, covered only the $16^{th}$ century, and drew primarily on limited archival series before being discontinued.[2] With "First Numbers" we extend this unfinished enterprise. We expand the coverage across three centuries, integrate all the primary sources previously used in the literature, and incorporate many additional unpublished collections. The resulting individual-level dataset, which records over 250,000 migrants, constitutes, by far, the most extensive reconstruction of Spanish colonial migration to date.

The "First Numbers" opens a new era in the study of colonial migration. For the first time, we can observe the actual flows that shaped the settlement of Spanish America, rather than extrapolating from conjectural estimates. It provides the foundation to revisit central questions in economic history: the link between migration and inequality (Engerman and Sokoloff, 2000) and the role of human capital in long-run development (Glaeser et al., 2004). We can explore the contribution of women's migration to the formation of American social fabric. More broadly, it allows us to revisit the institutional debates of Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson with the missing piece in place—systematic data on the people who crossed the Atlantic (Acemoglu et al., 2001).

We find that most migrants originated in Andalusia and Extremadura, home of explorers and conquerors. Over time, new migration hubs emerged in Catalonia and the Cantabrian coast, reflecting their comparative advantages in commerce and shipbuilding. While Mexico and Peru remained the principal destinations—the pillars of the Spanish empire—migration flows shifted over time in response to the evolving character of the colonial enterprise.

[2] A few scholars have examined short colonial periods looking at a small set of primary sources including Jacobs (1995), and Márquez Macías (1995), Macías Domínguez (1999). For a recent survey see García Cárcel (2019).

Eminently male-dominated, women rarely made up more than one-fifth of total migrants. Brief surges in the mid-$17^{th}$ and late $18^{th}$ centuries reflected targeted family settlement efforts.

We review the sources historians used to study this migration (Section 2), explain the sources used (Section 3), examine the quantitative patterns of Spanish colonial migration (Section 4), and offer new insights on the geographic origins and destinations that shaped colonial settlement patterns (Sections 4.1 and 4.2) with special attention to gender composition (Section 4.3) and social classes (Section 4.4). We include two lengthy appendices, one with details on the numerous sources consulted (Appendix A) and another one on our estimates (Appendix B). We conclude by outlining the new avenues of research made possible by this database (Section 5).

## 2 Current Migration Estimates

The estimation of early Spanish migration to the Americas has attracted significant scholarly attention, yet consensus remains elusive. A tension persists between the desire for precise migration estimates and the limits of available historical sources. Scholars have made significant progress in documenting individual migrants through archival research, but only for the $16^{th}$ century. The extrapolation from documented cases to total population flows remains problematic. The highly regulated nature of official emigration created extensive documentation for some migrants while leaving others entirely unrecorded. The literature has relied on three methods to estimate the number of migrants to colonial Spanish America: i) passenger counts; ii) ships tonnage; and iii) the stock of Spaniards in the Americas. Each has merits and shortcomings.

First, passenger counts provide more details on migrants and minimize false positives, i.e., each individual counted did cross the Atlantic. However, due to incomplete or missing sources, we should treat these counts as a lower bound. The *Catálogo de Pasajeros* offers the main example (Bermúdez Plata et al., 1980). As its title indicates, the goal was to

create a list of all passengers to Spanish America for the $16^{th}$, $17^{th}$, and$18^{th}$ centuries. After over 40 years (1940-1986) of hard work and several editors, the project ended with only seven volumes covering 1509-1599. Boyd-Bowman (1976b) built on that project and added secondary sources based on Latin American archives. He published two volumes, covering (1493-1540).[3] In a sense, the present work is a continuation of the *Catálogo* by adding many more sources and extending the analysis beyond the $16^{th}$ century.

Second, ships tonnage is a smart and simple method: counting the number of ships crossing the Atlantic and assign passengers per ship based on tonnage. As we discuss later, however, the estimates can be very sensitive to how tonnage is measured, how many passengers are assigned to each ship, and what ships should count as passengers ships. Much of the underlying data for these estimates derives from the monumental work of Chaunu and Chaunu (1959). This eight-volume study of Seville and the Atlantic provides the most comprehensive documentation of trans-Atlantic shipping for the period 1504–1650. Chaunu and Chaunu (1959) was following the seminal work by the great economic historian Earl J. Hamilton in estimating the flows of bullion from the Americas to Spain (Hamilton, 1934). Mörner (1976) used their data to estimate passenger numbers through 1650. However, as discussed in Appendix B, scholars have sharply criticized the methods to convert shipping data into migration estimates.[4]

Third, the simplest approach to estimate flows is to use the stock of Spaniards at the end of the period (e.g., c. 1800). To convert the stock to flows, scholars must assume fertility rates during the whole period and decide how to treat "Europeans" born in the Americas (creoles) and *mestizos*. For an upper bound estimate, one can just consider a replacement fertility rate, and count all creoles and mestizos (Eltis, 1983).

[3] In addition to adding a few more migrants from other sources, Boyd-Bowman (1976a) presents the main patterns of migration during the $16^{th}$ century. Moreover, whereas the *Catálogo* presents information by household, Boyd-Bowman (1976b) presents information by individual. He originally planned covering 1493-1600, but published only two volumes.

[4] Mörner (1976) and Borah (1976), both contributors to the Chiappelli et al. (1976) volume, provide additional perspectives on Spanish migration patterns, though their estimates ultimately rely on the same underlying documentary sources and face similar methodological challenges in converting incomplete records into comprehensive population estimates.

For flows for the entire period, Engerman et al. (2002) analyzes New World migration patterns using David Eltis' estimates (Eltis, 1983). They place Spanish migration in the broader context of transatlantic population movements, drawing on Davis (1973), Sánchez Albornoz (1974), Curtin (1969), Emmer and Mörner (1992), and Altman and Horn (1991), and the foundational essays by Borah, Boyd-Bowman, and Mörner in Chiappelli et al. (1976). Eltis (1983) provides the most systematic comparative framework for understanding Spanish migration in relation to other European colonial movements. His analysis suggests that Iberian immigration could have exceeded British migration only if natural population increase in Iberian America lagged significantly behind that of British America. Since this scenario seems unlikely, Eltis (1983) argues that Iberian immigration was probably less than the estimated 800,000 British migrants to North America. Eltis (1983) cites two independent scholarly estimates to bound for Spanish immigration: 437,000 through 1650 and 750,000 migrants by 1700. The foundation for individual migrant accounts rests heavily on the work of Boyd-Bowman (1973), whose research on Spanish emigration patterns from 1493 to 1600 represents the most systematic effort to document individual migrants during the early colonial period.

For the $17^{th}$ and $18^{th}$ centuries, subsequent research extended Boyd-Bowman's approach to later periods. García Hidalgo (2021) examines total and female migration during the $17^{th}$ century. Macías Domínguez (1999) reconstructs migration to Spanish America between 1701 and 1750. Márquez Macías (1995) documents the significant transformations in migration patterns between 1765 and 1824. Together, these works provide the most complete chronological coverage currently available, but they also underscore the persistent methodological challenge of converting partial and regionally skewed records into reliable aggregate estimates. Compared with these works, we typically identify two to three times as many migrants, for the same decade. For some periods, no prior estimates exist for comparison. For the past half century, the scholarship has relied heavily on the figures reported in Boyd-Bowman (1976b)

and Mörner (1976). Our findings reveal the limitations of these long-standing benchmarks and open the door to revisiting virtually all topics in the study of colonial Spanish America.

Our contribution builds on the foundation established by Boyd-Bowman (1976b) and others, while addressing key methodological gaps that constrained previous estimates. By systematically integrating notarial records, chronicles, and capitulation documents with official migration registers, we produce the most comprehensive account to date of early Spanish migration. This approach avoids the problematic extrapolations that have undermined prior upper-bound estimates and allows for a more reliable reconstruction of migration flows across the colonial period.

# 3 Historical Sources

During the colonial period, the Spanish imperial government carefully monitored and authorized all emigration to the Americas. The government centralized the colonial administration in the city of Seville, where we located the bulk of our sources: the General Archives of the Indies (Archivo General de Indias, AGI). The AGI stands as the most important repository for studying Spanish colonial migration patterns from the Age of Discovery through Latin American independence. Founded in 1785 through documentation transfers from the General Archive of Simancas, the AGI houses over 43,000 bundles (*legajos*) of documents that track human and commercial movements across the Spanish Empire. These records offer researchers an unparalleled window into migration flows, economic networks, and administrative practices that shaped colonial Spanish America and the Philippines. Covering nearly three centuries and all major Spanish territories, the archive provides essential evidence to understand both individual migration decisions and broader demographic patterns that influenced colonial economic development.

## 3.1 Main Sources

We now turn to the main sources used in the existing literature and in this paper. Licenses and ship manifests are found in the AGI while the Notary records are found at the Archive of Notary Records of Seville (*Archivo de Protocolos Notariales de Sevilla*). Our main sources are:

- Licenses (*Informaciones y Licencias de Pasajeros a Indias*): this collection contains long records, five- to six-page records, with details on approved household applications to migrate to the Americas. Each application enumerates all household members, the *Don*, *Doña*, or noble title, place of origin, and destination (see Figure 1, panel (a)).
- Ship manifests (*Libros de Asientos de Pasajeros a Indias*): these passengers lists offer similar data to the licenses but in an abridged form including the actual departure by household.[5]
- Notary records (*Protocolos*): these lengthy documents record contracts of carriage between the household heads and shipowners or captains (*maestres*). They offer additional information such as the name of the ship and the cost of the passage (see Figure 1, panel (b)).

In addition to primary sources, we consulted and cross-checked existing literature.[6] The *Catálogo de Pasajeros a Indias* (Bermúdez Plata et al., 1980) compiles summaries from license registers and ship manifests through the end of the $16^{th}$ century. Boyd-Bowman (1976b) provides more detailed information on migrants up to 1540. To fill gaps in the earliest period, we draw on Gould (1984), Gil (1985), León Guerrero et al. (2007), and Mira Caballos (2014), particularly for the four Columbian voyages and the Ovando expedition. We have also

[5]They also contain the date of departure and the name of the ship's captain. We use this information to link individuals and trips across sources and remove duplicates.

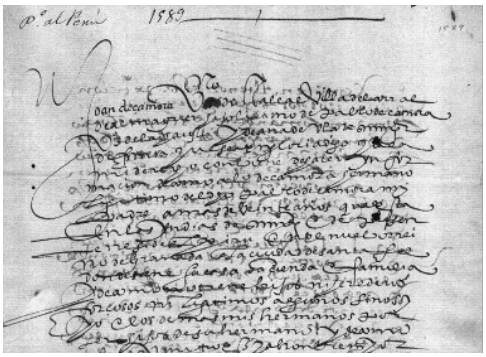
[6]The literature on emigration from Spain to the Indies during the $17^{th}$ to $19^{th}$ centuries typically presents migration flows in aggregate tables and for selected regions only. For the $17^{th}$ century, Díaz-Trechuelo (1991) focuses on Andalusia; López (1992) studies Extremadura; and María del Carment (1993) analyzes Castile. For the $18^{th}$ century, Macías Domínguez (1999) and Márquez Macías (1995) offer overviews for the first and second halves of the century, respectively. All of these studies rely on limited archival collections and omit migrant records available in other repositories.

digitized and transcribed notarial records for the earliest decades (Instituto Hispano-Cubano de Historia de América (Fundación Rafael G. Abreu), 2020). Across our entire dataset, around 9% of entries derive from secondary sources, and mostly concentrated in the earliest decades of the series (see Figure 2).[7]

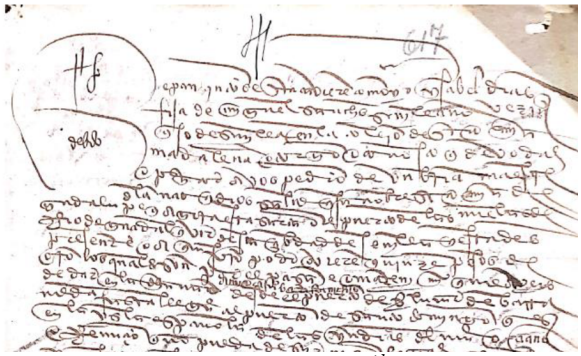
The *Catálogo*, initiated and financed through the generosity of the Duke of Alba, remains one of the most important scholarly undertakings in the documentation of Spanish migration to the Americas. Compiled from the meticulous records of licenses and ship registers (1509-1599) at the AGI, it provided the first systematic, large-scale transcription of passenger licenses, setting a benchmark for archival-based migration research. Its publication not only preserved a critical body of evidence but also directly inspired the pioneering work of Charles Boyd-Bowman. His *Índice geobiográfico de pobladores de América* expanded the empirical foundations of early migration studies. In the same spirit, our work builds on this tradition by extending coverage to the entire colonial period and integrating a wider array of primary sources. Just as the *Catálogo* stimulated a new generation of quantitative research on colonial migration, we hope that the database presented here will become a foundational tool for future scholars investigating the economic, social, and institutional history of colonial Spanish America.

Figure 1: Archival Documents

(a) Juan Zamora's record to New Granada



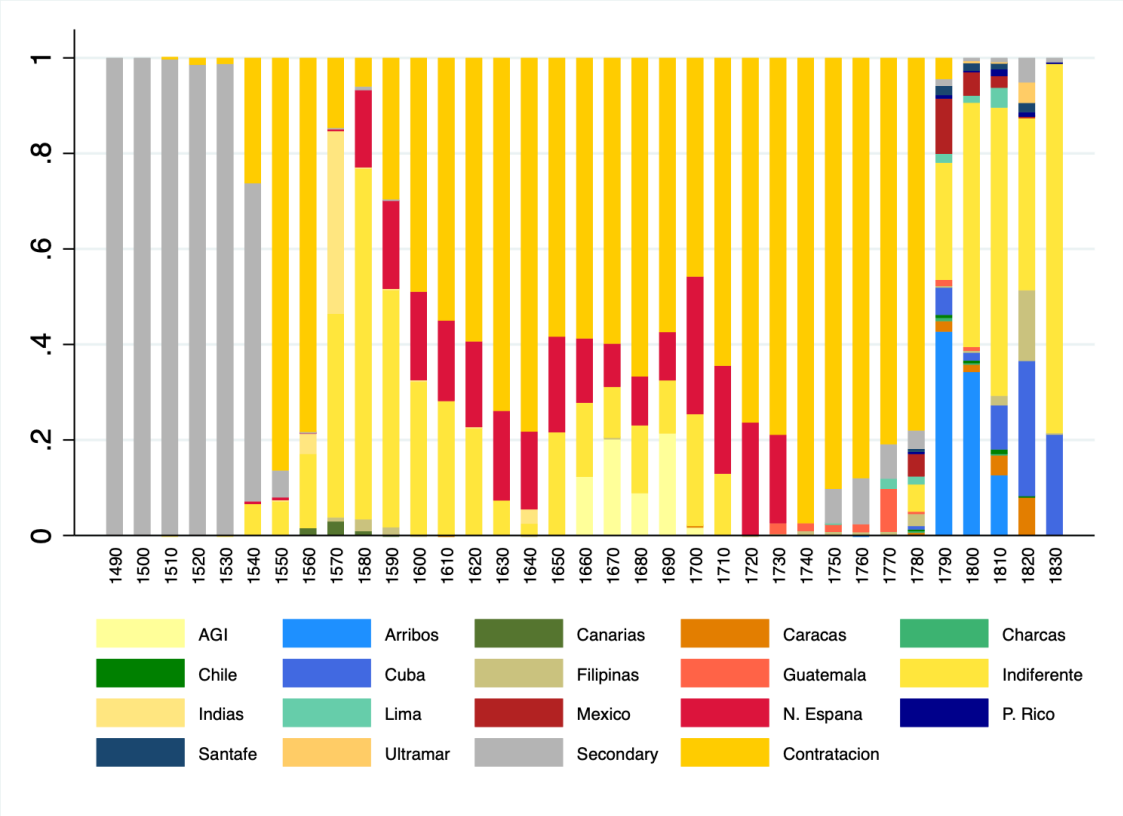
(b) Isabel Díaz's contract to Santo Domingo



*Notes*: Panel (a): Sample image Juan Zamora traveling to New Granada on November $6^{th}$, 1589. Panel (b): Notarized contract for Isabel Díaz to travel to Santo Domingo.

[7]For Canary Islands, we included the individual records for the period 1765-1830 from Mendoza (2004).

Figure 2: Sources by type




*Notes*: Share of migrants compiled from each source, by decade. See Appendix A for details.

## 3.2 Auxiliary Sources

In this section, we outline the main collections used in this article. The number of original primary sources are too large to describe in full detail, and many of them are unpublished. We also drew on several sources that historians have used for other purposes but never systematically examined for migration. At the AGI we consulted five main collections: *Casa de la Contratación*, *Indiferente General*, *Audiencias*, *Juzgado de Arribadas*, and *Ultramar* (see Appendix A.2 for details).

The House of Trade (*Casa de la Contratación*) (1503-1790) served as Spain's primary institution for controlling transatlantic trade and migration, modeled after Portugal's *Casa da India*. While its original goal of monopolizing American trade ultimately failed, the *Casa* retained crucial authority over regulating the movement of people and goods. The

institution's three key functions—judicial administration, estate management of deceased Americans, and immigration control—generated extensive documentation that provides direct evidence of migration patterns. The most significant sources include the licenses and ships manifests, as discussed in subsection 3.1. Additional valuable sources include the *Provistos* series, documenting individuals appointed to specific positions in America, which help track skilled migration and administrative personnel movements that shaped colonial governance and economic structures.

The *Indiferente General* collection is the most challenging yet comprehensive source for migration studies, containing roughly half of all AGI documents in a miscellaneous format that reflects the difficulty of categorizing diverse materials. This collection includes 3,302 series with multiple bundles each, requiring individual examination to identify migration-related sources. The most important materials include direct passenger documentation such as Licenses and Passengers to Peru, Passenger Licenses to New Spain, and comprehensive passenger lists for New Spain, Philippines, and Windward Islands. These sources provide specific references to passenger boarding for American territories and the Philippines. The collection also contains indirect migration evidence through licenses for boarding passengers and cargoes, which document chartered ships carrying passengers among their cargo. This scattered documentation offers researchers the most complete perspective on migratory movements, capturing both official passengers and those traveling in commercial contexts.

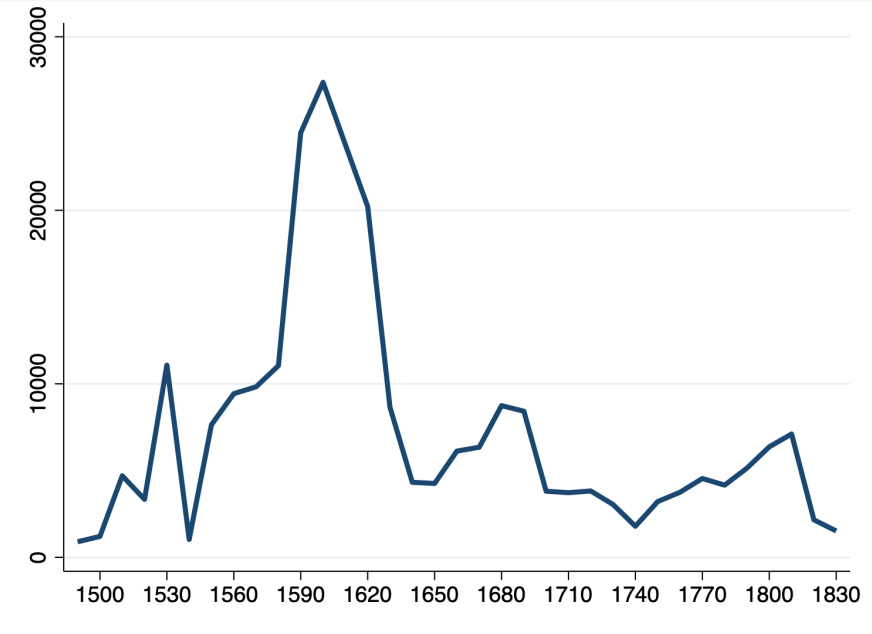
The territorial administration of colonial Spanish America through viceroyalties and royal audiences (*audiencias*) generated extensive migration documentation across eleven major jurisdictions. Each *audiencia* exercised authority to enforce Royal Provisions and represent royal power, creating standardized records of boarding licenses and passenger movements within their territories. These records cover the late colonial period intensively, with most series spanning the years 1787-1823, reflecting increased administrative control during the Bourbon reforms. The largest series include the Audiencias of Buenos Aires, Mexico, and Santo Domingo. This territorial approach allows researchers to track regional migration

patterns, link them to local economic factors, and analyze how different colonial jurisdictions managed human mobility during the critical late colonial period.

The Court of Arrivals (*Juzgado de Arribadas*) collection documents the final phase of the House of Trade operations after its transfer to Cádiz during the Bourbon reforms following the War of Spanish Succession. This collection covers the second half of the $18^{th}$ century through the first quarter of the $19^{th}$ century, capturing migration patterns during a period of significant political and economic transformation. The most comprehensive source is the Boarding Licenses for *Provistos*, Military and Passengers series, which includes both civilian and military personnel movements. These records are particularly valuable for understanding how the Bourbon administrative reforms affected migration patterns while also tracking the movements of military personnel and civil servants who played crucial roles in late economic and political structures in the late colonial period.

The Overseas (*Ultramar*) collection represents the final phase of Spanish colonial administration, focusing on the three territories that remained under Spanish control after most colonies gained independence: the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Created by the Overseas Ministry (*Ministerio de Ultramar*), this collection primarily documents $19^{th}$ century migration patterns to these strategically and economically important remaining colonies. The records capture migration during a period when Cuba and Puerto Rico became increasingly important to Spanish economic interests, particularly through sugar production and trade. The Philippines documentation reflects continued Spanish presence in the Pacific and provides insights into transpacific migration patterns. This collection offers researchers the opportunity to analyze how migration patterns shifted in response to imperial contraction and changing economic priorities in Spain's remaining overseas territories during the nineteenth century.

Figure 3: Total migrant flows per decade, 1490-1830



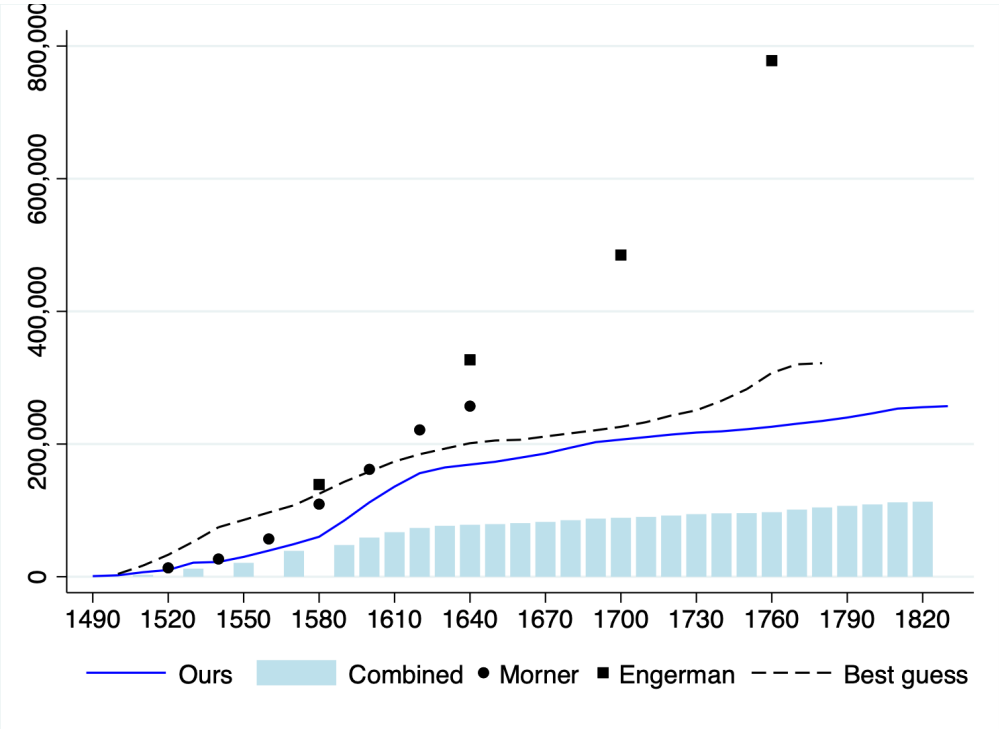

*Notes*: see Section 3 for details.

# 4 Numbers: a first account of colonial migration flows

Emigration to Spanish America was tightly regulated. The Spanish Crown exercised control through a legal and bureaucratic apparatus centered in Seville. This institutional infrastructure produced a remarkably rich documentary record. It allows us to reconstruct detailed patterns of migration across the entire colonial period. Our estimates show that over a quarter of million voluntary migrants left Spain for Spanish America from 1492 to 1830. Spanish migration unfolded in distinct temporal phases, aligned with shifting imperial priorities and stages of colonial development(see Figure 3).

Estimates in the scholarly literature differ dramatically. Boyd-Bowman (1976a) tallied 5,481 emigrants during the exploration period, 1492-1519. Our own estimates yield a figure approximately 25% higher—over 6,800 migrants—revealing the fragility of Boyd-Bowman's estimations. For the consolidation phase between 1560-1579, he reports 17,587 emigrants, roughly 10% lower than our estimate for the same period. For the $16^{th}$ century, he reports 56,000 migrants, while our total count is 83,784.

Figure 4: Cumulative migrant flows, 1492-1830




*Notes*: "Combined" series is the result of adding the estimations by Boyd-Bowman (1976b), García Hidalgo (2021), Macías Domínguez (1999), and Márquez Macías (1995). "Ours" series based on sources on Section A. For "Best guess" series estimation, see Appendix B.

Migration surged in the early colonial period and quickly collapsed. Flows remained depressed for over a century. Spain's $17^{th}$ demographic crisis, restrictive emigration policies, and the diversification of colonial activities beyond mining, especially in the pillars of the Spanish empire—Mexico and Peru, drove this prolonged decline (Nadal, 1984; Martínez Shaw, 1994). With the advent of Bourbon rule, the Crown kept centralized but selectively liberalized migration policy. It loosened restrictions on emigration for strategic aims: military settlement, agricultural colonization, and the demographic reinforcement of frontier regions. The promotion of free trade in the late $18^{th}$ century—particularly the opening of additional Spanish ports to transatlantic commerce also expanded legal pathways for migration (Stein and Stein, 2003; Kuethe and Andrien, 2014).

Estimates for the late colonial period vary widely. Mörner (1975) suggests an average of approximately 52,000 emigrants per decade, while Márquez Macías (1995) reports only 17,231 individuals between 1765 and 1824. Our migrant count lands between these figures, pointing to a total of over 30,000 emigrants during the same period.[8]

In sum, our estimates suggest a more moderate inflow to Spanish America than the back-of-the-envelope figures proposed by Mörner (1976). They also indicate higher migration levels than those derived from current studies based on a single archival source. For the $16^{th}$ century, the lower bound estimates of Boyd-Bowman (1976b) account for 20-25% of the upper bound estimates in Mörner (1976). For later periods, the share is even smaller (see Figure 4). We revise the lower bounds upward using a much extensive set of primary sources, and we revise the upper bounds in Mörner (1976) downward (see Appendix B). After both adjustments, our (lower-bound) estimates from primary sources exceed 90% of our best-guess (upper bound) estimates for the $18^{th}$ century. This result makes our database representative of most of the migration flows during the colonial period. This said, scope for improvement remains. First, our two estimates diverge around 1540 and around 1760. These periods brought instability and regulatory changes that may have depressed migration, but not likely to the extent suggested by the data. Under-counting likely explains much of the gap, especially in those two windows. Second, incorporating additional evidence from American archives, such as population counts (*padrones*), would help capture illegal migrants residing in the Americas. We leave these extensions for future research.

## 4.1 Origins

The distribution of Spanish emigration to the Americas was highly uneven. Across the colonial period, three provinces—Seville, Cadiz, and Badajoz—supplied over 40% of all individuals

[8]The port liberalizations in the last third of the $18^{th}$ century was the end of Seville as port monopoly of trade and migration. The evidence suggests that the bulk of migrants still departed from Seville, but we know very little of migration flows from other Spanish ports during this era. We are not aware of any systematic quantitative study of Spanish migration sources outside Seville during this period.

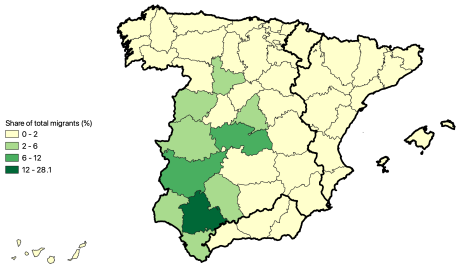
with known origins (see Figure 5).[9] Figure 6 shows how the regional composition of migration shifted over time. In the $16^{th}$ century, Castile and Andalusia dominated migration and together supplied the majority of transatlantic migrants. Extremadura also loomed large in the early decades, a sparsely settled frontier region that produced many early conquistadors and their followers. Regional economies and institutions help explain why Castile, Andalusia, and Extremadura led early migration (Arroyo Abad et al., 2025). Proximity to Seville—the House of Trade's seat (*Casa de Contratación*) and main port for American commerce—gave them privileged access to transatlantic routes and legal migration channels. Over time, migrant origins diversified. By the $18^{th}$ century, Aragon's share rose significantly. Bourbon reforms in the 1760s and 1770s liberalized trade and authorized new ports such as Barcelona, which boosted Catalan commercial and migration. Although the Basque Country and Navarre sent relatively few migrants, their influence was disproportionately high due to their prominent role in colonial trade, shipping, and administration (Ribas, 1982; Yáñez Gallardo, 1991; Vázquez de Prada Vallejo and Amores Carredano, 1991).

Scholars disagree on whether the Crown initially allowed non-Castilian subjects to migrate to the Americas. There is no doubt, however, that Castile drove early exploration and conquest. Queen Isabella of Castile and merchants such as Juan de la Cosa financed Columbus's voyages. In the following decades, Castilian and Genoese merchants, with some Portuguese capital, bankrolled further exploration and settlement. Chroniclers even report that Isabella's limited the American enterprise to Castilians (and Leoneses) (de Herrera, 1601). Her husband Ferdinand of Aragon later lifted this restriction, and her grandson Charles I formally confirmed Aragonese participation (Konetzke, 1945; Martínez Shaw, 1980; Sánchez-Albornoz, 2002). Yet by the time these legal barriers were removed, Castilian migration networks had already taken root by the 1510s (Arroyo Abad et al., 2025). In the

[9]We have so far identified the origins of over two-thirds of the migrants in our database. Most of the individuals with missing origins come from sources in *Provistos*, i.e. literally "supplies," document the confirmation of appointments for bureaucrats from Spain in the Americas, such as tax collectors and treasurers. These documents provide invaluable information because they record migration of individuals not documented in any other sources. Unfortunately, the place of origin of these individuals is not recorded. For more prominent appointees, we will look into biographical dictionaries to close this information gap.

Figure 5: Migration share by province.

(a) $16^{th}$ century




(b) $17^{th}$ century


(c) $18^{th}$ century


(d) $19^{th}$ century


*Notes*: $16^{th}$ century includes 1492-1599, the $19^{th}$ century includes 1800-1830. Share of total migrant flows—with known origin—for the period.

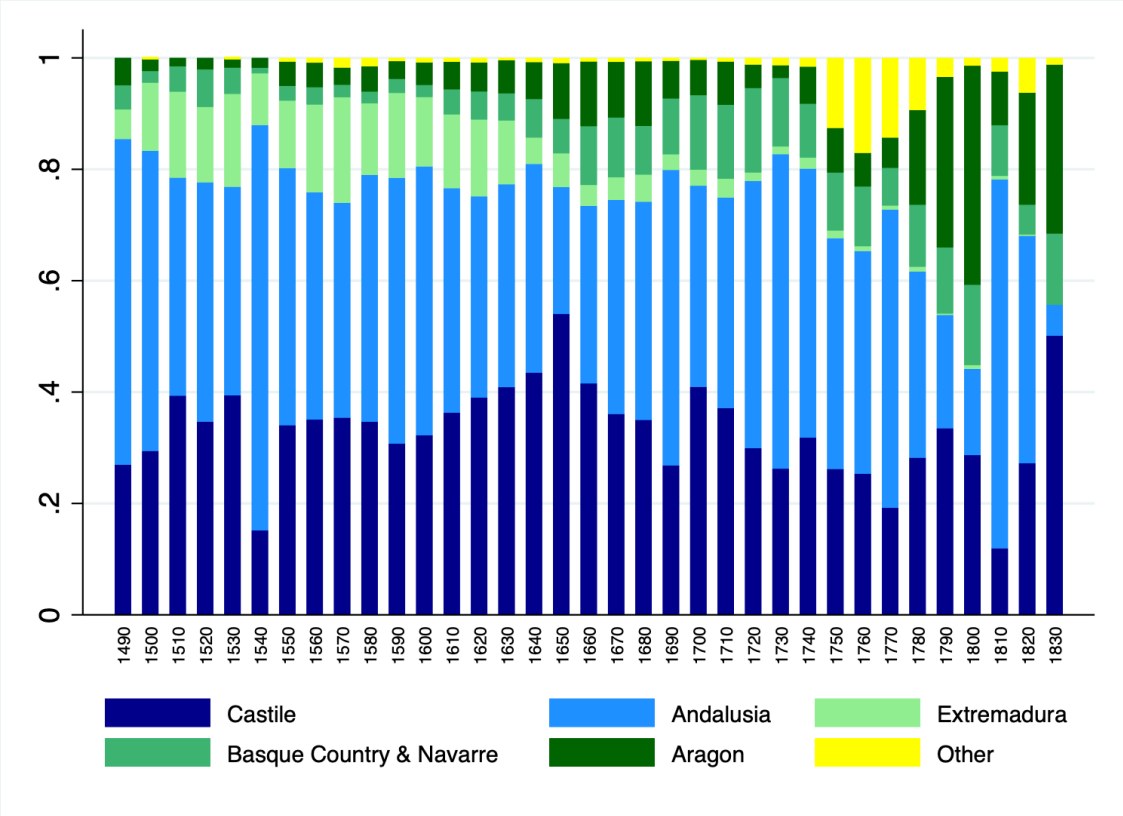
initial decades, Seville, Extremadura, and the Basque Country were transatlantic migration hotspots.

## 4.2 Destinations

It is not surprising that over 60% of all Spanish migrants ultimately settled in Mexico and Peru over the colonial period. These regions became the principal pillars of the Spanish Empire, offering densely populated indigenous societies and rich mineral resources, particularly silver.[10] Settlement patterns shifted with imperial expansion and emerging regional opportunities

[10]A large literature on indigenous labor exists. For a review on labor coercion, see, for example Arroyo Abad and Maurer (2024) and Arias and Girod (2011). For regional studies see Faguet et al. (2024) and Muñoz-Arbeláez (2025) for the case of Colombia; Arroyo Abad and Maurer (2025) for Peru; Diaz-Cayeros (2011) and Simpson (2023) for Mexico; and Austin (2015) for Paraguay, among many others.

Figure 6: Origins by regions by decade

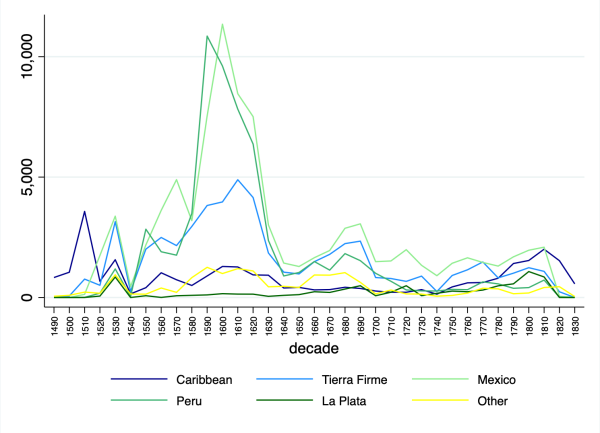



*Notes*: Source: see Section 3. Our definitions of territories here are based on modern territorial states: **Castille**: Castilla y León, Castilla-La Mancha, Galicia, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia, Asturias, and Cantabria; **Andalusia**: Andalucía; **Extremadura**: Extremadura; **Basque Country and Navarre**: País Vasco and Navarra; **Aragon**: Aragón, Valencia, Islas Baleares, Cataluña; and **Other**: Canarias, Ceuta, Melilla, and other territories not associated to any territorial states.

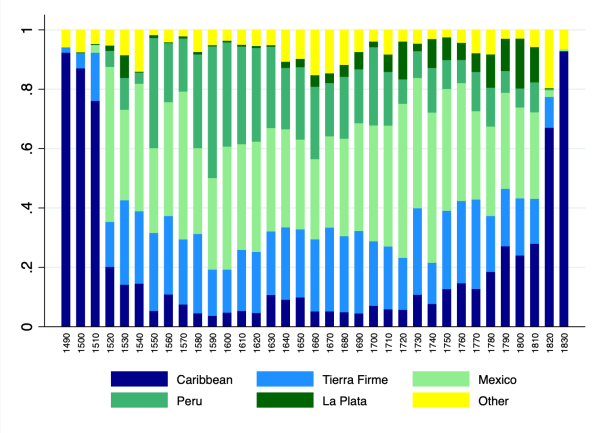
(Newson, 2014; Schwartz, 2019; Devereux, 2023). In the earliest phase, through the 1510s, migrants headed primarily to the Caribbean, which served as a launchpad for further conquests. It was not until 1510 that Spaniards founded their first mainland settlement —*Nombre de Dios* in Panama. The Crown integrated Mexico and Peru into the empire in the 1520s and 1530s, respectively. They became focal points for both governance and migration. Other regions, such as the River Plate, northern Mexico, and Venezuela, remained relatively peripheral. Indigenous resistance, the scarce mineral deposits, and distance from imperial centers kept Río de la Plata (River Plate), northern Mexico, and Venezuela relatively peripheral (Arroyo Abad et al., 2025).

Figure 7: Migration by destination

(a) Counts




(b) Shares




Source: see Section 3. For destination recorded as "Indias", we reassigned migrants according to the shares of migrants with known origin, see Section C and Table 7.

We can divide the evolution of migrant destinations into three distinct phases—see Figure 7, panels (a) and (b). From 1490 to 1530, the Caribbean was the main destination, serving as the initial platform for Spanish expansion into the Americas. The Antilles absorbed the lion's share of early settlers, reflecting both strategic importance and the role as a launchpad for subsequent exploration and conquest.

The period from 1530 to 1650 marked a dramatic shift, particularly to the newly conquered regions of Mexico and Peru. After the fall of Tenochtitlan (1521) and Cuzco (1533), the Spanish crown moved quickly to institutionalize imperial control with the creation of the Viceroyalty of New Spain in 1535 and the Viceroyalty of Peru in 1542 (Burkholder and Johnson, 2008). These institutions centralized royal authority, facilitated fiscal extraction, and created a stable framework that encouraged settlement. Drawn first by the promise and then exploitation of mineral wealth, Mexico and Peru emerged as critical nodes in the articulation of the Spanish imperial economy (Arroyo Abad and Palma, 2021). Silver strikes in Zacatecas (1546) and Potosí (1545) triggered an economic transformation (Brading, 1971; Tandeter, 1992). These mining centers became magnets for capital, labor, and infrastructure.

Thousands of migrants pursued opportunity as miners, artisans, merchants, and bureaucrats. Conquest ceased to drive migration: institutions and precious metals did.

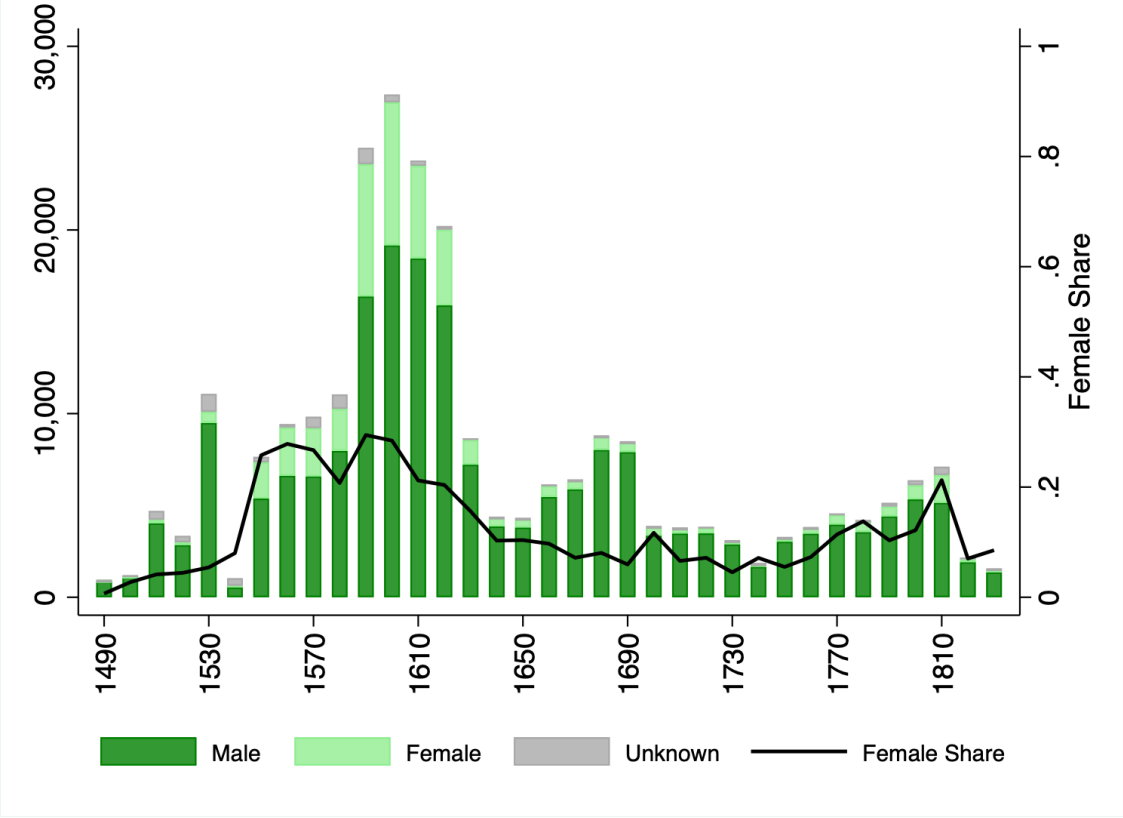
By the mid-$17^{th}$ century, migration to the core regions of Mexico and Peru stagnated, while peripheral zones such as *Tierra Firme*[11] and the *Río de la Plata*[12] gradually gained demographic and strategic weight. Several factors contributed to this shift. Governing a sprawling empire pushed the Crown to expand institutional presence on the fringes of the empire. In New Granada, the Crown created a Viceroyalty in 1717, briefly suppressed it, and restored it permanently in 1739. This development encouraged migration of soldiers, clerks, and merchants (Muñoz-Arbeláez, 2025). internal trade routes, commodity booms, and the consolidation of regional urban centers such as Caracas, Bogotá, and Cartagena fueled population growth (McFarlane, 1993; Wortman, 1982). In 1776, the Crown created the Viceroyalty of the *Río de la Plata* (River Plate) to assert control over neglected territories and to channel trade through Buenos Aires, which rose as a key Atlantic port (Donghi, 1985; Lynch, 1981; Fradkin and Garavaglia, 2009). Second, the Bourbon Reforms liberalized imperial trade and restructured colonial administration, eroding the commercial monopoly of Seville/Cadiz and allowing new ports—particularly Barcelona, La Coruña, and Havana—to participate in transatlantic commerce (TePaske et al., 1982; Grafe and Irigoin, 2012). These measures shifted economic gravity and expanded accessible destinations. In the River Plate, ranching, artisanal crafts, and coastal trade opened new occupational niches even without mineral wealth (Scobie, 1964). The expanding imperial footprint also sparked conflicts with indigenous peoples and slaves (Echeverri, 2006). Though these regions never matched Mexico or Peru in absolute migrant numbers, they grew more attractive to Spaniards seeking opportunities outside the crowded hierarchies of the core viceroyalties. By the final colonial decades, peripheral regions accounted for a growing share of total transatlantic flows, foreshadowing the $19^{th}$ century surge (Sánchez-Alonso, 2019).

[11] Defined loosely as Central America, Colombia, and Venezuela.
[12] Contemporary Argentina, Paraguay, parts of Uruguay, and Brazil.

## 4.3 Gender

Spanish migration to the Americas was overwhelmingly male, yet the gender balance shifted over time. Figure 8 shows a sharp rise in the female share of migrants during the mid $16^{th}$ century, peaking near 30% in some decades between 1540 and 1570. This increase likely reflected early efforts to stabilize settler society through family migration and marriage, particularly as urban centers became more established. After 1610, however, both total migrants and the female share fell sharply. Only in the late $18^{th}$ and early $19^{th}$ centuries does the female share recovered. The River Plate area attracted more migrants as a frontier outpost —see Figure 10. Despite these late gains, the long-term pattern remained one of gender imbalance, with women rarely exceeded one-fifth of total migrants.

Figure 8: Migrants by gender




*Notes*: We classify gender using names, stated relationships to the household head (wife, son, daughter). When sources use a neutral terms for other members, i.e., "three children," we classify their gender as "Unknown".

During the early conquest phase men dominated migration; women represented only 3.4% of all migrants. By the mid-$16^{th}$ century, family migration took hold, and by the early $17^{th}$ century women reached about one-quarter of all migrants. Boyd-Bowman (1976b) observed that by 1560: "Seldom did a man now emigrate without a reasonable idea of what his occupation or employment was going to be," marking a shift from conquest to systematic settlement. To narrow the gender gap, the Crown issued repeated measures that required men to bring their wives or facilitate family reunification in the colonies (Testón Nuñez and Sánchez Rubio, 1997). These family-oriented policies sought to stabilize society and to secure territorial control. Although enforcement was imperfect, a clearer legal framework after the mid $16^{th}$ century coincided with more recorded departures and a higher share of families and women (Almorza Hidalgo, 2018). As the empire consolidated, information flows expanded between colonies and the metropolis, and "calling letters" invited relatives to cross the ocean (Stangl, 2013, 2018; Rodríguez García et al., 2024).

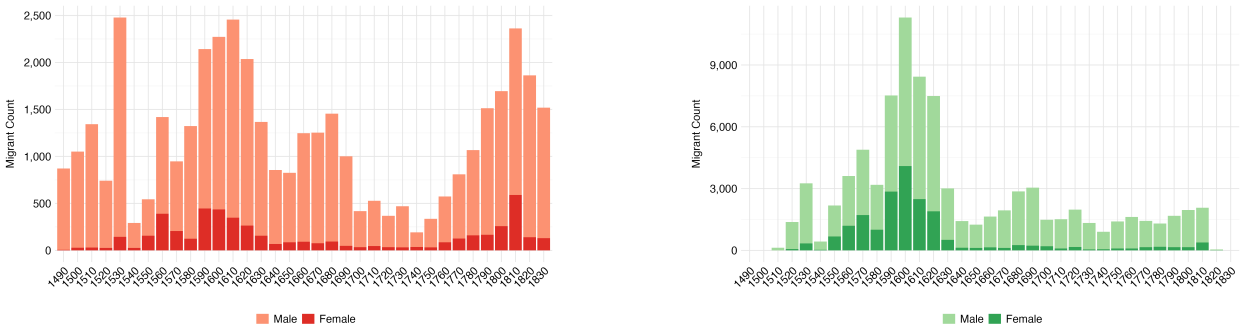
Between 1560 and 1620, the female share reached unusual levels for the early modern Atlantic —28.5% in 1580, then 26% in the following decade—largely because family networks linked Spain and the Americas opening opportunities for women (Calvi and Blutrach-Jelin, 2010)—see Figure 8. After 1620, the female share slid steadily through the mid-$17^{th}$ century and remaining at lower levels. Successive harvest failures, famine, and epidemic disease shrank Spain's population, while economic contraction and demographic collapse hit key urban centers—especially in the interior of Castile and major ports (Prados de la Escosura et al., 2022). The erosion of artisanal and commercial sectors further narrowed women's migration options. By the mid-$17^{th}$ century, migration policy moved away from family settlement. Women lost prominence they had held since the late $16^{th}$ century and flows reverted to a predominantly male profile (García Hidalgo, 2021).[13]

[13] Almorza Hidalgo (2018) reports a sharp post-1605 collapse of female migration from Andalusia. While this trend is visible in this broader series, it is muted by the inclusion of other Spanish regions whose female migration persisted beyond Seville's decline.

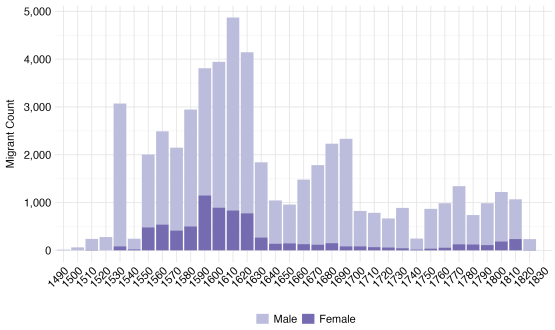
Figure 9: Distribution of migrants by gender and destination (1490-1830)

Figure 10: Caribbean

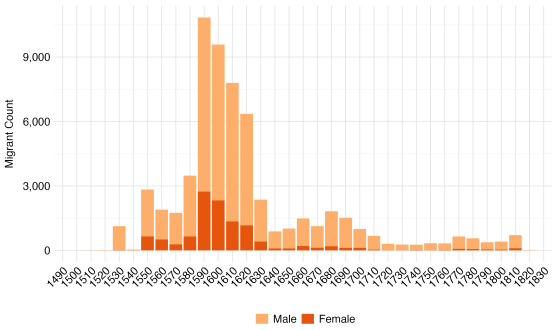
(a) Mexico



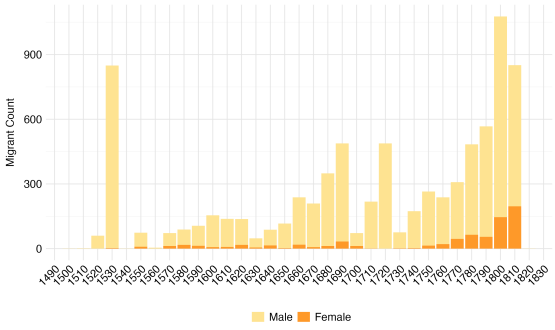

(b) Tierra Firme



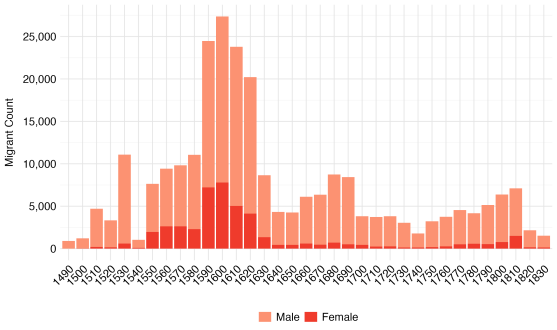

(c) Peru




(d) La Plata



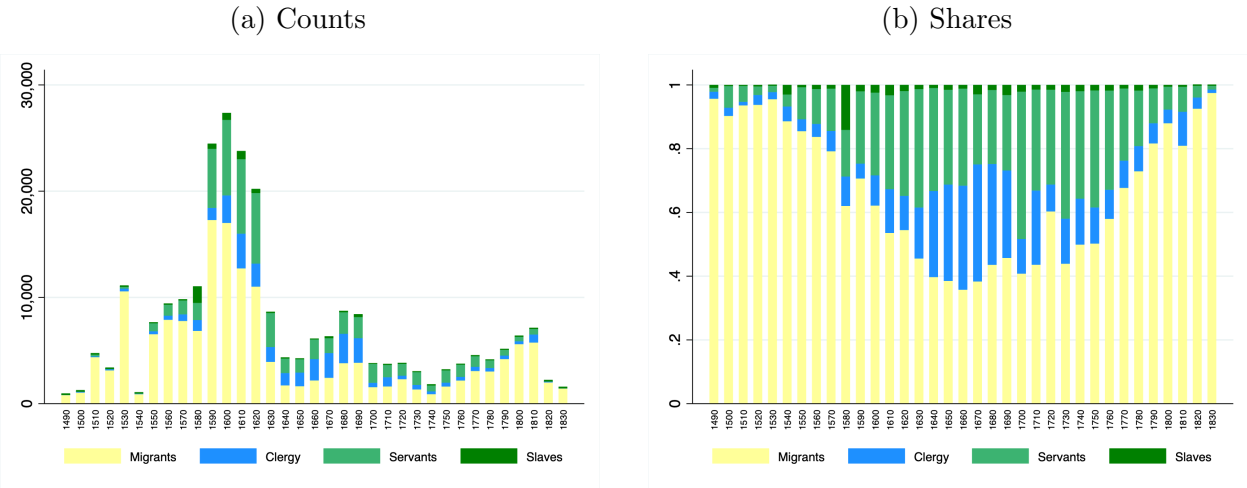

(e) All destinations




*Notes*: we classified migrants by gender using their names, or their relationships to the household head such as wife, son, and daughter.

In the $18^{th}$ century, female migration fell below the $17^{th}$ century levels, both in absolute and relative terms, though the decline did not run uniformly. In the initial decades, women made up a modest share—above the late $17^{th}$ century minimum but well short of earlier peak levels. After 1764–1778, Bourbon trade reforms and the opening of northern ports (La Coruña, Santander, and Bilbao) stimulated new flows from Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, the Basque Country, and Navarre, producing a modest recovery in the women's share. Targeted settlement projects added to the uptick, notably the 1778–1783 Patagonia expedition that brought nearly 900 peasant women and girls from northern Spain to the River Plate (Poska, 2012). Similar patterns emerged in late-colonial Venezuela. Demographic imbalances in sparsely settled areas led the Crown to facilitate female migration through the licensing system and *cartas de llamada* (calling letters) sent by male relatives. Authorities prioritized married women to promote *vida maridable* (married life) and stabilize settler households, in line with Bourbon-era settlement aims on the frontier (Fuentes Bajo, 2024). Even with these late-century gains, the overall gender balance remained far more male-skewed than in earlier centuries.

Figure 11: Distribution of migrants by class




*Notes*: We classify anyone with a stated religious occupation as "Clergy"; anyone explicitly recorded as servants (and other household members in that status) as "Servants"; and anyone listed as enslaved as "Slaves". We place all others —and their nuclear-family relatives—under "Migrants."

### 4.4 Social classes

The class composition of Spanish migration shifted over time as legal regimes, imperial priorities, and labor demand changed (see Figure 11, panels (a) and (b)). In the early $17^{th}$ century, servants counts surged as households used a legal loophole to bypass emigration restrictions.[14] This flow contracted dramatically after the liberalization of trade in the late $18^{th}$ century. Elite households held most domestic slaves and added large numbers during the Iberian Union (1580–1620), when Portuguese slaving networks routed people to Seville. Households sailed to the Americas with enslaved servants as part of the household unit. Clergy migration follows a distinct trajectory. Migration rose sharply around 1580 and remained high between 1640 and 1700, even as secular flows fell. The Church's redoubled evangelization efforts and kept a pastoral presence in both urban centers and frontier missions. Missionary orders acted not only as religious bodies but also as agents of imperial expansion. They anchored settlements and reinforced colonial authority Schwaller (2000). Clerics formed a core migrant group. Large contingents of Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and later Jesuits established footholds across the Americas. During secular migration slumps, clerical flows continued. Evangelization required personnel and the Crown leaned on the Church to stabilize colonial society (Lynch, 2012; Garfias and Sellars, 2025). After the 1767 Jesuit expulsion, locally trained priests replaced many European-born clergy. The Church hierarchy became more local, clergy migration shrank, and the creole-dominated ecclesiastical elite consolidated.

## 5 Concluding remarks

This paper presents the first comprehensive overview of migration from Spain to Spanish America across the entire colonial period. We transcribe and integrate primary and secondary

[14]While new licenses to travel to the Americas were restricted due to the demographic crisis in Spain, once the household head obtained a license, he could travel with his complete household. In the records, it is not unusual to observe five to ten individuals listed as servants of the main household head, including women and children.

sources to build the first individual-level dataset to track these flows for more than three centuries.

We document over a quarter million migrants departing for Spanish America, the majority originating from the Castilian regions of Andalusia and Extremadura. Most settled in the empire's core —Mexico and Peru—though both origins and destinations shifted over time in response to changing conditions in the metropolis and the colonies. Migration was consistently male-dominated, with women rarely accounting for more than one-quarter of total flows.

Our database opens multiple avenues for future research on the social, economic, and demographic history of the Spanish empire. At the micro level, scholars can trace specific migrant cohorts—their origins, occupations, and family ties—across the Atlantic. At the regional level, the data allow for the comparison of migration systems that link Spanish provinces to particular colonial destinations, and show how specialization, port access, and institutions shaped flows over time. Researchers can also map and analyze migrant networks connecting Spanish communities with colonial settlements and identify how kinship, patronage, and commercial ties influenced migration and integration. It further provides a foundation for integrating migration patterns with colonial population censuses, parish registers, and notarial archives to study assimilation, return migration, and mobility.

By pinpointing the origins and trajectories of prominent settlers, the data illuminate the formation of the colonial elite and its role in shaping governance, wealth, and economic development. More broadly, linking variation in migration flows to measures of regional economic performance and institutional change creates new tests of migration's causal contribution to colonial development. Finally, by covering more than three centuries, the database offers the temporal depth to examine the long-run effects of policy reforms, wars, and economic cycles on migration composition and volume, creating a platform for comparative work with other early modern empires.

In this sense, the "First Numbers" marks more than a technical contribution. It opens a research frontier for economic history, allowing us to connect individual-level evidence on

migration with the broad questions of inequality, human capital, and institutional development. By providing systematic evidence across three centuries, the dataset lays the empirical groundwork for revisiting old debates and asking new ones about how population movements shaped the Americas.

# References


Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., and Robinson, J. (2001). The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation. *American Economic Review*, 91(5):1369–1401.

Almorza Hidalgo, A. (2018). *No se hace pueblo sin ellas: mujeres españolas en el virreinato del Perú: emigración y movilidad social (siglos XVI-XVII)*. CSIC, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Altman, I. and Horn, J., editors (1991). *To Make America: European Emigration in the Early Modern Period*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Álvarez, C. (2003). Instituciones y desarrollo económico: La casa de la contratación y la carrera de indias (1503–1790). *Documentos de trabajo*, pages 1–30.

Arias, L. M. and Girod, D. (2011). Indigenous origins of colonial institutions. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*.

Arroyo Abad, L., Espin-Sanchez, J.-A., Spitzer, Y., and Zimran, A. (2025). Gambling for america: The first wave of migration to the Americas, 1492–1540. Working paper.

Arroyo Abad, L. and Maurer, N. (2024). Does time heal all wounds? The rise, decline, and long-term impact of forced labor in spanish america. *Explorations in Economic History*, 93:101580.

Arroyo Abad, L. and Maurer, N. (2025). The long shadow of history? The impact of colonial labor institutions on economic development in Peru. *Journal of Economic Growth*, pages 1–45.

Arroyo Abad, L. and Palma, N. (2021). The fruits of el dorado: The global impact of american precious metals. In *The Fruits of the Early Globalization: An Iberian Perspective*, pages 95–131. Springer.

Austin, S. M. (2015). Guaraní kinship and the encomienda community in colonial paraguay, sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. *Colonial Latin American Review*, 24(4):545–571.

Bermúdez Plata, C., Galbis Díez, M. d. C., and Romera Iruela, L. (1940–1980). *Catálogo de pasajeros a Indias durante los siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII*. Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla.

Borah, W. (1976). The mixing of populations. In Chiappelli, F., Allen, M. J., and Benson, R. L., editors, *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, pages 707–722. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Boyd-Bowman, P. (1973). *Patterns of Spanish Emigration to the New World (1493–1580)*. State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY.

Boyd-Bowman, P. (1976a). Patterns of Spanish emigration to the indies until 1600. *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 56(4):580–604.

Boyd-Bowman, P. (1976b). *Índice geobiográfico de más de 56 mil pobladores de la América hispánica*. Instituto Caro y Cuervo, Bogotá.

Brading, D. A. (1971). *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763–1810*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Burkholder, M. and Johnson, L. L. (2008). *Colonial Latin America*. Oxford University Press, New York, 7th edition.

Bustos Rodríguez, M. (2007). El traslado de la casa de la contratación y de consulado y sus efectos en el contexto de la nueva planta de a marina y el comercio americano. *Studia Historica. Historia Moderna*, 39:115–152.

Calvi, G. and Blutrach-Jelin, C. (2010). Sibling relations in family history: conflicts, cooperation and gender roles in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. an introduction. *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'histoire*, 17(5):695–704.

Carrasco, A. (1892). *Descubrimiento y Conquista de Chile*. Establecimiento Tipográfico Seguidores de Rivadeneyra.

Chaunu, H. and Chaunu, P. (1955–1959). *Séville et l'Atlantique (1504–1650)*. SEVPEN, Paris.

Chiappelli, F., Allen, M. J., and Benson, R. L., editors (1976). *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Cieza de León, P. (1945). *Crónica del Perú*. Calpe, Madrid.

Colón, C. (1968). *Diario de abordo*. Ediciones Cultura Hispánica.

Curtin, P. D. (1969). *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

Céspedes del Castillo, G. (2009). *América Hispánica (1492–1898)*. Marcial Pons, Madrid.

Davis, R. (1973). *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.

de Ayala, F. G. P. (1969). *Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno*. Casa de la Cultura del Perú.

de Herrera, A. (1601). *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y tierra firme del mar Océano,*. University of California Press, Madrid.

de Lizárraga, R. (1908). *Descripción y población de las Indias*. Imprenta americana.

del Vas Mingo, M. (1986). *Las capitulaciones de Indias en el siglo XVI*. Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, Madrid.

Devereux, A. W. (2023). Spanish imperial expansion, ca. 1450–1600. In *The Routledge Handbook of Spanish History*, pages 71–81. Routledge.

Diaz-Cayeros, A. (2011). Indian identity, poverty and colonial development in mexico. In *Impact of Colonial and Post-Colonial Independence Institutions on Economic Development in Latin America Conference, Columbia University, March*, pages 3–4.

Díaz de Guzmán, R. and Tieffemberg, S. (2012). *Argentina: historia del descubrimiento y conquista del Río de la Plata*. Editorial de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires.

Díaz del Castillo, B. (2021). *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*. Linkgua.

Díaz-Trechuelo, M. L. (1991). *La emigración familiar andaluza a América en el siglo XVII*. Fundación Española de Historia Moderna.

Donghi, T. H. (1985). *Politics, Economics, and Society in the Río de la Plata Region: The Evolution of the State in the Late Colonial Period*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Eagle, M. and Wheat, D. (2020). The early iberian slave trade to the spanish caribbean, 1500–1580. In Borucki, A., Eltis, D., and Wheat, D., editors, *From Galleons to the Highlands*, chapter 2. University of New Mexico Press.

Echeverri, M. (2006). Conflicto y hegemonía en el suroccidente de la nueva granada, 1780-1800. *Fronteras de la Historia*, 11.

Eltis, D. (1983). Free and coerced transatlantic migrations: Some comparisons. *American Historical Review*, 88(2):251–280.

Emmer, P. C. and Mörner, M., editors (1992). *European Expansion and Migration: Essays on the Intercontinental Migration from Africa, Asia, and Europe*. Berg, New York.

Engerman, S. and Sokoloff, K. (2000). Institutions, factor endowments, and paths of development in the new world. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 14(3):217–32.

Engerman, S. L., Sokoloff, K. L., Urquiola, M., and Acemoglu, D. (2002). Factor endowments, inequality, and paths of development among new world economies. *Economia*, 3(1):41–109.

Esparza, J. J. (2015). *La cruzada del océano: la gran aventura de la conquista de América*. La esfera de los libros.

Faguet, J.-P., Matajira, C., and Sánchez, F. (2024). Encomienda, the colonial state, and long-run development in colombia. *LSE Working Papers*.

Fernández Sotelo, R. D. (1987). *Capitulaciones colombinas (1492-1506)*. El Colegio de Michoacán AC.

Fernández López, F. (2015). La casa de contratación de indias: Gestión, expedición y control documental (siglos xvi–xvii). *Relaciones*, 144:169–193.

Fradkin, R. and Garavaglia, J. C. (2009). La argentina colonial. *El Río de la Plata entre los siglos XVI y XIX. Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI Editores*.

Friede, J. (1951). Notes and comment: The catalogo de pasajeros and spanish emigration to america to 1550. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, pages 333–348.

Friede, J. (1952). Algunas observaciones sobre la realidad de la emigración española a américa en la primera mitad del siglo xvi. *Revista de Indias*, XII(49):467–496.

Fuentes Bajo, M. D. (2024). Licencias de embarque y emigración femenina. venezuela, 1754-1804. *Procesos históricos: revista de historia, arte y ciencias sociales*, 46:3–20.

García Cárcel, R. (2019). El censo de 1510 y la población valenciana de la primera mitad del siglo xvi. *Cuadernos de Geografía de la Universitat de València*, 18:49–66.

García Hidalgo, P. (2021). *La emigración española a América en el siglo XVII. Mujeres cruzando el Atlántico*. PhD thesis, Universidad de Huelva.

García Gallo, A. (1972). Los principios rectores de la organización territorial en indias en el siglo xvi. *Estudios de Historia del Derecho Indiano*, pages 661–693.

Garfias, F. and Sellars, E. A. (2025). The jesuit expulsion: A double-edged sword for state authority in new spain. *World Development*, 195:107048.

Gil, J. (1985). El rol del tercer viaje colombino. *Suplemento de Anuario de Estudios Americanos, Sección Historiografía y Bibliografía*, 29(1):83–110.

Glaeser, E. L., La Porta, R., Lopez-de Silanes, F., and Shleifer, A. (2004). Do institutions cause growth? *Journal of economic Growth*, 9(3):271–303.

Góngora, M. (1962). *Los grupos de conquistadores en Tierra Firme, 1509-1530: fisonomía histórico-social de un tipo de conquesta*. Universidad de Chile, centro de historia colonial.

González Ochoa, J. M. (2023). *Protagonistas Desconocidos de la Conquista de América*. American Group.

González García, P. (1994). Archivo general de indias. *Revista de Enseñanza Universitaria*, 1:45–93.

González García, P., editor (1997). *Archivo General de Indias*. Dirección General del Libro, Archivos y Bibliotecas: Lunwerg, Madrid.

Gould, A. (1984). *Nueva lista documentada de los tripulantes de Colón en 1492*, volume 6. Real Academia de la Historia.

Grafe, R. and Irigoin, A. (2012). A stakeholder empire: the political economy of spanish imperial rule in america 1. *The Economic History Review*, 65(2):609–651.

Hamilton, E. J. (1934). *American Treasures and the Price Revolution in Spain 1500–1660*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Haring, C. H. (1939). *Comercio y navegación entre España y las indias en la época de los Habsburgo*. Fondo de cultura económica, Mexico.

Instituto Hispano-Cubano de Historia de América (Fundación Rafael G. Abreu) (1930-2020). *Catálogo de los fondos americanos del Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla*, volume I-XV of *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de Hispano-América*. Compañí General de Artes Gráficas, Sevilla.

Jacobs, A. P. (1995). *Los movimientos migratorios entre Castilla e Hispanoamérica durante el reinado de Felipe III*. Rodopi, Amsterdam.

Kirkpatrick, F. A. (2021). *Los conquistadores españoles*. Ediciones Rialp.

Konetzke, R. (1945). Legislación sobre inmigración de extranjeros en américa durante la época colonial. *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 3:269–299.

Kuethe, A. J. and Andrien, K. J. (2014). *The Spanish Atlantic world in the eighteenth century: war and the Bourbon reforms, 1713–1796*. Cambridge University Press.

Lamikiz, X. (2024). The fiscal transformation of the spanish carrera de indias in the 17th century: a reinterpretation. *Revista de Historia Económica / Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History*, 42(2):171–192.

León Guerrero, M. M. et al. (2007). Pasajeros del segundo viaje de cristóbal colón. *Revista de estudios colombinos*, 3:29–60.

López, E. L. (1992). Extremeños hacia américa: la emigración en la edad moderna. In *Historia general de la emigración española a Iberoamérica*, pages 261–292. Ministerio de Trabajo e inmigración.

Lorenzo Sanz, E. (1979–1980). *Comercio de España con América en la época de Felipe II*. Diputación Provincial, Valladolid.

Lynch, J. (1981). *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808–1826*. Norton, New York.

Lynch, J. (2012). *New worlds: A religious history of Latin America*. Yale University Press.

Macías Domínguez, I. (1999). *La llamada del Nuevo Mundo: la emigración española a América (1701-1750)*. Universidad de Sevilla.

María del Carment, M. M. (1993). *La emigración castellana y leonesa al nuevo mundo:1517-1700*. Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Cultura y Turismo.

Márquez Macías, R. (1995). *La emigración española a América, 1765-1824*. Universidad de Oviedo.

Martínez Shaw, C. (1980). Cataluña y el comercio con américa. el fin de un debate. *Boletín Americanista*, 30:223–236.

Martínez Shaw, C. (1994). *La emigración española a América, 1492-1824*, volume 11. Archivo de Indianos.

McFarlane, A. (1993). *Colombia Before Independence: Economy, Society, and Politics under Bourbon Rule*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Mendoza, F. R. (2004). *La emigración del noroeste de Tenerife a América durante 1750-1830*. Universidad de La Laguna (Canary Islands, Spain).

Mira Caballos, E. (2014). *La gran armada colonizadora de Nicolás de Ovando, 1501-1502*, volume 121. Esteban Mira Caballos.

Montana, A. (1973). *Descubrimientos, exploraciones y conquistas de españoles y portugueses en América y Oceanía*. Editorial Miguel A. Salvatella.

Moranchel Porcaterra, M. (2007). Gobierno, justicia, guerra y hacienda: una nueva visión del "indiferente general" del archivo general de india. *Cuadernos de Historia del Derecho*, 14:329–398.

Morineau, M. (2000). Revoir séville. le guadalquivir, l'atlantique et l'amérique au xvie siècle. *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 51(1).

Mörner, M. (1975). *Aventureros y Proletarios: Los Emigrantes en Hispanoamérica*. MAPFRE, Madrid.

Mörner, M. (1976). Spanish migration to the new world prior to 1810: A report on the state of research. In Chiappelli, F., Allen, M. J., and Benson, R. L., editors, *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, pages 737–782. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Moya, J. (2018). Migration and the historical formation of latin america in a global perspective. *Sociologias*, 20(49):24–68.

Muñoz-Arbeláez, S. (2025). *The New Kingdom of Granada: The Making and Unmaking of Spain's Atlantic Empire*. Duke University Press.

Nadal, J. (1984). *La población española: siglos XVI a XX*, volume 12. Ariel.

Newson, L. A. (2014). The latin american colonial experience. In *Latin American development*, pages 11–40. Routledge.

Poska, A. M. (2012). Campesinas transatlánticas. las mujeres y la migración en el imperio español a finales del siglo xviii. *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos. Nouveaux mondes mondes nouveaux-Novo Mundo Mundos Novos-New world New worlds*.

Prados de la Escosura, L., Alvarez-Nogal, C., and Santiago-Caballero, C. (2022). Growth recurring in preindustrial spain? *Cliometrica*, 16(2):215–241.

Ribas, J. M. D. (1982). La emigración española a américa latina durante la época del comercio libre (1765-1820): el ejemplo catalán. *Boletín americanista*, 32:115–137.

Richman, I. B. (1921). *The Spanish conquerors: a chronicle of the dawn of empire overseas*, volume 2. New Haven: Yale University Press; Toronto: Glasgow, Brook.

Rodríguez García, M. E., Mó Romero, E., and Pérez Cantó, P. (2024). " y en vuestra venida no haya falta": la construcción del significado de lo femenino en las" cartas de llamada". *Revista Complutense de Historia de América*, 50(2).

Rodríguez Lorenzo, S. M. (2017). El contrato de pasaje en la carrera de indias (1561-1622). *Historia Mexicana*, 66(3).

Romero Tallafigo, M. (1985). La fundación del archivo general de indias: fasto en la historia archivística europea. *Archivo hispalense: Revista histórica, literaria y artística*, 207–208:3–20.

Rubio Serrano, J. L. (1988). Las unidades de medida españolas en los siglos xvi y xvii. *Revista de Historia Naval*, 20:76–94.

Sainz Varela, J. (2006). Los pasajeros a indias. *Tabula*, 9:11–70.

Sánchez-Albornoz, N. (2002). La emigración española a américa en medio milenio: pautas sociales. *Historia social*, 42:41–58.

Schmidel, U. (1905). *Viaje al Rio de la Plata (1534-1554)*. Cabaut y Cia.

Schwaller, J. F. (2000). *The church in colonial Latin America*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.

Schwartz, S. B. (2019). Patterns of conquest and settlement of the iberian americas. In *The Iberian World*, pages 319–338. Routledge.

Scobie, J. R. (1964). *Argentina: A City and a Nation*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Simpson, L. B. (2023). *The encomienda in New Spain: the beginning of Spanish Mexico*. Univ of California Press.

Solís, J. F. M. (1896). *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista de Yucatán: con una reseña de la historia antigua de esta península*, volume 1. Impr. y lit. R. Caballero.

Stangl, W. (2013). Un cuarto de siglo con cartas privadas de emigrantes a indias. prácticas y perspectivas de ediciones de cartas transatlánticas en el imperio español. *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 70(2):703–736.

Stangl, W. (2018). Digital resources: En el ojo del huracán, private letters from the caribbean to spain. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*.

Stein, S. J. and Stein, B. H. (2003). *Apogee of empire: Spain and New Spain in the age of Charles III, 1759–1789*. JHU Press.

Sánchez Albornoz, N. (1974). *The Population of Latin America: A History*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Sánchez-Albornoz, N. (2006). Españoles hacia américa. cinco siglos de migración transoceánica. In Sánchez-Albornoz, N., editor, *Rumbo a América. Gente, Ideas y lengua*, pages 57–96. Colegio de Mexico, Mexico.

Sánchez-Alonso, B. (2019). The age of mass migration in latin america. *The Economic History Review*, 72(1):3–31.

Sánchez Andrade, E. L. (2013). *Las instituciones jurídicas de la Edad Media en España y su trascendencia en el derecho indiano y el derecho nacional mexicano*. Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Sánchez Bella, I. (1977). Las audiencias y el gobierno de las indias (siglos xvi y xvii). *Revista de estudios historico-juridicos*, pages 159–186.

Tandeter, E. (1992). Coercion and market: Silver mining in colonial potosí, 1692–1826. In et al., B. L., editor, *The Making of the Colonial Andes, 1500–1700*, pages 63–84. Duke University Press, Durham.

TePaske, J. J., Klein, H. S., and Brown, K. W. (1982). *The royal treasuries of the Spanish empire in America*, volume 1. Duke University Press.

Testón Nuñez, I. and Sánchez Rubio, R. (1997). Mujeres abandonadas, mujeres olvidadas. *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, 19:91–120.

Vázquez de Prada Vallejo, V. and Amores Carredano, J. B. (1991). *La emigración de navarros y vascongados al Nuevo Mundo y su repercusión en las comunidades de origen*. Fundación Española de Historia Moderna.

Wortman, M. L. (1982). *Government and society in Central America, 1680–1840*. Columbia University Press.

Yáñez Gallardo, C. R. (1991). La emigración catalana a américa: una visión de largo plazo. In *La emigración española a Ultramar: 1492-1914*, pages 173–188. Asociación de Historia Moderna.

# Appendices

## A Sources of Emigration to the Indies

The emigration process from Spain to the Americas, spanning from the conquest until the first third of the $19^{th}$ century, generated extensive documentation of varied nature. The long time period, across different and changing historical administrative units, creates classification challenges. This section presents all known sources housed at the General Archive of the Indies (*Archivo General de Indias*, AGI) and secondary sources. Many of the sources are unpublished or have not previously been used to document migration flows. We provide a comprehensive list of official documentary collections of sources that contain names and other personal identifiable information. These sources however do not cover all potential migrants. Some migrants might be missing due to lost of documents and illegal migration. Nonetheless, based on our estimates using the ships registration, we believe our dataset covers most of the total migration until the last third of the $18^{th}$ century. After this period, it is harder to compute the number of migrants and the number of ships due to the liberalization of Spanish ports and other administrative measures.

Our main sources are the licenses (*licencias*) and the ships registries (*asientos*).[15] Other sources refer to the passage of passengers, religious personnel, or administrative staff to overseas territories.

Subsection A.1 discusses the period 1492-1540, focusing on the secondary sources that we use (Boyd-Bowman, 1976b), and the primary sources that we use to complement it. Subsection A.2 presents sources stored at the AGI.[16]

[15] See Jacobs (1995) for a detailed description.

[16] Other archives in Spain contain relevant migratory sources, especially for the late $18^{th}$ century and the $19^{th}$ century. These archives are the General Archive of Simancas (*Archivo General de Simancas*, Simancas), the General Archive of the Navy (*Archivo General de la Marina, Álvaro de Bazán*); the General Archive of the Administration (*Archivo General de la Administración*, AGA), and other smaller archives that have not been systematically explored for migrant sources. Exploring all these archives is beyond the scope of this project.

## A.1 Sources 1492-1540

The foundation for lower bound estimates for 1492-1540 rests on two primary documentary sources (*Información y licencias* and *Asientos*). The *Catálogo de Pasajeros a Indias* (1940–1980) compiled records from 1492 to 1600 using two main archival collections: the *Información y licencias de pasajeros* (1534–1790)[17] and the *Asiento de pasajeros* (1509–1701).[18] Boyd-Bowman (1976b) built upon this catalog for the period 1492–1540, incorporating additional materials from Latin American secondary sources and miscellaneous documents. Our approach extends Boyd-Bowman (1976b) by incorporating three complementary source types for the period 1492–1540. First, we systematically examined notarial records to identify passage contracts. Second, we analyzed chronicles of the Indies that document expedition members. Third, we studied capitulations that detail the composition of conquest expeditions.

### A.1.1 Boyd-Bowman (1976): 1492-1540

Peter Boyd-Bowman began his study of emigration to America with the aim of understanding the phonetic roots of American territories. Boyd-Bowman (1976a) provides a summary of his work with data until 1600. He intended to publish the Geobiographical Index of the more than 56,000 Spanish settlers in America in the $16^{th}$ century. However, only the first two volumes, with data until 1540, were published. The work includes biographical references for soldiers, explorers, and other notable people, such as name, surname, origin, and destination, supplemented with additional information like profession, family relations, deaths, and many other variables. This work by Boyd-Bowman includes and improves upon the results of the *Catálogo de Pasajeros* using chronicles of the Indies, wills, and other complementary sources as additional documentation, but individual information is only available until 1540.

[17] Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Contratación, 5217-5535.
[18] Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Contratación, 5536-5540.

### A.1.2 Notarial Records

The information gaps that may arise from studying the collections of the AGI can be partially resolved by consulting notarial protocols. Migrants, in addition to obtaining a license, had to arrange a passage contract. The notarial protocol collection at the *Archivo de Protocolos Notariales de Sevilla* contains the best sources in this regard within its abundant documentary collection.

The passage contract appears in notarial indexes as a type of chartering. What makes this type of record invaluable is that it concerns the transport of people bound for America. These records list specific details such as name, last name, any accompanying parties chartered, along with the place of origin, and destination. The chartering party, also present in the contract, is usually the shipmaster or owner, although in some cases we observe a representative acting on their behalf (Rodríguez Lorenzo, 2017).

The *Instituto Hispano-Cubano de Historia de América* (*Fundación Rafael G. Abreu*) has published 15 volumes with summaries of contracts from the *Archivo de Protocolos Notariales de Sevilla* that relate to the Americas. The first volume was published in 1930, and the $15^{th}$ volume in 2020.[19] We first identified all the contracts related to passengers traffic to the Americas by looking at the index of topics (*Índice de materias*). We then scanned and OCRed the full text of all contracts to capture references to passages, or passage agreements. With the list of all potential contracts, we then extracted dates, the name and number of passengers, name of the ship's captain, name of the ship (when available), and other characteristics such as the price and type of accommodations. When the summary was unclear or did not list the name of individual passengers, we consulted the original source at the *Archivo de Protocolos Notariales de Sevilla*. In all instances, and after carefully reviewing the full

[19]The first five volumes were printed between 1930-1938, largely through the contributions by individual historians working at the archive. These five volumes cover contracts up to the year 1600, but the series remain incomplete. No volumes were published during the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975). Democracy gave a new impulse to this colossal effort, and volume six appeared in 1986. A team of historians systematically worked systematically through the archive in chronological order filling the gaps left in the earlier volumes. Volume 15 extends coverage to the year 1560. At the time of writing this manuscript, we only have access to 15 volumes. Volume 16 is in preparation.

contracts —typically 5-10 pages in length—we confirmed that no relevant information was missing in the summaries.

This documentation serves not only as a quantitative source to address gaps in the official documentation of the *Casa de la Contratación*, but it also usually offers diverse information about the contracting parties. It often notes the price paid to the shipmaster, payment conditions, maintenance during the journey, luggage, and travel arrangements within the vessel—for example first class (Rodríguez Lorenzo, 2017). It also notes the ship's name, the master's name, and occasionally the planned route upon arrival in America. Such details are very relevant for cross-referencing notary protocols with other sources, such as the ship registries.[20]

### A.1.3 Chronicles and Capitulations

Founded in 1503, the *Casa de la Contratación* became fully operational only a few years later. To study migration in the earliest years of Spanish expansion, we must turn to alternative sources. Fortunately, the exploration of new territories generated records of expeditions and capitulations.

A capitulation was, essentially, a contract between the Crown and an individual (*adelantado*) for exploration, conquest, discovery, pacification, and/or settlement in exchange for a series of rewards. The legal precedent for this system emerged during the conquest of the Canary Islands by Jean de Bethencourt during the $15^{th}$ century. Bethencourt, a Norman explorer, offered his vassalage to the Crown, the conquered islands, and 20% of the trade rights with the islands in exchange for a noble title and a grant of 20,000 *maravedís* (Sánchez Andrade, 2013). The capitulation explicitly stated that the conquered territories belonged to the Kingdom and not to the individual. Thus, the Crown retained the power to direct and control the conquests (Céspedes del Castillo, 2009). The *Capitulaciones de Santa*

[20]The ship registries lists all ships leaving Seville for the Americas or Africa during the colonial period, as well as returning ships. They include information such as the year of departure and the shipmaster's name, which can be used to link the individual migrant records to the ships registries.

*Fe*, between Queen Isabela of Castile and Christopher Columbus, are well known. From 1501 onward, the Crown generalized the procedure once the performance of the Columbian government had been confirmed. Through this system, the Crown sought to harness private initiative in the pursuit of new riches across the Atlantic, while safeguarding measures to direct and control the process (del Vas Mingo, 1986).

Of particular interest here is that the new conquerors traveled with an army or host (*hueste*), with diverse roles—one being the settlement of new territories. The *adelantado* financed the expedition according to the Crown's directives, i.e., the origin, status, and size of his contingent. Ultimately, however, the host remained at the *adelantado*'s expense. Each member entered into an agreement with him for passage to the New World (del Vas Mingo, 1986). These sources often provide information about the individuals' characteristics without identifying them by name, which makes complementary sources indispensable.

To address the anonymity of these hosts and further our effort to identify as many migrants as possible, we draw on several types of documents. First, archival sources include notarial protocols, trials, or accounting records that name the *adelantado* in contracts with members of his host. Second, we examine several Chronicles of the Indies—written usually by members of the hosts during their time in the American Conquest. These chronicles usually include names and accounting records that complement other sources. Accounts of voyages, conquests, and the vicissitudes of the arrival in the Americas frequently include names that comprise the *adelantado*'s host.[21] An exhaustive analysis of these works allows for the compilation of a series of names of notable importance for the study of early migrations to the Indies.[22]

[21]Peter Boyd-Bowman turned to these chronicles to complete the *Catálogo*. His account, however, is incomplete. We fill this gap by looking at many other chronicles he did not use.

[22]The chronicles consulted are: Díaz del Castillo (2021); Cieza de León (1945); Schmidel (1905); Colón (1968); de Ayala (1969); de Lizárraga (1908); Solís (1896); Díaz de Guzmán and Tieffemberg (2012); Carrasco (1892). We also consulted secondary sources with information on the explorers and their crew: Góngora (1962); Kirkpatrick (2021); Montana (1973); González Ochoa (2023); Gould (1984); Gil (1985); Mira Caballos (2014); León Guerrero et al. (2007); Esparza (2015); Richman (1921); Fernández Sotelo (1987).

## A.2 *Archivo General de las Indias* (General Archive of the Indies)

Founded in 1785 with materials transferred from General Archive of Simancas, the General Archive of the Indies (AGI) serves as the principal repository for research on Hispanic America in colonial times (González García, 1997; Romero Tallafigo, 1985). It holds over 43,000 bundles (*legajos*), including records of institutions with directly involved in regulating human and commercial movements. Table 1 summarized the primary sources used in this study.

Table 1: Migration Primary Sources in the AGI

| **Series** | **Reference** | **Period** |
|---|---|---|
| *Asiento de Pasajeros*<br>Ships registrations | Contratación, 5536–5540B | 1509–1701 |
| *Informacion y licencias*<br>Information and Licenses | Contratación, 5217A–5535 | 1534–1790 |
| *Provistos a Indias y Canarias*<br>Provistos to Indies and Canary Islands | Contratación, 5787 | 1515–1606 |
| *Provistos a Nueva España*<br>Provistos to New Spain | Contratación, 5788–5791 | 1564–1722 |
| *Provistos a Tierra Firme*<br>Provistos to Tierra Firme | Contratación, 5792–5796 | 1565–1723 |
| *Registros de embarque a Perú*<br>Boarding Records to Peru | INDIFERENTE, 611–613 | 1586–1717 |
| *Licencia para embarques y sobrecargos*<br>License for Boardings and Supercargoes | INDIFERENTE, 2108–2161 | 1700–1835 |
| *Pasajeros a Nueva España, Filipinas e Islas de Barlovento*<br>Passengers to New Spain, Philippines, and Windward Islands | INDIFERENTE, 2048–2077 | 1516–1700 |
| *Pasajeros a Perú, Tierra Firme y Buenos Aires*<br>Passengers to Peru, Tierra Firme, and Buenos Aires | INDIFERENTE, 2078–2107 | 1534–1834 |
| *Licencias de pasajeros a Nueva España*<br>Passenger Licenses to New Spain | INDIFERENTE, 1977–1979 | 1586–1735 |
| *Relaciones de pasajeros y cargamentos*<br>Passenger and Cargo Relations | INDIFERENTE, 2162A–2172 | 1550–1833 |

Continued on next page

Table 1 – continued from previous page

| **Series** | **Reference** | **Period** |
|---|---|---|
| *Expedicion de pasaportes y comercio*<br>Passport Issuance and Commerce | INDIFERENTE, 1975 | 1790–1815 |
| *Registro, Canarias*<br>Registry, Canary Islands | INDIFERENTE, 3089–3090 | 1566–1715 |
| *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque*<br>Files on Boarding Licenses | BUENOS AIRES, 563–567 | 1731–1745 |
| *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque a Buenos Aires*<br>Files on Boarding Licenses to Buenos Aires | BUENOS AIRES, 568–571 | 1778–1823 |
| *Licencia de embarque*<br>Boarding Licenses | CARACAS, 939–941 | 1787–1801 |
| *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque*<br>Files on Boarding Licenses | CHARCAS, 717 | 1787–1820 |
| *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque*<br>Files on Boarding Licenses | CHILE, 446 | 1787–1823 |
| *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque*<br>Files on Boarding Licenses | GUATEMALA, 880–882 | 1734–1808 |
| *Licencias de embarque al Mar del Sur*<br>Boarding Licenses to the South Sea | LIMA, 1521–1525 | 1787–1801 |
| *Licencias de embarco y pasaportes*<br>Boarding Licenses and Passports | LIMA, 1526–1527 | 1787-1814 |
| *Expedientes de licencias de embarque para Nueva España*<br>Boarding License Files for New Spain | MEXICO, 2493–2499B | 1786–1819 |
| *Expedientes y licencias de embarque*<br>Files and boarding licenses | QUITO, 578 | 1787–1823 |

Continued on next page

Table 1 – continued from previous page

| **Series** | **Reference** | **Period** |
|---|---|---|
| *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque*<br>Files on Boarding Licenses | SANTA FE, 954 | 1787–1822 |
| *Licencias de embarque: Cuba*<br>Boarding Licenses: Cuba | SANTO DOMINGO, 2199–2207 | 1790–1820 |
| *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque a Puerto Rico*<br>Files on Boarding Licenses to Puerto Rico | SANTO DOMINGO, 2514 | 1787–1834 |
| *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque*<br>Files on Boarding Licenses | FILIPINAS, 931 | 1787–1823 |
| *Registro de oficios de la Audiencia de Filipinas*<br>Registry of Offices of the Audiencia of the Philippines | FILIPINAS, 334–346 | 1739–1805 |
| *Licencias de embarque a provistos y militares*<br>Boarding Licenses for Provistos and Military | ARRIBADAS, 515 | 1790 |
| *Libro de registro de provistos*<br>Registry Book of Provistos | ARRIBADAS, 458 | 1749–1767 |
| *Licencias de embarque a provistos, militares y pasajeros*<br>Boarding licenses for Provistos, Military and Passengers | ARRIBADAS, 439–441/516–520 | 1790–1810 |
| *Expedientes de licencia de embarque a América en General*<br>Boarding License Files to America in General | ULTRAMAR, 847 | 1801–1822 |
| *Expedientes de licencia de embarque a la isla de Cuba*<br>Boarding License Files to the Island of Cuba | ULTRAMAR, 326–364 | 1801–1835 |
| *Expedientes de licencia de embarque a Puerto Rico*<br>Boarding License Files to Puerto Rico | ULTRAMAR, 494–497 | 1797–1821 |
| *Obispo de Méjico. Lista de casados ausentes*<br>Bishop of Mexico. List of Absent Married Men | PATRONATO, 180 | 1535 |

### A.2.1 *Casa de la Contratación* (House of Trade)

The *Casa de la Contratación* (1503–1790) was a Crown institution modeled on the Portuguese *Casa da India*. It was Spain's first administrative body for the newly claimed territories in the Americas. It centralized the management and governance of the New World's commercial affairs. Its functions included controlling, registering, and organizing human and commercial traffic. It acted as the metropolitan authority for government, justice, and administration of the American territories. The Crown's attempt to monopolize transatlantic trade ultimately failed, leaving trade initiatives in private hands. The *Casa de la Contratación*, however, retained the control and regulation of the movement of people and goods (Haring, 1939).

Three institutional domains are particularly relevant to migration studies: (1) judicial administration, which supplies indirect sources such as lawsuits for unlicensed departures or desertion notices; (2) estate management of deceased Americans, which offers indirect evidence of migrants through wills and inventories; and (3) the immigration office, which directly handled and recorded population movements (Álvarez, 2003). The *Casa* played a central role in granting boarding licenses for passage to the Americas and inspecting royal licenses to ensure proper documentation and compliance with requirements. It also held the deposit for bonds of passengers appointed to administrative positions in the Americas.

The first set of documents of interest is the Ships Registrations (*Asiento de Pasajeros*) (5536–5540B), covering 1509–1701. These volumes summarize information from public hearings for emigrants licensed by the *Casa de la Contratación*. The subseries comprises six parts in 24 composite units, with counts are organized by name to identify duplicates. Closely related are the Information and Licenses (*Informacion y licencias*) Information and Licenses (5217–5535), covering 1534–1790. These files from boarding licenses applicants include blood purity reports, baptismal and marriage certificates, and details on accompanying relatives and servants. Content varies over time, with some periods preserving more complete files than others.

The *Catálogo* (Bermúdez Plata et al., 1980) drew on both of these sources to create the first large index of migrants to the Americas. Initiated by Cristóbal Bermúdez Plata and continued by María del Carmen Galbis Diez and others through volume VII, it covers 1509–1599. The *Catalog* remains the core reference for most studies of migration to the Americas, but has notable shortcomings. Friede (1951) argues that it fails to give a realistic picture of migration to the Americas because it ignores marginal annotations in the original sources and irregular immigration. These major subseries have attracted significant research attention, but scattered documentation is essential for a fuller view of migratory movements. In the same *Contratación* section at the AGI we find the books on *provistos*. *Provistos* were appointments to specific government positions in the Americas, recorded in three categories: Provistos to Indies and Canary Islands (*Provistos a Indias y Canarias*) (5787); Provistos to New Spain (*Provistos a Nueva España*) (5788–5791); and Provistos to Tierra Firme (*Provistos a Tierra Firme*) (5792–5796).[23] These books require selective use as they also contain records irrelevant to emigration such as cancellations, salaries, contracts, bonds, and other *provisto* matters.

The *Casa de la Contratación*'s Accounting Office was initially established as a notary office and evolved into the main venue for recording and documenting most government business. It handled secretarial duties such as registering correspondence, drafting reports, issuing mandates, and managing expeditions within the *Casa*'s jurisdiction (Fernández López, 2015).The *Contaduría* section at the AGI holds the Council of the Indies series *Consejo de Indias*, including six subseries of Licenses to Travel to the Indies *Licencias para pasar a Indias* (240–244B) covering 1556–1671. These consist of seven parts containing a total of 2,905 licenses.

[23] Sainz Varela (2006) proposes including *Provistos of the Casa de la Contratación* (5784–5786). After reviewing these sources, however, we conclude that these are records of positions within Seville's *Casa* itself, not migrants.

Table 2: Sources from *Casa de la Contratación* and *Contaduría*

| **Series** | **Reference** | **Count** |
|---|---|---|
| Passenger Registrations to the Indies | 5536–5540B | 24 |
| Information and Passenger Licenses to the Indies | 5217A–5535 | 329 |
| Provistos to the Indies and Canary Islands | 5787 | 1 |
| Provistos to Tierra Firme | 5792–5796 | 10 |
| Provistos to New Spain | 5788–1591 | 7 |
| Licenses to Travel to the Indies | 240–244B | 7 |

*Notes*: The first five sources correspond to the *Contratación* collection at the AGI. The last source corresponds to the *Contaduría* collection at the AGI.

### A.2.2 *Indiferente General*

Documentation from the Council of the Indies appears across multiple sections of the AGI. Within *Indiferente General* (i.e., miscellaneous) collection, the Government (*Gobierno*) section stands out. Among all collections, *Indiferente* poses the greatest challenge due to the exceptionally wide variety of sources.[24] Currently, the AGI lists 3,302 series in this collection, each with many bundles. As no established categories exist, we examined each individually to identify all sources related to boarding licenses and passengers.

Table 3 shows a summary of the documents in *Indiferente General* that contain any information about migrants. We only considered sources that contain at least the name of the migrant, or the name household head of a migrating household. The main sources are: 1) Licenses and Passengers to Peru (*Licencias y pasajeros a Perú*) (611–613) with eleven bundles covering 1586–1717 (missing 1627–1650); 2) Passenger Licenses to New Spain (*Licencias de pasajeros a Nueva España*) (1977–1979) covering 1586–1735; 3) Passengers to New Spain, Philippines, and Windward Islands (*Pasajeros a Nueva España, Filipinas e Islas de Barlovento*) (2048–2077) covering 1516–1700 (missing 1621–1657); and 4) Passengers to Peru, Tierra Firme, and Buenos Aires (*Pasajeros a Perú, Tierra Firme y Buenos Aires*)

[24] About half of all AGI documents sit in *Indiferente*. This is collection includes documents that did not fit in a established collection or added by archivists at a later date. In many cases, series interrupted or partially missing in another collection, would reappear in *Indiferente*. Moranchel Porcaterra (2007) recommended reconstructing collections in this division through systematic regrouping by theme.

(2078–2107) from 1586–1717. These represent direct, specific references to passenger boarding to American territories, and the Philippines.

In addition to these sources, we expanded our database with other sources that record migratory movements indirectly. These include: 1) Licenses for Boarding and Supercargoes (*Licencias para embarques y sobrecargos*) (2109–2161) covering 1700–1835 (with a gap between 1739–1786) and 2) Passenger and Cargo Relations (*Relaciones de pasajeros y cargamentos*) (2162A–2172), covering 1550–1833.[25]

These records concern chartered ships carrying passengers in their cargo. Finally, we identified two more sources —miscellaneous among the miscellaneous—Passport Issuance and Commerce (*Expedicion de pasaportes y comercio*), covering the period 1790–1815 and Registry, Canary Islands (*Registro, Canarias*) for the period 1566–1715. We examined every possible source with information on migrants. We define anyone who travels as migrant: an emigrant at a port of departure, an immigrant upon arrival at destination (Sánchez-Albornoz, 2006).

Table 3: Sources from *Indiferente General*

| **Series** | **Reference** | **Count** |
|---|---|---|
| Licenses and Passengers to Peru | 611–613 | 11 |
| Passenger Licenses to New Spain | 1977–1979 | 3 |
| Passengers to New Spain, Philippines, and Windward Islands | 2048–2077 | 30 |
| Passengers to Peru, Tierra Firme, and Buenos Aires | 2078–2107 | 30 |
| Licenses for Boarding and Supercargoes | 2109–2161 | 56 |
| Passenger and Cargo Relations | 2162A–2172 | 12 |
| Registry, Canary Islands | 3089–3090 | 2 |
| Passport Issuance and Commerce | 1975 | 1 |

### A.2.3 *Audiencias*

The territorial domains of colonial Spanish America were divided into viceroyalties (*virreinatos*). Each viceroyalty would then de divided into a small number of royal audiences

[25] Sainz Varela (2006) recommends including *Expedientes, informaciones y probanzas* (1202–1288). consultations with AGI staff confirm that these do not pertain to passengers to the Indies.

(*reales audiencias* or just *audiencias*).[26] *Audiencias* held authority to use and issue documents with royal seals,including royal provisions signed by viceroys and *Audiencia* presidents. In doing so, they represented the king in the documentation they issued. We now focus on the eleven *audiencias* with documents related to migration.

The first is the *Audiencia de Buenos Aires* (Argentina), which holds eight partial series titled *Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque* ("dossiers on boarding licenses"), numbered 564–571 , covering 1746 to 1823. The *Audiencia de Charcas* preserves only one series, Boarding license files *Expedientes de licencias de embarque* (717), covering the period 1787–1820. The *Audiencia de Chile* likewise has one series, Boarding license files *Expedientes de licencias de embarque* (446), for 1787–1823. The *Audiencia de Filipinas* (Philippines) holds sources that are more widely scattered. One series, Boarding license file *Expediente de licencias de embarque* (931), covers the period 1787–1823 while other relevant material appears in the series (334–337; 339–346).[27] We examined all these records individually and identified 118 documentary units with information on passengers, both emigrants and re-emigrants (returning to the Indies).

For the *Audiencia de Guatemala* (Central America), we use the series Reserved Route: Letters and files (*Vía Reservada: Cartas y expedientes*) with subseries series Records and boarding licenses (*Registros y licencias de embarque*) (880–882) covering the years 1734–1808. For the *Audiencia de Quito* (Ecuador), we use the same series Reserved Route: Letters and files *Vía Reservada: Cartas y expedientes* with subseries files and boarding licenses (*Expedientes y licencias de embarque* 578), for the period is 1787–1823. For the *Audiencia de Santa Fe* (Colombia), we again use the series Reserved Route: Letters and files *Vía Reservada: Cartas y expedientes*. This time with with fractional series Boarding license files *Expedientes de*

[26]The *Audiencias* gained great notoriety and expanded their powers, although scholars still debate their actual functions, as noted by Sánchez Bella (1977). García Gallo (1972) maintains that they operated not as governmental bodies but as strictly judicial institutions, occasionally offering consultative advice that allowed them to wield decisive influence over governmental affairs —particularly through their judges (*oidores*).

[27]These include Office records of the *audiencia* and office and parties records of the *audiencia*. Sainz Varela (2006) also lists references 329, 347 and 348. After reviewing them, we found no documentation relating to migrants.

*licencias de embarque* (954), for the period 1787–1822. The *Audiencia de Caracas* (Venezuela) holds three fractional series (Boarding licenses (*Licencias de embarque*) (939–941), for the period 1787–1822. The *Audiencia de Lima* (Peru and Bolivia), has a series Boarding Licenses and Passports (*Licencias de embarque al Mar del Sur*), for the period 1787–1801, plus two subseries Boarding licenses and passports (*Licencias de embarco y pasaportes*) (1526–1527), for the period 1787–1814. The *Audiencia de Méjico* holds eight subseries Boarding license files (*Expedientes de licencias de embarque*) (2493–2500), for 1786–1819. Finally, the *Audiencia de Santo Domingo* (Caribbean) has three subseries: 1) Boarding licenses: Cuba (*Licencias de embarque: Cuba*) (2199–2206), for 1790–1834; 2) Files on boarding licenses (*Expedientes sobre licencias de embarco*) (1099), for 1787–1822; and 3) Files on boarding licenses (*Expedientes sobre licencias de embarque*) (2514), for 1787–1834.

Table 4: Sources from *Audiencias*

| ***Audiencia*** | **Series** | **Reference** | **Count** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Buenos Aires | Boarding Licenses | 564–571 | 8 |
| Caracas | Boarding Licenses | 939–941 | 3 |
| Charcas | Boarding License Files | 717 | 1 |
| Chile | Boarding License Files | 446 | 1 |
| Guatemala | Records and Boarding Licenses | 880–882 | 3 |
| Quito | Files and Boarding Licenses | 578 | 1 |
| Lima | Boarding Licenses to the South Sea | 1521-1525 | 5 |
| | Boarding Licenses and Passports | 1526–1527 | 2 |
| Mexico | Boarding License Files for New Spain | 2493–2500 | 8 |
| Philippines | Boarding License Files | 931 | 1 |
| | Office Records of the Audiencia | 334–337 | 3 |
| | Office and Parties Records of the Audiencia | 339–346 | 7 |
| Santa Fe | Files on Boarding Licenses | 1787–1822 | 1 |
| Santo Domingo | Boarding Files: Cuba | 1299–2206 | 8 |
| | Files on Boarding Licenses | 1099 | 1 |
| | Files on Boarding Licenses | 2514 | 1 |

### A.2.4 *Juzgado de Arribadas* (Court of Arrivals)

The Court of Arrivals (*Juzgado de Arribadas*) contains the AGI received documents in 1822 from the Cadiz's Court of Arrivals (*Juzgado de Arribadas y Comisaría Interventora de la*

*Hacienda Pública de Cádiz*) (González García, 1994). The material relates to *Casa de la Contratación* activities during the Cadiz period.[28] The documents cover the second half of the $18^{th}$ century and first quarter of the $19^{th}$ century.

Table 5 summarized these sources. The series Boarding Licenses for Provistos, Military and Passengers (*Licencias de embarque para provistos, militares y pasajeros*) includes two subseries: Boarding Licenses for Provistos and Military (*Licencias de embarque a provistos y militares*) (515–520) and its continuation Boarding Licenses for Provistos, Military and Passengers (*Licencias de embarque a provistos, militares y pasajeros*) (439A–441), covering 1790–1810, plus an individual subseries Provistos, Military and Passengers with Boarding License (*Provistos, militares y pasajeros con licencia de embarque*) (561) from 1767–1793.[29] This collection also includes the Registry Book of Provistos (*Libro de registro de provistos*) (458), for 1749-1767.

Table 5: Sources from Court of Arrivals

| **Series** | **Reference** | **Count** |
|---|---|---|
| Boarding Licenses for Provistos and Military | 515–520 | 5 |
| Boarding Licenses for Provistos, Military and Passengers | 439A–441 | 4 |
| Provistos, Military and Passengers with Boarding Licenses | 561 | 1 |
| Registry Book of Provistos | 458 | 1 |

### A.2.5 *Ultramar* (Overseas)

The *Ultramar* (overseas) section contains documentation received by the Overseas Ministry *Ministerio de Ultramar*. The Ministry had gathered collections from various institutions responsible for governing and administering the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Even though Spain lost most of its overseas colonies during or soon after the Napoleonic Wars

[28] During the Bourbon reforms following the War of Spanish Succession, the Crown transferred the *Casa de la Contratación* to Cadiz as the principal hub of American affairs under the new dynasty (Bustos Rodríguez, 2007).

[29] Sainz Varela (2006) suggests adding *Expedientes relativos al despacho de licencias de embarco* (236-239B); *Órdenes e informes sobre las licencias de embarco* (105; 209AB y 215), and *Órdenes y comunicaciones sobre licencias de embarco* (152–153; 232–235). After reviewing these sources and in consultation with AGI's staff, we determined they have information on ships, but not on passengers.

(1803–1815), these three territories remained under Spanish rule until the Spanish-American war. The holding therefore contain mostly $19^{th}$ migration records.

The main collections are: 1) Files and boarding licenses to the island of Cuba (*Expedientes y licencias de embarque a la isla de Cuba*) (326–364), 39 subseries covering 1801 to 1835; 2) Files and boarding licenses to Puerto Rico (*Expedientes y licencias de embarque a Puerto Rico*) (494–497), covering 1797–1833; and 3) Boarding license files to America in General (*Expedientes de licencias de embarque a América en General*) (847), covering 1801–1822. Together, these collections record 4,073 individuals in these files (Cuba: 3,661, Puerto Rico: 358, and General: 54).

Table 6: Sources from *Ultramar*

| **Series** | **Reference** | **Count** |
|---|---|---|
| Boarding License Files to Puerto Rico | 326–364 | 39 |
| Boarding Licenses for Provistos and Military | 494–497 | 4 |
| Boarding Licenses for Provistos, Military and Passengers | 847 | 1 |

### A.2.6 Other sources

In addition to the sources listed above, we identified several idiosyncratic sources that contain information (name and year) on Spaniards living in the Americas during the colonial period. One example is a 1535 letter from the Bishop of Mexico King Charles I with list of absent married men (*Obispo de Méjico. Lista de casados ausentes*). Alarmed by the number of Spaniards who have taken local wives, the bishop suspected that many were already married in Spain. Because bigamy was both illegal and a sin, he sought to identify those men to punish them. Although this source is not representative —and most men here could also appear in other sources—it serves as an example of the kind of materials researchers can consult to be exhaustive in tracking migrants. Another example comes from the Crown's

regular tax rolls, compiled annually by each treasury. These lists typically separated locals from Spaniards and other foreigners.[30]

# B Upper Bound Estimates

Reliable estimates of migration to Spain to the Americas remain scarce. The best available figures are now over 50 years old. Systematic estimates for the $17^{th}$ and $18^{th}$ centuries do not exist. For the $16^{th}$ century, the literature has provided a lower bound of 56,000 migrants (Boyd-Bowman, 1976b) and an upper bound of 243,000 migrants (Mörner, 1976). These figures suggest that existing records capture only one-fifth to one-quarter of actual migrants.

The lower bound corresponds to individuals for whom we have direct documentation, including names and personal characteristics. The upper bound derives from ship counts combined with assumed passenger loads per vessel. This appendix revisits those estimates, assesses their limitations, and presents our methodology for expanding the documented migrant database.

## B.1 Mörner estimates

Mörner (1976)'s upper bound figures rest on shipping count data combined with estimated passenger and crew loads. These estimates have faced substantial methodological criticism, particularly regarding the use of Chaunu and Chaunu (1959)'s work.[31] Chaunu and Chaunu (1959) were interested in trade volume, not migration.[32] They had information on tonnage for about 50% of the ships going west and extrapolated using other sources.

[30]For example, for Puerto Rico for the years 1511–1512, at the AGI, we have Contaduría (1071) (*Diezmos correspondientes a los años que se reseñan, adeudados por los vecinos de Puerto Rico. 1511-1512.*)

[31]Friede (1952) consulted primary sources at the *Archivo General de Indias* (AGI) and documented 2,550 ships crossing the Atlantic between 1504 and 1550. He assigned 17–20 passengers per ship and 30–33 crew members, for a total of 50 persons per ship. This yields approximately 45,000 passengers for this period, compared to 12,764 households recorded in the official *Catálogo* for the same period. Friede (1952) also added, without any backing, that the early years of exploration would bring his estimate to 150,000 by 1550.

[32]They followed the work of Hamilton (1934) in trying to estimate the value of trade between Spain and the Americas. By doing so, they estimated the total tonnage of the cargo. They consulted AGI, Contratación 2898-2900, for the years 1504-1650.

Their extrapolations have been heavily criticized. Rubio Serrano (1988) provides the most detailed critique, showing that their assumption of steadily increase in ship tonnage is unfounded. Additional criticism comes from Morineau (2000), Lorenzo Sanz (1980), and others who question the reliability of the Chaunu and Chaunu (1959) extrapolations. Moreover, for voyages prior to 1584, Chaunu and Chaunu (1959) relied almost entirely on secondary sources rather than primary archival evidence (Eagle and Wheat, 2020).

Mörner (1976) combined tonnage estimates of Chaunu and Chaunu (1959) with Friede (1952)'s approach of assigning passenger and crew numbers per ship. The passengers and crew allocations for the early period were arbitrary, though not inconsistent with the fragmentary evidence available (Rodríguez Lorenzo, 2017). More importantly, Mörner assumed both numbers rose steadily over time, mirroring the much-criticized estimates of Chaunu and Chaunu (1959). His passenger assumptions were:

- 1506–1540: 15 passengers per ship
- 1541–1560: 20 passengers per ship
- 1561–1625: 30 passengers per ship
- 1626–1650: 40 passengers per ship

Given these numbers, Mörner (1976) concluded that Boyd-Bowman (1976b) had identified 20–25% of all passengers with no selection bias in the sample.[33] The central flaw in Mörner's approach is the "inflation" of the Castilian ton (*tonelada Castellana*). It weighed 40% less in 1620 than a century earlier (Rubio Serrano, 1988). Once corrected, Mörner (1976)'s figures imply that the number of passengers per ship remained constant between 1500 and 1650.[34] The deeper problem, as highlighted by Rubio Serrano (1988), Jacobs (1995), and others, is that Mörner built upon the already problematic tonnage series of Chaunu and Chaunu (1959).

[33] Mörner (1976) estimated the crew as twice the passenger count and then multiplying the ships that traveled to the Americas by that number. He finally applies a 20% loss and arrive at 78,568 sailors that potentially stayed in the Americas. Adjusting for the artificial increase in tonnage (20 passenger and 30 crew per ship), that number would be 49,992. We do not count sailors as potential migrants, and they would not appear in our sources.

[34] Rodríguez Lorenzo (2017) further shows that passengers per ton actually declined during this period.

This feature compounds these errors with arbitrary upward-trending assumptions about passenger loads. This cascade of methodological errors renders his upper-bound estimate of 243,000 migrants unreliable.

## B.2 Our estimates

One of the central functions of the *Casa de la Contratación* was to regulate maritime traffic between Spain and the Americas. Since its foundation, the institution established standardized procedures to for approving vessels and their crews through official inspections or visits (*visitas*).

The final product of this process was the ship registers (*registros de navío*), recording the main details of each approved vessel. While early registers listed only the departure date, the ship's name, the name of the captain (*maestre*), and its destination, later entries became more detailed. They added tonnage, the owner's name, the type of vessel, and sometimes the purpose of the voyage (e.g., dispatch ships, maritime mail, or slave ships).

In revisiting Mörner (1976)'s estimates, we adopt a similar approach but introduce several refinements. First, we fix the number of migrants per ship at 30 for the entire period, drawing on new evidence that tonnage did not increase systematically over time. Second, we construct a more detailed inventory of each ship, excluding those unlikely to have carried passengers—such as slave ships bound for Africa, mercury carriers (*azogue*), or mail ships (*Navío de Aviso*).

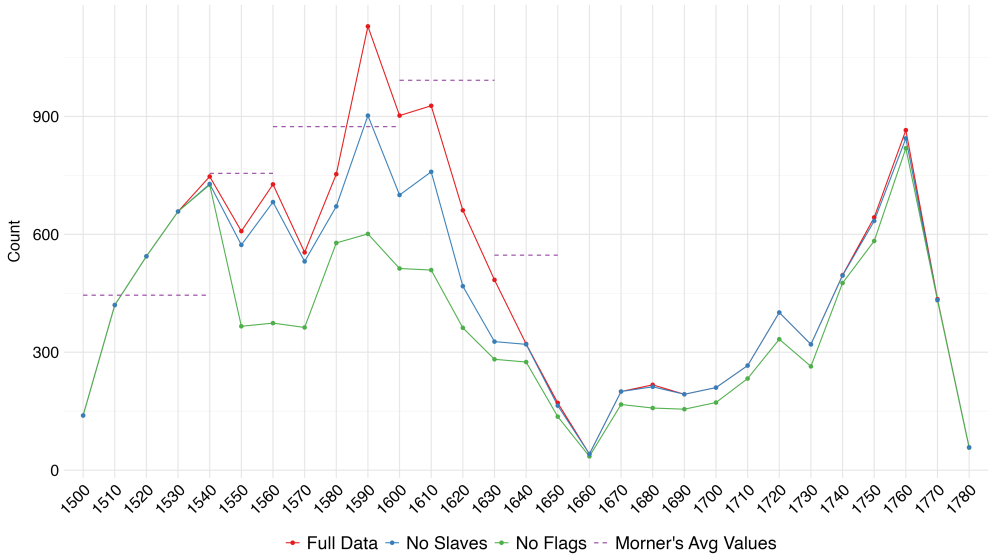
Our main sources mirror those used by Chaunu and Chaunu (1959).[35] Our total numbers of ships is virtually identical: we count more than 14,000 ships traveling from Spain to the Americas and just under 9,000 making the return trip for the period (1500-1790).

Figure 12 reports the number of ships traveling from Spain to the Americas (Panel a), and those returning from the Americas to Spain (Panel b). Out of over 14,000 ships traveling to the Americas, just under 11,000 carried migrants. During the Iberian Union–the heyday of

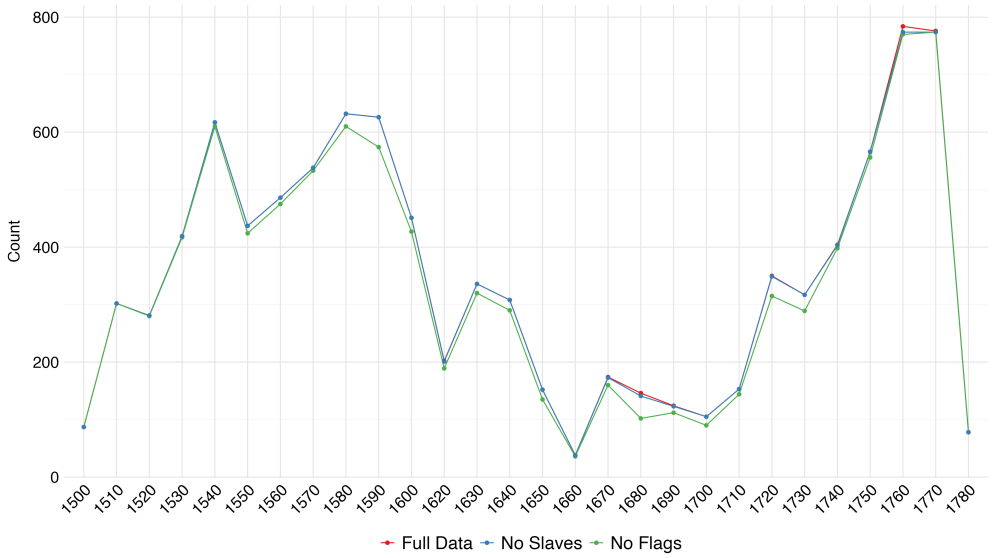
[35] In particular, we consulted the ships registries at the AGI (*registros de navíos*): Contratación 2898, 2899, 2900, 2901, 2902A, and 2902B.

Figure 12: Ship distribution by decade

(a) Outgoing




(b) Return




*Notes:* "Full Data" corresponds to the aggregate number of ships by decade without considering any of the flags we included in the dataset other than the one classifying ship as westbound. "Morner's Avg Values" corresponds to the values in column D Table 1 (*Promedio total de viajes a Occidente*) in Mörner (1976). "No Slaves" corresponds to the full data values excluding those labeled as having slaves onboard. "No Flags" corresponds to all ships except slave ships, *azogue* (mercury) ships, *navíos de aviso*, and other special conditions.

slave trade–many ships leaving Spanish ports for the Americas stopped in Africa to embark enslaved Africans. After 1640, slave ships constitute only a negligible share of the sample. Before 1540, the total number of ships matches exactly the estimated number of passenger ships (No Flags). Our counts are also very close to those in Mörner (1976). Between 1540 and 1600, however, the series diverge substantially. This discrepancy reflects the many ships flagged in our dataset. It is remarkable that for 1540–1580 there are few slave ships, and most of the difference arises from other flagged categories. Between 1600–1640 the three lines converge again, coinciding with a sharp drop in the number of ships. This is the same pattern we observe in data on migrants from completely different sources.[36]

Figure 12 shows a dramatic decline by 1660. While traditional historiography has interpreted this collapse as evidence of Spanish imperial decay, recent scholarship argues that this apparent crisis actually reflected an administrative transformation of the *Carrera de Indias* system. The key moment was Philip IV's decree of March 31, 1660, which eliminated compulsory registration for ships returning from the Americas. From that point onward, the registration of precious metals and other American goods was no longer be compulsory (Lamikiz, 2024). The immediate effect was statistical rather than economic: with the change in reporting rules, the ratio of return-to-outward tonnage fell from 0.78 in 1621-1650 to just 0.34 in the final three decades of the century.

The 1660 reforms replaced the dysfunctional ad valorem system with a fixed annual contribution of 790,000 ducats, apportioned among different constituencies. American merchants paid 470,000 ducats (with Peru alone contributing 350,000), Andalusian merchants contributed 170,000, and the Crown assumed responsibility for 150,000 (Lamikiz, 2024). This shift toward fixed contributions enabled more predictable revenue collection while reducing

[36]It is worth noticing that the totals in Mörner (1976) are substantially higher than ours for some periods, e.g., 1540–1560 and 1600–1650. We excluded certain registries in archival sources that were clearly duplicates. It appears that Chaunu and Chaunu (1959), which only recorded the counts and dates (but not other characteristics, like the captain's name) failed to remove the duplicates. This correction lowers our estimates.

Table 7: Reassignment of migrants to the Indies

| Period | Caribbean | Tierra Firme | Mexico | Peru | La Plata |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before 1510 | 1.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 1510 – 1519 | 0.82 | 0.18 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 1520 – 1524 | 0.26 | 0.15 | 0.59 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 1525 – 1579 | 0.11 | 0.27 | 0.41 | 0.20 | 0.00 |
| After 1579 | 0.10 | 0.22 | 0.37 | 0.28 | 0.04 |

*Notes:* Each column shows the share of migrants to the Indies allocated to each destination group in a particular time period.

incentives for evasion. At the same time, the fiscal regime continued to generate significant revenues through alternative mechanisms.[37]

# C Destination reassignment

At times, the records do not provide a specific destination. Rather, the migrant is identified only as having departed for the "Indias." Given that this designation is both imprecise and subject to temporal variation in its geographic scope, we reassign such entries to the principal categories of destination. The allocation is determined by the areas of the New World that had been incorporated into Spanish exploration during the relevant period, with the results presented in Table 7. For example, for all cases dated to 1510 or earlier, migrants listed as bound for the *Indias* are classified as traveling to the Caribbean. For the decade 1510–1519, 82% are reassigned to the Caribbean and 18% to *Tierra Firme*.

[37]For example, in 1692 alone, the Crown collected 2,500,000 pesos through extraordinary contributions.