

Social Research Call

Title:

Labor market inequalities in Spain: motherhood, care, and migration dynamics.

Acronym: CARELAB

Project leader: María Sánchez-Domínguez

Host organisation: Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Main purpose of the project: CARELAB investigates how care responsibilities shape the employment trajectories of migrant mothers in Spain. It focuses on the interaction between gender, migration, and institutional constraints to understand why motherhood produces unequal labor market outcomes across groups. The project aims to generate policy-relevant evidence to promote gender equity and improve the integration of immigrant families.

Design/methodology/approach: The project follows a quantitative strategy combining secondary data (LFS and LCS) with an original national survey of native and migrant mothers with children under 14. This survey includes detailed modules on gender norms, family trajectories, and employment decisions, as well as hypothetical job scenarios to capture preferences and constraints under different care conditions.

Potential results: CARELAB will uncover why motherhood leads to divergent labor outcomes between migrant and native women, exposing how care, culture, and inequality intersect. The project will identify the most invisible barriers to employment and reveal what actually works to support inclusion. Its findings will reshape how we think about gender, integration, and work.

Social relevance of the research: CARELAB addresses three major societal challenges: gender equality, the sustainability of the welfare state under demographic pressure, and the integration of international migration. By generating empirical evidence on how care responsibilities shape migrant mothers' labor trajectories, the project informs gender-sensitive policies to reduce inequality and respond to new social risks.

Originality/value of the project: CARELAB is the first study in Spain to systematically compare native and immigrant mothers under a unified framework of care constraints. Its novel approach disentangles internal (gender norms) and external (institutional) barriers to employment, combining academic rigor with real-world impact. Results aim to be both innovative and transformative