

The Importance of Foreigners' Childbearing in South Europe

1. Introduction

Migration directly affects the size and the composition of a population, especially when the immigrant populations have different levels and patterns of fertility, nuptiality and mortality. After 1990, migration became the main engine of population growth in many European countries, among others, in Greece, Spain and Italy. At the same time, in these countries, a common belief is that foreigner women have higher fertility than natives, which can weigh on welfare benefits for families and, in long term, this fact may lead to a situation in which the foreigner population will be larger than the native one.

This paper examines the influence of foreigners on childbearing trends for the period 2007-2017, in Greece, Italy, and Spain. The contribution of foreigners to fertility is analyzed in the basis of data of births by age and nationality for 2007-2017 (fertility rates, TFR, and mean age at birth for native and foreign citizens). The results are indicative of a diversity between the three countries and reveal that foreigner women typically retain higher levels of period fertility than the native ones, but the gap typically diminishes over time (the notion of exceptional high foreigner fertility, present in the discourses in South Europe, is not supported by the analysis), since the foreigner's fertility in these countries falls sharper than that of nationals.

In fact,

- Foreigner's fertility has a large contribution to births.
- A moderate impact on fertility rates (the percentages of the contribution of foreigners to the total TFR in these three South European countries are between +0.12 and +0.06 children/woman).
- The fall in foreigner's fertility was steepest than that of the national populations, as they were stronger affected by the economic crisis.

2. Fertility in South European Countries (2007-2017)

With a TFR less than 1,5 children per woman after 2006, Spain, Italy and Greece, have the lowest fertility among the European Union countries; the EU average being higher than 1,6 during the last decade. During the same period in these countries, the number of births decreases continuously. (Figures 1-3)

Fertility in South-European countries

Figure 1. TFR, 2007-2017 (children/women)

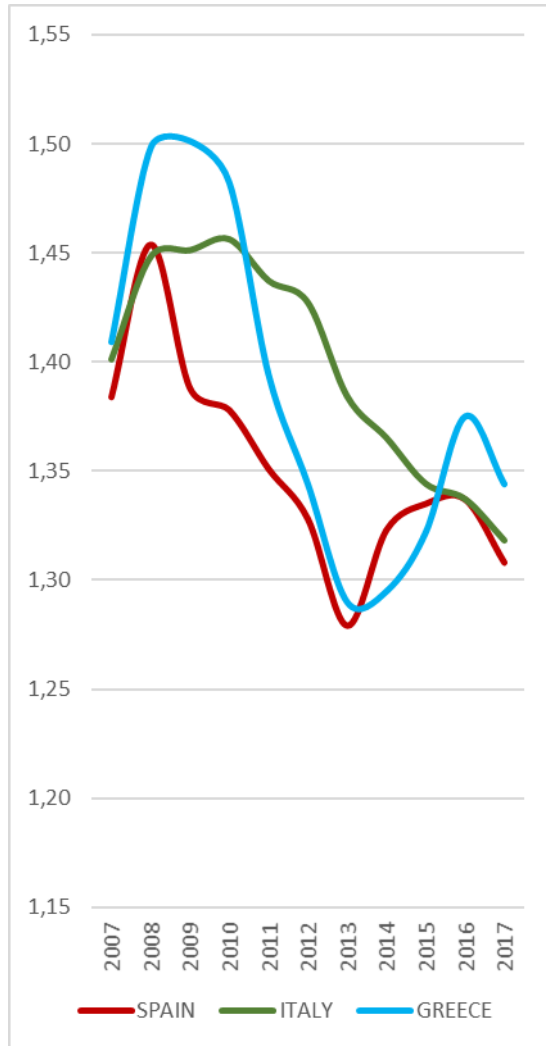


Figure 2. TFR, 2007-2017 (variation, base 2007=100)

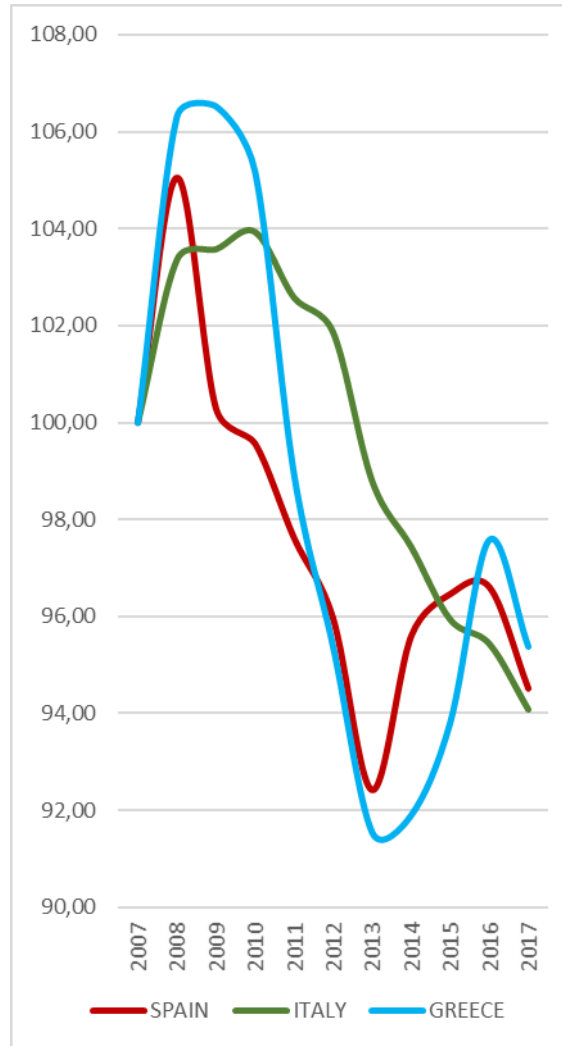
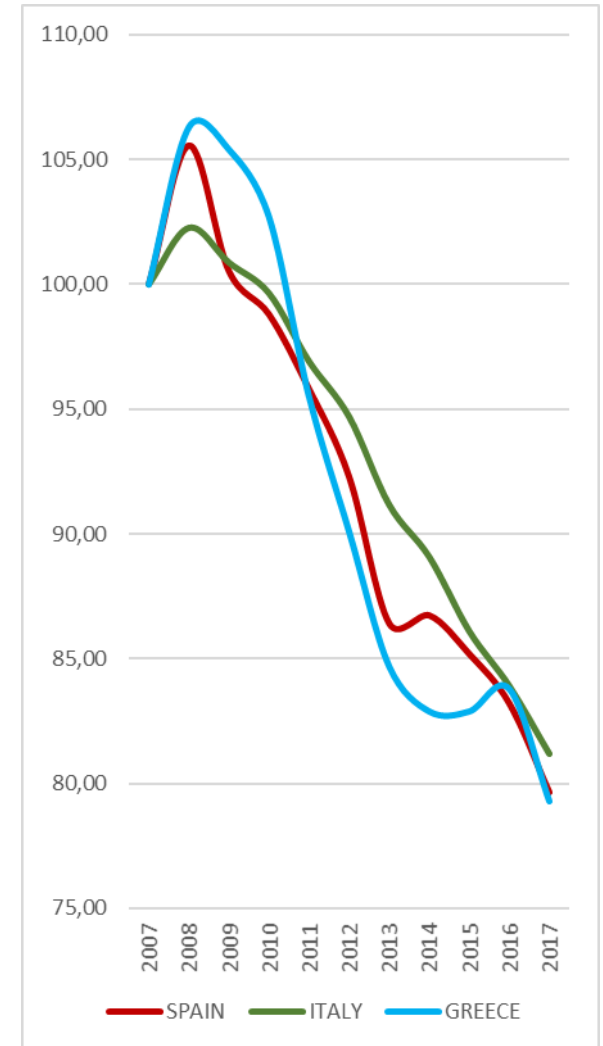


Figure 3. All births, 2007-2017 (variation, base 1997=100)



3. The contribution of foreigners in fertility

Data and definitions

- This study uses EUROSTAT (2019) data on births by age of mother (2007-2017) and female population by age for the years 2007-2018 for Spain, and IISTAT and ELSTAT data for Italy and Greece, differentiated by citizenship.
- This data suffers of some limitations as:
 - i) Part of initially foreign women obtained citizenship after a period of staying,
 - ii) The three under consideration countries did not apply the same criteria to conferring citizenship to their foreigner's residents.

For these reasons, citizenship-based fertility statistics may provide biased estimates of migrant fertility. Thus, fertility analyses based in the criterion of citizenship must be interpreted with caution (as a gross approximation of "migrant fertility").

4. Foreigner's fertility: A large contribution to births

The proportion of births of women of foreign citizenship provides a basic indication of the importance of foreigners for childbearing. This measure is a function of past immigration levels, the age composition of immigrants, and their fertility rates.

Births of foreign women contribute considerably to the recorded total number of births in the three countries since, roughly 18% of all births are attributed to foreign women during the last decade in the three south European countries, while the female foreign population in reproductive ages are only roughly 13% of the total female populations in reproductive ages in these countries (Table 1 & Figure 4).

Table 1. Repartition of births and women at reproductive ages (15-49 years) by citizenship (country /foreigner citizens) in South European countries, 2007-2017

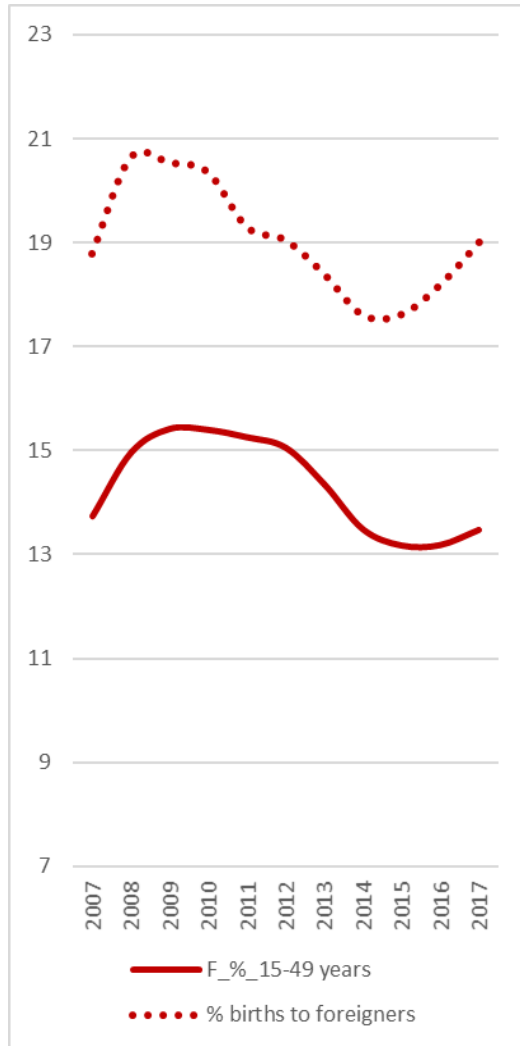
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
SPAIN											
1. All (millions)	11492,0	11593,6	11582,4	115012,1	11406,6	11278,0	11088,7	10892,2	10736,1	10617,0	10528,3
2. Nationals %	86,26	85,06	84,59	84,61	84,75	84,95	86,65	86,51	86,82	86,81	86,52
3. Foreigners, %	13,74	14,96	15,41	15,39	15,25	15,05	14,35	13,49	13,18	13,19	13,48
4. Births from foreigners, %	18,79	20,65	20,55	20,36	19,30	19,05	18,39	17,60	17,62	18,20	19,02
5. D (4) - (5)	5,05	5,69	5,14	4,97	4,05	4,00	4,90	4,11	4,44	5,01	5,54
ITALY											
1. All (millions)	13950,0	14009,8	13722,0	13661,9	13576,8	13482,2	13496,1	13458,6	13262,9	13052,6	12841,9
2. Nationals %	92,10	90,92	90,88	90,23	89,75	89,27	88,39	87,70	87,51	87,47	87,41
3. Foreigners, %	7,90	9,08	9,12	9,77	10,25	10,73	11,61	12,30	12,49	12,53	12,59
4. Births from foreigners, %	14,62	15,92	17,11	17,67	18,38	19,03	19,22	19,37	19,41	19,70	20,03
5. D (4) - (5)	6,72	6,84	7,99	7,90	8,13	8,30	7,61	7,07	6,92	7,17	7,44
GREECE											
1. All (millions)			2649,0	2629,0	2600,8	2563,2	2522,5	2484,0	2445,1	2407,0	2370,1
2. Nationals %			88,41	88,48	88,59	88,76	88,99	89,26	89,58	89,85	90,13
3. Foreigners, %			11,59	11,52	11,41	11,24	11,01	10,74	10,42	10,15	9,87
4. Births from foreigners, %	18,13	18,41	18,84	18,66	17,68	15,34	13,91	13,14	12,91	13,59	13,92
5. D (4) - (5)			7,25	7,14	6,27	4,10	2,90	2,40	2,49	3,44	4,05

Source: EUROSTAT data base (2019) , ISTAT and Greek Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), own computations

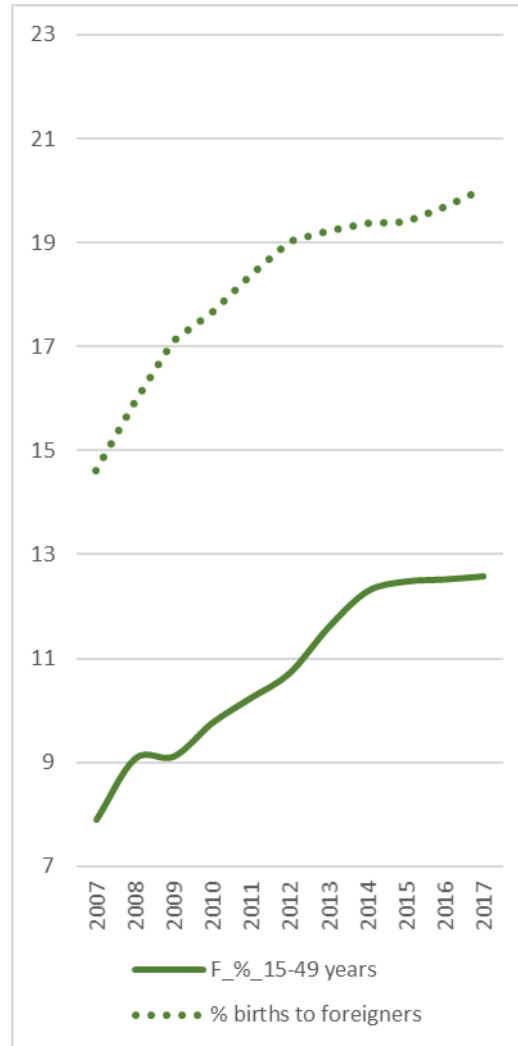
Fertility in South-European countries by citizenship

Figure 4. % of Foreigners in reproductive ages and % births of foreigners, 2009-2017

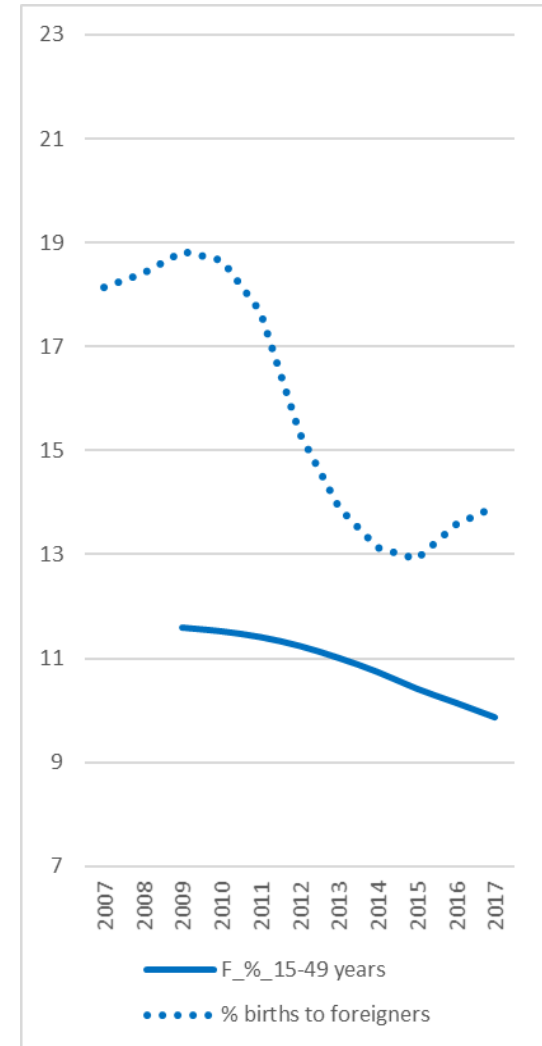
4a. Spain



4b. Italy



4c. Greece



5. A limited impact of foreigners on Total Fertility Rates

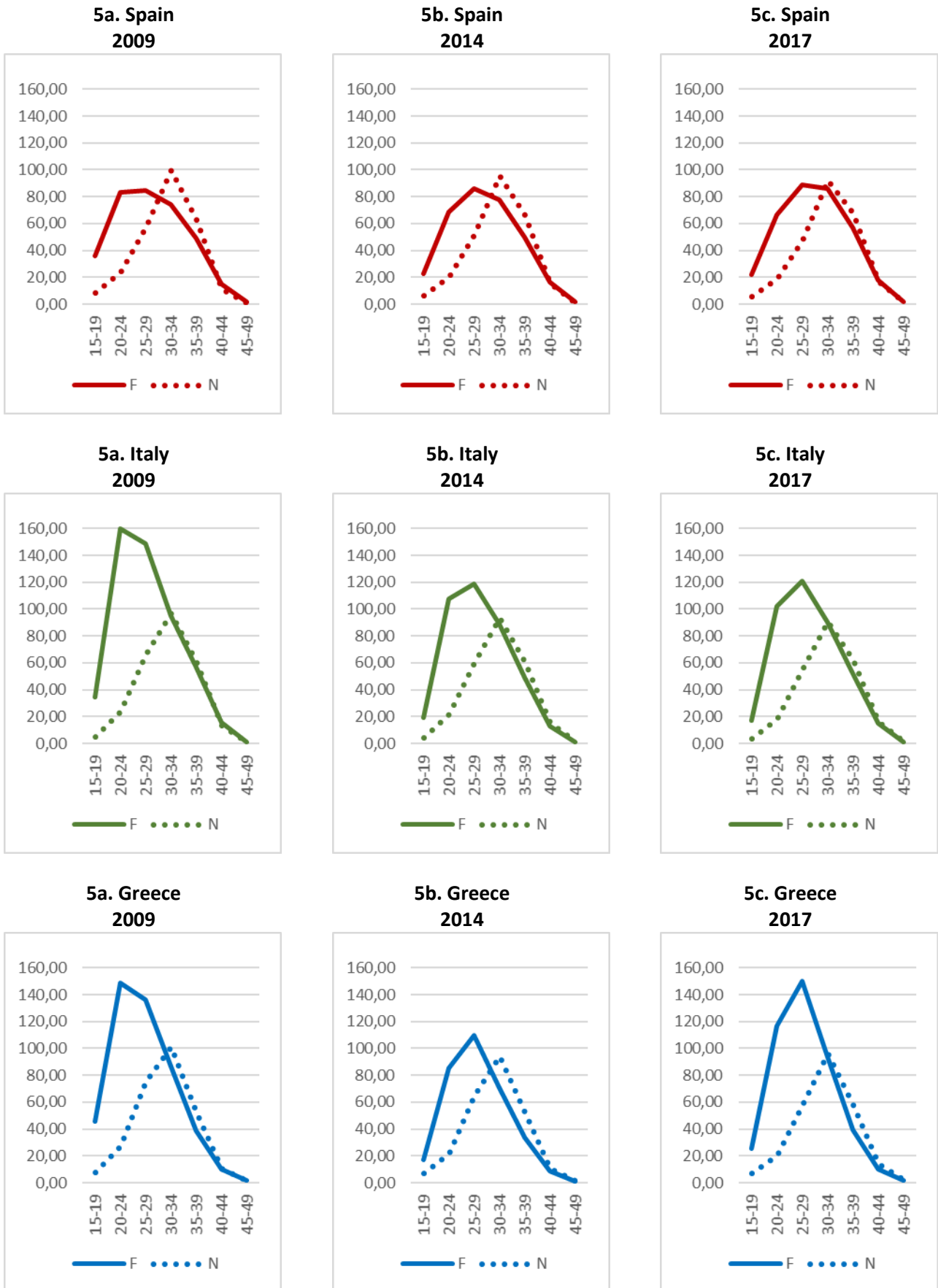
The contribution of foreigners to the total TFR is between +0,12 (max, 2009-2012 in Italy and Greece/) and +0,03 child/woman (min, 2014 in Greece).

The impact of foreigners to total fertility during the last decade is moderate (or even limited in Spain). In addition, foreigner's fertility remains distinct from the fertility of nationals, since they have:

- 1) A younger age pattern at birth than their counterparts. (Figures 5 & 6)
- 2) Higher TFR (Table 2 & Figure 7)
- 3) Moderate/limited impact in TFR (Table 2 & Figure 8)

Fertility in South-European countries by citizenship

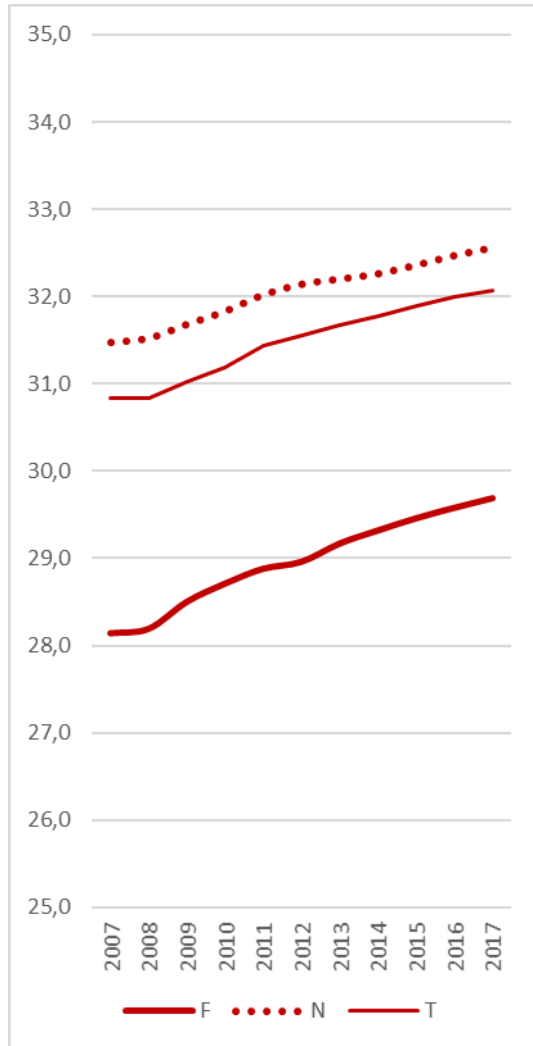
Figure 5. Fertility rates (o/oo) among foreigners and national women (2009, 2014, 2017)



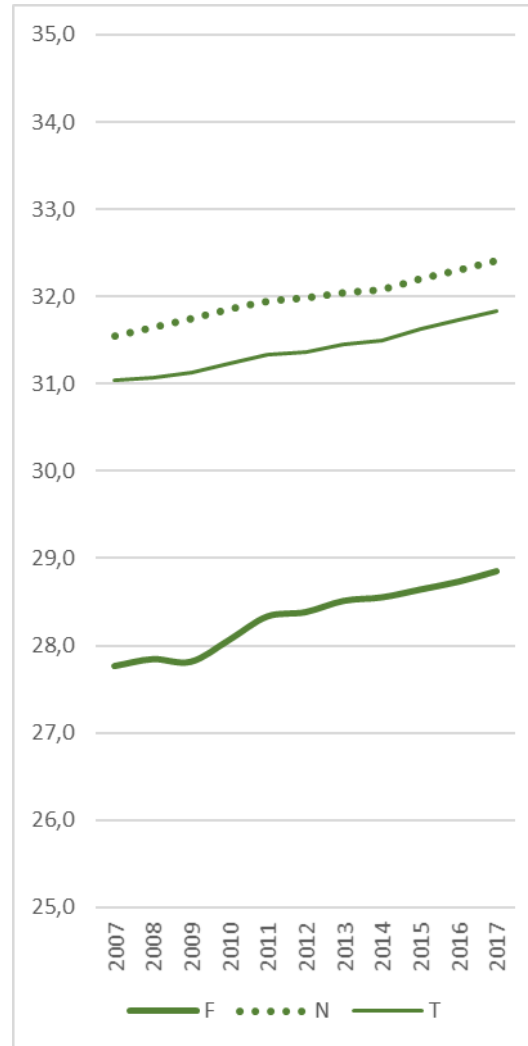
Fertility in South-European countries by citizenship

Figure 6. Mean age at childbearing (Total/T, country/N & foreigner citizens/F), 2009-2017

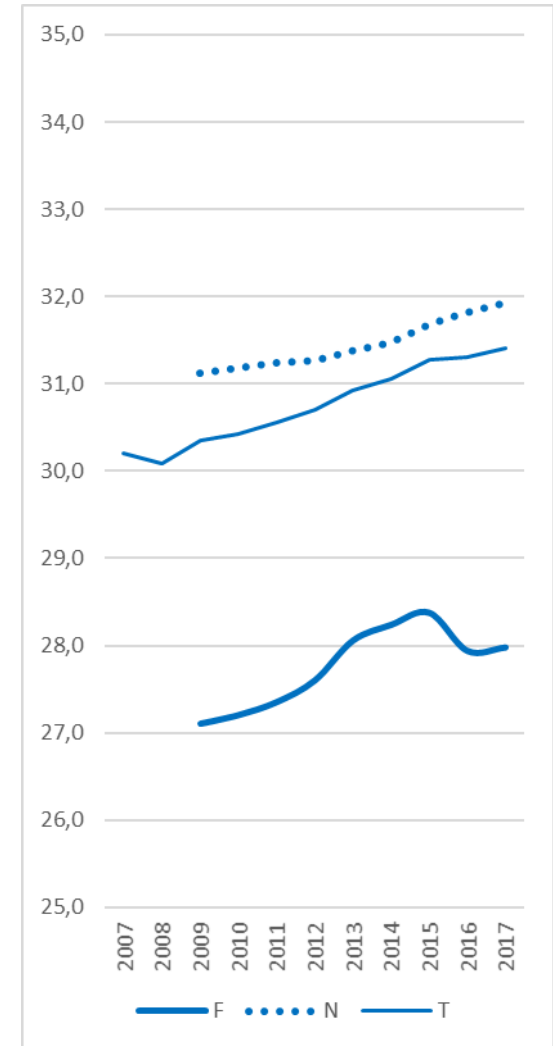
6a. Spain



6b. Italy



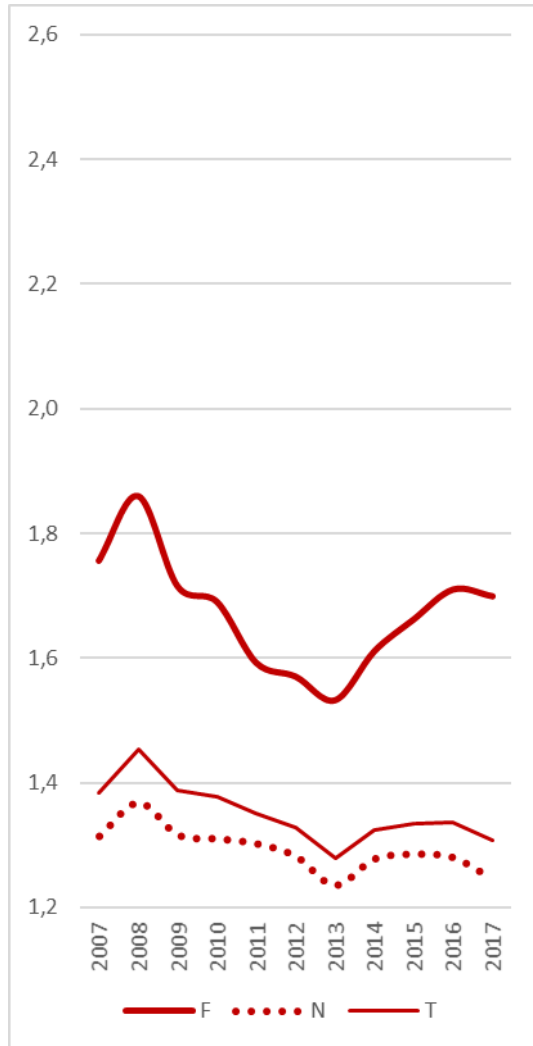
6c. Greece



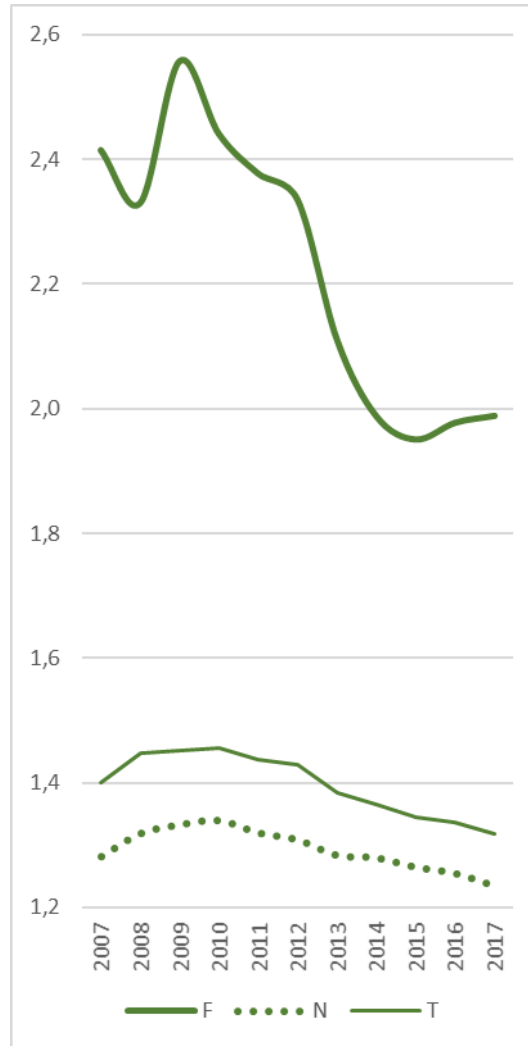
Fertility in South-European countries by citizenship.

Figure 7. TFR (Total/T, country/N & foreigner citizens/F), 2009-2017

7a. Spain



7b. Italy



7c. Greece

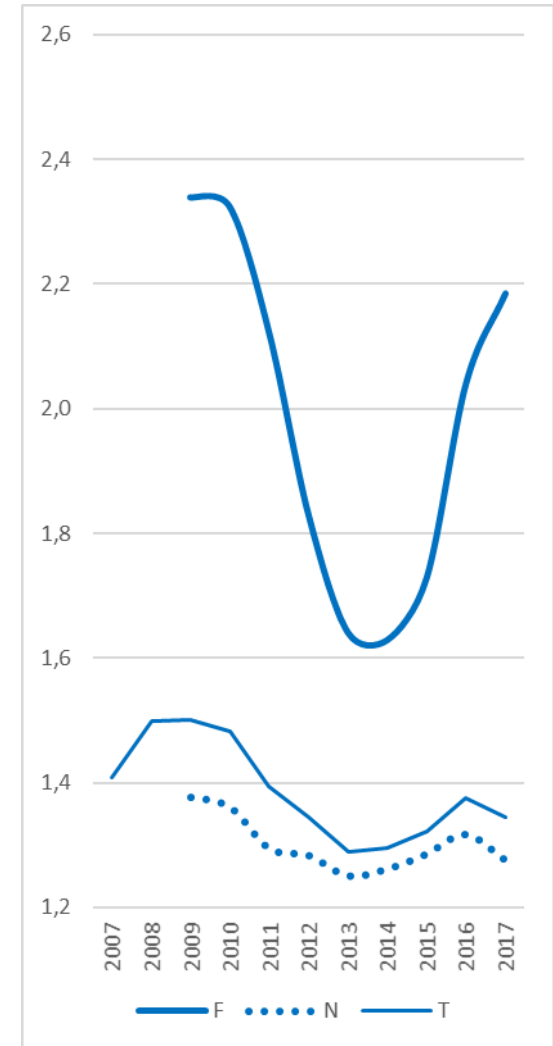
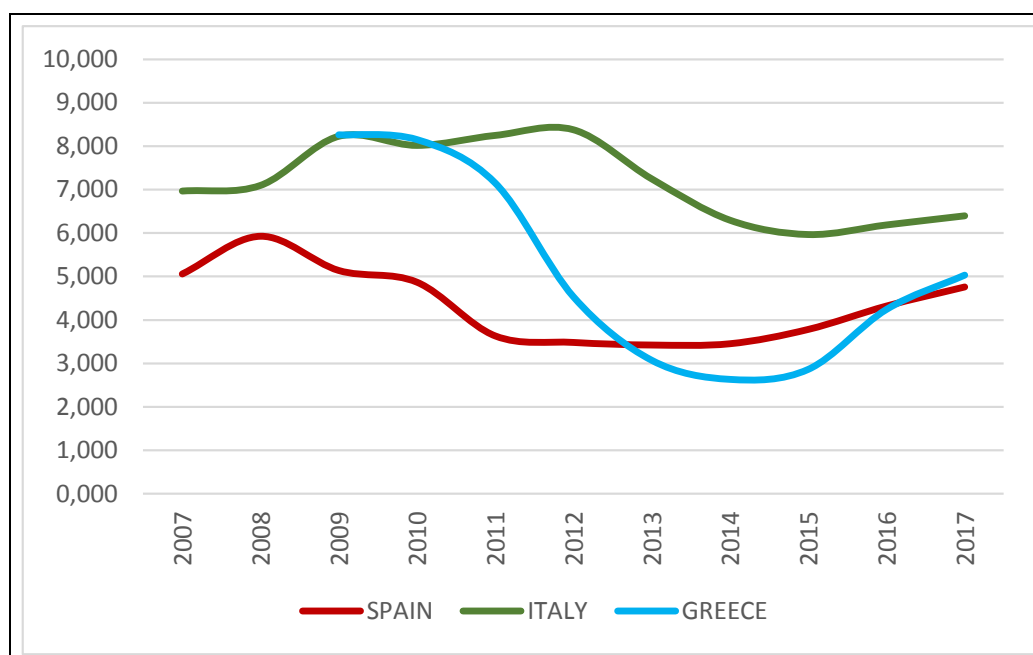


Table 2. TFR by citizenship (country /foreigner citizens) in South European countries and their impact on fertility (2007-2017)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
SPAIN											
TFR-F	1,756	1,860	1,715	1,690	1,592	1,570	1,532	1,611	1,662	1,710	1,699
TFR-N	1,314	1,368	1,316	1,310	1,302	1,282	1,235	1,277	1,285	1,280	1,246
TFR-T	1,384	1,454	1,388	1,378	1,351	1,328	1,279	1,323	1,335	1,337	1,308
Difference TFR F-N	0,442	0,492	0,399	0,380	0,290	0,298	0,297	0,344	0,378	0,430	0,453
Difference TFR T-N	0,070	0,086	0,071	0,067	0,049	0,046	0,044	0,046	0,050	0,058	0,062
Relative impact (%) (TFR/ T - TFR N) /TFR T*100	5,06	5,93	5,14	4,87	3,63	3,48	3,42	3,45	3,78	4,32	4,76
ITALY											
TFR-F	2,415	2,330	2,558	2,441	2,377	2,335	2,110	1,987	1,950	1,977	1,988
TFR-N	1,281	1,318	1,332	1,339	1,319	1,308	1,283	1,279	1,264	1,254	1,234
TFR-T	1,401	1,448	1,451	1,456	1,437	1,428	1,384	1,365	1,344	1,337	1,318
Difference TFR F-N	1,134	1,012	1,226	1,101	1,058	1,027	0,827	0,708	0,686	0,723	0,755
Difference TFR T-N	0,096	0,100	0,119	0,117	0,119	0,120	0,100	0,086	0,080	0,083	0,084
Relative impact (%) (TFR/ T - TFR N) /TFR T*100	6,97	7,10	8,23	8,02	8,25	8,38	7,25	6,30	5,97	6,19	6,40
GREECE											
TFR-F			2,340	2,325	2,123	1,831	1,642	1,630	1,730	2,042	2,186
TFR-N			1,377	1,361	1,294	1,283	1,250	1,261	1,285	1,317	1,276
TFR-T	1,41	1,5	1,501	1,482	1,394	1,344	1,290	1,295	1,322	1,375	1,344
Difference TFR F-N			0,963	0,964	0,829	0,548	0,392	0,369	0,445	0,725	0,910
Difference TFR T-N			0,124	0,121	0,100	0,061	0,040	0,034	0,037	0,058	0,068
Relative impact (%) (TFR/ T - TFR N) /TFR T*100			8,26	8,15	7,15	4,53	3,07	2,63	2,86	4,24	5,03

Source: EUROSTAT data base (2019), ISTAT & ELSTAT, own computations

Figure 8. Foreigner's fertility, impact on TFR (TFR- T – TFR- N)/TFR- T (%)



6. Conclusions

Even if foreigners in Spain, as in most European countries have reached a low period TFR below 1.85, this is not the case of Greece and Italy, as in these two countries during the last decade foreigners have on average a higher fertility (1,95 - 2,6 in Italy, 1,65 - 2,35 in Greece). Therefore, the notion of "exceptionally high" foreigners fertility, present in some popular discourses, is not supported by the data and the discourses about "fecund foreigners" in these three countries also is based on selected and exaggerated data. At the same time, it appears that the small variations in period fertility rates during the last decade across South-Europe are not driven by fertility trends among foreigners women. Nevertheless, even if the gap in period TFR between foreigners and nationals women tend to diminish, as in the majority of European countries, the existing differences, especially in Greece and Italy, imply that foreign women still have a moderate positive net effect on period TFRs in these countries, that is below 0.1 child/woman at the end of the examined period.

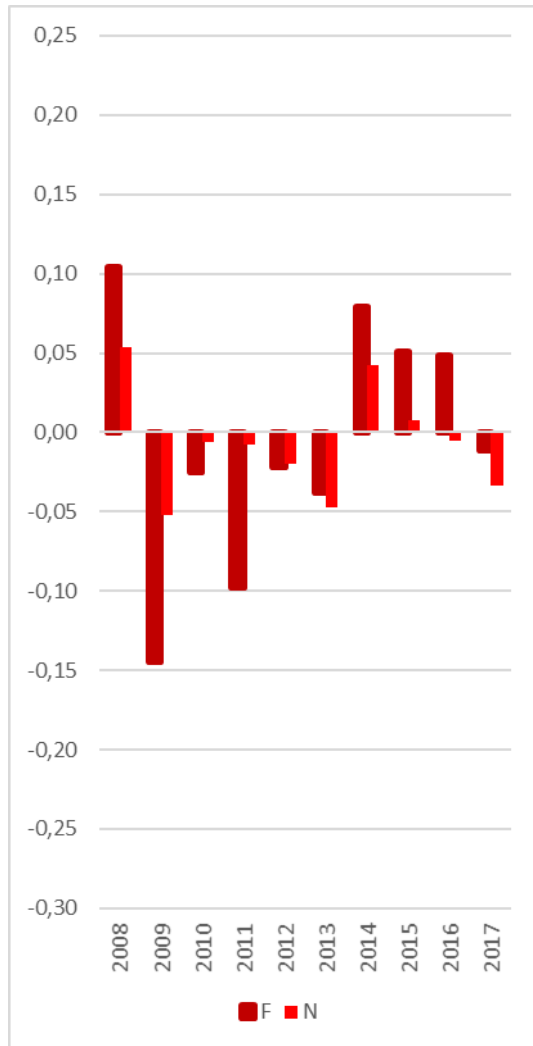
In addition, foreigners often holding precarious jobs or working in informal economy tend to be economically more disadvantaged and vulnerable. This economic uncertainty suggests that their fertility behavior might have reacted more strongly to the economic recession. In such a case, their fertility would have to be reduced faster than that of nationals, and the analysis above, allow investigating this effect. In the three South European countries fertility rates tended to fall slowly among both foreigners and nationals, between 2009 and 2015, but TFR of foreigners in Italy and Greece tended to decrease faster than TFR of nationals (Figures 9 & 10).

References

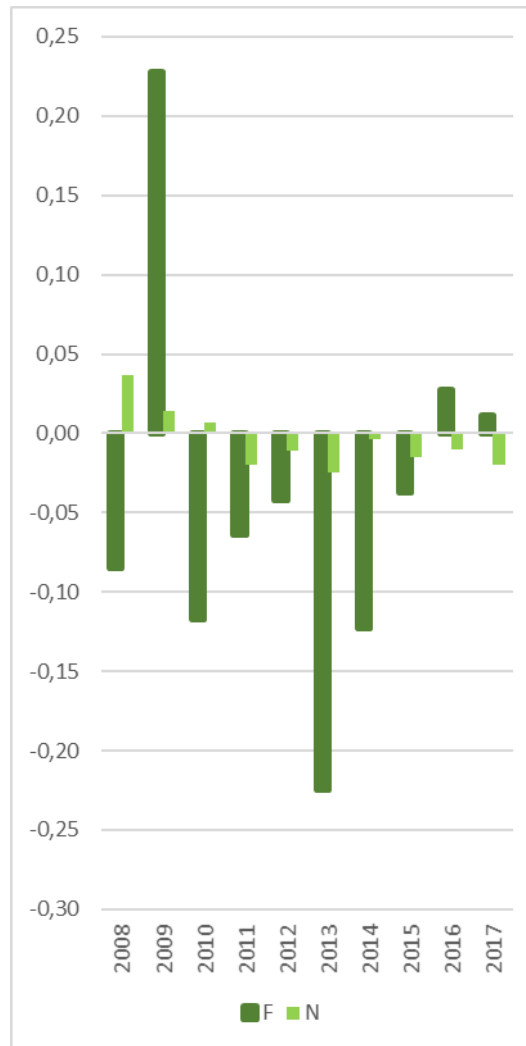
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Figure 9. Absolute changes in period TFR by citizenship (country/N & foreigner citizens/F)

9a. Spain



9b. Italy



9c. Greece

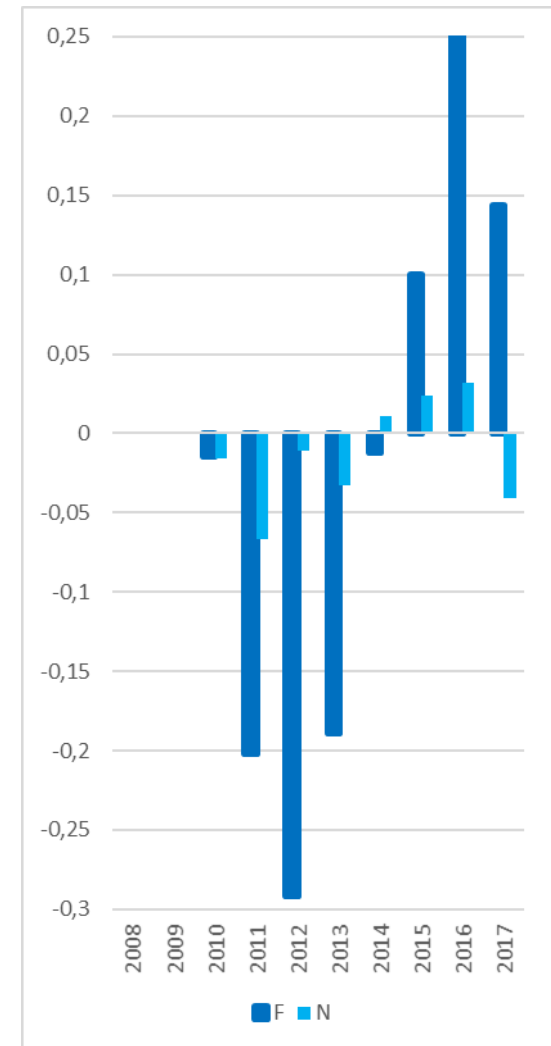
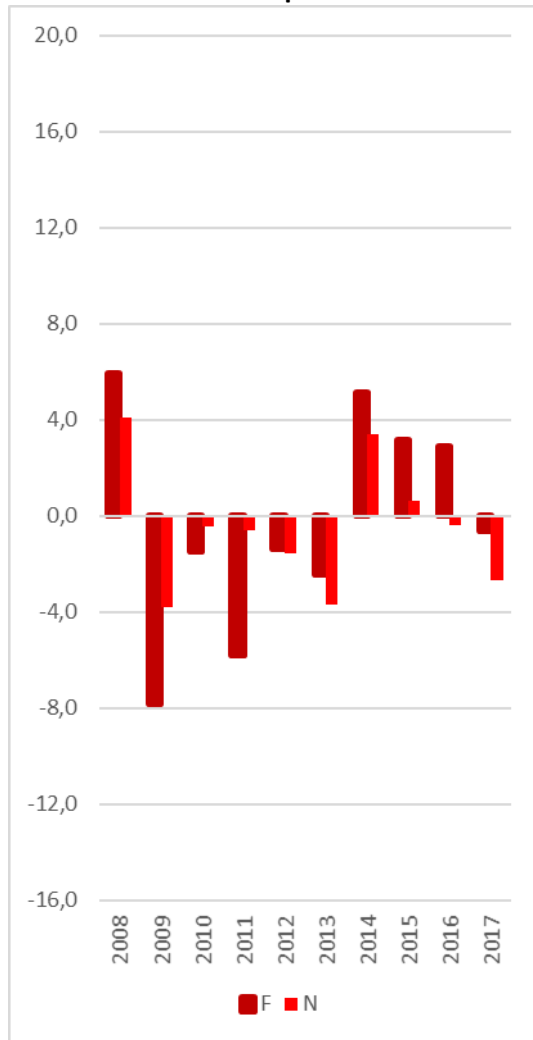
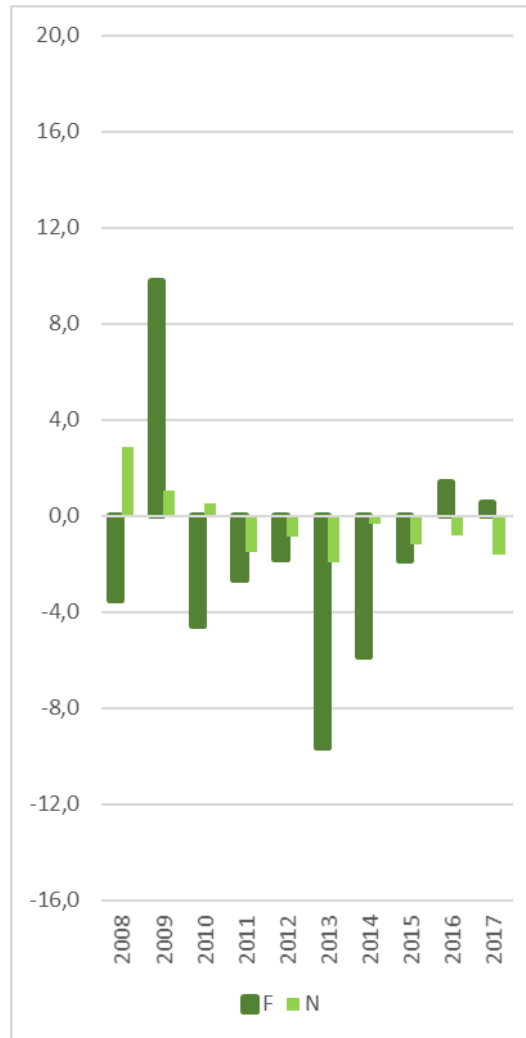


Figure 10. Relative changes in period TFR (in %) by citizenship (country/N & foreigner citizens/F)
2008-2017

10a. Spain



10b. Italy



10c. Greece

