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Influence of the agricultural immigration on the population of a municipality of Almeria (Andalusia, Spain)

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RESUMO

Esta comunicação debruça-se sobre a ocorrência de uma grande imigração agrícola em El Ejido (Espanha) e as principais consequências por ela originadas. São as seguintes:

1 — Um grande crescimento da população entre 1950 e 1981.

2 — Um aumento do crescimento natural, cujas taxas indicam um tamanho final da população claramente superior ao tamanho calculado a partir do padrão de crescimento da população de Almeria.

3 — Esta imigração representa 50% da população total e tem principalmente origem na região de Aljubarrota.

4 — Não se observam diferenças entre os sexos nesta imigração, mas são observáveis diferenças em relação à idade.

Palavras-chave: População; Imigração; Crescimento absoluto e natural; Pirâmide populacional; Composição sexual e de origem; Razão idade-filho.

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the arrival of a great agricultural immigration in El Ejido (Spain) and its main consequences. These are the following:

1 — A great increase in the population size from 1950 to 1981.

2 — An increase in the natural growth, whose rates give a final population size clearly superior to the size estimated by means of the growth patron of Almeria population.

3 — This immigration represents the 50% of the total population, and its principal origin is the Alpujarra region.

4 — This immigration does not show sexual differences, but it shows differences in relation to the age.

Key-words: Population; Immigration; Absolute and natural growth; Population pyramid; Sex and origin composition; Age-child ratio.

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INTRODUCTION

In the occidental litoral of the province of Almeria (Andalusia, Spain), there is a great agricultural very well limited geographically. It spreads itself from the south of Gador ridge to the Mediterranean sea, and has experienced an important economic development in the last decades. This is the region called Campo de Dalias, also known as Poniente de Almeria. This economic development, based on agrarian modernization, has brought about an intense flood of immigrants. As a consequence of the immigration, a great increase in the population size has taken place, an increase which we dare call a demographic explosion. It is probably El Ejido, among all the towns of which the region is made out, the one that best represents this demographic phenomenon. Actually, El Ejido has become the most populous nucleus in the province, in a second place after its capital, and has stopped being the little village it previously was.

The real importance about this demographic event is not so much what has been named a «demographic explosion», as it is the usual occurrence of an intense migratory movement between two equally agricultural regions: on the one hand, La Alpujarra, which is the migration origin, on the other hand, El Campo de Dalias, the place to which the migrants go. La Alpujarra region, which has been included in the comparative study in the present paper, is an economically depressed area. It comprises part of Almeria and part of Granada, both of them Andalusian provinces, and is contiguous to Campo de Dalias (Fig. 1).

The evolutive study of the population growth of El Ejido municipality has been carried out from 1940 to 1981, being this latter the year in which the last census was taken. We have gone back to some years before the demographic explosion took place, in order to determine precisely the right moment in which the migratory phenomenon started. On Table 1 and Fig. 2, it can be seen clearly the Absolute and Natural Growth of the population size, as well as its hypothetical evolution, estimated according to the provincial growth model. As regards the absolute or real growth, we can observe a brief initial period of stability around 11.000 inhabitants, but in a very short time population size increases very rapidly, to reach a number of 30.000 inhabitants in 1981. The municipality has increased its population in 200% in less than 40 years, and it has reached a density of population near to 100 inhabitants per Km², a density which is clearly superior to the provincial and national ones.

The natural growth shows that, considering the initial population size and exclusively amount of comings in of individuals through birth and goings out through death, the final population size would only be that of 25.000 inhabitants, 8.000 less than those ones really registered. It does not mean at all that the present size of the municipality without immigration should be of 25.000 inhabitants. As the migratory movement has been carried out by young reproductive people mainly, with the immigration the number of births increases and, therefore, the natural growth also increases. To estimate the

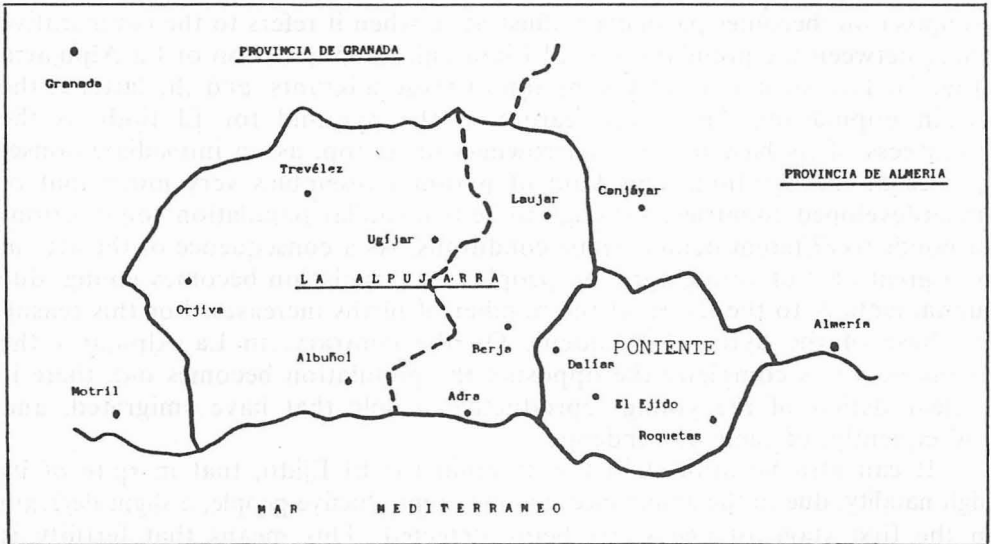
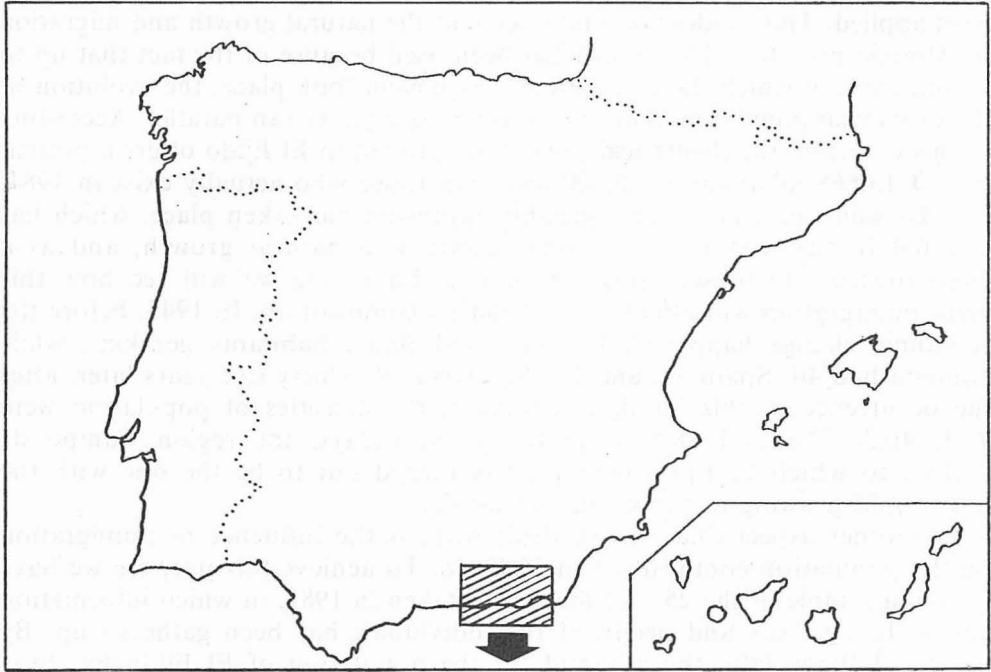


Fig. 1 — Geographical situation of the region Campo de Dalias

population size that this municipality would have in case of not having experienced such a demographic phenomenon, the provincial growth model has been applied. This model takes into account the natural growth and migration in Almeria province. This model has been used because of the fact that up to the moment in which the demographic explosion took place, the evolution of the provincial population and that of the municipality ran parallel. According to this criterion, the theoretical population growth in El Ejido offers a present size of 13.668 inhabitants, 20.000 less than those who actually exist in 1981.

To sum up, a great demographic explosion has taken place, which has affected in the first place the real growth and natural growth, and as a consequence, the present population size. Later on we will see how this great immigration will affect the population composition. In 1945, before the economic change happened, El Ejido had 30.5 inhabitants per km², while Almeria had 40, Spain 55, and La Alpujarra 39. Thirty five years later, after the occurrence of this immigration event, the densities of population were 91.1, 46.2, 74.8 and 18.5, respectively. Nowadays, the region Campo de Dalías, to which El Ejido belongs, has turned out to be the one with the most rapid growing in the whole Andalusia.

Another aspect that will be dealt with, is the influence of immigration on the population composition in El Ejido. To achieve this purpose we have chosen a sample of the 25% of the census taken in 1981, in which information about the age, sex and origin of the individuals has been gathered up. By means of these data, the pyramid for the population of El Ejido has been constructed. It establishes how many individuals are natives and how many are foreigners, in every group of age and sex.

The analysis of the population distribution according to age and sex composition, becomes particularly illustrative when it refers to the comparative study between the population of El Ejido and the population of La Alpujarra (Fig. 3). The former is the destination of these migrants, and the latter is the origin population. The main feature of the pyramid for El Ejido is the broadness of its base and the narrowness of its top, as an immediate consequence of immigration. This kind of pyramid resembles very much that of underdeveloped countries, although these two similar population compositions responds to different demographic conditions. As a consequence of the arrival of a great deal of young agrarian people, the population becomes young, due fundamentally to the fact that the number of births increases. For this reason the base of the pyramid broadens. On the contrary, in La Alpujarra the phenomenon is completely the opposite: the population becomes old, there is a clear deficit of the young reproductive people that have emigrated, and consequently, of their descendents.

It can also be noticed in the pyramid for El Ejido, that in spite of its high natality, due to the abundance of young reproductive people, a slight decrease in the first stage of age starts being detected. This means that fertility is decreasing, even though it is still very elevated. Presently the average fertility in El Ejido is of 2.8 births per woman, clearly over the national rate which is of 1.7.

TABLE 1. *Absolute, Natural and Estimated Growth in El Ejido Population*

YEAR	ABSOLUTE	NATURAL	ESTIMATED
1940	11.683	11.683	11.683
1945	10.936	12.436	11.324
1950	11.386	13.387	11.607
1955	12.337	14.474	11.447
1960	14.409	15.628	11.707
1965	17.351	17.264	11.919
1970	21.230	19.139	12.170
1975	25.589	21.491	12.552
1981	32.929	25.092	13.668

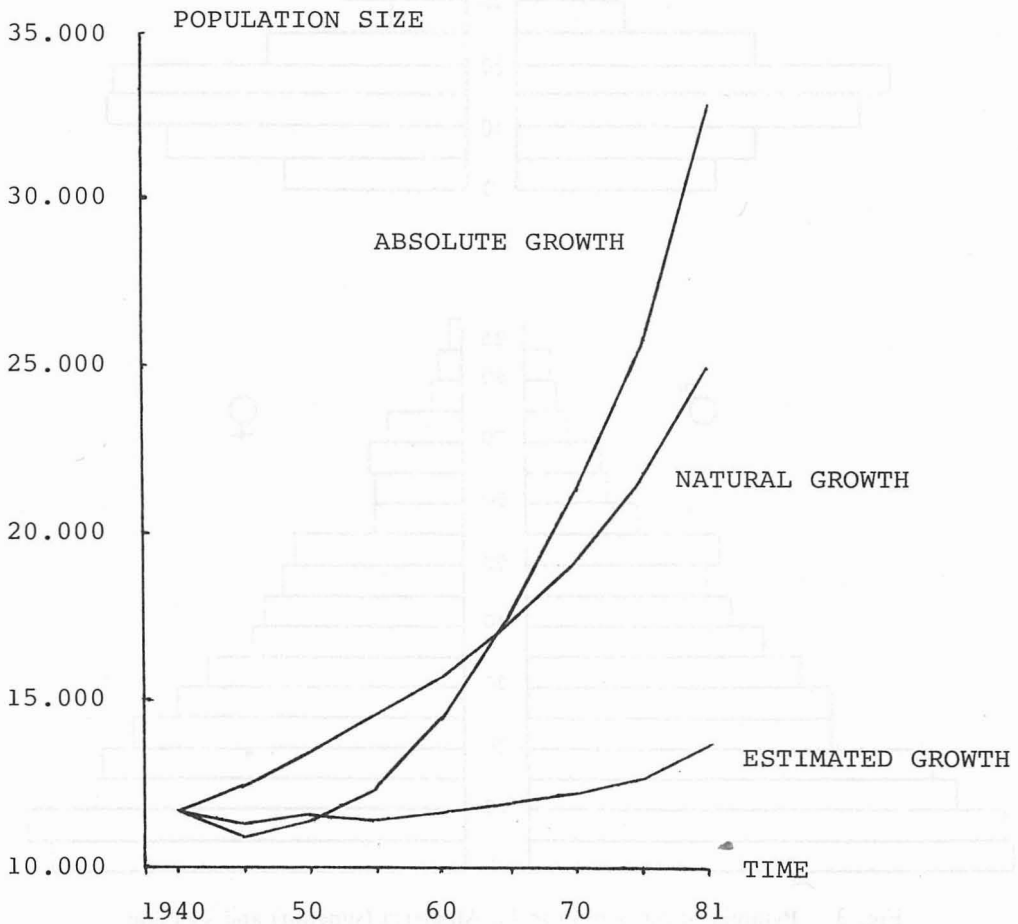


Fig. 2 — Representation of the Absolute, Natural and estimated Growth in El Ejido Population

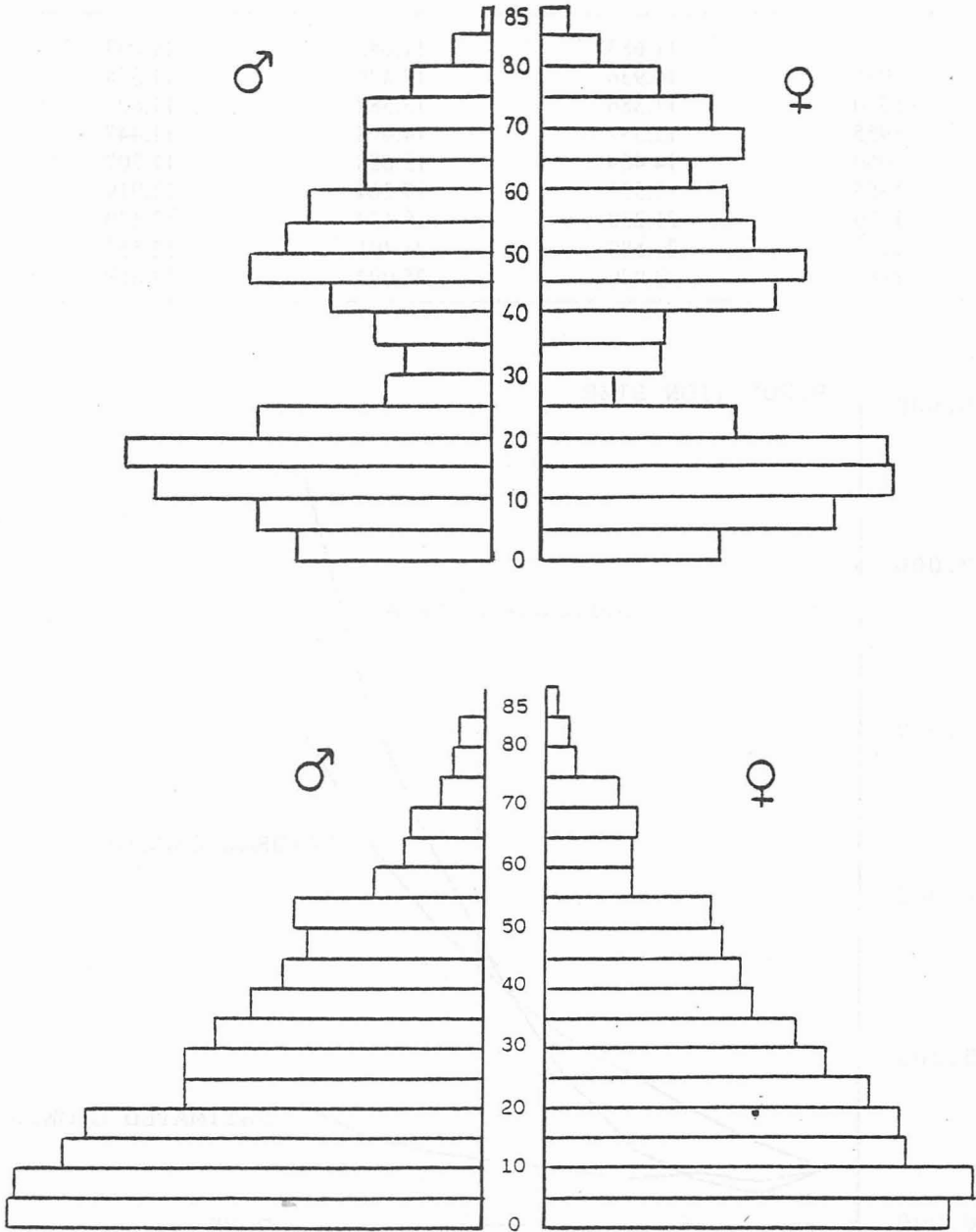


Fig. 3 — Pyramid of population in La Alpujarra (superior) and El Ejido

It is especially significant the study of Age-Composition, because as it has been already pointed out, this composition depends very much on the migratory movement. On Table 2 and Fig. 4, the relative frequency of individuals in every of the three categories in which they are usually distributed appears: infantile population, up to 15 years of age; adult population, from 15 to 64 years of age; and aged population, from 65 years of age onwards. Besides, the Age-Child ratio has been calculated for El Ejido population, as well as for the national, provincial and La Alpujarra populations, with the purpose to offer a greater clarity in the description of the age composition. The study of the age composition makes clear one of the main demographic features of El Ejido population: it is very young. The low age-child ratio is due to the small proportion of aged people, as well as to the great quantity of children. Such an age composition is other direct consequence of immigration, as is corroborated by the comparative study between the four populations. While El Ejido age-child ratio is half the ratio of either Almeria or Spain, the age-child ratio in La Alpujarra is the double of these both provincial and national ratios, and four times El Ejido ratio.

With regard to Sex-Composition, El Ejido population shows an ordinary distribution, that is, there is a great masculine proportion which overpasses the feminine one in the first age groups. This distribution turns over little by little and, finally, in the last age groups, the feminine proportion comes to be superior to the masculine one. In any case, what is really worth mentioning is the so high initial masculine proportion (118 male children for every 100 female children, in the 0-4 years old group), and also the advanced age at which the sexual proportions balance themselves (around 60 years of age). We have to take into account the fact that, while in the most populations there are more women than men, in El Ejido the opposite happens: there are 107 men for every 100 women. The existence of this elevated masculine proportion is not due to a young men's selective immigration, as it was previously thought. Statistically, significant differences have not been found as a sexual level.

One last aspect to comment about El Ejido population is its Origin Composition. In the present paper, four different places of origin have been established for the study of the population: the native origin, Alpujarra origin, the provincial origin, and any other origin. On Fig.5 the population pyramid has been represented, making clear how many inhabitants are natives and how many are foreigners in every age group. It can be seen that the immigrants proportion in the adult group is greater than in the infantile and aged groups. It is evident that an elevated number of native children are immigrant parent's descendents. For this reason, the analysis of the population composition in El Ejido, in relation to the individuals' origin, changes very much from some age groups to another ones. When considering the whole population, the percentage of native and foreign people is that 50%, while when the three different groups already established are considered individually, the results are different. In relation to the infantile population, the native proportion increases considerably (71.42), for obviously this group's mobility capacity

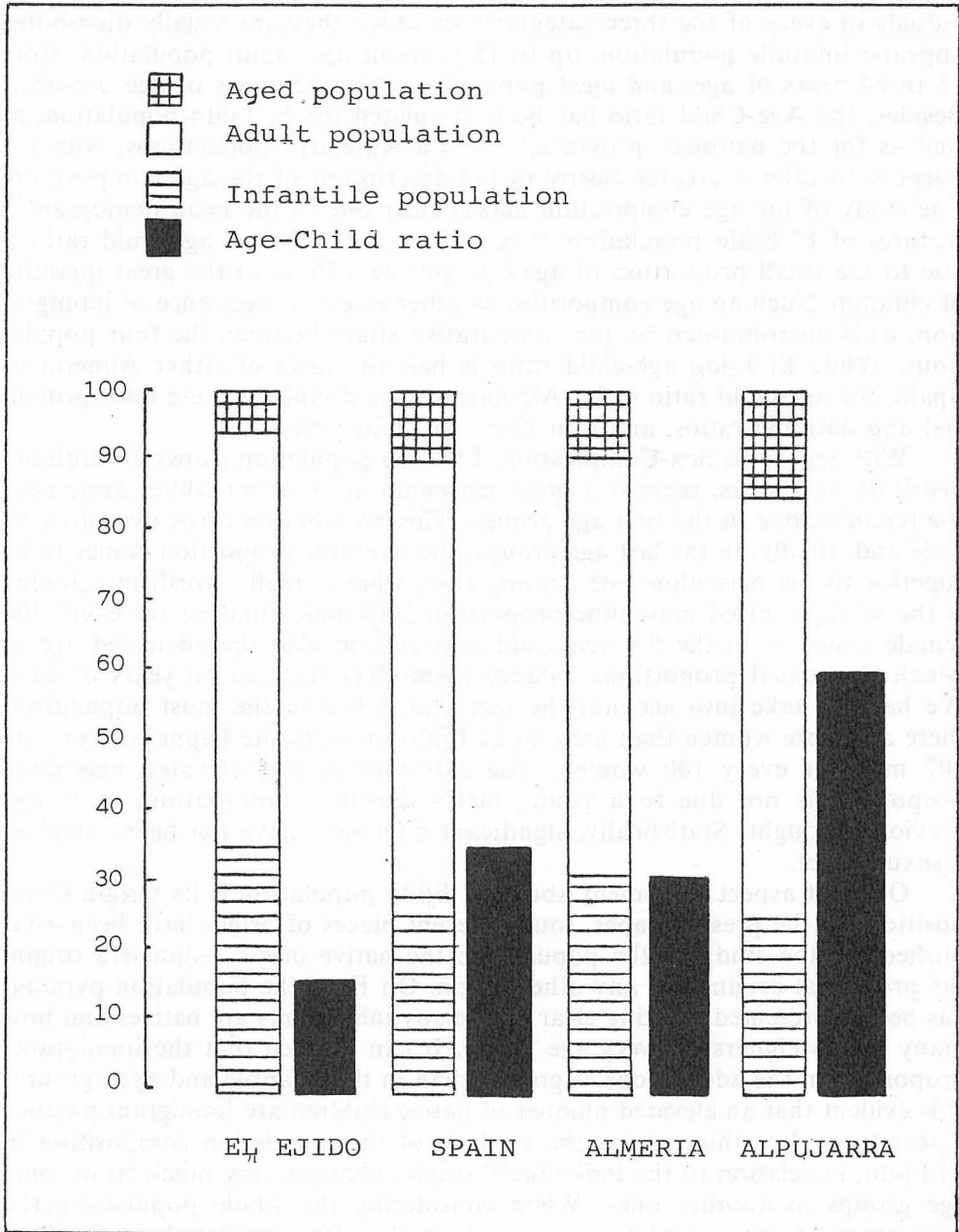


Fig. 4 — Age groups and Age-child ratio in some populations

TABLE 2. *Age Composition and age-child ratio in some populations*

	EJIDO	SPAIN	ALMERIA	ALPUJARRA
Infantile Pop. (<15)	34.89	27.79	30.88	25.31
Adult Pop. (15-64)	59.60	62.54	59.68	59.46
Aged Pop. (≥65)	5.51	9.97	9.44	15.23
Age-Child ratio	15.81	34.79	30.58	60.18

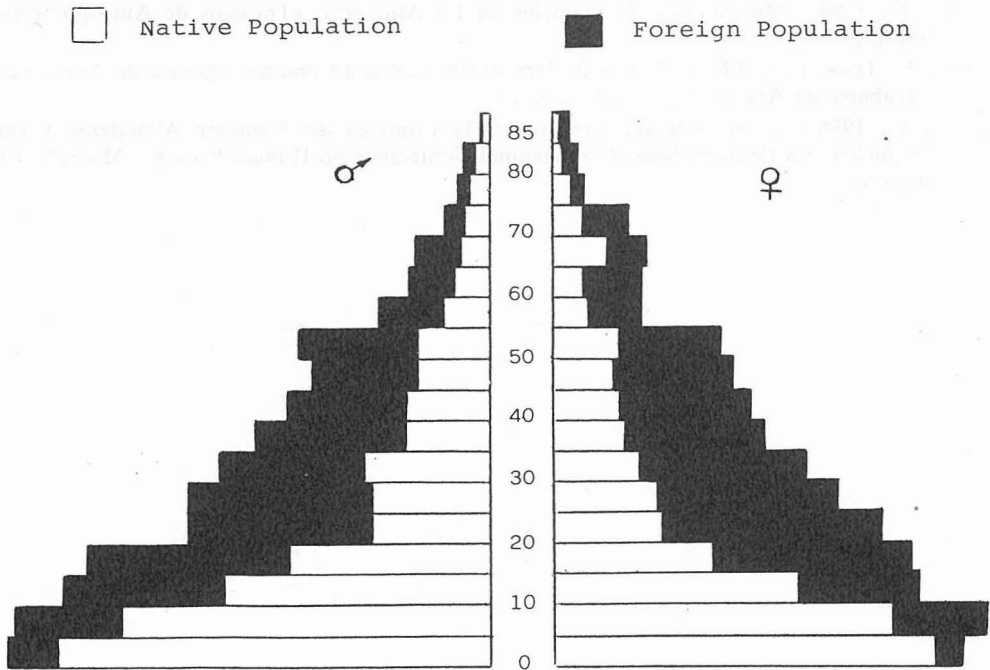


Fig. 5 — Pyramid of population by people origin in El Ejido.

depends on their parent's mobility. On the contrary, the adult group shows the opposite result: only a 39.5% of the 15-64 years old people have been born in this municipality, and the rest have other origins, mainly La Alpujarra. Four of every six immigrants come from la Alpujarra, or what is the same, there are as many adults from La Alpujarra as natives. Finally, with regard to the aged group, the proportion of individuals according to their origin is in a middle way between the infantile and adult groups. The percentage is similar to the proportion as a whole, that is, 50% of foreigners and 50% of natives.

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