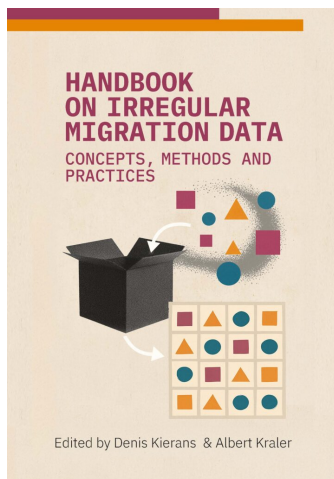




Textbox taken from D.Kierans & A.Kraler (eds),
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Box 11.2: Spain's padrón system

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Box 11.2: Spain's padrón system*Adèle Appriou, Jasmijn Slootjes and Ravenna Sohst*

Spain's *padrón municipal de habitantes* (municipal register of inhabitants) is a notable example of how local registration systems can support the inclusion of irregular migrants while generating valuable data for public planning and service provision.

All residents, regardless of their status, are required to register with the *padrón*, which grants them access to municipal services such as education, health care, libraries, and language courses. The main advantage for irregular migrants registering in the *padrón* system is the possibility of obtaining *arraigo social* (legal residence) if they provide proof that they have lived in Spain for at least three years.

Registration requires minimal documentation—typically an ID and proof of address—which many municipalities apply flexibly to reduce barriers for irregular migrants. For instance, Barcelona actively encourages registration even for those without a fixed address, with city officials conducting field visits to verify the residence of individuals unable to provide formal proof. Another key feature of this public formation is its separation from other policy functions (e.g., immigration enforcement), which, along with outreach by civil society actors, helps build trust and encourage participation. This initiative enables the country to gather valuable information about all residents, including their age, country of origin, nationality, gender, and family or marital status.

While the *padrón* fosters inclusion, challenges remain. Registration requirements and practices vary between municipalities, with some cities facilitating registration for irregular migrants more actively than others. Issues around data accuracy—such as residents failing to de-register when they move—have also been noted. Nevertheless, Spain's *padrón* offers valuable lessons on how local initiatives can improve data collection and service access for irregular migrants.

Conclusion

While data on irregular migration has the potential to drive more effective, transparent, and responsive policymaking, this potential remains limited by persistent gaps and structural barriers. Enhancing

the quality, accessibility, and responsible use of data is not only feasible, but necessary for fair and informed migration governance.