

# WOMEN'S LIVES AROUND THE WORLD

A Global Encyclopedia

VOLUME 4  
EUROPE

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## Spain

### Overview of Country

With 195,364 square miles, Spain is considered the fifth-largest country in the Europe. It has an estimated population of more than 46.7 million, but this number fluctuates with the fluid immigration from many countries. Geographically, the country is in Southwest Europe and part of the Iberian Peninsula. The Pyrenees Mountains separate Spain from France in the north. Portugal and the Atlantic Ocean are to the west, and the Mediterranean Sea is to the east. The strait of Gibraltar separates Spain from Morocco, making this frontier one of the main points of entry to Europe from Africa (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008).

The country has a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system. It has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1986. It is also a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Politically, Spain is divided into 17 autonomous communities, including the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean and the Canary Islands in the Atlantic. It also has two autonomous cities, Ceuta and Melilla, in northern Morocco. Some of those communities have significant historical and cultural differences and enjoy a rich linguistic diversity. Spanish is the official language in Spain, but the Basque language (Euskara) is also the official language of the Basque autonomous community and Navarre, with a population of 2.5 million. However, the Basque territories, including the Basque region in southern France, have an estimated population of 720,000 speakers of Basque.

Catalan, a romance language, is also an official language of Catalonia. Most people in this autonomous community are fluently bilingual. It is also spoken in the bordering

regions, as 7.2 million people (of the 11 million population) speak Catalan in Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Island, some parts of Southern France, and the island of Sardinia, in Italy. In a small area of Val d'Aran (Aran valley) in the Pyrenees, Aranese and Gascon Occitan are also spoken and protected.

Galician, another romance language, closely related to Portuguese and Spanish, is used in Galicia, in the northwest of the peninsula and above Portugal. With an estimated population of 2,700,000, most people are bilingual, but 56 percent use more Galician than Spanish (Pereira-Muro 2003).

### Overview of Women's Issues

As part of a patriarchal and traditional Mediterranean culture, women in Spain did not have legal rights until the 20th century, with a few regional exceptions for the rights to inherit and own property. Some of the main elements that have shaped women's lives in Spain are the role of the Catholic Church toward women; the period before and during the Spanish Civil War, from 1936 to 1939; and the following 50-year dictatorship and the transition to democracy from 1975–1982.

Spain has been considered a strong Catholic country for many centuries. It became infamous during the 16th century for its Inquisition and the persecution of people that did not practice the official Catholic faith. Over the centuries, the Catholic Church has practiced politics of fear among its congregations, especially with regard to women, favoring the macho culture of Mediterranean tradition. Still, before and during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), women enjoyed a period of freedom that they had never had before. During the Second Republic period, from 1931 to 1936, women were granted new rights. In 1931, they secured the right to vote. In 1932, laws were passed to ensure access and equality to jobs along with laws for divorce and civil marriage; abortion was legalized; and adultery was decriminalized. In short, at this time in Spain, women had more and better rights than many other European countries.

During these years, women were actively engaged in politics and civic society. Federica Montseny was elected the minister of health and social policy in 1936, making her the first female minister in Europe (Rodrigo 2014). Women also had their own organizations, such as *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women). But while they were gaining their rights, a civil war exploded, with the fascists fighting the

legally elected Republic. With the help of Hitler and Mussolini, the fascists won the war, starting a long dictatorship in 1939 that lasted until General Francisco Franco, the leader of the coup, died in 1975.

This was a dark period for many Spanish people. Women lost all the rights that they had acquired and were confined to the domestic spheres. Political violence was the basis for the new order, to the extent that it became institutionalized. It was used to destroy social practices and the political and social plurality created by the Republic. The Catholic Church played a crucial role, punishing women and, once again, playing politics of fear. Many women were repressed and incarcerated, and others were not allowed to work. Working-class women were forced to work for meager wages as punishment and retaliation when their families had been active during the civil war against the fascists, and also because women's salaries were lower than those for men. (Nash 2013)

The fascist government had a women's organization, *La Sección Femenina* (Feminine Section), whose objective was to present an image of the modern woman, a person who was a consumer of public life but who respected the domestic life and the superiority of men above all. In essence, it sponsored the same virtues of the Catholic Church of that period. During these years, macho attitude was allowed, and many women were victims of domestic violence. In the 1960s, late in Franco's dictatorship, women began to organize themselves by creating resistance movements and feminist awareness. Those organizations became transmitters for the memory of early feminism in Spain and created bridges for post-Franco reforms concerning women's rights.

## Health

Spain guarantees universal health care coverage, education, and welfare for everyone, including legal and illegal immigrants, but not all Spanish people agree with these policies.

## Abortion

Abortion was legal from 1932 to 1939, but women had to wait until 1985 for a limited abortion law, which was legalized again after much public debate and strong opposition by the Catholic Church that split the country (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008). Illegal abortions were commonplace before 1985; poor and working-class

women were subject to very unsanitary abortions. Middle- and upper-class women traveled to England or the Netherlands to have legal abortions, but they did not have any health care when they returned to Spain. Because of the restrictions within the law of 1985, which limited abortions for up to three months of pregnancy in cases where pregnancy was a result of rape, danger to the mother's life, or malformation, the practice of illegal abortions continued to be prevalent until 2005. As a result, Spain's official abortion rate was the lowest in the European Union. However, between 1987 and 2005, the number of annual abortions increased from 16,000 to over 90,000 (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008). A new law in 2010 legalized the practice of abortion during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.

## Education

The best progress for women so far has been in education. The number of women enrolled in Spanish universities now surpasses that of men, and female participation in business schools has also soared. Two decades ago, the percentage of female MBA candidates stood in the single digits. In two of the most prestigious private institutions, the business school Universidad de Navarra (IESE) and Escuela de Superior de Administración y Dirección de Empresas (ESADE), it varies from 20 percent at the Barcelona- and Madrid-based IESE to 44 percent at rival ESADE—though many of those students from outside Spain. The schools are expanding their efforts to attract women candidates, including mentoring programs and a growing number of scholarships for female students.

Public education in Spain has been criticized for decades, but it has been the foundation for the increase of women in higher education. Public education is free for everyone, including immigrants, legal or not. Private education follows the same laws as the public schools. Some of the private schools have religious affiliation, mostly Catholic, and can receive public funding. The literacy rate for women in Spain is around 97 percent. Education is compulsory until age 16. After that, students can choose two paths: a professional path for *formación profesional* (vocational training) and an academic one that continues with the *bachillerato* (baccalaureate) for two years. The latter has four options: humanities and social sciences, natural and health sciences, technology, and the arts. There are other opportunities for continuing education and distance-learning programs. Special education for students

with learning disabilities aims to integrate children in mainstream classes when possible. There is now the concept of “compensatory education” for people who, for whatever reason, failed to complete normal school education.

Today, the number of women enrolled in Spanish universities surpasses the number of men, even beyond the traditional career paths. In business fields, women’s participation has improved from the single digits to 40 percent at ESADE.

## Employment

The new role of women in Spanish society has changed dramatically. Their formal education has increased along with their participation in the workplace. Single or married, women now constitute 51.6 percent of the workforce in Spain. Their strong presence has transformed the reality of men, women, and families. Women do not abandon their jobs because they get married or have children. As a result, birth rates have decreased. However, conditions for men and women in the workplace are not equal, as women earn 16–25 percent less than men; they also have more temporary jobs and are subject to double duties, both in the workforce and in the home.

Although some women now occupy influential and high-paying jobs in banking, business, and marketing, many others work in administration, services, and the tourist industries. Female doctors, lawyers, engineers, and scientists are on the rise, but they have a harder time finding jobs due to an ongoing economic crisis and lack of opportunities. Many of them leave the country for better opportunities, in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States.

The military is one of the sectors where the presence of women has increased considerably since 1988, when new laws allowed women to serve. Now women constitute about 12 percent of army staff and 5 percent of officers, making Spain the first in the European Union in its proportion of female members in its ranks. (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008) Another important area of advancement is the *Policía Nacional* (National Police). Until 1979, women were not allowed to serve there, but since then, the number of women has grown to 8,800, including ranking officials and inspectors, reaching one of the objectives of *Red Europea de Mujeres Policía* (European Network of Policewomen), which is asking not only for more female presence but also more access to commanding posts (Diario de Madrid 2015).

Immigration became a necessity for the economy after joining the European Union, when workers were needed in agriculture, construction, the auto business, the tourist industries, and services, among others. Today, many emigrant women working as domestic workers take care of the homes and the elderly, allowing Spanish women to join the workforce and participate in politics. Since the economic crisis in 2008, immigration has slowed down, but immigrants, and especially women, are a very important part of the society.

## The Law for Effective Equality Act

The *Ley para la igualdad efectiva de Mujeres y Hombres* (Effective Equality Act), a major new law, was added in 2007. The law’s purpose is to combat sexual harassment and discrimination against employees who become pregnant. It extends maternity leave for women and paternity leave for fathers for a period of 15 weeks. It brings new measures to encourage equal opportunity in the workplace and requires companies to achieve a ratio of 40 percent female membership on their boards of directors in the next eight years. The same law also increases the number of female representatives in the political sphere, setting quotas for the minimum number of women candidates to be included on a party’s electoral list (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008).

## Family Life

Civil marriage was forbidden in Spain from 1554 to 1931. During the Republic, it was briefly legal. In 1939, under Franco’s rule, all civil marriages were nullified. The new constitution of 1978 allowed couples to have civil marriages again. It was not until 2009 that Spain had more civil marriages (94,933) than Catholic ones (80,174). Many people consider this is an indication of the secularization of the society. However, many couples married in religious ceremonies are not practicing Catholics; they are, as it is called, nominal Catholics. They are married, baptized, and have First Communion in the church, but very few attend Sunday Mass.

Traditionally, women in Spain keep their maiden names, using the father’s last name first and the mother’s last, a custom that continues today. Couples used to get married young and would have several children, but not today. Until 1975, women were required to get their husband’s permission before being active outside the home. Divorce, contraception, and abortion were not allowed.



## Women's Voices

### Anuncia Escala

I grew up in Spain during the dictatorship of General Franco's regime. In Catalonia, where I am from, most people are bilingual and speak Catalán and Spanish. However, under the dictatorship we were not allowed to speak Catalán in public. We spoke Catalán at home and with friends, and we spoke Spanish in schools and public arenas. At around five or six years of age, I thought my Spanish was pretty good. I liked translating words from Catalán to Spanish. Once I was asked to translate the Catalan word *gos* into Spanish (*perro*, dog). My response was simple. Adding an O to the end, *goso* was my new word, which provoked hilarious responses but made me feel ridiculous. We learned language by improvising, not from school.

A few years later, I guess I had a secret desire that I didn't know I'd had. Growing up in a Catholic culture church, services were a mystery to me. I liked the ritual and the sense of community I felt while in church. I used to pay close attention to the actions of the acolytes, how they dressed, their movements, and especially the bells they rung, but I never thought that it was something I wanted to do until I had a dream. I was at the end of the church in a section where I thought no one could see me ringing the bell as loudly as I could. Panic overwhelmed me when I realized, still in my dream, that people were watching me and saying "Look! It's a girl. It's a girl. What is she doing?" I woke up in a sweat.

Today in the Catholic Church, girls can ring the bells and read in public, but nothing more. We are still waiting.

When women separated from their husbands, as it was in many cases, they needed the permission of their husbands for any legal activity, from renting or buying property or even for obtaining a passport. Since the 1970s and 1980s, with more women working outside the home, many have become "superwomen," as they have to take care of their jobs and their homes. Today, the large majority of men work minimally on household chores or taking care of the children. This means a double life for many modern Spanish women; they are still responsible for the traditional

duties of taking care of the house and raising the children. According to Carmen Pereira-Muro (2003), this double duty affects the health of women due to high levels of stress; today, the consumption of pharmaceutical drugs to deal with such stress is high among women.

Currently, Spain has two of the lowest birth and fertility rates in the world, heavily affecting the population's replacement rates. People marry later, and couples wait to have children. Some do not have any. However, one or two children are common. For the moment, only immigration can balance this situation, simultaneously incorporating new values and lifestyles into Spanish society.

Contraception was legalized in 1978, but divorce and abortion required a great struggle to become legalized due to strong opposition by the Catholic Church and the political parties that supported the church's views. In 1981, divorce was legalized with several restrictions. One was that a spouse had to cite evidence, such as that they had been legally separated for at least a year (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008). Because of these restrictions, many couples choose to live separately, an arrangement known as *divorcio a la española* (Divorce Spanish style), a practice that was initiated during Franco's dictatorship. Because of the restrictions, Spain has the lowest rate of divorce in Europe.

In 2005, a revised law has made it easier to obtain a divorce, which has led to an increase. Now it is possible to get a divorce within three months after getting married, or earlier if a spouse has been the subject of abuse by the other partner. Also, a judge can grant shared custody of the children, if this is beneficial for the children. This has increased the rate of divorce dramatically (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008).

## Politics

For women, the transition to democracy meant a revival of women's liberation movements. The 1978 Constitution for a democratic state proclaimed liberty, equality, justice, and political pluralism for individuals and groups. Civil rights were restored, including equal access to work, the restoration of voting rights, and the legalization of political parties, trade unions, and civic organizations. The feminist movement at the time was questioning its role, whether they needed to join the new parties or keep their independent organizations. The movement lost important leaders who joined the parties and held executive positions in several administrations.

Spain still has feminist organizations, such as *El Partido Feminista de España* (the Feminist Party of Spain), founded in 1981. It was the creator of *Federación Organizaciones Feministas* (Federation of Feminist Organizations) in 1999, which participated in the elections for European Parliament and received 28,901 votes, 0.14 percent. Today, it is part of this federation in Spain, but it does not have public activities. Several other feminist organizations are also active, but with little political representation. On the other hand, women began to participate in elected government institutions, as mayors of large and small towns, representatives in the congress, senators, and ministers. There was a significant rise in women elected during the 1989–1993 legislatures, when their participation rose to 14 percent. By 2012, it had grown to a 34 percent.

During his second term, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, a socialist prime minister, formed a cabinet with a female majority, consisting of 9 women out of 17 ministers. Perhaps his most important appointment was the young Carmen Chacón as minister of defense when she was pregnant. Rodríguez Zapatero also created a new title called the minister of equality. It was the first time in Europe that a government had more female than male ministers. Also, for the first time, Spain had a Ministry for Equality that dealt with domestic violence more forcefully than any previous cabinets. In 2004, when the socialist president Rodríguez Zapatero came to power for the first time, domestic violence was prevalent and not dealt with adequately. He created new and better measures for women to obtain restraining orders, which were poorly enforced before; he provided refuge provisions and courts to deal with domestic violence. He also improved the lives of caregivers in Spain, who were mostly women.

## Issues

### Domestic Violence

In Spain the issue of domestic violence has been an acute problem. Several steps and awareness programs have been implemented. However, in a society where the machismo ideology still prevails and many judges have not accepted the seriousness of the problem, progress has been slow. In any case, since the late 1990s, cases of domestic violence have been receiving greater attention in the media. Until the new divorce laws were passed in 2005, it was difficult for women to escape domestic violence due to the lack of judicial support. (Pereira-Muro 2003). About 60 women are murdered by their partners or former partners every

year (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008). In 2004, the government passed the *Ley Integral contra la Violencia de Género* (Gender Violence Act). The law has a wide range of provisions to protect the victims of gender violence. Victims can go to the police to report an aggression, but they often do not get protection or legal action. As a result, such crimes are often never reported. Many people complain that while Spain has made advances in helping victims, it has not been enough. TV channels have programs where they interview victims and sometimes the aggressor as a way of denouncing the problem, but they also have programs where gender violence is represented without criticism.

### LGBT Issues

The contrast in how homosexuality in Spain was seen just a few decades ago and today is enormous. If you walk around the neighborhood of Chueca in Madrid, or the Eixample in Barcelona, it is hard to imagine a country where homosexuality was forbidden. In the past, it was culturally accepted that gay people were unnatural because homosexuality was considered a sin and a pathological disorder by the Catholic Church. Between 1954 and 1970, around 5,000 people were imprisoned for homosexuality. A law was passed in 1970 to allow the rehabilitation of lesbians and gays with various forms of treatment, including electric shock therapy.

Nevertheless, a clandestine movement developed in the 1960s in Barcelona, where gay activists formed the Catalan Liberation Front in 1975 (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008). In 1998, a law called *Ley de Parejas de hecho* (De facto Partners Act) was passed in Catalonia. The law stipulated the same rights for same-sex couples living together as those enjoyed by heterosexual couples, but it did not include the right to adopt children (Ross, Richardson, and Sangrador-Vegas 2008). During the 1990s and early 2000s, several city councils and autonomous communities allowed civil unions, giving the same benefits as married couples to unmarried couples of any sex.

In 2005, Spain legalized same-sex marriage. It was the third country in the world to legalize it, after Belgium and the Netherlands. Approximately 4,600 people were married the first year. The same law allowed the adoption of children. The current government is against the law, but so far they have not been able to repeal it.

The law establishes that marriage has the same requirements and privileges regardless of whether the individuals

are of the same sex. At the same time, it allows couples who have lived together for a long time to adopt whether they are homosexuals or heterosexuals. Equal rights are also guaranteed for single people to have the right to adopt.

In cases where children were born in a lesbian marriage, the biological mother was the parent, but the nonbiological parent did not have any rights. The nonbiological parent had to apply for a long adoption process. In 2006, the government amended the law on assisted reproduction, granting the same rights to the nonbiological mother as the birth mother.

On October 2, 2014, the parliament of the Catalanian autonomous community approved a law against homophobia with a large majority of votes, 112 in favor and 18 against, to protect lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals. This law, the first in Spain, is to guarantee the rights of the LGBT communities, to prevent situations of discrimination and violence against such persons, and also to facilitate their participation and representation in all aspects of social life.

### Immigrant Women in Spain

Immigrant women, coming from any different areas of the world, have made significant and important contributions to Spanish society. Even though in 2014 the Chinese immigrant population was the only one that grew in some communities, such as in Madrid, in Spain, the majority of immigrant women are from Eastern Europe, Latin America, and North Africa. Their motive for coming to Spain was mostly for family reunification, but over the years, many women have come to Spain looking for jobs, especially those from South America. The need for domestic work in Spanish households is creating a global feminine market for those immigrant women.

Families favor Latin Americans, but the number of Eastern European women working as domestics in homes is growing. Women coming from the Andean region, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru are the most sought after because they speak Spanish and share the same strong Catholic beliefs as many older Spaniards. Many of these women left their countries because of an economic crisis. They usually have at least a high school diploma, and some are nurses, teachers, or had previous professional careers. In Spain, they are especially preferred for taking care of the children and the elderly. Romanian women are also more accepted for the same reasons. North African women from Morocco work in the households doing domestic duties, but because

of prejudices and discrimination related to their Moroccan customs and religion, they are more rejected by Spanish society. In some cases, the language barrier is a factor, as some of these women do not speak Spanish. Nevertheless, the roles of all these groups of women in Spanish society are growing in all sectors, specially the service and tourist industries (Molpeceres Alvarez 2012).

Women from Latin America carry a double burden because they have to take care of other people's families to economically support the families they left behind. Many of these women pay for the education of their own family's children, including college, in their countries of origin. But the distance and lack of personal contact creates difficult situations for the immigrants because sometimes the children see their own mothers as moneymaking machines. Some women immigrants have a very lonesome existence. The film *Flores del otro mundo* (*Flowers from Another World*, 1999), by Iciar Bollain (1967), a female Spanish filmmaker and actress, portrays the difficulties of their lives in Spain and the world they left behind, as well as the loneliness, conflicts, and rejections they face.

Second-generation immigrants have been integrated into the education system since childhood and have different attitudes and challenges. They can become professionals in many fields, but sometimes they are not fully accepted. The writer and professor Najat El Hachmi (1979), a daughter of Moroccan parents, has published several books about this. *Jo també soc catalana* (*I Am Also a Catalan Woman*, 2004), an autobiographical account, tells the story of growing up as an immigrant girl in Catalonia. It focuses on her relations with language, identity, the role of women, religion, and lost sentiments, along with her feeling of belonging to Catalonia, her adopted country. Her second novel, *El último patricarca* (*The Last Patriarch*, 2008), deals with immigration, but mostly with the struggle of a woman who had a tyrannical father whom she still loved.

### Women in Film and Television

Television and movies play an important role in the social fabric of Spain. Spain has many successful women filmmakers and actresses, but the large number of women in the industry work as specialized professionals (Arranz, Roquero, and Aguilar 2012). The role of women in this media is contradictory. While Spain still produces soap operas where women tend to be the victims, it has also developed strong roles for women. The filmmakers that



follow represent this latter tendency, along with a strong interest in social justice issues. Pilar Miró (1940–1997), a Spanish filmmaker, was the director of national television from 1986 to 1989. She worked in more than 200 film and TV productions.

Isabel Coixet (1960–) worked first in advertising, where she developed a unique visual style. Her films are original, dealing with universal and intimate feelings. She is the most international of the women filmmakers, directing and producing films abroad as well as in Spain. Her documentary *La mujer, cosa de hombres* (*Women Belong to Men*, 2009) was part of the 50th anniversary of the national TV network. This documentary presented footage of films from the 1960s that portrayed women unhappy with their relationships with men, along with scenes of domestic violence. Using real footage from newsreels, the film stops from time to time to report cases of domestic violence occurring in that era. It also incorporates advertisements from the 1960s that portray women as inferior beings.

Icíar Bollain (1967–) is an actress, filmmaker, and scriptwriter. She has acted since childhood. She is also the director of six feature films. *Flores del otro mundo* (*Flowers from the Other World*, 1999) about immigrant women from Latin America in Spain was previously mentioned. Her film *Te doy mis ojos* (*Take My Eyes*, 2003), a movie about domestic violence, won seven Goyas, the most prestigious awards in Spain. Her film *También la lluvia* (*Even the Rain*, 2010) made it to the short list for the 83rd Academy Awards in 2011. Her last work, the documentary *En Tierra extraña* (*In Foreign Land*, 2014), follows young Spanish immigrants to Edinburgh, where an estimated 20,000 are looking for work and better opportunities. Since the economic crisis of 2008, an estimated 700,000 young people have emigrated from Spain.

Women in Spanish movies are now portrayed in many different ways, from traditional roles, to professional women, to objects of desire. Many of the characters have a common wish for independence and sexual freedom. There is debate about whether this is the desire of Spanish women or the dream of Spanish men. In any case, a large number of excellent actresses have devoted their talents to portraying very different characters. Victoria Abril (1959–), Ariadna Gil (1969–), Blanca Portillo (1963–), Emma Suárez (1964–), and Isabel Verdú (1970) are among the best known, to mention only a few. The complex characters these actresses bring to life are an indication of the changes Spanish women are going through today.

## Women Leaders in Social Movements

Almudena Bernabeu was born in Spain in 1972 and studied law at the University of Valencia, Spain. She is the only Spanish woman working in the field of universal civic justice, simultaneously in Spain and the United States. As a well-known lawyer specializing in international law and human rights, she has dedicated her life to investigating and preparing cases of human rights abuse in Latin America and in Africa. Since 2003, she has been the director of the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) in San Francisco, California. In Spain, she has been the lead private prosecutor before the Spanish National Court in cases concerning genocide in Guatemala during the 1980s. She and her team were leading advisers to the prosecution in the Guatemalan genocide trial against former president Efraín Ríos Montt in 2013 (McConahay 2013). Her work is featured in the 2011 documentary *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator*. She was instrumental in achieving the prosecution of the Salvadorian military junta for the massacre in El Salvador in 1989, where six Jesuit priests were killed along with a housekeeper and her daughter. She is constantly working on cases in Central and Latin America. She teaches law at the University of Berkeley and has received several international awards for her work. She is also the vice president of the Spanish Association for Human Rights. In 1912 *Time* magazine included her in its list of the 200 most influential people in the world.

Two Spanish women, Carme Forcadell (1956–) and Muriel Casals (1944–), are leading the Catalan independence movement. Carme Forcadell is a linguist and a Catalan political activist. She is the president, since its founding in 2012, of the *Asamblea Nacional Catalana*, a grassroots organization working for Catalonia's separation from Spain. Muriel Casals was born in France to exiled parents. She is an emeritus professor from the Department of Economics at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Since 2010, she has been president of *Omnium Cultural*, a nonprofit organization working for the promotion of the language and culture of Catalonia. Both organizations do not have partisan political affiliations, but rather sponsor peaceful and creative demonstrations for change to make politicians accountable. Together, these women are leading a very large Catalan movement for independence from Spain. Some of the demonstrations they have helped to organize were attended by more than 1.8 million people. Their works channel the energies of many Catalan people who believe independence for Catalonia

is the best solution after many centuries of conflict with Spain.

Ada Colau (1974–) is another social and political activist from Barcelona and a leader for the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH, Platform for People Affected by the Loan Crisis). The organization was created as a response to the 2008 financial crisis, which exposed the corruption of the banking industry in Spain. The PAH was set up in Barcelona in 2009, and it now has 150 branches across Spain. She is the coauthor of *Mortgaged Lives*, which was based on the grassroots experiences of direct action with the PAH to stop evictions and to campaign for housing rights. Since 2014, she is the spokesperson for the organization *Guanyem Barcelona* (Let's Win Back Barcelona), a citizens' platform for the 2015 Barcelona city elections. Ada Colau has won several awards, including the European Citizen's Prize for her work with PAH in 2013, and the European United Women Prize in the same year.

Teresa Forcadas i Vila was born in Barcelona in 1966. After studying medicine in Barcelona, in 1995, she became a doctor specializing in internal medicine at the University of Buffalo. She moved to Harvard, where she completed a Master of Divinity degree in 1997. Upon her return to Barcelona, she became a nun at the famous Santa Maria de Monserat Abbey, near Barcelona. In 2004, she received a doctorate in public health, and in 2009, she obtained a doctorate from the School of Theology in Catalonia. Sister Teresa is considered a Christian feminist and teaches feminist theology in her convent and gives public lectures. She is also an advocate for public health issues and is an activist for Catalan independence. She is well-known for her controversial public-speaking appearances. She has expressed more than once that "the Roman Catholic Church, which is my church, is misogynist and patriarchal in its structure. That needs to be changed as quickly as possible" (Tremlett 2013).

Sister Teresa defends the right of women to become priests, bishops, or pope, searching for total equality inside and outside the church. Before taking her vows, she gave a talk to her fellow nuns about a group of gay Catholics who celebrate their sexuality as a gift from God. She also defends contraception and believes abortion is an individual choice. During the swine flu pandemic in 2009, she denounced the politics of medical and industrial groups that declared it a pandemic. She claimed the flu vaccine they promoted lacked scientific basis for public use, and she listed irregularities and the consequences of declaring it a "pandemic" (Forcades 2014).

On the political front, Sister Teresa supports Catalan independence and proposes a government model based on social mobilization and self-organization. She coauthored a declaration with Arcadi Oliveres, an economics professor from Barcelona University, with the title *Manifesto for the Convening of a Constituent Process in Catalonia* (2013).

### Contemporary Women Writers

The transition to democracy in the 1970s led to a boom of Spanish women writers. Compared to other Western nations, the feminist movement in Spain came late, due to the Franco dictatorship that ended in 1975. However, women have been writing about women's issues long before that, and several writers have published such works since the 1960s. Mercé Rodoreda (1908–1983) is considered the most important Catalan writer of the postwar period. Her well-known 1962 novel *La plaça del Diamant* (*The Time of the Doves*) became a hit in the 1960s, and it has been translated into over 30 languages. Other well-known Spanish writers from the same period include Maria Zambrano (1904–1991), Carmen Laforet (1921–2004), and Ana María Matute (1925–2014). Carmen Martín Gaité (1925–2000), a writer, actress, and a playwright, was the first woman to win the National Award for Literature for her novel *El cuarto de atrás* (*The Back Room*) in 1978. That was the beginning of her awards as a writer. She went on to write 18 more books as well as essays, children's literature, and film scripts.

Many other writers from the post-Franco generation deal directly and critically with women's issues, their sexuality, and their roles in society. Cristina Fernández Cubas, Carmen Posadas, Soledad Púertolas, Carme Riera, Esther Tusquets, and Ana María Moix are only a few of them. Others continue exploring the narrative of memory, such as Dulce Chacón (1954–2003), the author of *La voz dormida* (*The Sleeping Voice*, 2002) a very popular novel that used testimonials she had collected from women about the difficult years of the postwar period.

Special mention is necessary for Almudena Grandes (1960–) and her novels dealing with female eroticism and desires (Bergman 2007). Several of her novels have been turned into movies: *Las edades de Lulu* (*The Ages of Lulu*, 1990); *Melena es un nombre de tango* (*Melena Is the Name of a Tango*, 1995); and *Los Aires difíciles* (*The Wind from the East*, 2006). She also writes a weekly column for the newspaper *El País* as well as other journals and magazines.

In literary journalism, women writers have found their niche, writing for periodicals and specialized publications and using humor to convey their sociocultural critiques. Some also contribute to radio, television, and the film industry as scriptwriters. Literary journalism gives these writers opportunities to report on cultural trends and social problems and to engage with the public.

Rosa Montero (1951–) is a writer as well as a journalist. Her 1981 novel *La función Delta* (*The Delta Function*) is considered a major work of feminist thought. She collaborates weekly with the newspaper *El País* and has won the National Journalism Prize many times. Her writing reveals the situation of women, but it also focuses on political corruption and the lack of national unity.

Montserrat Roig i Fransitorra (1946–1991) was a prolific writer and journalist and also a professor of Catalan at the University of Barcelona. She wrote short stories, novels, and children's books. Her well-known and rigorous report *Els Catalans als camps Nazis* (*Catalans in Nazi Concentration Camps*, 1977) received several awards.

Elvira Lindo (1962–) is famous for her children's series *Manolito gafotas* (*Manolito Four-Eyes*, 1994) that was turned into a movie in 1999. She was awarded the Premio Nacional de Literatura Juvenil in 1998. She has been a correspondent for the newspaper *El País* in New York for several years.

Empar Moliner (1966–) is best known for her collection of essays *Busco senyor per amistad I el que sorgeixi* (*In Search of a Man for Friendship and Possibly More*, 2005). In her essays, she touches on topics that are everyday news, such as the future of the Catalan language or the situation of immigrant women, in this case Peruvian women looking for jobs as maids. Her representations are realistic and use irony to convey complex situations with humor.

### Women in the Arts: Dancers, Singers, and Actresses

Spain has a long tradition of women as actresses, dancers, and singers in both popular and classical music, including flamenco. What has changed in the last century is their professionalization. Many flamenco women now have their own companies and direct, create, and produce both plays and music in this genre.

Legendary flamenco dancer Carmen Amaya (1918–1963) was born in a gypsy family of flamenco musicians and dancers in Somorrostro, a slum in Barcelona. She revolutionized flamenco dancing with her unique style and

was accused by some critics of defeminizing flamenco dancing, but others admired her for liberating the female style of dancing.

Mecaela Flores Amaya, or “La Chunga” (“the Difficult One”), another flamenco dancer, was born in Marseille circa 1938 of immigrant Romani parents from southern Spain. She became famous for her unorthodox ways of dancing. Cristina Hoyos Panedero (1946–), also a flamenco dancer, is an actress and choreographer. She has worked with many different dance companies as well as her own and has played an important role in the world of flamenco dancing for women.

Spain has a rich and original variety of singers. To mention only a few, Estrella Morente (1980–), a flamenco singer from Granada, was born into a famous flamenco family; her father was a singer and her mother a dancer. Her voice and songs have been used in several movies. Silvia Pérez Cruz (1983–), from outside Barcelona, had classical musical training. While a student, she cofounded the flamenco group *Las Migas* (Bread Crumbs), which created a particularly unique sound. She sings in seven languages, including four of the Iberian languages: Catalan, Galician, Portuguese, and Spanish.

The Basque culture has a long tradition of choral singers. A few of the best-known Basque women singers come from this tradition. Singing in Spanish, the popular pop group *Mocedades* (Youth), from Bilbao, was founded in 1969. The lead singer, Amaya Uranga, left the group in 1984 to continue her solo career. The pop rock group *Oreja de Van Gogh* (Van Gogh's Ear), from Donostia-San Sebastian, is a Latin Grammy-winning and nominee group. Their lead singer, Amaya Montero, also left the group for a solo career in 2007. Opera is another genre where Basque women have excelled. The soprano Ainhoa Arteta is the most international of all the Basque opera singers. She has performed in prestigious opera houses around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Royal Opera House and Covent Garden in London, and La Scala in Milan.

ANUNCIA ESCALA

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## Sweden

### Overview of Country

Sweden is located in Northern Europe and is bordered by the countries of Norway and Finland as well as the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Bothnia. Roughly 174,000 square miles (450,295 sq. km), Sweden has a mountainous border to its west and a mostly flat or rolling terrain in the east. The country had an estimated population of 9,723,809 in 2014, which is primarily concentrated in the southern half of the country and in urban areas, with 85 percent of the population in urban centers. Approximately 15 percent of Sweden's population is foreign born.

The Swedish state dates back to the 1500s, though its borders and separation from Norway were not permanently fixed until 1905. Sweden has a constitutional monarchy led by King Carl XVI Gustav. His daughter Crown Princess Victoria (1977–) is heir apparent and will become Sweden's fourth queen regent and first since 1720. Sweden has a parliamentary democracy driven by its 349-member *Riksdag* (Parliament); general elections are held every four years. Women hold 44.7 percent of the seats in Parliament. Sweden has been a member of the European Union since 1995, though the public rejected the introduction of the euro in a 2003 referendum.

Voting rights are extended to all Swedish citizens aged 18 and older. Women received the right to vote and run for office in 1921, and Sweden's first female Parliament representatives were elected that year. Sweden has a high voter turnout rate for both men and women, at approximately 90 percent. Eight parties are currently in the Parliament: Social Democrats, Moderates, Sweden Democrats, Green Party, Center Party, Left Party, Liberal Party, and Christian Democrats. Only in the past decade have the Swedish Democrats, the extreme right-wing party known for its stance against immigration, gained influence in Sweden. Sweden's feminist party, the Feminist Initiative, narrowly missed a seat in the 2014 Parliament.

In 2014, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Sweden 12th out of 187 nations on its Human Development Index. Sweden has a maternal mortality ratio of 4 deaths per 100,000 live births and an adolescent birth rate of 6.5 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19. Women have a 60.2 percent labor force participation rate, while the rate for men is 68.1 percent. Some secondary education is attained by 86.5 percent of women (UNDP 2014). The