

Exploratory pilot study on **school segregation** of **Roma students**

Executive summary

Fundación Secretariado Gitano / Department of Education



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1. INTRODUCTION

This executive summary provides a synthesis of the main results of a research study on the segregation of Roma pupils, carried out between January 2020 and July 2021, and culminating in the publication of the *Exploratory pilot study on school segregation of Roma students*¹ by the Ministry of Education.

The study sprang from the need to obtain information about the situation of Roma students. The aim was to be able to drive forward a series of tailored measures and actions to reverse processes of school segregation, which required greater knowledge of how this problem plays out in our country. This all sits within the context of the new legislative framework created by the modified Education Law (LOMLOE)², which seeks to promote inclusive education and equal opportunities, as well as a framework of investment and funding for measures to improve the quality and equity of our educational system.

In the European context, the persistence of the segregation of Roma students in special schools or classes is a central issue in many countries. This has attracted considerable attention from politicians, the media and researchers in recent years.

Spain, as a Member state of the European Union committed to International Human Rights Law, has committed itself to guaranteeing the fundamental right to education of all pupils. However, according to various European organisations and institutions (eg. European Commission³, FRA⁴, ECRI⁵) this right is not yet sufficiently protected for Roma pupils, owing in part to their high concentration in certain centres of education.

In the case of Spain, various studies have provided evidence of the impact of socioeconomic segregation resulting from various factors, ranging from the composition of residential areas to the lack of decision-making power of the families with the fewest economic resources.

When it comes to Roma families, however, there have not been many empirical studies analysing the situation in all its complexity. In almost all regions there are centres of education described as high-complexity

1 <https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publiventa/estudio-piloto-exploratorio-sobre-la-segregacion-escolar-del-alumnado-gitano/educacion-inclusion-mundo-gitano/26045>

2 <https://educagob.educacionyfp.gob.es/lomloe/ley.html>

3 Recommendation of the European Council of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/En/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224\(01\)&from=en](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/En/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01)&from=en)

4 A persisting concern: anti-Gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion, 2018: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/persisting-concern-anti-gypsyism-barrier-roma-inclusion>

5 5th Report on Spain by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2018: <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-spain/16808b56c9>

centres, many of which have high concentrations of Roma students. We know this problem exists, but we do not have sufficient knowledge or information relating to it.

The strength of a study like this one lies precisely in its ability to shed more light on these processes in order to achieve an informed understanding which can shape educational policy. At the same time it can aid the implementation of measures to end segregation, or at least to reduce it as far as possible. This allows Spain to meet its responsibilities under the political and legal frameworks to which it is committed.

This study complements the results obtained in a previous study, carried out as part of the European No-Segregation project⁶ by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) in 2019-2020. This transnational project, led by the Bulgarian NGO Amalipe, included research on the segregation of Roma students in each of the participating countries. The FSG was the project member responsible for carrying out this research in Spain.

1.1. What do we understand by ‘school segregation’?

School segregation, understood as the **“unequal distribution of students in schools based on their social or personal characteristics or other conditions”** (Murillo, 2019) has its origins in various types of segregation that can come about jointly or independently: segregation based on national or ethnic origin, disability, gender, socioeconomic level and so on.

Similarly, the *Alliance for Inclusive Education and against School Segregation*⁷ defines school segregation as “the separation of students in different school environments based on some personal or social characteristic”. This **implies an unequal distribution of pupils among centres of education** which does not reflect the social composition of the area, whereby students with similar characteristics are concentrated in the same classrooms or schools (CERMI, FSG, Save the Children, 2020).

The majority of studies carried out in Spain to date have analysed school segregation in relation to the distribution of the resident population in

6 *“No-Segregation: Local Action Against School Segregation of Roma Students”*, a study funded by the European Commission Directorate General for Justice within the European Union Programme Rights, Equality and Citizenship (2014-2020).

7 <https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/2020-06/AlianzaSegregacion.pdf>

the areas where the educational centres are located. Segregation is therefore said to exist when the distribution of pupils in a centre is dissimilar to the distribution of the population in the surrounding area (Maya & Santiago, 2012, Martínez & Ferrer, 2018, Besalú, 2017). While we accept that the residential environment is important in understanding segregation, we believe that there are other factors, related for example to the socioeconomic conditions of the population, educational policies and practices, access to centres, possibilities for mobility, family preferences in choice of centre, and the rejection by society of certain groups, which influence the patterns of segregation which currently exist in Spain.

In the case of Roma students, and based on both the pilot study and the results of the previous study carried out as part of the European No-Segregation project, it appears that segregation goes beyond mere economic segregation (although this is an intrinsic part of it) and is also found in centres located in areas which are not in themselves especially segregated. **Ethnicity is a factor which shapes and aggravates the effects of the economic conditions.** Given the small percentage of the overall population represented by Roma people, the existence of segregated centres, where the student body is sometimes composed almost exclusively of Roma pupils, is something which should be studied and analysed carefully in order to understand the phenomenon of segregation and the processes which are acting upon a part of this student population.

There is an additional problem related to the way in which a segregated centre of education is defined. Where should the line be drawn to determine whether there is a high concentration of Roma pupils?

At the FSG, we believe that the figure of **30%**, which is the figure most commonly used, including by some public authorities when determining educational policy, is appropriate as an “approved” demarcation line which allows us to measure school segregation based on ethnic origin. However, we also believe that **this line is arbitrary** if we are interested specifically in Roma students, essentially for two reasons:

- » The **size of the Roma population as a proportion of the general population is small.** In the case of children under the age of 16, it can be estimated that they represent between 2% and 2.5% of all children of this age in Spain. Normally, the distribution of students across centres should not be higher than this figure.

- » In many cases, **teachers tend to overestimate the number of Roma pupils in their centre**, perceiving a larger number than actually exists. This can be for various reasons: because they have higher rates of dropout and failure than other pupils; because their cultural tendencies, or how to establish relationships with their families, are not understood; because various prejudices exist against them. To these factors we must add the fact that on many occasions, Roma pupils are identified as a group in opposition to other pupils, even though socioeconomic conditions may be similar (and low) across the entire class group, and they are also identified as a source of conflict.

Based on these factors, and starting from the premise that an **unequal distribution** of pupils can have many nuances which are important for establishing effective policies of intervention, we have created a **categorisation of segregation** based on five typologies:

- **No concentration or low concentration:** percentages between 1% and 15% (a typical class having 20 students, including approximately 1-3 Roma students)
- **High concentration:** 16% to 30% (between 4 and 6 Roma students in a typical class)
- **Segregation:** 31% to 40% (between 7 and 8 Roma students in a typical class)
- **Severe segregation:** 41% to 60% (between 9 and 12 Roma students in a typical class)
- **Extreme segregation:** more than 61% (13 to 20 Roma students in a typical class)

1.2. Context of the research study

The research summarised in this document began in January 2020 and was born of the collaboration between the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) and the Directorate General of Regional Evaluation and Cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

The initial proposal was assessed by the Education Group of the State Council of the Roma People, and involved the collaboration of Spanish regions in the Technical Group for Educational Inclusion as part of the Sector Conference on Education. The situation arising from the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 caused difficulties and delays for its implementation for more than a year, with fieldwork finally able to begin in March 2021.

The tool used to collect information was an online questionnaire sent to 566 centres of primary and compulsory secondary education across 6 Spanish cities (Seville, Almería, Valladolid, Alicante, Madrid and Barcelona⁸).

To validate the questionnaire and the final report, we relied on a group of experts comprising:

- » *D. Jesús Salinas Catalá*. Former teacher and teacher-trainer, director and/or active member of several organisations including the Roma Association of Valencia, the Association of Teachers with Roma People, the European Lungo-Drom EQUAL project and the State Council of the Roma People.
- » *Carlos Peláez*. Lecturer at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) and expert consultant on public policy, socioeducational action, migration and cooperation.
- » *María Luisa Lozano Gil*. Trainer and consultant for organisations. Coordinator of company services for Badajoz Council's ROT Project.

8 In the latter two, the sample was designed for some districts only and some municipalities with high levels of Roma population.

1.3. Sample

43% (n=246) of the centres of education which received the questionnaire answered it, but it was decided to eliminate some of them because they barely provided information. For this reason, the analysis of information relating to Roma pupils is based on just **138 questionnaires** in which the majority of questions in the sections focusing on these pupils were answered. However, for information on the context and characteristics of the centres, other centres were included (n=56) which had answered only the first few questions relating to these topics.

As a consequence of this low rate of valid responses, we have only been able to use information from **24.5% of the original sample**, with the response rate varying considerably between cities (Table 1).

It should also be borne in mind that the most segregated centres may be over-represented in the final sample given that, in principle, they may be the centres most interested in answering a survey of this kind.

TABLE 1. RESPONSE RATE BY REGION

REGION	ORIGINAL SAMPLE	Questionnaires answered	Questionnaires completed	% OF ORIGINAL SAMPLE
ANDALUSIA	99	81	38	38,40%
CASTILE AND LEÓN	43	49	31	72,10%
VALENCIA	68	18	9	13,20%
CATALONIA*	111	18	10	9,00%
MADRID*	245	80	50	20,40%
TOTAL	566	246	138	24,40%

*Only some municipalities and districts of the capital.

2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section will present the main results of the exploratory pilot study on school segregation of Roma students. Due to the small sample size, these results should be **understood as observations and trends without statistical validity**. However, they do help us to explore the phenomenon of segregation based on ethnicity, as well as some of the characteristics of centres and of students themselves which may be associated with a high concentration of Roma students. One of the novel elements of this study compared with other similar studies is precisely the fact that it provides information on a greater number of centres with Roma pupils, on a significant number of students (6,563 Roma students out of a total of 75,804 students), and on school careers according to the type of centre attended.

We also include some references to the previous study, part of the European No-Segregation project, which reinforce some of the trends observed. In the case of Spain, the study was based on a survey of the FSG's staff in the field of education, as well as on interviews with professionals in educational centres and administrative bodies where innovative methods and practices may have been implemented to combat school segregation.



2.1. School characteristics and the social context

FIGURE 1. COMPOSITION OF SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE

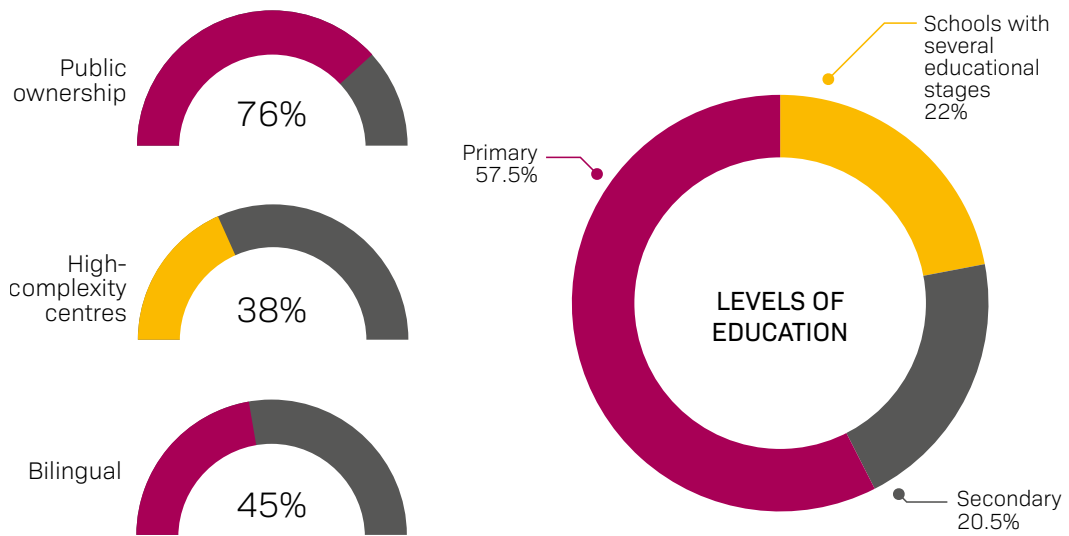
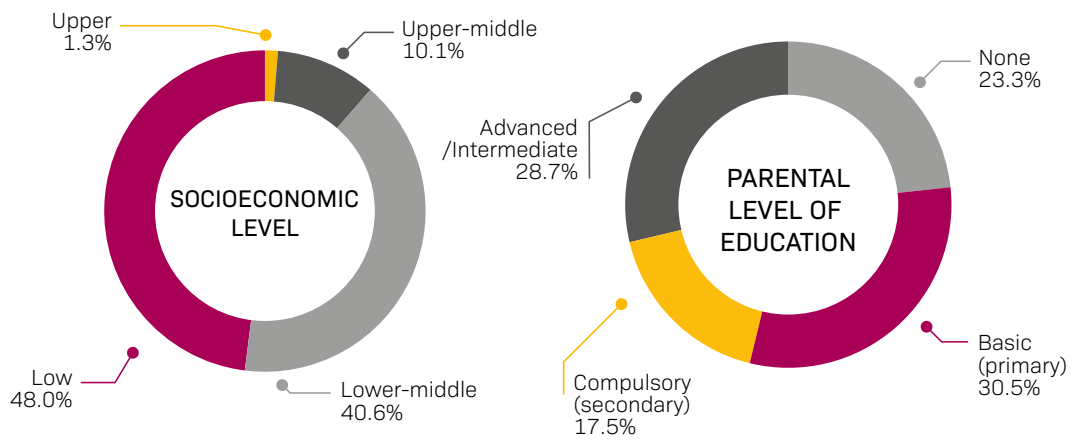


FIGURE 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES AND THE AREAS SURROUNDING SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE



N. DIRECTORS WHO THINK THAT EXISTS RESIDENTIAL CONCENTRATION



1/3 of directors indicate a mismatch between student body composition and neighbourhood composition.

If we examine these socioeducational characteristics in relation to different levels of concentration of Roma students in centres, we can obtain a clear **profile of a segregated centre**. It is typically a public infant and primary school, small in size (fewer than 200 pupils), considered to be underperforming, not offering bilingual education, with extracurricular activities funded mainly by external organisations, with students in very precarious socioeconomic circumstances and families with no education or a low level of education.

Centre type is key to understanding where Roma students are to be found: all infant/primary schools and secondary schools which are '**concertados**' (privately-owned centres which receive an educational subsidy from the public authorities) **have percentages of Roma pupils of below 15%**. Meanwhile, among publicly-owned schools, twice as many infant/primary schools as secondary schools have a concentration of more than 40%. The greatest difference is found at extreme levels of segregation (more than 60%), a category in which there is clearly a greater number of primary schools. Public schools with several educational stages in their organisational structure also have very high levels of concentration, although the data are not very consistent as this type of school is rare. However, it is worth noting that although only 8.8% of these integrated schools are public, most integrated schools with levels of concentration of more than 60% are public ones.

Apart from these characteristics related to the centres, there are also contextual factors related to students which can have a greater or lesser impact on their schooling: the socioeconomic level of the family and neighbourhood, their cultural capital, the residential composition of the area they live in, and so on. Although it must be borne in mind that survey responses depend on the perceptions of those surveyed, certain trends stand out which have also been observed in other studies of segregation, including the study carried out by the FSG as part of the European No-Segregation project:

- » **The relationship between poverty and segregation appears to be confirmed:** in centres with a concentration greater than 30%, there are no families of medium or high socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic level of the families in the study sample is generally low, with few cases for whom the level is high, but those that do appear in the sample attend centres where concentration is below 29%.
- » **An increase in level of concentration goes hand in hand with a decrease in parental levels of education.** In the centres with a concentration of more than 40%, 90% of families have primary education as a maximum level. This is double the proportion found in schools with concentration levels below 30%.

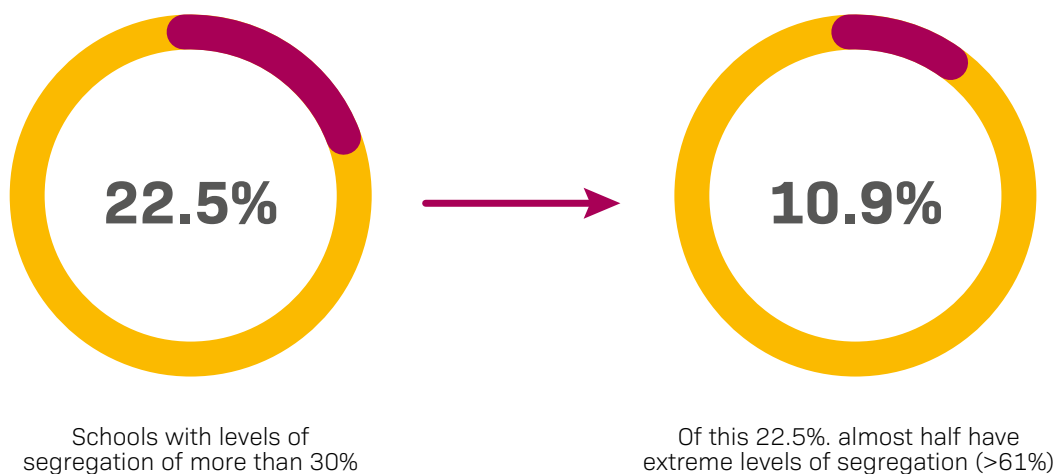
- » With a **greater level of segregation comes an increased perception of a high residential concentration** of Roma families in the area surrounding the centre. However, it should be noted that half of the centres with concentration levels below 30% also believe that there are high levels of Roma population in the neighbourhood, **even though this has not translated into high levels of enrolment** at the centre. This perception is particularly common in Madrid: 69% of centres with a concentration lower than 30% believe that levels are high. A similar pattern is seen in Valladolid (52.6%).

2.2. Educational segregation in figures

2.2.1. Centres of education

94.3% of centres which answered the questionnaire have some Roma pupils. Only 11 (5.7%) have no Roma students at all. Focusing on the former group, the majority have levels of concentration below 15%, **although 22.5% of centres have concentration levels of more than 30%. Within this latter group, 10.9% have an extreme level of segregation, above 61%.**

FIGURE 3. PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS WITH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CONCENTRATION OF ROMA STUDENTS



These average figures across centres are different from city to city. Madrid, Alicante and Barcelona are the cities with the lowest percentages of concentration, although it is worth remembering that the sample size in the latter two cities is very small. In the case of Madrid (6% with more than 30%), we must not forget that the analysis does not cover the whole region. There are neighbourhoods in the city with significant pockets of Roma population, such as Villaverde, which do not form part of the sample. **The Andalusian cities are those with the highest proportions of segregated centres**, with concentrations of more than 61% (25% in Almería and 23% in Seville).

54% of the centres with an actual concentration of 16-29% believe that there is a high concentration of Roma pupils at the centre. This **mismatch between perception and reality** seems to be especially marked in Alicante and above all in Madrid, where a third of the schools which consider there to be segregation in fact have concentration levels below 30%.

2.2.2. Roma students

In total, the educational centres have given information on the schooling of 6,563 Roma pupils out of a total of 75,804 pupils, meaning that Roma pupils represent **8.7% of the student body**.

The distribution of Roma students with respect to the total varies considerably from one city to another, as can be seen in Figure 4.

Madrid, Valladolid and Seville represent 71% of the Roma students in the sample.

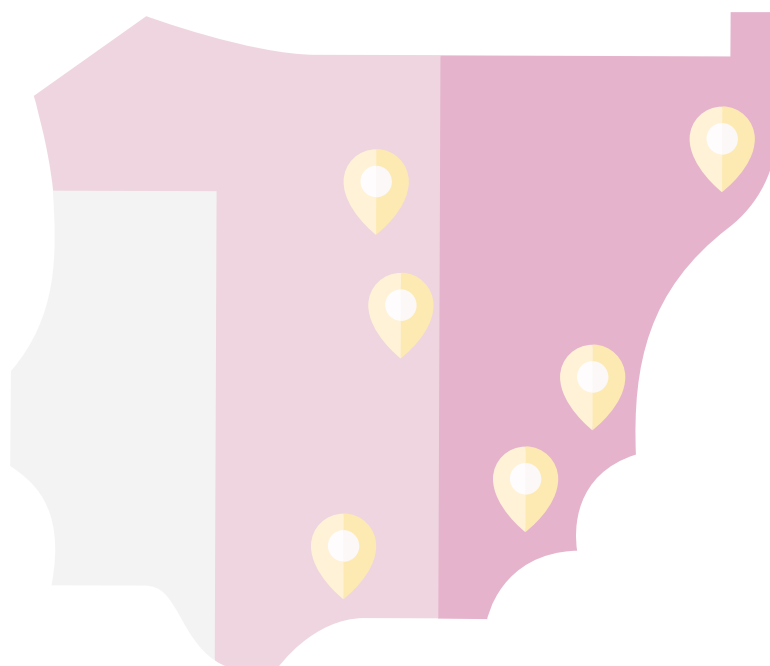
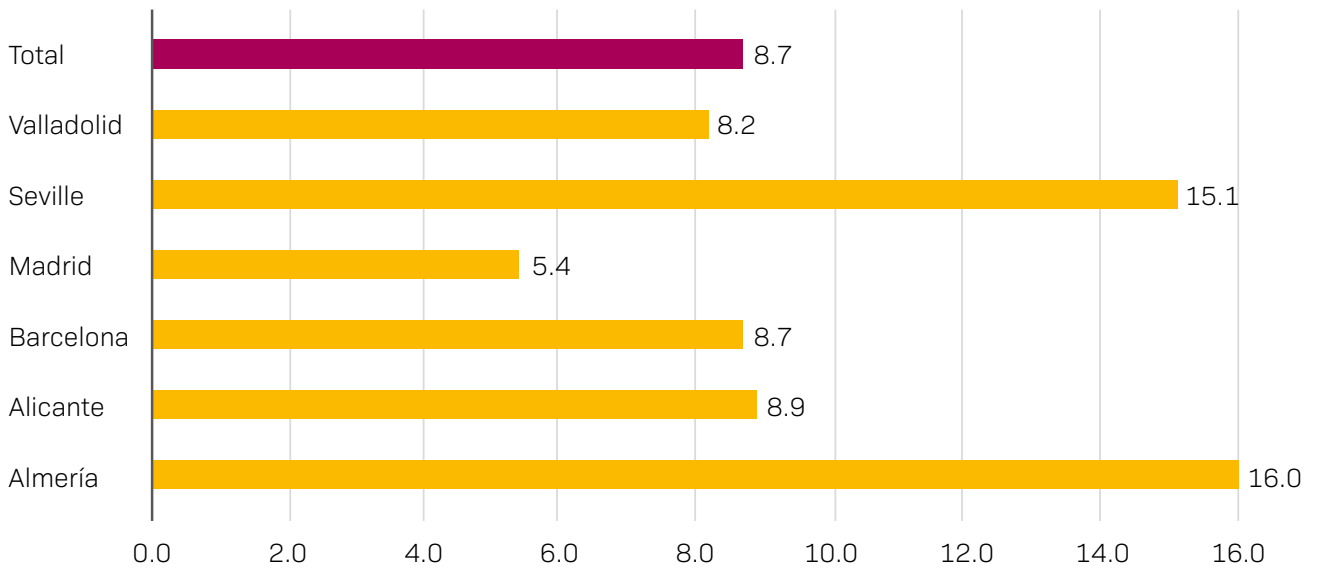
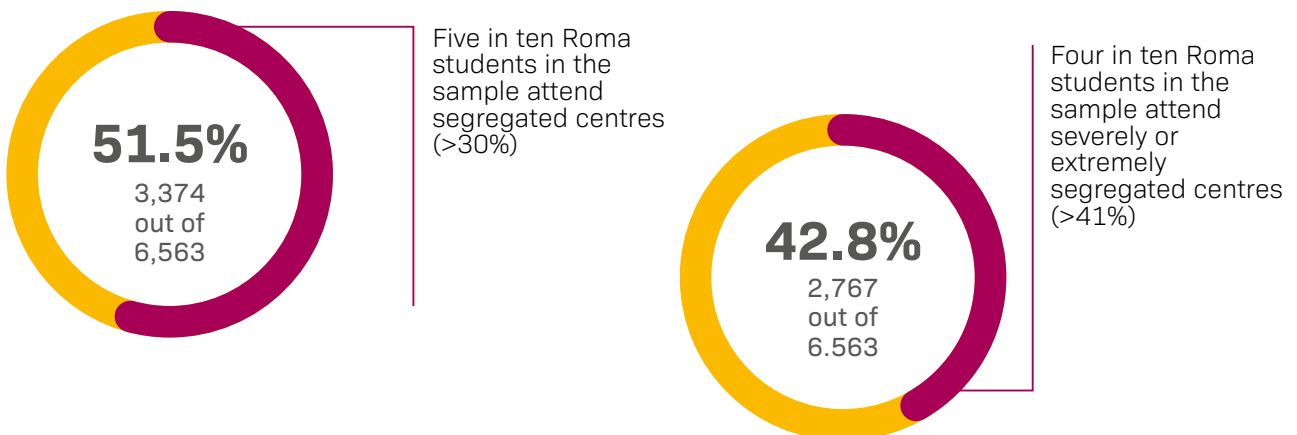


FIGURE 4. ROMA PUPILS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE STUDENT BODY IN THE CENTRES SAMPLED IN EACH CITY (%)



According to the data, **a little more than half of the Roma pupils are in segregated centres, with concentration levels of more than 30%** (3,374 students). And out of the total amount of Roma pupils in the sample, **42.8%** (2,767 students) is in centres with severe or extreme levels of segregation (more than 41%). Only 28.8% of Roma pupils are in centres with concentration levels below 15% (1,864 students).

FIGURE 5. DISTRIBUTION OF ROMA STUDENTS BY LEVEL OF CONCENTRATION



Within these global data, there are differences by region. Madrid is the only region where the proportion of Roma students attending schools with low or no concentration (under 15%) is above 55%, followed by Valladolid with 31.7%. In other regions the proportion is below 25%, and as low as 6.8% in Seville.

The case of Madrid is paradigmatic as, despite having some of the **highest rates of socioeconomic segregation in Europe** (Martínez & Ferrer, 2018, Ferrer & Gortázar, 2021), it is one of the regions analysed in this study which were found to have the **lowest rates of ethnic segregation**. Almost 60% of Roma students are studying in centres with levels of concentration below 15%. This is probably a consequence of the size of the centres analysed (there are very few small centres), which contributes to Roma pupils being less visible. Another contributing factor may be the policies aimed at rehousing Roma people living in slum settlements which have been in operation since the 1990s (with the proportion living in such settlements decreasing from 13% in 2007 to 7% in 2015 (FSG-MSCBS, 2018)). What is worth highlighting about this region is the fact that, as well as perceiving greater ethnic segregation than exists in reality, it also has a **rather polarised distribution of Roma students**. The majority of the most segregated centres in Madrid have an almost exclusively Roma student body, while in other cities with higher overall levels of segregation, students of other profiles (principally immigrants) are found alongside Roma pupils. In Madrid's segregated centres there is very little student diversity, the majority being Roma.

2.3. SCHOOL CAREERS AND RESULTS

2.3.1. School careers

Do students in segregated centres have academic careers which extend beyond compulsory secondary education? Looking at the distribution across academic years, and bearing in mind that we cannot follow individual academic careers given that this is a cross-sectional study rather than a longitudinal one, the data obtained seem to indicate that they do not. For the entire student body (Roma and non-Roma) there is a significant drop-off in the numbers continuing in school from the fourth year of compulsory secondary education onwards, and enrolment in later years of education is infrequent. Longer academic careers do exist, with pupils in Baccalaureate and intermediate-level vocational training, but this

is seen only in schools with several educational stages. There are too few cases to draw any firm conclusions, but attending a single centre for their entire academic career, and not having to change centre, does seem to influence students towards continuing onto post-compulsory education; at least, it makes it easier, even if the centre has a high level of concentration (over 40%).

This, while true for students in general, does not seem to be the pattern for Roma students. The trend we have observed is that in the most segregated centres, Roma students continue to attend school until the 3rd year of compulsory secondary education in secondary schools, and until the 4th year in schools with several educational stages. However, **there are no Roma students who go on to post-compulsory education in the most segregated centres, whether secondary or integrated.**

For Roma pupils, **there is a greater likelihood of going onto post-compulsory education if their schooling takes place in centres with low or no concentration**, or with concentration levels between 15% and 30%. Presumably, the transition will generally involve a move to a non-segregated centre, with the dropout rate very likely to be **almost 100% among students continuing in segregated centres**, given the most recent information on qualifications in compulsory secondary education or at higher levels (in 2018, 17.36% of the Roma population had qualifications in secondary compulsory education or at a higher level (ISEAK-FSG, 2019)).

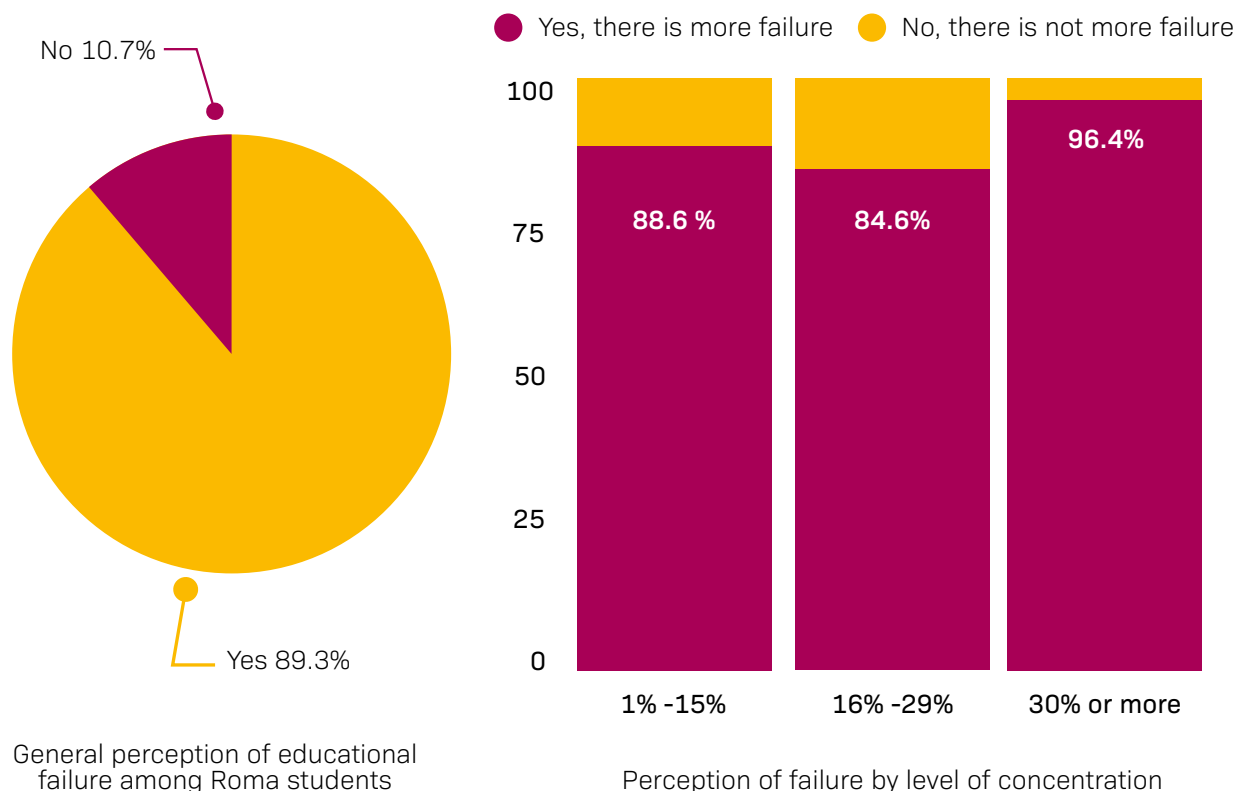
2.3.2. School results

We asked about centres' **perceptions** of trends in Roma pupils' academic results over the last three years, with reference to variables defining educational failure (dropout, repetition of school years, failure to graduate from compulsory secondary education) as well as educational success (focusing mainly on the transition into secondary education and the completion of compulsory secondary education). As well as measuring this perception in qualitative terms (centres were asked if they thought there was a significant level of failure, for example more repetitions or dropouts than among other pupils) the study also created **estimated indicators of results**, with questions included on the estimated percentages of Roma pupils who had passed their school year, dropped out or repeated a year in the last three years.

A large majority of centres believe that Roma students have higher rates of educational failure (89.3%).

FIGURE 6. PERCEPTION OF CENTRE MANAGERS OF EDUCATIONAL FAILURE AMONG ROMA STUDENTS

Do you believe that there are higher rates of educational failure (repetition, dropout and failure to complete the final year) among Roma students than among other students?



Among centres with lower levels of concentration or no concentration, there is a more favourable perception of results (12.1% believe that there is not more failure), while among the more **segregated centres, this positive perception is much less frequent** (3.6%).

The reasons they give to explain their belief that failure is more common among Roma students are related mainly to a low value being placed on education and a low level of family involvement (41%) and to absenteeism or irregular attendance in class (20%). There are 2.5% who believe that it is due to early marriage or to girls working in the home. 3.4% believe that it is due to an educational system which is poorly adapted to their needs or to a lack of integration under the current model, in which no content related to the Roma community is included on the curriculum.

2.3.3. Transition to secondary education

The average percentage of Roma primary pupils who go on to the first year of secondary education is 68%, but only **42% do so with a curricular level which allows them to participate with a reasonable likelihood of success** in secondary school.

In the case of compulsory secondary education, **the average percentage of Roma pupils graduating from this stage of education in the last three years is 15.25%**, and 84% of centre managers estimate that the proportion graduating in this period is below 25%.

If we look at these data broken down by levels of concentration, segregated centres appear to have a higher percentage graduating compared with non-segregated centres. In fact, the average estimated percentage graduating from compulsory secondary education according to centre managers is clearly higher in centres with segregation levels of more than 40%, owing principally to the large proportion of students attending schools with several educational stages, whose results in terms of graduation are somewhat better than those of secondary-only centres.

These data differ from what was observed when centres were asked for their perceptions of educational failure. This is something we will attempt to explain at the end of this section, as the same pattern is observed for school dropout.

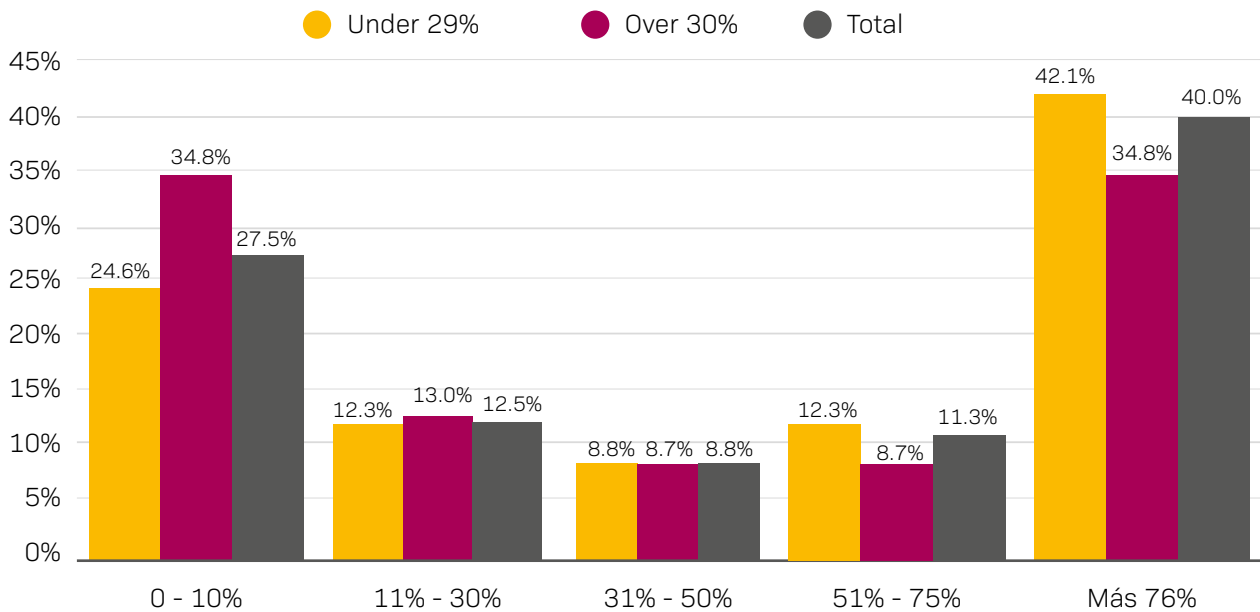
2.3.4. School dropout

70.7% of centres have had Roma students who have dropped out of education in the last three years. This percentage is markedly higher in segregated centres (83% of those with a concentration level of more than 30%, compared with 69.6% of those with lower concentrations). Again, we can see here a discrepancy between the number of centres which say that they have experienced dropouts and the quantified rate of dropout (estimated percentage). There seems to be a greater perception of dropout in the most segregated centres, while the estimated numerical proportion is lower in these centres than in centres with concentration levels below 30% (Figure 7).

Levels of dropout are generally high, especially in the second year of secondary education, except in post-compulsory education where the dropout rate is very low. A quarter of centres have dropout rates above 95% over the course of the entire compulsory phase of education, especially in compulsory secondary education.

The dropout rate in primary school is very low, but boys drop out more often before the sixth year while girls drop out in the sixth year of primary and the first year of secondary education (during the transition period).

FIGURE 7. PERCENTAGE OF ROMA STUDENTS WHO DROP OUT* DURING THE YEARS OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION BY PERCENTAGE OF CONCENTRATION (UNDER 29% - OVER 30%)



*Percentage of dropping out in the last three years, estimated by centre managers

2.3.5. Repetition of school years

Repetition of school years is even more frequent than dropping out. **79.3% of centres have a significant number of Roma students who have repeated a year** in the last three years.

In the compulsory phases of education, according to 56% of those interviewed, more than 76% of Roma students repeat a year. Meanwhile, only 7% of those interviewed reported that repetition rates of Roma students were under 10%.

Furthermore, this **repetition by Roma students occurs mainly in primary school**, even before reaching the 6th year. There are no significant differences by sex, with practically the same proportions of boys and girls being affected. In general, students who pass the 2nd year of compulsory secondary education are more likely to continue studying, at least until the 4th year. The data in this study suggest that there is no significant repetition either in Basic Vocational Training or in the second phase of secondary education.

2.3.6. What do these results suggest?

Once past the second year of compulsory secondary education, a key year in terms of both dropout and repetition, the continuation of Roma students within the educational system becomes more certain.

There is a mismatch between centres' perceptions of educational failure and the estimated percentage of student failure observed in the centres. Segregated centres (>30%) tend to perceive more failure than centres which have lower levels of concentration, but the estimated data relating to school graduation and to dropout are slightly better in the most segregated centres (with slightly lower rates of dropout and slightly higher rates of graduation). This does not mean that results in segregated centres are better per se; what the greater perception of failure by the teaching staff may suggest is that behind these figures is a tendency to adapt the curriculum and restrict it to very basic content, which then makes it difficult to progress successfully to post-compulsory education. This would appear to be confirmed by the fact that **there are no students in post-compulsory education** in the centres with higher levels of segregation, whether these are schools with several educational stages or secondary schools. In the most segregated centres, it could be that Roma students are graduating without attaining the curricular level necessary to prepare for post-compulsory education.

In light of the study data, along with the factors we have already noted, we could suggest some further factors which may help to explain this dissonance:

- » **A greater dispersal of students can lead to lower visibility of failure.** Larger centres and/or centres with smaller numbers of Roma students may not have a clear view of their levels of educational failure or success at the centre. It is one thing to have 80 Roma students, of whom 25 pass to the next year, in a centre with 90 students in total; but quite another to have 10 Roma students, of whom 3 pass to the next year, in a centre with 1,000 students in total. It is possible that in the latter case, the perception of a centre manager will be more positive, because the visibility of the Roma students is lower.
- » The **definition of educational failure** used by centres. The most segregated centres may not be looking only at figures for remaining or continuing onto to later years at the centre, but also at the quality of the qualifications obtained, as mentioned earlier.
- » The greater **effect of the school's organisation compared with the effect of segregation**. In the case of schools with several educational stages, where the entire school careers of students can best be observed, dropout may be less frequent because grouping all stages of schooling in one centre has positive effects for students, who do not have to change centre when making the transition to secondary education. This factor, examined in various studies, may have a greater effect in reducing dropout than segregation has in increasing it.

2.4. ZONING POLICIES AND SCHOOL ACCESS CRITERIA

Having examined centre's composition and context, the next step is to ask whether the administrative procedures implemented by regional authorities to manage access to centres have an influence on the existence of segregated centres. Most of the literature around this topic focuses on the influence on school segregation of the criteria for centre choice and access. These can create a vicious circle from which is difficult for families in situations of vulnerability to escape, given that they have fewer resources enabling them to make a choice.

As seen in our study, currently it is very infrequent that measures are taken to distribute students in situations of vulnerability across different centres, or to reduce the proportions of such students in classrooms. In the few cases where such measures are applied, there is a greater trend towards distributing students across centres with low or high levels of concentration (but not segregation), while measures to reduce proportions in classrooms are more common in centres with severe or extreme segregation. Even so, more than one third (38%) of centre managers **express the opinion that these measures are having no effect on the most vulnerable students**. This was also suggested by the European project mentioned earlier.

The most common way to manage access to education is the single zone (59% of responses), which suggests a greater freedom for families to choose the centre which suits them best according to their own criteria. Only in the case of a very few centres of primary education (12%) are pupils obliged to go on to a particular centre of secondary education.

The level of concentration of Roma students influences the way in which centres are accessed, especially when it comes to the transition to secondary education. Among centres with higher levels of segregation, there is a greater percentage of public schools, a greater mismatch with the demographic composition of the surrounding area, and a greater proportion of enrolment at associated secondary schools (centres which are linked to a particular primary school, which means that the school place is guaranteed).

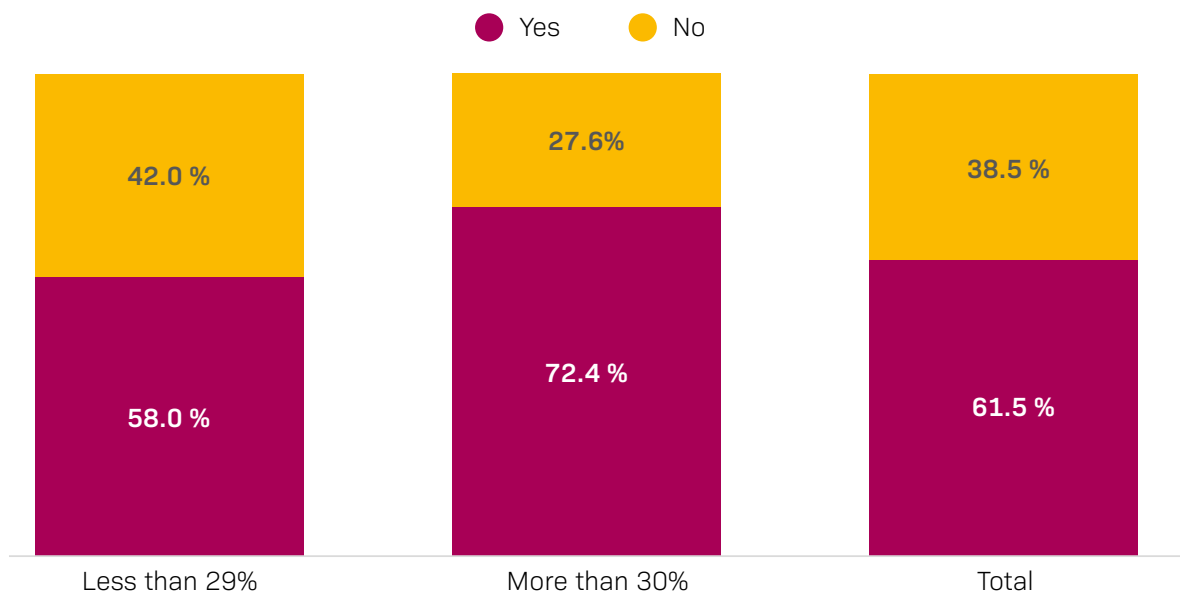
This last point is interesting, because the way in which segregation in some centres is maintained is often related to the association of a secondary school with certain primary 'feeder' schools, and to the restricted scope for decision-making by families. If a group of students attend a primary school with a high level of segregation and then they all go on to the associated secondary school, the situation is perpetuated and "little can be done about it". We can observe that in non-segregated centres, the possibility of going to a secondary school other than the associated one is greater (25.5%) than in centres with higher levels of

concentration (10%). **The scope for families to opt for a different secondary school when the pupil has attended a non-segregated primary school is therefore greater** than when the pupil has attended a segregated primary. It is difficult to uncover the motivations behind such family decisions through a survey such as this one; it could be for example that the families are better informed, that the group has less influence, or that there is more trust in the system.

Regarding admissions criteria, these vary little between centres. The most important criteria are: *having **siblings at the centre, living or working close to the centre and applying to the centre as first choice***. The only difference is that in public schools more weight is given to criteria such as being a minimum income recipient or applying to the centre as first choice, while in the ‘concertados’ (privately owned but state-subsided schools), slightly more weight is given to the centre’s philosophy or the interest of families in specific educational programmes. In centres with levels of concentration below 30%, much more variation in criteria is seen than in those with higher levels of segregation.

Another interesting point is that 61% of centres do not fill all their places at the start of the school year, which means that the majority (59.5%) see significant additional enrolments during term-time, once the academic year is underway. This is known as ‘matrícula viva’ (ongoing enrolment) and it is a factor which has a direct influence on school segregation. A greater proportion of segregated centres which **do not fill their places at the normal time see significant additional enrolments** than of non-segregated centres or centres with segregation levels below 30% (a 15-percentage-point difference).

FIGURE 8. INFLUENCE OF LEVEL OF CONCENTRATION OF ROMA STUDENTS ON ADDITIONAL ENROLMENTS (OUTSIDE THE NORMAL PERIOD)



2.5. WORKING METHODOLOGIES AND INNOVATION

The majority of centres have a large percentage of Roma students who need specific forms of educational support (84%), although these needs are of many different types.

The **most frequent type of support is support in ordinary groups (20.4% of responses), followed by splitting of groups and flexible grouping.** There are several differences by level of concentration:

- » **Less than 30%:** more frequent curricular adaptations, support in ordinary groups, and learning and performance improvement programmes (PMAR).
- » **More than 30%:** above all, flexible groupings, but also splitting of groups and certain personalised programmes according to the circumstances of each pupil.

Only **8%** of centres have **specific groupings** of Roma students established, and of those, the majority (72%) apply flexible grouping.

In terms of innovation, **20%** of segregated centres **are or have been engaged in a specific project to combat segregation.**

In centres with proportions of more than 15%, there is a greater likelihood of it being the **administrative authorities** which have implemented innovative projects. There is also a **greater degree of collaboration with other centres**, generally through professional networks. In the case of centres with less than 15% Roma students which are engaged in this type of project, these projects tend to originate from the centre itself more often than in the case of centres with a higher concentration.

In segregated centres, methods associated with Project-Based Learning (27%) and technological innovation (18%) have particular importance. Learning Communities are particularly important in centres with severe and extreme levels of segregation (40%+).

These projects have had a direct **beneficial impact** on the students involved in them, improving in particular the school climate, educational inclusion, performance and attendance. However, they **have had very little impact in terms of attracting students of other profiles to the centre to create greater diversity.** This was also a recurring theme in the earlier European study.

3. KEY FINDINGS

The most significant results set out below relate to sampled centres with Roma pupils (138) and to the Roma students about whom the centres have provided information (6,563 out of a total of 75,804 student (8.6%)). The data are exploratory in nature and are presented as an indication of the processes and trends which may be behind the patterns of segregation of Roma students.

- 1.** In absolute terms, the number of centres with a high concentration of Roma students is not very large; we may be talking about 1%-1.3% of the total number of centres with segregation based on ethnicity. However, if we focus on Roma students, they form one of the groups most affected by school segregation, above even those affected by segregation on the basis of their socioeconomic conditions. In this study, segregation affects half of Roma students, or 70% if we focus on centres with levels of concentration of more than 15%. **Ethnic origin is a factor which shapes and aggravates poor socioeconomic conditions.** This finding coincides with what has been found by a number of writers who affirm the existence of a specific ethnic segregation, linked to other types of segregation such as socioeconomic segregation, which finds a social expression with a harmful impact on the most vulnerable people.
- 2.** There is a tendency to **overestimate the number** of Roma students in classrooms. Many schools with levels of segregation below 30% believe (perceive) that the number of Roma students is high, probably owing to the difficulties it presents to them and the inadequate training they have received to inform their teaching of these students.
- 3.** Roma students have **very short school** careers if they attend segregated centres, tending to drop out in the second year of compulsory education in secondary schools, and in the fourth year in schools with several educational stages, although there is a very small percentage who manage to complete compulsory secondary education, especially in integrated centres. In fact, Roma students **are more likely to go on to post-compulsory education if they attend non-segregated centres.** Dropping out before the completion of compulsory education and repeating a school year are both experiences which are particularly likely for Roma students. Indeed, these situations may reinforce each other given that, as shown in various studies, a high number of repetitions leads to higher dropout. This particularly affects the most vulnerable students, given that repetition has a social origin.
- 4.** **The scope for families to make decisions regarding their choice of centre** when pupils have attended a segregated primary school **is less** than if they had attended a non-segregated primary, or one with a low concentration. This supports the idea, found in the literature, that having a large scope for choice does

not always mean that assignation to centres is equitable. The most socioeconomically vulnerable families, with the least social and financial capital, tend to be those who more often choose centres close to where they live. If, in addition, there are associated secondary schools close by, the starting situation of the primary school ends up being reproduced in the associated secondary school. Added to this are the admissions criteria, which place a lower weight on socioeconomic circumstances than on other factors, and some of which are arbitrarily defined by the centres themselves.

- 5.** The implementation of **innovative projects/measures** to combat segregation, both by some public authorities and some centres of education, does not seem to be generating visible solutions across segregated schools considered as a collective, although there are some models of success at an individual level:
 - a.** There are very few centres which have applied measures to redistribute students or to reduce ratios, but **one third** of the centres which have applied them **believe that they are not having any effect on the most vulnerable students.**
 - b.** 20% of segregated centres which are or have been engaged in a specific project to combat segregation observe a clear positive impact on the students involved (in terms of improving school climate, educational inclusion, performance and attendance). However, this **has not translated into a greater ability to attract students of other profiles to the centre to generate greater diversity.**

The lack of a legislative response and the composition effect (i.e., the effect of school composition on student performance), along with the “flight” from these schools of other social groups with greater purchasing power (white flight) are factors which have been extensively studied. These factors could explain the difficulty encountered in attempting to reverse the situation of segregated centres, despite the implementation of innovative methodologies and even of some *ad hoc* regulatory measures, as seen for example in Catalonia, Valencia, and Castile and León. All these measures have only recently been implemented, which may explain why their effects are not yet visible and may suggest that more time is needed before substantial transformations can be achieved.

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