


# Aging Migration in Argentina: The Passage of Time as an Analytical Dimension

## Las vejeces migrantes en Argentina: el paso del tiempo como clave analítica

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**Abstract:** This article examines the long-term effects of migration with two aims. Firstly, to reconstruct how the aging of migrant populations has been approached academically in different contexts and locations. Secondly, to analyze social security legislation in Argentina to identify the main limitations faced by the South American migrant population when accessing certain rights. Using a qualitative approach that combines bibliographic and documentary analysis, this study contends that South American immigrants with precarious and informal jobs face limited capabilities for coping with the aging process. These limitations are further exacerbated by public policies that fail to consider their unique life and work experiences, thus denying them access to social security benefits.

**Key words:** migration, aging, social security policies, vulnerability, Argentina.

**Resumen:** Este artículo apunta a reflexionar sobre los efectos de largo plazo en las migraciones. Se propone dos objetivos: en primer lugar, reconstruir el modo en que la cuestión del envejecimiento de las poblaciones migrantes ha sido abordada académicamente en distintos contextos y latitudes. En segundo lugar, y considerando el caso argentino, analizar las legislaciones orientadas a la seguridad social para identificar las principales limitaciones que encuentra la población migrante de origen sudamericano, para acceder a determinados derechos. Con base en una metodología cualitativa que combina el análisis bibliográfico y de documentos, se sostiene que las poblaciones migrantes sudamericanas, cuyos trabajos son precarios e informales, tienen capacidades limitadas para hacer frente al envejecimiento. Limitaciones que se ven potenciadas por la existencia de políticas públicas que no contemplan las

particularidades de sus trayectorias vitales y laborales en el país, y restringen el acceso a los beneficios previsionales.

**Palabras clave:** migración, envejecimiento, políticas de seguridad social, vulnerabilidad, Argentina.

## Introduction

The article aims to explore the long-term effects of migration, with a focus on analyzing the temporalities experienced by migrants (Mercier *et al.*, 2021). The study of *time and its passage* has been largely overlooked in the field of migration studies, making it an important area of investigation.

Sayad (2010) notes that representations of migrants often concentrate on the working world and economically active age groups, rendering migrant experiences beyond this generational boundary opaque and invisible. This article aims to address the issue of the aging of migrant populations in different contexts and latitudes. It has two specific objectives: first, to reconstruct the way in which this issue has been addressed academically; second, to analyze legislation and legal issues related to social security in the Argentine case. The main limitations encountered by this population in accessing certain rights will be identified.

The topic of aging migrant populations first emerged during our fieldwork in March 2020, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Migrant care workers with several years of residence in Argentina began to express concern about their uncertain future due to job loss in the informal economy and difficulties in ensuring their subsistence. During this period, individuals over the age of 60 were often classified as ‘at risk’, leading many to acknowledge their status as elderly for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

In June 2022, a community dining room in the city of Cordoba contacted us regarding Marina, a 65-year-old Peruvian migrant who attended the dining room and had no regular income. They asked if we knew of any state social program that Marina could access to alleviate her vulnerability. Marina has worked as a paid domestic worker since arriving in Argentina, always informally. Due to a precarious working life and social security policies that do not consider the difficulties faced by certain populations, such as migrants, Marina finds herself unprotected and unable to access a pension at her age. It is important to continue analyzing

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<sup>1</sup> Current perspectives in gerontology advocate for the use of the term ‘older adults’, redefining the negative connotations associated with the word ‘old’ in everyday language.

the experience of aging migrants in Argentina, considering the limited possibilities available to Marina.

The study of aging in migration requires some initial clarifications. When referring to 'older adults', 'older age', 'old age', or 'old', it is not just a matter of chronological age. Dividing populations into age cohorts based on childhood, youth, productive work, and retirement still serves as a framework for the social and political organization of the life cycle (Lulle and King, 2016: 3). However, it also refers to the implications of the passage of time when being a migrant. This definition considers aging as a biological, social, spatial, and culturally constructed process (King *et al.*, 2016). Old migrants are defined empirically as individuals over 60 years of age who have reached retirement age.

For several years, our research has analyzed the relationship between migration and work, particularly in the context of care. We have investigated the intersectional mechanisms of labor segregation, mobility, and circulation within the care sector, as well as the role of migrant women in these processes. Additionally, we have explored the concept of waiting time as a form of care, among other dimensions. However, we did not explore the effects of aging on the life experiences of migrants who remain in the country, particularly those who have worked in informal and precarious jobs and whose livelihoods are dependent on a day-to-day basis.

By 2020, 12.2% of the world's total migrant population was estimated to be over 60 years old (ONU DAES, 2020). In Latin America and the Caribbean, this percentage was 7.6%, while in Europe and North America it reached 16.2% and 15.7%, respectively. According to the same source, worldwide the number of older women among older migrants is higher than that of men (6.8% compared to 5.4%). Given these data, it is no coincidence that the little research found on the nexus between migration and aging is focused on movements to the global north. On the other hand, and as will be discussed in more detail in the following section, the link between old age and caregiving makes women the central protagonists of these jobs. Both locally and transnationally, they are the ones in charge of care tasks and who require care networks, generally made up of other women, often older, to support their own families. In this sense, the recent and growing feminization of migration, especially to the global North, highlights the central role of global care chains and the primary role of older women in them.<sup>2</sup>

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2 For additional information on global care chains, please refer to Hochschild's (2000) work.

Although these scenarios do not necessarily correspond to the specificities of the Argentine context, revisiting the way in which the aging of migrant populations has been addressed in other socio-historical frameworks will provide tools for reconstructing the particularities of this field of inquiry. In Argentina, for migrants of South American origin who have been living in the country for several decades, the main limitation to accessing social security benefits lies in the type of work they have done during their “active” working lives. Migrant populations whose jobs are precarious and informal have limited capacities to cope with aging. These limitations are reinforced by the existence of public policies which, as we shall see, do not take into account the particularities of the life and work trajectories of a large part of the migrant populations in the country, especially those coming from the countries of the region. Thus, the possibilities of rest and new projects that other privileged older populations can enjoy are blocked.

Following this framework, the article will be divided into three sections. The first section will review the most relevant antecedents on the subject in the local, regional, and global context, as well as their contributions to the development of a field of study that is still in its early stages. The aim is to contribute to the development of a line of inquiry within migration studies that considers the passage of time in migration as an analytical tool. The second section presents data on contemporary migration in Argentina, with a focus on the aging of the migrant population. The third section discusses the main limitations this population faces in accessing their rights, based on an analysis of current public policies for social security in the country.

### **What is the perception of old age in migration studies?**

As stated in the introduction, the study of the passage of time has not been adequately explored in the field of migration studies. The experiences of those who are economically excluded from the population become unclear, and their passivity in migration projects is assumed, as highlighted by those who work with migrant youth (García Borrego, 2006; Zenklusen, 2020). Additionally, the case of the elderly in migration contexts presents other issues. As Sayad (2001) points out, aging in destination societies challenges the legitimacy of the migrant condition, which is based on the assumption that migrants are only bodies for work, their stay is temporary, and they will eventually return to their home country. For societies in

the global north, the concept of growing old while being a migrant was considered implausible for many years (Temime, 2001). According to Samaoli (2011), the aging migrant population poses a burden on the societies they reside in. However, as they age in their destination countries, they seek access to social benefits, which has led to increased attention to the issue. Despite this, it remains a marginalized topic, likely due to the need to analyze it beyond the traditional categories of the field of study.

The case of France serves as an example of how the topic of aging arises in migration studies and its limitations. Madoui (2016) used Sayad's definitions to explore the sociological aspects of migrant aging. Unlike the extensive approach to the integration of migrants and their descendants, the issue of retirement and aging of migrants was long forgotten. This was due to the lack of interest generated by old migrants who have become 'unproductive' and the academic world's focus on the issue of integration. The French public authorities also neglected this issue.

However, this inattention is reversed when migrant elders are constituted and defined as a "problem" by the state that receives the migrations, which in turn causes the academic world to start paying attention to the issue (Madoui, 2016). Thus, since the turn of the millennium, there is a growing number of works that address the issue of migrant old age and their access to basic rights. In general terms, following Sayad (2001), studies point out that the time of retirement is often a time of deep reflection on the identity of old migrants who justified their stay in France by their status as workers (Madoui and Jaeger, 2015), while analyzing the conditions of old age, access to pensions, health care, specialized institutions and the conditions of the housing in which they live (Madoui, 2015). Thus, in the words of Plard, Martineau and Fleuret (2015), a gerontological reading of migration has been constructed in the academic world and among state actors attentive to this novel social issue.

In the case of Argentina, the topic of aging, trajectories, rights, and care for elderly migrants is not a prominent issue in the field of migration studies, nor is it part of the most vibrant topics of state agencies or migrant activism. This gap highlights the need for the background reconstruction exercise proposed in this section.

The following section addresses the main academic works analyzing the intersection between aging and migration, with a focus on Latin America. The search engines Scielo, Latindex, Google Scholar, and

Jstor were used, along with the following keywords (in addition to those related to migration): older adults, old people, old age, aging, retirement, grandmothers, and grandfathers. The purpose of this section is not to simply compile or exhaustively reconstruct the background, but rather to examine how old age and migrant aging are constructed in current research agendas. Therefore, we only consider previous works that have helped us move in the intended direction.

In migration contexts, there are two main lines of analysis regarding older migrants. The first approach considers the issue of local and transnational care, taking into account that people become more dependent as time goes by. The second approach analyzes the displacement of the elderly. Outside of these two groups, there are demographic studies that have analyzed the impact of migration on the aging processes of societies of origin. These studies take into account the bias in age and sex composition between those who leave and those who remain in the place of origin (Martínez Caballero and Montes de Oca Vargas, 2012; Cruz Manjarrez, 2023).

With the same perspective, we analyze the social and economic impact of international migration on the experience of older adults who have not moved. We point out the advantages of those who receive international remittances (Cruz Manjarrez, 2023). For the purposes of this article, we are interested in developing the first two groups. In third place, we include a particular set of works on the retirement of migrant domestic workers due to their significant connection to our research interests.

### *Cares, Migrations, and Elderliness*

In this line of inquiry, old age is typically considered a part of the aging process during which individuals become vulnerable and fragile (Samaoli, 2011: 68). One group of studies emphasizes the dependence of the elderly and the challenges they face in accessing social and health services in their destination societies. They highlight the psychological and physical suffering that older people experience in migration contexts (Torres Hernández and Arias López, 2019). The authors argue that migrant old age is characterized by specific health conditions due to displacement. They suggest that the nature of the jobs available to migrants, which are typically low-skilled and in worse conditions than those available to the native population, has a negative impact on their

health. This, in turn, makes their aging conditions more precarious (Plard *et al.*, 2015).

Sharing the view that old age requires greater attention, there are works that analyze the intersection between care, old age, and migration. One approach focuses on economically active age migrants and their connection with the elderly in both their societies of origin (as recipients of remittances and transnational care) and in their societies of destination. In the case of elderly care, migration intersects with the need for care work, both paid and unpaid, provided by migrants in the destination countries. Thus, the link between old age, care, and migration is based on migrant workers settling in the paid care sector. This subject has been extensively studied in recent decades, highlighting the role of migration in sustaining the aging processes of destination societies (e.g., Martínez Buján, 2005; Borgeaud Garcíandia, 2007). The second linkage, which has a more novel research agenda, focuses on the transnational practices that young migrants use to care for their elders in their societies of origin (Bastia and Calsina, 2022; Stefoni *et al.*, 2022).

Similar to studies on transnational care with a special focus on children, these approaches assume that caring for the elderly is possible despite geographical distance. However, they highlight that examining transnational families through the lens of aging can offer novel insights into intergenerational relationships. The article introduces an analysis of how the aging of parents affects the migratory projects of migrants and the specificities of transnational care for adults. This includes forms of care provided at a distance, such as managing problems and completing virtual procedures, as well as sending remittances. The article mainly associates the elderly with their role as care recipients.

However, there is additional research that emphasizes the active role that older individuals can play in care settings and their importance for family reproduction in transnational contexts (Díaz Gómez and Marroni, 2017). These approaches exhibit a clear gender bias and concentrate on migrant women as caregivers. The role of elderly individuals who remain in their country of origin, particularly women in their capacity as grandmothers, in transnational family arrangements has been extensively studied in various research projects (e.g. Bastia, 2009; Herrera, 2016; Bianchi Pernasilici *et al.*, 2017). These studies highlight the role of older women who stay behind as caregivers for migrants' children, guardians of the family, and managers of remittances and patrimony, particularly housing and land. Stefoni *et al.* (2022: 109) note that the elderly are

often 'reduced to the role of caregivers for children left behind in their countries of origin or as grandmothers who travel to help care for their grandchildren'.

In this case, it is noted that women migrate in order to facilitate family reproduction in transnational contexts. For instance, Díaz Gómez and Marroni (2017) analyzed the role of grandmothers who migrate to the United States to care for their grandchildren, which becomes a crucial element in the reproduction of migrant or reunified families. This article highlights the duality of grandmothers' caregiving roles as both caregivers and migrants seeking care for themselves. It emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to understanding their experiences.

In this way, it is emphasized that older migrants are not only recipients of care, but also providers of care, straining the representations of old age as a stage associated only with situations of dependency, vulnerability and unproductivity that sometimes filter into migration studies (Stefoni *et al.*, 2022). Thus, this research demonstrates that the elderly are active providers of care, and instead of a '*care drain*', there is a circulation of care where the elderly are both caregivers and care recipients (Stefoni *et al.*, 2022: 110).

In summary, the papers indicate that older individuals require more care, and that their access to care is hindered in migration contexts due to factors such as distance from unpaid caregivers, limited access to care policies in destination societies, and neglect and precariousness that often accompany their experiences as migrants. Likewise, older female migrants are often highlighted for their role as caregivers in transnational family structures. This dual role, as both caregiver and recipient of care, highlights the unique position of older migrants in personal and family care strategies.

### *Migration of Senior Citizens*

Another area of research examines the migration of older individuals. Specific motivations for these movements include retirement, seeking support, and family reunification (Campos and Barbieri, 2013). In the previous section, we discussed family reunification for elderly individuals in the context of caregiving. Generally, people migrate to wealthier countries to support their elderly family members through family reunification. The analysis of care provision has primarily focused on women, without providing enough detail on men. These displacements



are primarily motivated by family ties and the lack of public care institutions to support family reproduction strategies. This is a common scenario for the middle and lower classes in societies of the global south.

However, this study also analyzes movements motivated by other factors, such as those made by individuals seeking to age in a different country (Repetti and Bolzman, 2020), particularly in northern regions, or to return to their countries of origin (King *et al.*, 2016; Bolzman, 2018). In the first case, retirees from northern countries often relocate to areas with better weather, a more appealing lifestyle, new job prospects, and renewed social connections (King *et al.*, 2016).

Thus, these are migration projects that are not necessarily associated with the vulnerability of old age, as is the case with the movement of Swiss to Spain and Morocco analyzed by Repetti and Bolzman (2020). In general, they involve people who access social protection systems in their country of origin and use this income to sustain their stay abroad. Since these are countries with lower living costs, migration can also improve the quality of life for those with low pensions in their countries of origin. Therefore, old age, instead of being seen as the end of a journey, is considered a stage in which migration and life projects are renewed.

Lulle and King (2016) investigate the intersections between aging and migration from a gender perspective, based on research on older Latvian women in European countries. The authors aim to reveal how older women transform their lives through mobility. The study finds that these women challenge stereotypes about aging and migration by moving, finding work, and experiencing a sensual awakening. The study aims to demonstrate that Latvian women enhance their well-being, exercise their rights, and develop a sense of belonging to the places they have migrated to.

The analyzed forms of displacement include those associated with return migration, which has become a growing area of research in recent years. We concur with Sayad's (1999) view that return is an integral part of the migratory experience. The desire to return to one's country of origin permeates the entire migration process as a cherished idea that is often indefinitely postponed (Sayad, 1999). However, this research focuses on older adults who successfully return to their societies of origin. As with all issues related to population displacement and old age, the return of older adults is a new approach. Studies conducted in Mexico stand out in the region. The return of migrants is understood as a new stage of the migration system between Mexico and the United

States based on two types of trajectories. The first type includes migrants of advanced age who ended their working life in the United States and return to live their retirement with some type of pension. The second type includes elderly people returning in conditions of precariousness and austerity (Martínez Díaz Covarrubias, 2018).

In summary, these studies demonstrate that mobility is a viable option during old age. It is crucial to analyze the social protection systems in different societies, including their possibilities and the barriers that the migrant population faces, both for the elderly who return to their countries of origin and those who decide to grow old abroad.

### *Retirement of Migrant Workers in Private Households*

We have saved for the end of this section a group of studies that are crucial to our purposes. These studies address the aging of migrant domestic workers in Latin America. The significance of these studies lies in the importance of domestic work for migrant women in our country. Therefore, analyzing their conditions guides the forms of female aging. Additionally, these approaches intersect aging with the labor precariousness of some sectors of the workforce. Thus, it is necessary to adopt an intersectional perspective to understand that aging is not a universal experience and is influenced by factors such as gender, class, and nationality. This approach is widely accepted in academic literature and helps to avoid oversimplification and generalization. Moré (2019) notes that the aging of migrant women working in private homes is influenced by the precarious working conditions, long and intensive workdays, and physical demands required in these occupations. As this is a physically demanding job, age can become a hindrance to continuing work in the sector after a certain point. However, the challenges in accessing social benefits force many to continue working ‘until the body endures’ (González, 2016).

The research focuses on the subsistence of elderly individuals who lack benefits from formal employment. Women, in particular, face social disadvantages that accumulate throughout their lives, increasing their vulnerability in old age (González, 2016) and reinforcing the precariousness of their situation (Poblet, 2022). Poblet’s (2022) work highlights the challenges of caring for the body in this line of work, particularly over time. To fully comprehend the cases of Mexico and Spain, which are the focus of these investigations, it is essential to

analyze the interplay between migration laws, domestic work, and social protection, both at the national and transnational levels.<sup>3</sup> This normative context establishes the conditions for creating ‘retirement plans’ that enable migrant women to access social protection. It also leads to the development of various formal and informal strategies to sustain life during old age.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the approach to old age in migration studies has been influenced by the traditional deficit model of old age. This model emphasizes the unproductive nature of the elderly and the link between old age and illness (Otero, 2021). However, some researchers have found that older people’s commuting projects can provide them with agency, desires, and new purposes, and even lead to creative and collective strategies for coping with the challenges of accessing retirement in mobile contexts (Pedone and Alfaro, 2022). It is important to note that our focus is on South American migrants who are aging in Argentina, specifically those who have chosen or been unable to return to their home countries with long-term plans. While there is a precedent for migration aging from Europe in the country, it has not been adequately addressed in migration studies. Sala (2017) provides a quantitative analysis of the pension coverage of older border migrants in Argentina and the attributes of those who began to receive pension income between 2005-2012. The study finds that the ability to access pension income is dependent on an individual’s work history, density of contributions to the pension system, and the pension characteristics of their respective country.

In agreement with these contributions, it is important to emphasize that the majority of the South American population residing in Argentina has a long work history, even if it has been carried out in various locations. As Temime (2001) points out, the life of a migrant worker is conditioned, organized, and temporally marked by their work, and especially for women, by local or transnational unpaid care work. However, the right to retire from work, including access to retirement, is

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3 Transnational social protection includes benefits related to agreements and laws between different countries, whether bilateral or multilateral (Poblet, 2022). Additionally, as noted by Moré (2019), other transnational resources are available that are not provided by states but by markets, organizations, social networks, and families. Individuals and their families develop multisituated dynamics of mobility and immobility in search of social protection strategies (Parella and Speroni, 2018).

a complex issue with various challenges. As demonstrated by previous cases, access to the social protection system in the country of residence is crucial for the migratory paths of the elderly. One particular aspect of South-South migration is the high level of informality in labor markets at both origin and destination, which affects strategies in old age. Therefore, the following sections will focus on the case of Argentina and examine the primary regulations that impact the elderly migrant population residing in the country.

### **Old Age in Contemporary Argentina's Migration Landscape: A Data Analysis**

According to a November 2022 report from the National Registry of Persons (RENAPER), 87.1% of migrants in Argentina with a DNI came from a South American country, with the majority coming from Paraguay (29.7%) and Bolivia (21.7%). Peru (9.54%), Venezuela (7.27%), and Chile (6.98%)<sup>4</sup> were also represented. Of those from European countries, 2.93% were from Italy and 2.34% were from Spain (RENAPER, 2022). This data is relevant for our research as the population is aging and has not been renewed with the arrival of new migrants.

According to the report, there are 1,568,350 female and 1,465,430 male migrants. It is noteworthy that men predominate in the age range from 0 to 44 years, while women become more prevalent after the age of 45 due to their higher survival rate (RENAPER, 2022: 10). In terms of the geographic distribution of the migrant population, a significant portion is concentrated in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA) and, to a lesser extent, in the central provinces of Cordoba and Santa Fe.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) published a report on the pension coverage of migrant populations over 60 years of age in Argentina. The report warns that coverage is high, exceeding 90% for all groups except Latin American migrants (Lieutier, 2022: 49). Pension coverage is particularly high for migrants of European origin

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<sup>4</sup> The migration of South American women and men to Argentina is mainly motivated by the search for work and the possibility of social progress for their families through access to rights such as education and public health. Additionally, the ease of access to regular migration to South American countries has been highly valued since the beginning of this century, in contrast to other countries in the region. Finally, migration networks have played a significant role in providing feedback on the process since the late 1990s.

who arrived in Argentina around the middle of the 20th century and aged in the country. According to Lieutier (2022), pension coverage varies significantly among different nationalities of migrants. While Spanish and Italian nationals have a coverage of 97% and 98%, respectively, Paraguayan, Peruvian, Venezuelan, and Bolivian nationals have much lower coverage rates of 71%, 46%, 64%, and 69%, respectively. Additionally, the document notes that women have higher pension coverage than men across all population groups.

The disparities in social security coverage access among South American migrants can be attributed to several factors, including the prevalence of informal work trajectories among this population, both at their origin and destination. According to IOM data from 2019 (Beharán, 2019), the migrant population in the region had higher rates of unregistered work compared to the non-migrant population, with 45% of migrants and 28% of non-migrants engaged in such work. These data refer to the types of activities that bring together the majority of South American migrant women and men: commerce (21%), construction (18%), and domestic work (17%). These jobs are characterized by their informality and instability. The jobs in which migrants of South American origin are primarily employed have both short-term and long-term effects. These effects relate not only to the daily difficulties they face in sustaining their own and their families' lives but also to their future prospects.

However, while both men and women face barriers to accessing social security benefits, the pension system perpetuates gender inequalities that stem from labor market segregation. According to Petrone and Baliña (2022: 3), gender gaps in participation and career paths result in gender disparities in the pension system. According to Petrone and Baliña (2022: 4), contributory pension schemes unintentionally perpetuate labor market inequalities. These inequities manifest in labor segregation processes that limit the labor market opportunities of certain social groups by concentrating them in specific types of jobs and excluding them from others. Magliano and Mallimaci Barral (2021: 393) support this view. Gender, in intersection with race, ethnicity, national origin, and age, is an explanatory factor for labor segregation. As argued in another paper, the intersection of these social classifications conditions and predisposes migrants, affecting their migratory forms, opportunities for labor market insertion, and present and future access to rights (Magliano and Mallimaci Barral, 2021).

Although some measures have been introduced since 2005 to universalize the pension system and expand coverage to a large percentage of the elderly (Apella, 2022: 12), the migrant population from the countries of the region has less social security coverage due to two main reasons: their type of insertion in the labor market and the limitations that the legislation generates for accessing social security benefits.

In the following section, we will discuss the primary challenges faced by this population in obtaining retirement or pension benefits effectively. This will be based on an analysis of the current public policies on social protection and social security benefits in Argentina.

### **Migration, Old Age, and Social Security in Argentina**

Based on collecting and analyzing current legislation regarding migrant populations and social security within the national framework<sup>5</sup>, this section focuses on examining how the State perceives and addresses migrant aging. While Argentina does not undergo a population aging process similar to that of countries in the global north, it is a trend gaining increasing sociodemographic significance in the local context. As Otero suggests (2020: 10), “population aging resulting from decisive demographic transition transformations became a progressively visible problem since World War II, eventually becoming one of the central themes on the current demographic agenda, both in developed and developing countries.” In this vein, according to a 2021 RENAPER report, “population aging in Argentina became clearly visible since 1970 when the population over 60 years old exceeded 7% of the total population” (RENAPER, 2021: 11). This same report records a process of feminization of demographic aging in Argentina, represented by femininity indices of 135 women per 100 men aged 60 and older.

As previously stated, the aging process occurs under unequal conditions, as not all individuals reach this stage of life with the same level of social protection. Differential conditions are influenced by factors such as labor and family trajectories during the economically active phase, gender, and non-national status.

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5 Among the laws and decrees mentioned are Law 25,871 on Migration; Law 24,241 of 1993 on the Integrated Retirement and Pension System; Law 25,994 of 2004 on pension moratoriums; Decree 582/2003; Decree 1454/2005; Decree 475/2021; and Law 27705 of 2023 on the Provisional Debt Payment Plan.

Argentina currently has broad pension coverage based on a social security system made up of a contributory and a non-contributory pillar. As summarized by Lieutier (2022), the contributory pillar is based on the Argentine Integrated Pension System (SIPA), which includes pensions and pensions from the public and pay-as-you-go systems, as well as pension inclusion plans through moratoriums. The non-contributory security system, on the other hand, grants social benefits without the need to have made a previous contribution. These include the Universal Child Allowance (which is received until the child is 18 years old)<sup>6</sup> and the Universal Pregnancy Allowance. Both benefits are not intended for the elderly. Within this system there is also the Old Age Pension, which is aimed at people aged 70 or over who have no social security or non-contributory coverage (the amount to be received is equivalent to 70% of a minimum benefit); and the Universal Pension for the Elderly (PUAM), for people over 65 (in this case, the amount received is equivalent to 80% of a minimum benefit).

The ‘breadth’ of pension coverage presents specific restrictions for migrant populations. Access to social security rights for retired migrants is linked to the number of years they have resided in the country and the type of employment contract they have had, whether formal or informal. Under current legislation, there are no formal limitations for migrants to access SIPA retirement and/or pension benefits, as there is no minimum residency requirement. This means that the same requirements apply to the entire population. However, meeting the demand for 30 years of contributions in the country entails not only having worked in the formal labor market but also having legal residency for the same period (Lieutier, 2022).

To access a pension, individuals must have made years of contributions in the general contributory scheme. This requirement means that only those who have worked most of their active working life in formal jobs, either as employees or self-employed (Petroni and Balaña, 2022: 12), and those who have at least 30 years of legal residence in the country are eligible. Unfortunately, the informality that characterizes migrant work is not considered in public policies, resulting in a significant barrier to accessing this benefit. Meeting the requirement of 30 years of contributions can be extremely difficult for those who have not been able to secure formal employment.

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6 It is important to note that there is no age limit for collecting this allowance if the child has a disability.

Within the contributory system, the moratorium retirement plans were implemented in 2005 and subsequently extended in 2014, 2016, 2019, and 2023. These plans establish a payment facilities regime for debtors of the social security system who do not have 30 years of full contributions. This initiative allows individuals who have reached retirement age but do not have the required years of contributions to declare a debt for those years through the self-employed worker regime. They can then enter a payment plan that runs concurrently with the collection of benefits (Apella, 2022: 15). For migrant women and men seeking to access this benefit, a condition of obtaining an Argentine ID card and having a minimum of 30 years of residence from the start date of the pension plan is required. This means that the residency requirement is an exclusionary factor for obtaining a pension moratorium.

Non-contributory old age pensions for individuals over 70 years old have a similar requirement. According to the National Administration of Social Security (ANSES), to be eligible for this benefit, one must be a native or naturalized Argentine citizen residing in the country. In the case of naturalized citizens, they must have lived in the country for at least five years before applying. For migrants, a minimum of 20 years of residency is required to apply. To be eligible for the PUAM, applicants must be Argentinean or naturalized citizens with at least 10 years of residency in the country prior to the application or have a minimum of 20 years of residency.

These requirements demonstrate that certain migrant populations are at a clear disadvantage with respect to native women and men from popular sectors due to the demands regarding years of contributions and residence in the country. Additionally, the accreditation of the date of entry to certify the years of residence demanded by the legislation has become more complex as different requirements were added. According to Coturel's (2023) reconstruction, the ANSES circulars expanded the requirements for migrant populations to prove their years of residence in the country, with the National Directorate of Migration (DNM)<sup>7</sup> playing a leading role.

Therefore, migrant populations are required to update their information in the DNM database. However, the DNI issued by RENAPER is unknown (Coturel, 2023). This requirement creates a barrier to accessing social security benefits as it is difficult for migrant

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<sup>7</sup> Circular 12/17 made it a requirement to consult the DNM database prior to applying for PUAM (Coturel, 2023).



populations to prove their residency. Social security benefits are conditional on certification by the DNM. If the data in this database do not match those in the applicant's DNI, the social security file cannot be initiated. The applicant must rectify the information in the DNM and request a new DNI (Coturel, 2023).

To overcome the residency requirement that many migrants face in their old age, naturalisation is often an available option. However, this requires access to information on the process, which is not always readily available, and compliance with state-established demands.<sup>8</sup> To be eligible, one must be at least 18 years old and have resided in the country continuously for two years, which must be documented and certified by the DNM, unless they are the spouse of a native Argentinean or the parent of an Argentinean. Additionally, an apostilled and legalized birth certificate, proof of livelihood such as work contracts or proof of tax contributions (as highlighted in the original), and certification of a clean criminal record<sup>9</sup> are required. For the majority of migrants, these procedures are cumbersome. They face difficulties in demonstrating 'supporting livelihoods' according to the state's criteria, and often lack the necessary networks and credentials to gather all the required 'papers'.

The focus on the articulation between migrant elderly and state legislations aimed at social protection expresses, therefore, the relevance of a "State thinking" (Sayad, 2010), which defines and constrains the rights of migrant populations living within its territory. According to Sayad (2010: 387), migration constitutes the limit of the national state. The definition of a migrant is solely based on their link to work. Therefore, once a migrant stops working (in this case, due to the passage of time), they cease to exist as a migrant in the eyes of the state. The Immigration and Colonisation Law No. 817, also known as the Avellaneda Law, passed on 19 October 1876 by the National Congress, provides a clear example of this. The law in question aimed to define the term 'immigrant' based on specific labour, migration, and age criteria. According to the law, a person could only be recognised as an immigrant if they met these criteria, including a maximum age limit of 60, except for heads of family

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8 During our fieldwork with adult migrant women of South American origin in cities across Argentina, we found that naturalisation was not considered as an option when thinking about their trajectory as migrants. Instead, their main aspiration was to gain access to permanent residence.

9 Visit: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/obtener-la-ciudadania-argentina> (accessed on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023).

(Otero, 2021). While subsequent regulations do not explicitly mention this age requirement, the association between migrants, youth, and work remains a prevalent assumption in State thinking.

Therefore, legislations tailored to meet the needs of elderly individuals fail to account for the distinct trajectories experienced by the bulk of migrant populations upon their arrival in the country. As highlighted by Sayad (2010), the framework of “State thinking” revolves around delineations of “national” and consequently “non-national” categories, culminating in tangible manifestations of discrimination against migrant populations, particularly those advancing in age within destination contexts, thereby erecting impediments to their entitlement of rights.

## **Conclusions**

This article discusses the significance of representing the passage of time in migration studies. Despite its importance, this topic remains underexplored in global, regional, and local research. Previous studies have primarily concentrated on countries in the global North, where both the general population and migrant populations have experienced an increase in ageing rates over the past few decades. This research has focused on two main dimensions of the intersection of ageing and migration: local and transnational care, and the movement of older people. The studies do not necessarily engage with the specificities of the local scenario, but their consideration is fundamental for the construction of a field that is still in its early stages.

This article’s research is based on the recognition that the informality and precariousness of jobs available to migrant populations in Latin America affect the passage of time during migration. These labour insertions not only condition migrants’ short-term daily subsistence but also their long-term strategies and possibilities during old age. Regarding migrant women, as previously mentioned in the article, gender inequalities in the labour market affect the ageing process, which is predominantly experienced by women<sup>10</sup>, and can limit their ability to obtain pension rights. It is worth noting that various international organisations have highlighted the additional

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<sup>10</sup> According to estimates by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2010), there are 83 men for every 100 women over 60. Among those over 80, there are only 59 men for every 100 women over 80.

challenges faced by women, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, in their later years.<sup>11</sup>

In the case of Argentina, in particular, migrant populations that arrived from the South American region and have been living in the country for several decades have less coverage in terms of social security. This is linked to two central issues: the type of insertion in the labour market and the difficulties that the legislation and legal requirements generate in accessing social security benefits. In particular, because these benefits are tied to years of contributions to the social security system and verifiable residence in the country.

From our perspective, the specific barriers to accessing pension rights faced by older migrants in contemporary Argentina are related to state thinking, as proposed by Sayad (2010), which does not consider migrants of certain national origins beyond their link to work and economically active ages. This perception of migrants as provisional, even when the passage of time in migration questions and disputes this idea, has both material and symbolic implications. An analysis of current pension legislation reveals that ageing occurs under unequal conditions, as not all individuals who reach this stage of life have the same social protection benefits and rights.

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11 This is particularly clear in the 2010 CEDAW General Recommendation No. 27 on older women and the protection of their human rights. That document, among other issues, states that older migrant women “are often exposed to discrimination, abuse and neglect” (CEDAW, 2010, point 18). It also highlights that “gender discrimination in employment throughout their lives has a cumulative impact in old age, forcing them to live with disproportionately low, or even non-existent, incomes and pensions compared to men” (CEDAW, 2010, point 20).

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