

newsletter on  
**social vulnerability**

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NEW DATA ON **THE CRISIS' IMPACT**  
ON THE SITUATION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE



Cada vez más cerca de las personas



**Cruz Roja Española**

# Introduction

The tremendous impact of the crisis on Spanish society, specifically on the population in situations of poverty and social vulnerability, is the main issue addressed in the second **Newsletter on Social Vulnerability by the Spanish Red Cross**.

According to the Survey on Living Conditions, published on March 17, 2010, by the National Institute of Statistics, 13.7% of Spanish households had “a lot of difficulties” making it to the end of the month in 2009, which represents the highest percentage rate in the past six years and is 1.5 points higher than it was in 2008. Nineteen point five percent (19.5%) of the population is under the line of poverty and one out of every three households has not been able to handle any unforeseen expenses, which represents an increase in 5.8 percentage points from 2008, the highest level of the past 4 years.<sup>1</sup>

The magnitude and severity of the aforementioned phenomena present major challenges to administrations and social initiative entities, which the Red Cross – committed to the most vulnerable segments of the population – attempts to address, as part of its commitment to getting closer every day to the people. In accordance with this philosophy, we have increased our direct assistance emergency activities and strengthened the projects and programs aimed at social inclusion and inter-institutional coordination, but we understand that these actions must be supplemented by others that are focused on in-depth research and debate.

The findings of this second wave of interviews corresponding to the “Panel of Interviews to Assess the Impact of the Crisis on People in Situations of Social Vulnerability, who are beneficiaries of Red Cross assistance” shed light on its incidence among the most vulnerable segments, which possess the least number of resources to develop capacities to confront the crisis. A comparative analysis of the results of the first wave, which was conducted during the month of May 2009, makes it possible for us to establish comparisons and to determine the direction of the evolution of this process.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np589.pdf> The rate of relative poverty is the percentage of people who are below the line of poverty, which is measured as 60% of the mean income per a person's unit of consumption. The mean is the value that, ranking all individuals from lower to higher incomes, leaves half of them under that value and the other half above it. Therefore, since we are dealing with a relative measurement, its value depends on how wealth is distributed among the population.



## Primary Findings

### Concern with regard to Unemployment

In October 2009, 52% of the people interviewed, 13% more than in May 2009, find that unemployment is the most important issue Spain faces ●

### Expectations for the Future

When they are asked about their expectations for the future for the next 2 or 3 months, 47% of the people interviewed think that the situation will not change, 20% think that it will get better and 16% think that it will get worse. In terms of their expectations in the next 12 months, the percentage of people who believe their lives, in general, will be the same is 38%, 25% think things will go better for them, 18% think their situations will get worse and 20% say they don't know ●

From a sample of 1,437 people with different degrees of social risk, participants in the Red Cross' social intervention programs (a representative sample of 23,161 in situations of great social vulnerability), 515 valid interviews were achieved. Seventy-four percent (74%) of the people interviewed in this wave had participated in the first survey conducted in May 2009.

The average age of the people interviewed is 52.2 years. In the analysis, two groups stand out: one that comprises immigrants and prisoners whose average age is 46 and another of aged people, whose average age is 66. In terms of sex, 75.5% are females, even though the distribution between the programs is very concentrated: the males are predominant among those who correspond to the programs of "drug-dependency assistance" and "prisoners" (which constitute about 70%).

The main conclusions of this Newsletter are the following:



## **Less Optimism than the overall population in terms of the Country's Situation**

With respect to their perception of Spain's economic situation, 52% think this will stay the same or get better and 23% think it will get worse, as opposed to 65% and 27%, respectively, registered in the December 2009 release of the CIS' Eurobaromete ●

## **Assessment of the Labor Situation: Worse than the rest, but more resigned to it than in May**

With respect to their personal employment situation, 40% think it will stay the same, 23% think it will get better and 16% think it will get worse. With regard to the employment situation in Spain, 47% think the situation will stay the same or get better, as opposed to 27% who consider it will get worse.

Of the people interviewed who are working, 63% responded affirmatively when they were asked if

there had been lay-offs/dismissals recently in their jobs. However, they depict a more optimistic vision than what was depicted in May. The percentage of those employed who think their job is in little or no danger is 69% as opposed to the 50% it was previously. A possible explanation for this change is that unemployment "may have hit bottom"; that is, once the negative expectations are lessened, this could provoke a change in perspective ●

## **Influence of the Crisis: Polarized Vision**

Two different groups are detected. On the one hand, 44% of the people interviewed believe that the crisis has had some or a lot of influence on their economic-financial situation of the past year, because their situation has deteriorated. The second group, also totaling 44%, made up of people who receive fixed incomes and also by those who do not have any incomes and are already in a situation of exclusion, find that the degree of influence has been little or none ●





## More and more People are **under the Line of Poverty**

While the INE figures that 19.5% of the residents in Spain are under the line of poverty, in the sample under analysis of people in situations of vulnerability, the average monthly income is 573 euros. Only 20% of the people interviewed earn more than 1,000 euros a month. Thirty percent (30%) earn between 500 and 1,000 euros. It's worth noting that 50% of the people interviewed earn a maximum of 500 euros a month, which makes all of them technically "at risk of poverty" (the INE sets the line of poverty at incomes below 662 euros a month, that is, 7,945 euros a year). However, it is important to highlight that half of this group lacks any kind of income, that is, they are clearly in a situation of "extreme or severe poverty" (253 euros a month or 3,037 euros a year) ●

## Problems with Housing

In accordance with INE's data, 7.2% of Spanish households had delays in their payments with regard to paying expenses related to their main residence, such as the mortgage, rent and the gas and electric bills, which represented an increase in 1.8 points with regard to 2008, the highest level since 2005. In the sample of people in situations of vulnerability analyzed by the Red Cross, the percentage quadruples: 24% of the people

interviewed affirm having had some kind of problem with their housing situation, the most notable of which were: not being able to pay the rent (52%), not being able to pay the utilities like the electric, gas, telephone and community bills (14%). Ten percent (10%) have had to go to live with other people, 4 points more than in the month of May, and 3.5% live in the street, a situation that was not the case for anyone in that month ●



## More unemployed than employed. **Among those who work, lower quality-jobs are predominant and non-contracted jobs have increased**

In October 2009, the employment situation of the people interviewed indicated 31% unemployment, 28% employment (27% salaried employees and 1%

freelance) and 27% retirement. With regard to salaried employees, the majority of them are still employed in domestic labor and homecare assistance, with this percentage

increasing to 53% (as opposed to 34% in May 2009). This confirms the overall view that the drop in unemployment among females was less than it was among males, up until now.<sup>2</sup> There is an inverse trend with regard to qualified and unqualified construction workers, whose level of employment drops to 15%

## **They do not participate in Leisure Activities or Courses**

In October 2009, the social lives of the people interviewed continued being hardly active, given that the majority of them (90%) go very little or never to bars, cafés or restaurants, 81% never go to pubs, clubs, casinos or bingos, 93% go very little or never to the movies, theater or concerts. In terms of day centers for the aged, shelters and soup kitchens, only 4% go to them sometimes or very often. Ninety-four percent (94%) never or hardly ever go to adult education schools, occupational training centers or internet cafés ●

(it was 19% in May 2009) and also among service and office workers, who dropped to 10% (29% in May 2009). It is worth noting the increase in the percentage of people who work without a contract (39.6% as opposed to 20% in May 2009) and that 24.3% of salaried employees have changed jobs in the last year ●

## **Less than half have people in whom to turn to for support or to feel loved**

Only 41% have friends or loved-ones who always or very often visit them or whom they visit. Forty-seven percent (47%) always have or almost always have someone who shows them affection, someone who encourages them to express their ideas (45.9%) and thoughts, and to whom they can tell their problems (43%). This percentage rate drops to 32% when it refers to someone who can give them some type of significant economic assistance. This process indicates a deterioration of the personal, familial and friendship networks ●

## **Unemployment is Prolonged and the Benefits are Exhausted**

Of the nearly 30% of people unemployed, less than 2 of every 10 (19.5%) receive unemployment benefits. While 64% are looking actively for work, only 10.6% of the unemployed have had any kind of job offer in the last month (September 2009). There are various reasons for unemployment, the most frequent are: contract expired (30.2%), family or personal reasons (11.1%), the company went out of business (10.3%) and early retirement (9.5%). It is worth mentioning that the maximum time of unemployment for 60% of the cases was a year, while it was 6 months for 29% of the cases ●



<sup>2</sup> A Release of the Data from the report, “Mujer y Mercado de Trabajo 2009” by the Secretarial-Directorate of Employment of the Ministry of Employment and Immigration, <http://www.tt.mtas.es/periodico/Laboral/201003/LAB20100306.htm>

## Extensive Co-habiting Units

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the people surveyed share a house with their family members, 5 points above the data from May 2009, which registered an average of 3.89 people per household, a relative increase of 12% in the average number of people per household. Only 17.4% of the people surveyed live alone. Forty-five point four percent (45.4%) live with children under the age of 16, 11% of whom are below school-age. Nineteen point five percent (19.5%) of the people surveyed live with people over the age of 65 ●

## Slight increase in the emotional state with regard to May 2009

A decrease in the percentage of people who reported feeling tense or nervous (often or always), going from 47% in May 2009 to 31% in October. The percentage of those interviewed also decreased with regard to those who stated having their heads full of worries often or always, totaling 42% (50% in May 2009) ●



## 18% of the People Live with Disabled or Ill People

Ten point six percent (10.6%) of the people interviewed live with (physically or mentally) ill people, with an average of 2.02 ill people per household. Eight percent

(8%) of the people interviewed live with (physically or mentally) disabled people, with an average of 2.11 disabled people per home ●



## EQUIPO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

**COORDINACIÓN DEL INFORME ANUAL SOBRE VULNERABILIDAD SOCIAL Y DEL BOLETÍN SOBRE VULNERABILIDAD SOCIAL:**  
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**Rosario Romera** es Doctora en Matemáticas por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Ha sido Profesora Titular en la Universidad Politécnica de Madrid y actualmente está en la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. Está acreditada como Catedrática desde Septiembre de 2008. Tiene más de 30 publicaciones científicas nacionales e internacionales en Estadística Multivariante robusta, Optimización Estocástica y aplicaciones a Ciencias Sociales e Ingeniería. Ha dirigido tesis doctorales, tesis de master y proyectos de I+D+I en estas áreas.

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**Encuestas telefónicas realizadas por ESCODE (www.escode.org) en abril y mayo de 2009.**

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Este proyecto ha sido financiado por la Fundación Cruz Roja Española. La Fundación nació en 1993 con la participación de 23 de las principales empresas españolas, con un objetivo principal: ayudar a Cruz Roja Española a realizar su labor asistencial y de apoyo a los más vulnerables. Su fin principal es el de apoyar a Cruz Roja Española, colaborar con ella y contribuir a la consecución de sus fines benéficos, promoviendo y fomentando la cooperación entre empresas y particulares con las actividades desarrolladas por la misma, así como fomentar la aportación de recursos destinados a financiar sus actividades, de acuerdo con sus programas de actuación.

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**Cruz Roja Española****Cada vez más cerca de las personas**

Cruz Roja Española pertenece a la Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja, que promueve las actividades humanitarias de las Sociedades Nacionales en favor de las personas vulnerables.

Mediante la coordinación del socorro internacional en casos de desastre y el fomento de la asistencia para el desarrollo, se propone prevenir y aliviar el sufrimiento humano.

La Federación, las Sociedades Nacionales y el Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja constituyen, juntos, el Movimiento Internacional de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja.

**Humanidad**

El Movimiento de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja, al que ha dado nacimiento la preocupación de prestar auxilio, sin discriminación, a todos los heridos en los campos de batalla, se esfuerza, bajo su aspecto internacional y nacional, en prevenir y aliviar el sufrimiento de los hombres en todas las circunstancias. Tiende a proteger la vida y la salud, así como a hacer respetar a la persona humana. Favorece la comprensión mutua, la amistad, la cooperación y una paz duradera entre todos los pueblos.

**Imparcialidad**

No hace ninguna distinción de nacionalidad, raza, religión, condición social ni credo político. Se dedica únicamente a socorrer a los individuos en proporción con los sufrimientos, remediando sus necesidades y dando prioridad a las más urgentes.

**Neutralidad**

Con el fin de conservar la confianza de todos, el Movimiento se abstiene de tomar parte en las hostilidades y, en todo tiempo, en las controversias de orden político, racial, religioso o ideológico.

**Independencia**

El Movimiento es independiente. Auxiliares de los poderes públicos en sus actividades humanitarias y sometidas a las leyes que rigen los países respectivos, las Sociedades Nacionales deben, sin embargo, conservar una autonomía que les permita actuar siempre de acuerdo con los principios del Movimiento.

**Voluntariado**

Es un movimiento de socorro voluntario y de carácter desinteresado.

**Unidad**

En cada país sólo puede existir una Sociedad de la Cruz Roja o de la Media Luna Roja, que debe ser accesible a todos y extender su acción humanitaria a la totalidad del territorio.

**Universalidad**

El Movimiento Internacional de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja, en cuyo seno todas las Sociedades tienen los mismos derechos y el deber de ayudarse mutuamente, es universal.

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