

The population of the Basque Country increased by almost 4,000 in 2017

Donostia/San Sebastián and Vitoria-Gasteiz gained inhabitants, whereas Bilbao lost them

The population of the Basque Country in 2017 totalled 2,175,819 individuals, according to EUSTAT data. This represented a return to population growth after the stagnation of recent years. Specifically, the population of the Basque Country rose by 3,934 individuals compared to 2016, but did not reach the levels of 2012, a year in which the population reached a historic high.

The population in all three provinces has increased between 2016 and 2017. Bizkaia increased its population by 575 inhabitants, and so the accumulated loss compared to 2012 stood at 14,708 individuals. There are 2,102 more individuals in Gipuzkoa, half of the total increase in the Basque Country. Gipuzkoa has seen its population continue to grow since 2012, rising by 7,207 during these six years. The population in Álava rose by 1,257, putting its population higher than the figure for 2012, after the decreases in 2013 and 2014. As a result of the population decrease in Bizkaia, the Basque Country did not return to the 2012 population level, despite the increases in the other two provinces.

Amongst the Basque capitals, between 2016 and 2017 the population rose in Donostia/San Sebastián and Vitoria-Gasteiz by 379 and 803 inhabitants respectively, whilst Bilbao lost 84 individuals. In 2009 the population of Bilbao and Donostia/San Sebastián reached an historic high for both cities. However, since then Bilbao has experienced a steady decline in population, with 12,659 inhabitants less over the past nine years. In this same period the population in Donostia/San Sebastián has fluctuated. The final result is 2,016 less residents than in 2009. Excluding 2013 and 2014, the population of Vitoria-Gasteiz solely increased, reaching its highest ever population in 2017.

The remaining municipalities in the Basque Country have not experienced significant population change between 2016 and 2017. Amorebieta-Etxano saw the greatest rise in population, 220 individuals (1.2%); the same percentage, but negative, occurred in Hernani, which was the municipality with the highest absolute decrease in population (239 less inhabitants). Samaniego and Yécora/Iekora have lost more than 5%, although this only meant 45 inhabitants less between the two municipalities.

In the last five-year period, Getxo, Barakaldo, Portugalete, Santurtzi, Basauri and Sestao lost more than 1,000 inhabitants, accounting for a total of 8,246 individuals. Arrigorriaga is the next municipality with the greatest population loss, however this was only 320 less residents. All these municipalities are part of Greater Bilbao, which has the highest concentration of municipalities with a higher population density in the Basque Country, above 5,000 inhabitants per km², with the highest density occurring in Portugalete, with 14,521 inhabitants per km² in 2017.

Table 1. Population of the Basque Country by province, according to main age groups

	Total	0 - 19	20 - 64	>= 65
Total	2.175.819	18,3	60,0	21,7
Historic territories				
Araba/Álava	323.592	19,3	60,6	20,1
Bizkaia	1.139.426	17,5	60,3	22,2
Gipuzkoa	712.801	19,3	59,1	21,6
Capitals				
Bilbao	342.397	16,2	60,1	23,7
Donostia / San Sebastián	180.558	17,2	59,6	23,2
Vitoria-Gasteiz	242.254	19,2	60,6	20,2
Districts				
Arabako Ibarrak / Valles Alaveses	6.032	17,6	61,9	20,6
Arabako Lautada / Llanada Alavesa	259.639	19,4	60,7	19,8
Arabako Mendialdea / Montaña Alavesa	3.009	14,9	58,4	26,8
Arratia Nerbioi / Arratia-Nervión	23.735	19,5	60,6	19,9
Bidasoa Beherea / Bajo Bidasoa	76.828	19,2	59,8	21,1
Bilbo Handia / Gran Bilbao	857.016	16,9	60,2	22,8
Deba Beherea / Bajo Deba	55.498	19,0	58,1	22,9
Debagoina / Alto Deba	63.075	19,0	58,3	22,8
Donostialdea / Donostia-San Sebastián	325.111	18,2	59,5	22,2
Durangaldea / Duranguesado	98.715	19,4	60,6	20,0
Enkartazioak / Encartaciones	31.909	17,7	61,0	21,3
Errioxa Arabarra / Rioja Alavesa	11.509	20,3	59,4	20,3
Gernika-Bermeo	45.690	18,3	58,9	22,8
Goierrí	67.919	20,7	58,2	21,2
Gorbeia Inguruak / Estripac. del Gorbea	8.726	21,5	61,3	17,2
Kantauri Arabarra / Cantábrica Alavesa	34.677	18,0	59,9	22,1
Markina-Ondarroa	26.160	17,6	59,4	23,0
Plentzia-Mungia	56.201	21,3	62,3	16,4
Tolosaldea / Tolosa	48.759	21,5	58,5	20,0
Urola-Kostaldea / Urola Costa	75.611	21,7	59,5	18,9

Source: Eustat. Municipal inhabitants statistics. 1/1/2017

In 24 municipalities in the Basque Country, people aged 65 or more accounted for over a quarter of the total population

At 21.7%, the Basque Country in 2017 has a greater proportion of the population over the age of 65 than Spain (18.8%). Castilla y León, Principado de Asturias and Galicia, where the figure is over 24%, are the Autonomous Communities that have higher proportions. In comparison with Europe, only Italy has higher figures than the Basque

Country, by barely three tenths; 10 years ago the proportion in the Basque Country was more than 3 percentage points below.

83 municipalities exceed the average percentage of the Basque Country, whilst 168 presented the same or a lower percentage. Amongst those that exceed it are Bilbao, Donostia-San Sebastián and Barakaldo. Over the course of the last ten years, the proportion of people aged over 65 decreased in 76 municipalities, even though they only make up 3.4% of the total population.

There is quite a lot of disparity between the municipalities regarding the percentage of people aged 65 and over, where it goes from 10.1% in Irura to 40.3% in Harana/Valle de Arana. Besides Irura, there are two other municipalities that have a percentage under 11%. These are Alegria-Dulantzi and Larraul. The total population of these municipalities has increased to 5,079. On the other hand, 3 municipalities had a percentage over 30%, Harana/Valle de Arana, Lagrán and Elantxobe, which have a combined total of 788 residents.

The high proportion of elderly people in all of the municipalities in the region of Montaña Alavesa caused its figure to reach almost 26.8%, whilst the next region in this classification, Markina-Ondarroa, has 23% of people aged 65 and over, and in the region of Plentzia-Mungia the weight of the older population dropped to 16.4%.

If we look at older age groups, people aged 85 and above went from constituting 2.1% of the total population in 2007 to 3.7% of the total population in 2017, which is an increase of 1.6 percentage points over those 10 years. This increase has varied significantly across the regions. The highest increase was in Cantábrica Alavesa and the lowest in Esterribaciones del Gorbea. This process has been very dramatic for the centenarian population, with a rise in the number of centenarians from 341 in 2007 to 624 ten years later, which is almost double.

In the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, there was a ratio of 1.5 people aged 65 or more to every person under 16, exceeding the ratio for Spain as a whole, which is 1.2, but still far from the ratio in Asturias, which is 2.1.

The municipalities that exceed this ratio number 67, with extreme cases such as Harana/Valle de Arana, which has a ratio of 6 to 1 and Lagrán and Añana, more than 4. On the other hand, municipalities such as Irura, Alegria-Dulantzi, Larraul and Arakaldo had more than 2 young people up to the age of 15 for each person aged 65 and over.

Population distribution by age is most extreme in the municipalities of Álava, due above all to its small size and the fact that any demographic phenomena, particularly migration, causes significant modifications.

For further information:

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