

In 2019, the living conditions of people in the Basque Country improved compared to 2014

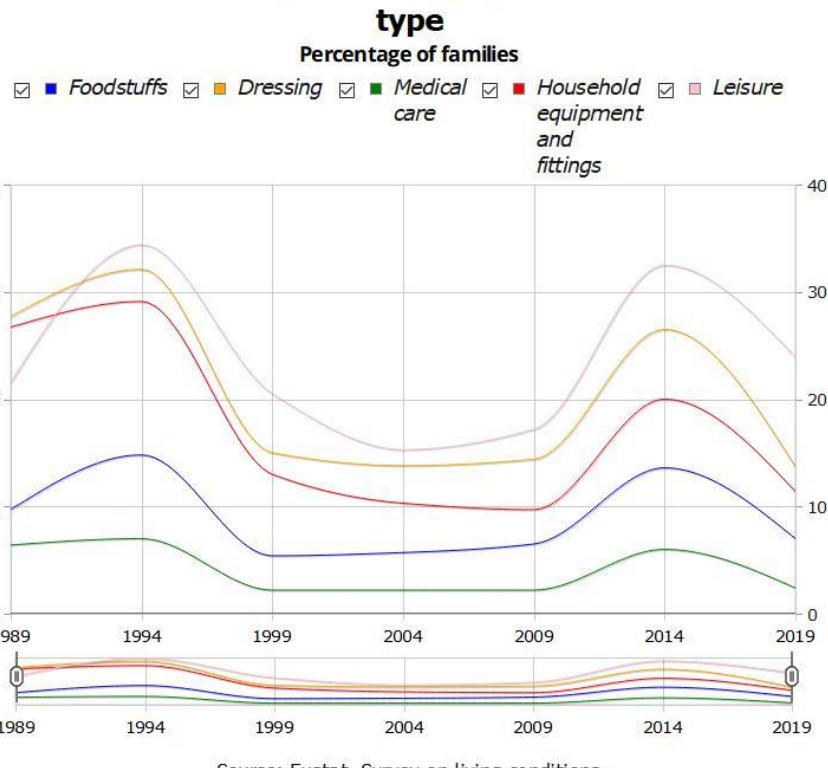
The number of Basque families in a bad economic situation fell by half, to 4.2%

The living conditions of people in the Basque Country improved in 2019 compared to five years previously, 2014, according to Eustat data. Economic situation is the most significant factor in this positive trend. The large majority of families are in a situation defined as good (45.3%) or normal (50.5%) and the number of Basque families in a bad economic situation fell by half (4.2%).

The positive trend occurred in all three provinces, but at a different rate: Gipuzkoa improved the most (+11.3 percentage points) and remained the territory with the highest proportion of families in a good economic situation (52.0%). In Bizkaia they account for 43.6% (+9.0 points) and in Álava they make up 36.4%. Conversely, families in a bad economic situation decreased in all three provinces over these five years: in Álava the figure went from 10% to 4.8%, in Bizkaia from 9.7% to 4.9% and in Gipuzkoa from 6.6% to 3%.

There are fewer families that struggle to make ends meet (-10.4 points) but even so, 29.9% of families face real financial difficulty. These results vary noticeably depending on variables such as the relationship with activity and age group of the reference person. In fact, the situation deteriorates when the reference person is unemployed and belongs to a younger age group.

Families of the Basque Country by economic restrictions



Source: Eustat. Survey on living conditions

Restrictions due to financial considerations have fallen significantly compared to 2014, improving by 13 points and decreasing to 27.9% of families – a very similar percentage to 1999 (27.3%) but higher than those for 2004 (23.4%) and 2009 (24.9%).

These restrictions have centred around leisure (85.8%), although the weighting for all types of restrictions has decreased over the last five-year period: clothing and footwear (-12.9 points), leisure and household goods (-8.6 points each), food (-6.6 points) and medical care (-3.6 points). Of course, the latter two were barely restricted: only 2.4% of families faced these types of restrictions.

Relationships between family and friends have strengthened, while those between neighbours have continued to weaken

91.4% of families in the Basque Country have a close relationship with their immediate family – mothers, fathers and children – who no longer live together, an increase of 5.9 percentage points compared to 2014 as, although a similar proportion of families had close contact in 2019 and 2014, they became more frequent.

Telephone conversations were the most common form of contact (93.1%), but many families visited each other (73.4%), help each other (58.2%) or met for lunch or dinner (56.2%) at least once a week. Compared with the results 5 years ago, the frequency of daily contact between family members has increased, especially calls (+23.6 points).

There has been a similar trend in contact with other family members or relatives (80.2%) and friends (90.9%) compared to 2014, as the proportion of family members who contacted each

other has decreased slightly (-4.2 and -1.1 points, respectively) while their intensity has increased. The most common form of contact between friends was daily calls (45.6%) and weekly meetings (32.0%), which also increased the most (+19.1 and +11.4 points, respectively).

In 2019, contact with neighbours has continued to decline (-6.7 points) and 24.8% of families have no relationship at all with them. Of the forms of contact between neighbours that have endured, daily conversations on the stairs (78.0%) and providing assistance on a daily or weekly basis (36.9%) are the most common and have increased significantly (+16.2 and +25.9 points, respectively) over these last five years, while other forms of contact have tended to disappear.

The surrounding area is not an issue of concern for most Basque families

The majority of families believe that they live in a "healthy" physical environment (64.1%), a proportion similar to that in 2014, or a very healthy environment (66.2%), which has increased compared to five years ago (+7.0 points). 84.7% of families did not perceive any safety issues in their area of residence (+4.4 points).

The proportion of families who believe that there are disturbances caused by noise, smoke and smells (32.1%) and polluting industries (15.0%) in their area of residence remained unchanged. 5.8% of families experience pollution on a daily basis.

In 2019, the percentage of families who perceive public safety issues in their neighbourhood or area of residence decreased. Among the families that do perceive such issues (15.3% of the total), those most frequently mentioned are delinquency (22.0%) and drugs (15.3%). In general, all issues have decreased, though in different proportions, since 2014. The number of families that have been directly affected by any kind of theft in the last 3 years has also decreased, and the proportion affected by physical or sexual assault has remained the same (2.2%).

Household equipment and surroundings

In general, Basque homes are equipped and have basic utilities. Homes that have few utilities (1.7%) or few appliances (17.8%) are very scarce, and those with little audiovisual equipment are practically nonexistent. However, 1.4% of family homes – almost 13,000 – did not have any heating in 2019 (-1.1 points). Individual heating is the most common form in Basque homes (62.2%).

More than 90% of homes are located in areas with lots of services, compared with 5% that are in enclaves without services, either in their immediate surroundings – there are no basic services, such as grocery shops, pharmacies, bars or a local transport stop, within a 10-minute walk – or in their close surroundings – there are no services such as health centres, schools, citizen services offices, basic social centres or banks within a 20-minute walk.

People's health

In 2019, 8.5% of the population claimed to have a disability or chronic health problem. Their age varies, but over-60s are the most affected. This age group makes up 28.5% of the Basque population and accounts for 64.7% of the population with a disability or chronic illness.

As a result of these health problems, more than 133,000 people (6.2%) have difficulty performing everyday tasks. The most common difficulty is mobility. In particular, going up and down stairs is a difficulty or impediment for 88.9% of these people. This figure is halved for difficulties moving around the home (44.9%).

70.5% of the Basque population has been to a primary care centre. The number of patients seeing medical specialists accounts for 42.7% of the population, without any major differences compared to 5 years ago. Visits to the dentist have increased by 13.4 points to 37.1% of the population.

In 2019, just over half a million people aged 6 years and over claimed to be a donor, which equates to 25% of the population; an increase of 13.6 points on 5 years ago. The most common are blood donors (23.4%).

Half the population belongs to some kind of association

Almost 285,000 people (13.7%) are members of sporting associations, 60,000 more than in 2014, and this type of association has the largest number of members. The biggest differential factor for membership of this type of association is gender, as the proportion of men is double that of women. This is the type of association for which most people volunteer: 3.4% of the population aged 6 years and over.

In certain types of organisation, the proportion of their membership varies greatly according to gender. There are more male volunteers in sporting associations (74.0% of the total) and in political organisations (63.0%). On the other hand, religious (66.9%), educational (66.8%) and social care (59.2%) organisations have more female volunteers.

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