

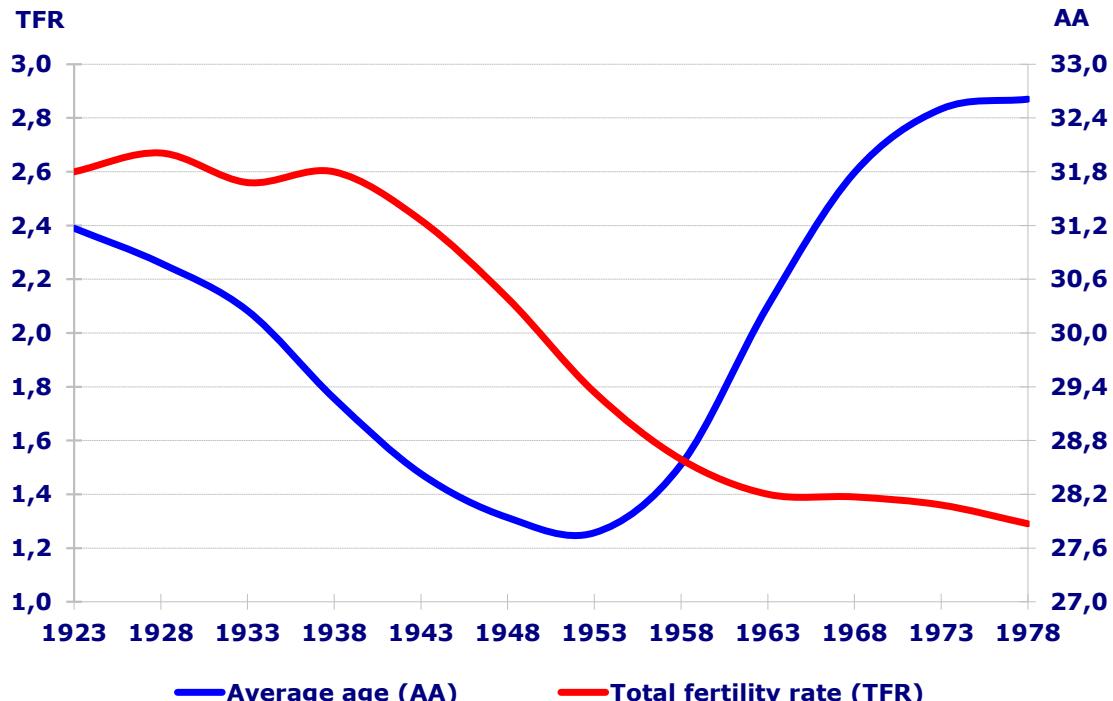
Female fecundity has descended to 1.3 children for those born between 1976 and 1980 in the Basque Country, far from generational replacement

Predictions for the youngest generations, those aged under 40, do not indicate any recuperation

The eventual family size of the generations of women born after the 1950s descended to 1.3 children for women born between 1976 and 1980, the last in terms of those whose fertility cycle can be considered complete, according to Eustat data. Women born in the second half of the 1940s were the last generation to achieve generational replacement, that is, they had an average of 2.1 children.

In the 2021 Demographic Survey for the first time men were asked how many children they had had throughout their life and the results were similar to those for women: men born after 1975 had fewer than 2.1 children, although their fecundity is slightly higher than that of women, standing at 1.4 children per man for the last generation considered.

Total fertility rate and average maternity age of generations from 1923 to 1978



Source: Eustat. Demographic survey

In almost all European countries a general decrease has been observed in the eventual family size of women born after 1940, where it has not reached the generational replacement of generations born at the end of the 60s, except in countries with very ambitious family policies, such as France, Norway and Sweden. However, the eventual family size of women born in 1960 (1.53 children per mother) was below that for the same generation in Germany and Italy where it was 1.66.

The average age of maternity, over 30, for more recent generations was similar to that for older ones, those aged 75 and over, but in this latter case it was due to third and subsequent children representing almost 35% of the total, whereas amongst women aged between 40 and 50 in 2021, third or subsequent children scarcely accounted for 8%. In the most recent generations, the average age at the birth of the first child was over 31 and in the older ones it did not even reach 28. For men the average age was higher than that of women in all age groups and for those born after 1966 it was over 33.

The eventual family size of the generations of women under the age of 40 in 2021 does not appear as though it is going to recuperate, given that the number of children that they hope to have over their lives, according to what they have stated, scarcely reaches an average of 1.3, with those born between 2001 and 2005 standing out for predicting that they would only have an average of 1.1 children. Men are predicted to have an average of 1.6 children, although predictions for those aged between 16 and 20 barely reach an average of 1.3 children.

The intensity of fecundity within married couples has declined more dramatically, with couples who married before 1970 having an average of 2.1 children, whilst the number for those married between 1991 and 1995 barely exceeds 1.5. It should be added that births outside marriage greatly increased: from 5% in women who in 2021 were aged 70 or over to 36% in those who were between the ages of 36 and 40 in 2021.

The marriage rate of the generations was down

Amongst men, the lowest percentage of unmarried men (7.5%) was observed in those born between 1926 and 1930; amongst women it was in the generations born ten years later. From then on this percentage has increased, reaching 30% in males and 23% in women, in the last generations whose marriage cycle can be considered complete, that is, those born from 1976 to 1980.

This does not mean that the number of unmarried couples has diminished, given that from the generations born between 1976 and 1980 who live as a couple, 26% do so in civil partnerships, whereas this figure for those born 20 years previously was 5%. It is also worth mentioning that the fecundity of civil partnerships is quite low, given that in 2021 only 52% had children, with the average number of children standing at less than 1.

The average age of marriage for men has increased from 28 in the generations born during the Civil war to 32.3 in those born between 1976 and 1980; however, generations born before 1936 also presented higher average ages, around 30. Amongst women, the average age at marriage revealed its highest level for those born between 1976 and 1980, 29.3, which was almost two years older than those who were born five years before: in previous generations, the average age at marriage of women did not exceed 27.

In the last twenty years, the average age of children who have left the family home has constantly increased, standing at 30 in 2020 when in 1990 it barely reached 25. Since 2008 the average age was over 29. Traditionally, the main reason for emancipation of young people was marriage; between 1981 and 1990 69% did so for this reason, but between 2011 and 2020 30% left the family home to form a civil partnership and only 20% to get married.

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