

The material living condition of Basques improved in the period from 1989-2004

However, indicators for sociability, sustainability and social participation all slightly worsened.

Twenty five indicators, distributed into six major categories, were studied in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of living conditions in the A.C. of the Basque Country during the period from 1989-2004. In general, results showed that the evolution of the General Index of Living Conditions in the A.C. of the Basque Country has risen from 4.8 in 1989 to 5.01 in 2004 (on a scale of 0 to 10) according to Eustat data.

Data analysis shows that material living conditions improved in the period from 1989-2004 due to the economic prosperity that occurred during this time. On the other hand, there was a noticeable drop observed in indicators related to sociability, sustainability and social participation.

Comprehensive analysis

The overall analysis of the indicators shows that during the 15 years studied there has been a noticeable change in living conditions in Basque society. Material living conditions have improved in recent years, demonstrated by the general improvement in all indicators related to this area: presence of equipment, of services, etc...

With respect to the importance given to immediate family and social relationships, the nuclear family continues to be a source of shelter and warmth. At the same time however, privatization of personal lives is seen as a modern attribute. All social networks (which until recently implied commitment and reciprocity) – neighbours, friends, extended family, - are seen to be weakening. This doesn't necessarily mean a withdrawal to the home and "neglect of public life"; on the contrary, as a place of sociability, the home is important as a place of recreation and leisure.

Also worth mentioning is the high value that the Basque society gives to the security and the quality of their living space.

In regards to the category of leisure, free time and quality of life, there has been an increase in what is known as "passive leisure" (home cinema, TV and the like). On the other hand, only a marginal increase was seen in athletic activities, attendance to entertainment events and other related types of leisure.

The problem of accessibility and mobility in general is especially relevant. More and more people work farther from home and this has lead to an increased need for private transport.

Despite gender differences which disadvantage women, little by little traditional roles are changing. The indicator with the most amount of positive change is the domestic

joint responsibility indicator. This shows that that awareness of domestic roles is not an idea that has simply fallen by the wayside.

It is also worth mentioning that the data show citizen participation weakening. If association membership is low, association participation is even lower.

A description of each of these areas follows:

Material Conditions and Instrumental Resources

The evolution of the scores shows a fundamental difference between the way Basque families see their own economic situation and the way they see the economic situation of their society as a group. For example, in 2004 the objective economic situation, a synthetic variable that combines net family income with respect to the number of family members, obtained a score of 5.77 which signifies a relatively pessimistic outlook; on the other hand, the subjective economic view (values the existence or not of restrictions and the need to request assistance) received a score of 6.44.

Notable improvements were seen in the area of consumption, both individually (home equipment) and collectively (resources available for equipment). These indicators reflected that the Basque society has an optimistic view of the economic situation in general.

Environmental conditions of the workplace (noise, pollution ...) have improved although it is worth noting that this indicator has slightly dropped since 1994 when it reached an all time high score of 6.90. In 2004 the score was 6.69.

The knowledge of languages variable, representing instrumental abilities developed by the Basque people, measures the use and knowledge of both official languages and other foreign languages. As of 2004 a passing score has not been reached (4.59).

Relational Life

Basque society maintains frequent relations with the family. However, the concept of the nuclear family (those with whom intense relations are maintained) is reduced. For example, scores corresponding to relations with close family have continuously risen from 1989 until 2004 reaching 5.95 points in this year, while relations with relatives only reached a score of 3.10.

Relations with friends and neighbours have decreased in this same period. The scores were very low: 3.63 for relations with friends and 1.95 for relations with neighbours.

Perceived Security, Quality of the Residential Environment and Functional Autonomy

One of the most sensitive and definitive variables for determining the quality of the residential environment is the relative level of perceived security amongst the population. The variable for the quality of the social environment where you live expresses the value of the living space with respect to problematic issues like: noise, pollution, degradation and other related issues.

By observing scores for both indicators it can be seen that both variables occupy top positions. For example, the level of security from robbery and assault obtained a score

of 9.36 out of 10, the highest out of all other indicators used. Likewise, Basque people give the quality of the social environment where they live a value of 6.77 points; a relatively high score.

The data shows that the progressive ageing of the population is resulting in a reduced level of functional autonomy. In 1989 this category had a score of 7.58 on the scale; in 2004 it dropped to 6.98.

Leisure, Free Time and Quality of Life

The leisure, free time and quality of life category overall had a very modest score of 3.92 out of 10. It can be said that domestic leisure has increased dramatically, which in turn resulted in the decline of active and planned leisure. The spread and expansion of multimedia consumer technologies has made the home the centre of leisure. The score was 7.10 out of 10.

Basic sociability of the Basque population supported by relationships based on socializing (go out for drinks, go bar hopping ...) continues rising in value. In 2004 the score was 5.72 while it was only at 4 in 1989.

Although the reading index has slightly increased in the past 15 years, it is still far from an optimal situation. The score was 4.83.

During the period analysed, the evolution of the scores related to outdoor athletic activity shows a rising trend, but it should be kept in mind that the 2004 score was only 3.63 out of 10, a very low score. This shows a profound imbalance in the amount of time allotted to sports in the media and public events as well as the very few people taking up sports as part of a healthy lifestyle.

With respect to weekend travel, this type of leisure scores relatively low (2.48), evidently because it requires the availability of material resources.

The attendance to entertainment events index, identical to the one before, has experienced a significant increase although the score obtained continues being low (2.25).

Religious service attendance possibly reflects the cultural change experienced by Basque society in recent years (possibly more than any other indicator). All interpretations of the data show a withdrawal from religion in modern society, at least in terms of the traditional sense of religion. When Basque people were asked if they attend religious services, they rated it with the lowest score (1.48), which is a -1.38 point drop.

Accessibility and Mobility Required by Work

The category of accessibility and mobility required for work scored 4.22 in 2004, compared with 5.13 in 1989. In other words, it dropped -0.91, which means that the work place is further from the home than before and that the use of private transport has increased. The number of people who walk to work has decreased significantly. Therefore the work accessibility index, which measures the distance from home to work, has fallen from 5.64 in 1989 to 4.94 in 2004.

Sustainability of work required mobility is fundamentally measured by the use of alternative forms of transport and favours sustainable transport. It went from 4.62 in 1989 to 3.51 in 2004; a very low number which shows the general increase in the use of cars as a means of transport. There was a loss of -1.11 points.

Domestic Joint Responsibility, Participation and Associative Life

Gender equality in the performance of household chores is an area that best defines the change of current roles. Therefore, an index of domestic joint responsibility was developed that measures the greatest/least progression in the division of household chores.

Data analysis confirmed that between 1989 and 2004 the score went from 5.03 to 7.33, a dramatic increase in terms of size (2.3 points). This means that despite existing differences there is a notable change in awareness and fulfilment of domestic roles.

The indicators related to association membership and participation show a more pessimistic result. In 2004 scores were very low: 2.95 for membership and 2.58 for participation.

Living Conditions in the A.C of the Basque Country (1989-2004)

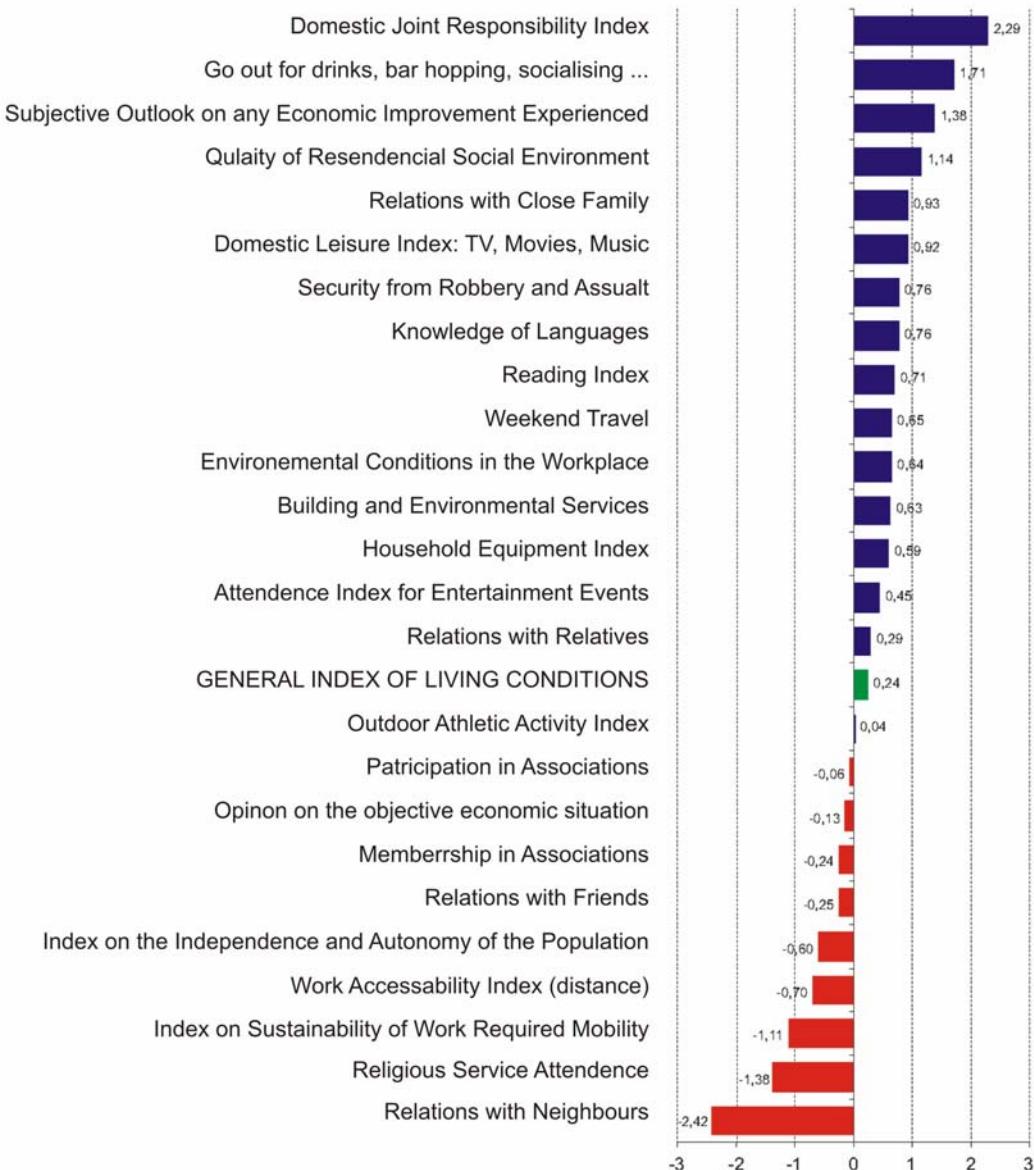
COD	INDEX	1989	1994	1999	2004	DIF ^a 89/04
I	MATERIAL LIVING CONDITIONS	5,6	5,7	6,4	6,2	0,6
	Building and Environmental Services	7,0	7,4	7,4	7,6	0,6
	Environmental Conditions of the Workplace	6,1	6,9	6,5	6,7	0,6
	Subjective Economic Consideration	5,1	4,5	6,4	6,4	1,4
	Household Equipment Index	5,8	6,4	6,4	6,3	0,6
	Objective Economic Situation	5,9	4,9	7,2	5,8	-0,1
	Knowledge of Languages	3,8	4,3	4,7	4,6	0,8
II	Relational Life	4,0	3,5	3,8	3,7	-0,4
	Relations with Close Family	5,0	5,3	5,6	5,9	0,9
	Relations with Friends	3,9	3,8	4,5	3,6	-0,2
	Relations with Relatives	2,8	2,8	3,1	3,1	0,3
	Relations with Neighbours	4,4	2,3	2,1	2,0	-2,4
III	PERCEIVED SECURITY, QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE	7,1	7,8	7,6	8,1	1,0
	SECURITY FROM ROBBERY AND ASSAULT	8,6	9,0	9,3	9,4	0,8
	Level of Functional Autonomy in the Basque Population	7,6	7,3	7,4	7,0	-0,6
	Quality of the Social Environment where you live	5,6	6,5	5,9	6,8	1,1
IV	LEISURE, FREE TIME AND QUALITY OF LIFE	3,5	3,7	3,7	3,9	0,4
	Domestic Leisure Index: TV, Movies, Music	6,2	6,3	6,6	7,1	0,9
	Go out for drinks, bar hopping, socializing	4,0	5,0	4,8	5,7	1,7
	Reading Index	4,1	4,4	4,6	4,8	0,7
	Outdoor Sporting Activity Index	3,6	3,6	3,6	3,6	0,0
	Weekend Travel	1,8	1,7	2,4	2,5	0,6
	Attendance to Entertainment Events Index	1,8	1,9	2,1	2,2	0,4
V	Religious Service Attendance	2,9	2,6	1,7	1,5	-1,4
	WORK ACCESSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY	5,1	4,8	4,4	4,2	-0,9
	Work Accessibility Index (distance)	5,6	5,5	5,1	4,9	-0,7
	Sustainability of Work Required Mobility	4,6	4,1	3,7	3,5	-1,1
VI	PARTICIPATION, JOINT RESPONSIBILITY AND ASSOCIATIVE LIFE	3,6	3,8	4,0	4,3	0,7
	Domestic Joint Responsibility Index	5,0	5,6	6,0	7,3	2,3
	Membership in Associations	3,2	3,3	3,4	3,0	-0,2
	Participation in Associations	2,6	2,5	2,6	2,6	-0,1
	GENERAL INDEX OF LIVING CONDITIONS	4,8	4,9	5,0	5,1	0,2

* Values fluctuate between 0 (minimum) and 10 (maximum)

Note: Indicators appear in order from highest to lowest score obtained on the living conditions scale from 2004.

Methodology note: Eustat has edited the Monographic "Survey of Living Conditions." The publication shows the latest research on topics such as conditions and quality of life in the A.C of the Basque Country, family and social relations, the physical environment, the complementary realities of leisure and free time, health and health resources, in addition to education and working conditions.

Evolution of the Indicators: Differences in scores (1989 -2004)



Note: Positive or negative scores express the variation that occurred between 1989 and 2004 on a normalised scale of 0 to 10.

Source: Eustat, ECV 1989-2004 (produced by Eustat)

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