

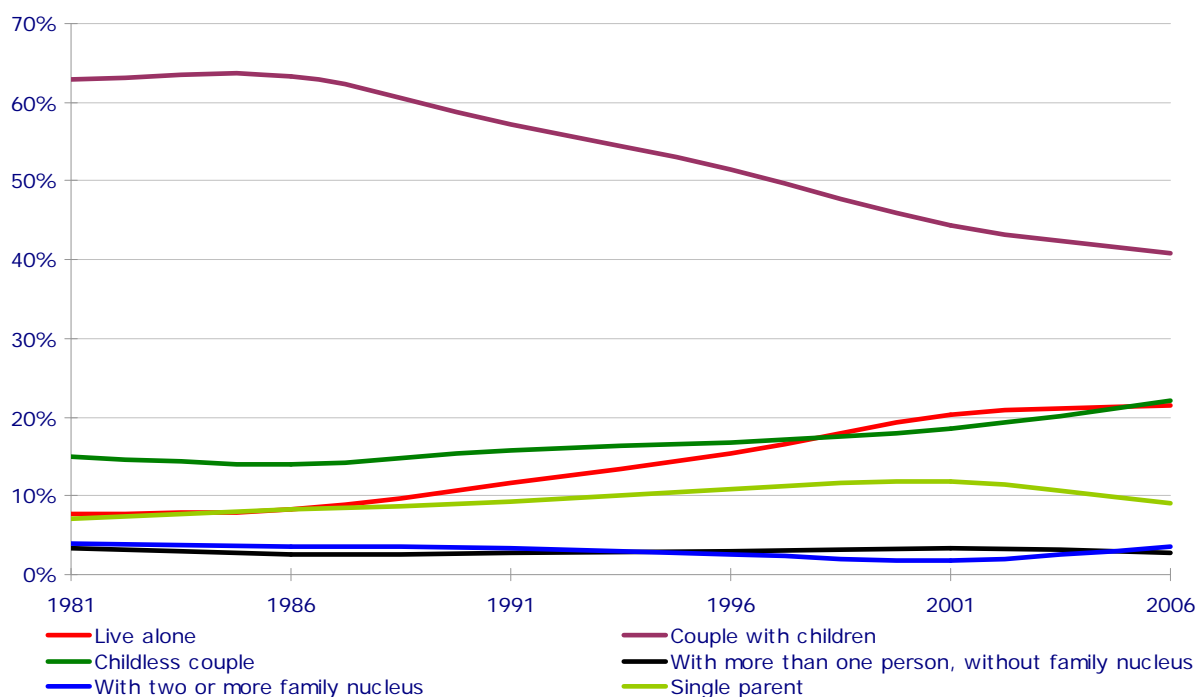
The evolution of demographic phenomena simplifies the family structure of the A.C. of the Basque Country

High life expectancy, together with the low fertility rate and number of marriages characterise Basque demography

Between 1996 and 2006, around 104,000 families were created in the A.C. of the Basque Country. This rate of growth is much higher than that of the population, which means that the average size of the family fell from 3.1 in 1996 to 2.6 ten years later, according to data prepared by Eustat.

The evolution of the fertility rate and of life expectancy has meant that the number of **single-person families increased by 61% and of married couples or couples without children by 51% in the last 10 years**. In the case of the single-person families, the greatest influence on the rise was the increase in life expectancy, which is higher in the case of women, which account for 61% of these families. With regard to families of couples without children, the drop in the fertility rate in the 1980s was significant as having fewer children has meant a reduction in the time when all the children leave home.

Graph 1. Evolution of the types of families. 1981-2006. A.C. of the Basque Country.



Source: EUSTAT

This evolution has had its greatest impact on families of both parents with children, as in addition to falling from 62% of the total families in 1986 to less than 41% in 2006, their average size has decreased (from 4.3 people in 1986 to 3.7 in 2006). The decrease in the types of families with children would be greater if the time that they remain with their parents had not increased. In the last five years, young people leave their parental home at over 29 years old on average, while the age stood at 24.6 years old twenty years earlier.

Single-parent families have also been affected, as the number fell by around 16,000 from 2001 to 2005, although there was a greater impact on families where the father is the single parent (-30.4%) than where the mother is (-15.4%).

Thirty years ago, practically 100% of people ended up getting married, but currently over 40% of people remain single. In addition, there is the fact that people are waiting longer to get married with the average age of the first marriage standing at 33.8 for men (7.2 years later than in 1976) and 30.8 in the case of women (6.6 years later than in 1976).

In terms of the generational figures, the ratio of non-single persons for each of the sexes at 50 years old ranges between 86% for men and 95% for women. The generations of the 1950s, the last for whom their nuptial history can be considered to be complete, show sharp falls in their nuptial intensity, due to the drop in the numbers of marriage between 25 and 34 years old.

Historically, there is considered to be a relationship between the high average age and the drop in the intensity of the number of marriage. An increasingly greater proportion of the population will remain single for ever.

The final descendents of the generations is closer to current fertility levels

The generation of women born between 1956 and 1960 not only ensure their replacements, standing at 2.1 children per women, but they have only managed to have final descendents of 1.6 children. These figures contrast with the 2.4 children that the generations born 15 years earlier had.

The reason that explain the lack of generational replacement lies in the drastic reduction in third and subsequent children who have gone from accounting for 23% of the total children of women born between 1946 to 1950 to 6% of those born between 1961 and 1965.

The final descendents are so low due to over 20 years with very small annual fertility indicators. In 2005, the average number children stood at 1.2, which is a far cry from the average 2.7 children in 1975, but we should not forget that it reached the minimum in 1994, with the figure of 0.9.

Life expectancy continues to increase

Both men and women in the A.C. of the Basque Country have experienced a constant increase in their life expectancy. Given the indicators observed 30 years ago (69.6 years old and 76.9 years old was the life expectancy for men and women, respectively), **life expectancy for women has increased by 7.4 years and for men by 7.6 years**. Men and women gained 3 months of life each year and their life expectancies now stand at 77.2 and 84.3 years old, respectively. **The difference in life expectancy between the sexes narrowed to 7.1 years from the maximum of 8.7 observed 15 years ago.**

Table 1. Life Expectancy at birth by sex in some developed countries. 2005.

	Males	Women
Germany	76,7	82,0
Austria	76,7	82,3
Belgium	76,2	81,9
Denmark	76,0	80,5
Spain	77,0	83,7
United States (*)	74,8	80,1
France	76,8	83,8
Greece	76,8	81,6
Ireland	77,3	81,7
Iceland	79,6	83,5
Italy	77,8	83,4
The Netherlands	77,2	81,7
Portugal	74,9	81,3
United Kingdom	77,1	81,1
Russia	58,9	72,4
Sweden	78,5	82,9
Switzerland	78,7	84,0
Turkey	68,9	73,8
Japan	78,5	85,5
Basque Country	77,2	84,3

(*) 2003

Source: Eustat, Eurostat and UN.

Tumours are the main threat to life expectancy. **If tumours could be completely eradicated, then men would prolong their life by over four years and women by over three and a half.** External causes of death, on the other hand, had a less extreme effect, since they deducted just over a year of life from men and slightly over 4 months from women

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