

SURVEY ON LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY (ECV) - 2009

Economic downturn hits the perception of some aspects of the living conditions of the Basques

Compared to 2004, social and family relations strengthened, the physical environment remained stable and the social setting worsened slightly, while the subjective perception of the economic situation went from good to normal.

Over the last five years, the perception of the quality of life of the population of the Basque Country was negatively hit by the arrival of the economic downturn, according to Eustat data. Special mention should be made of the improvement and spread of education, strengthening of social and family relations and increase in basic household amenities, while the social climate was slightly affected. As far as the economic resources were concerned, the subjective perception of the economic situation went from good to normal.

Family relations intensified

The presence of family contacts in the Basque Country is high. 96% of families have some sort of relationship with their immediate family (0.2 percentage point more than in 2004 and the same percentage as in 1989).

People were more closely in contact with relatives and friends with respect to both 2004 and to 1989. However, there was less contact with neighbours.

The percentage regarding contact with immediate family remained practically unchanged with respect to 2004, but was up 19 percentage points on 1989; the percentage of families that had a close relationship with other relatives increased by nearly 2 points compared to 2004 and had risen by 14 points over the last 20 years. Contact with friends also increased by over 7 points (20 with respect to 1989). On the other hand, this was not the case when it came to contact with neighbours, which was down by just over 5 points compared to 2004.

The frequency of telephone calls to relatives and friends also increased, without that being to the detriment of visits, which also increased in frequency in the case of relatives. It is therefore noteworthy that daily calls and visits to relatives increased by 23 and 10 percentage points respectively between 1989 and 2009.

70% of families live in a “healthy” physical environment, but the social setting has been slightly hit and there is a perception of greater citizen insecurity

70% of families consider that they live in a “healthy” physical environment thanks to fewer external nuisances caused by pollution, noise and bad smells.

As far as the social environment is concerned, the figures rose slightly in 2009 regarding how the population perceived delinquency, ethnic problems and burglaries. Specifically, between 2004-2009, the perception of delinquency existing rose by 6 percentage points and of there being ethnic problems, burglaries and theft increased by 2 points. On the other hand, the perception regarding alcoholism, drugs and physical attacks fell by 3, 2 and 1 percentage points, respectively.

Overall, 19% of families perceived law enforcement problems (thefts and attacks), up by just over 2 points (16.8%) compared to 2004 and this had a greater impact in Álava.

10.5% of homes do not have some domestic household amenities

Domestic household amenities (mainly household appliances) are present in the vast majority of Basque homes. Thus, only 10.5% of families said that they had few amenities of this type, which was down by nearly one and a half percentage points with respect to 2004 (11.9%) and by over 15 points compared to 1989 (25.9%). However, there continued to be around 13,300 families that still did not have, for example, any heating.

On the hand, non-essential amenities (sports, audiovisual and IT) fell by 4.5 percentage points over the last five years: in 2004, 54.7% of the families answered that they had many amenities of this type, but the figure had fallen to 50.2% of families in 2009, even though that was nearly 4 points more than in 1989.

The system using individual gas boilers went through a period of expansion and was used by 63% of Basque households, 10 percentage points up on 2004.

Nearly a third of families recognised that it was difficult to get to the end of the month

One out of every 4 families (24.9%) has had to make cuts in certain areas, mainly with regard to leisure, clothes and shoes, but it is particularly noteworthy that a quarter of them say that they have cut back on food. Even though this figure is slightly worse overall than in 2004, the evolution is very different if we consider the relation with the activity of the reference person: nearly 40% of families with the reference person out of work in 2004 said that they had had to cut back on spending, while this figure rose to 57% in 2009.

In addition, nearly a third of families (30.1%) found it hard to get to the end of the month and 42.4% considered their economic situation to be worse than 3 years before. Families with the reference person out of work again acknowledged facing the most predicaments: in 2004, 52% said they found it hard to get to the end of the month, while that figure was 72% in 2009.

With regard to **local amenities**, 32.7% of families said that there were many services in the building in 2009, while the figure for 2004 came to 23% of families and the percentage was 15.3% in 1989.

However, services in the immediate and close proximity had remained more or less stable over the last 5 years. In 2009, 92% of families considered that there were many services in the immediate proximity - within 10 minutes on foot from home - (supermarket, butcher's, fishmonger's, nursery school, chemist's, etc.), while the figure stood at 93% of families five years ago. The services in the close proximity – 20

minutes on foot from home - (restaurant, health service, library, taxi stand, cinema or theatre, etc.) remained stable, at around 95%.

The number of students with a split morning and afternoon timetable increased with respect to 2004

In 2009, the educational level of the Basques continued to improved, with an ongoing drop in illiteracy levels and the difference between the sexes in that respect tended to shrink

With respect to the type of timetable for the student population, two out of every three students aged 5 and over had a split morning and afternoon timetable. The number of students only studying in the morning or afternoon tended to fall. In 2009, 69.3% of students had a split timetable, while it was only 59.2% in 2004.

Furthermore, the percentage of students who had lunch at home fell by 25 points since 1989, among the population in official education, falling from 84% to 59%.

The most frequent means of transport to the educational centre was and continues to be on foot (45.5%), followed by regular bus routes (17.4%). Use of the latter increased by 3.4 percentage points compared to 2004 and by 8 compared to 1999, to the detriment of school bus services.

The proportion of people with total dependency within the group of dependent people fell with respect to 2004, although it was double the 1989 figure.

Over the last 20 years, the percentage of people aged 6 and over in the Basque Country with some degree of dependency fell from 9.2% to 7.4% in 2009. With respect to 2004, the percentage is also down by 1.3 points. The lowest level is in Gipuzkoa (5.9%), followed by Bizkaia (8.1%) and, finally, Álava with 8.3%:

More than 12% of the dependent persons were totally dependent in 2009, even though it had fallen from 15.4% in 2004 to 12.6% in 2009. However, the percentage had doubled since 1989 (6%).

In 2009, the percentage of the population that saw the doctor during the year (76.3% in 2009 compared to 78% in 2004). In terms of the range of health care professionals, special mention should be made of the increase in appointments with general practitioners, who saw 87.2% of the population seeking health care in 2009, while they saw 82.7% in 2004. On the other hand, appointments with specialists, who saw 57.3% of the population in 2004, fell to 48% in 2009, one of the lowest rates in the last 20 years.

Over a quarter of the population belong to an association

In 2009, sports associations, with more than four million members, headed the ranking of associations with the most followers. There was a clear majority of men in this type of clubs (181, 000 male compared to nearly 78,000 women).

There were also more men than women in professional, trade union and political organisation, youth associations, environmental organisations, art, folk or leisure associations and other associations. However, women were greater in number in social care organisations (38,000 women compared to nearly 28,000 men), religious

denominations, development cooperation organisations, educational organisations and human rights organisations.

In 2009, the number of men and women that belonged to neighbourhood associations was the same: 17,000 of the 34,000 people registered were men and about the same number of women.

For further information:

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