

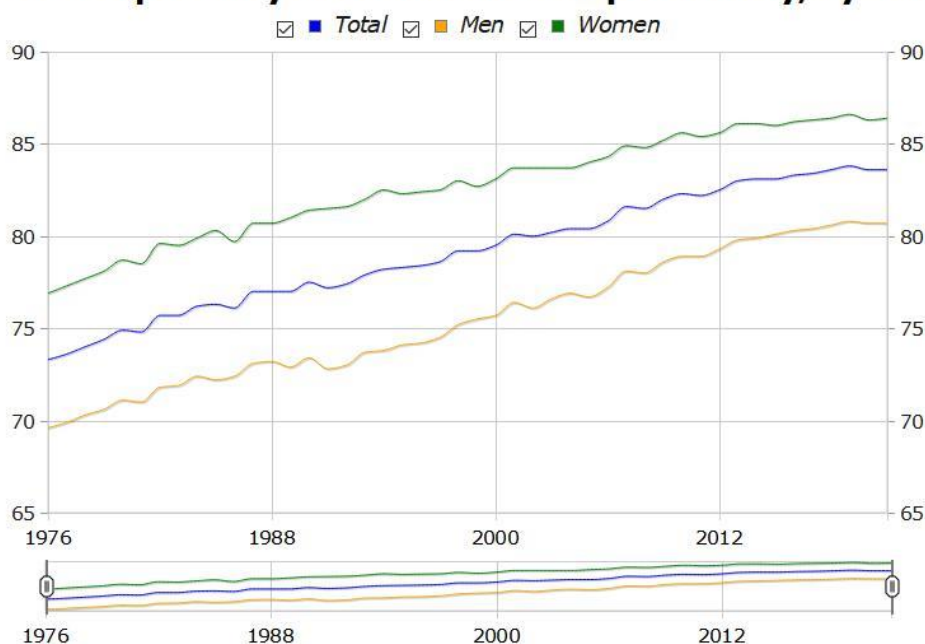
Life expectancy in the Basque Country in 2021 did not reach pre-pandemic levels

Fecundity recovered slightly, but with a higher average maternity age

Life expectancy in 2021 stood at 80.7 years for men, the same as in 2020, but one tenth less than that of 2019, while it increased by one tenth for women, reaching 86.4 years, but two less than that of 2019, according to Eustat data. This drop was due to the excess mortality caused by the COVID -19 pandemic in 2021. If it were not for this increase in mortality, life expectancy would have reached 81.7 years for men and 87.2 years for women, i.e. 9 tenths more for men and 6 tenths more for women than in 2019.

Nevertheless, this decrease in life expectancy between 2019 and 2021 was far from that seen in the European Union as a whole, which was 1.3 years in the case of men and 1.2 in that of women, standing at 77.2 years for men and 82.8 years for women. Life expectancy in Spain occupies one of the highest positions among European countries, although it is slightly lower than that of the Basque Country (4 tenths for men and 6 for women).

Life expectancy at birth in the Basque Country, by sex



Source: Eustat. Indicators for the analysis of demographic phenomena

Both men and women in the Basque Country saw an increase in their life expectancy, despite some fluctuations. Compared to the indicators observed in 1976 (a life expectancy of 69.6 years for men and 76.9 years for women), life expectancy increased by 9.5 years for women and 11.1 years for men. Men gained 3 more months of life per year, reaching 80.7 years, while women enjoy 2.5 more months per year, reaching 86.4 years. The gap between the life expectancies of the two sexes narrowed to 5.7 years, from a maximum of 8.7 years difference 27 years earlier.

Tumours were the main threat to the years of life expectancy. If tumours were completely eliminated, men would prolong their lives by 3.9 years and women by 2.8 years. If we make the comparison with the COVID-19-free life expectancy (86.1 years for men and 90.2 for women), the increase for men would be 5.4 years and for women it would be less, 3.8 years. External causes of death, however, were less detrimental, taking 8 months from the lives of men and 4 months from women. These figures dropped to just 1 month in the case of traffic accidents for men and a negligible amount for women. The combination of the absence of external causes with that of deaths due to COVID-19 would produce an increase of 1.8 years in the life expectancy of men and of 1.1 years in that of women.

Fecundity recovered slightly, but with a higher average maternity age

Fecundity in the Basque Country was at exceptionally low levels in comparative terms, given that in 2021 the average number of births per woman was 1.25, half a tenth more than in the previous year, but below the 1.50 seen in the European Union (latest data, 2020) and a long way from the average of 2.7 births in 1976 and the 2.1 required for generational replacement. The lowest index was in Bizkaia, with 1.17 births per woman, whereas Álava reached 1.30 and Gipuzkoa stood at 1.34.

On the basis of the data from the Indicators for analysing demographic phenomena, it was predicted that women would have an average of 0.63 first children, assuming that almost a third of women would have none; 0.46 second children; and 0.16 third or subsequent children. In other words, in the latter case, fewer than two out of ten women will give birth to a third or subsequent child, representing a decrease of 79% compared to 1976.

Another characteristic of the fecundity of Basque women was their high average maternity age, which stood at 33.2 years, more than 2 years above the European Union average (latest data, 2020) and 4.6 years more than in 1976. The average maternity age was slightly lower in Álava (33 years) than in the other two provinces, whilst in Bizkaia it stood at 33.1 years and in Gipuzkoa it was 33.2.

The pandemic also caused a fall in marriages

The percentage of first marriages according to the marriage rates for 2021 stood at 31.7% for men and 33.6% for women. These rates were significantly lower than those for 2019, which were themselves the lowest since 1977, due to COVID-19 restrictions; specifically, there was a decrease of almost 15 percentage points for men and 16.9 for women. It is assumed that marriage rates in 2021 were extraordinary and it is expected that the marriages postponed in 2020 will take place in the coming years.

An analysis of the marriage rate showed that the age for marriage continued to rise. The average age at which people enter their first marriage was 38.6 for men and 36.7 for women. However, this average age was 1.2 months higher for both sexes than in 2019,

which is a significant rise, given that in recent decades the increase from one year to the next was 2 or 3 months.

As in the case of fecundity, a considerable number of marriages took place at specific ages. In just 10 years, between the ages of 30 and 39, 50% of men and 49% of women got married.

On average, an inhabitant of the Basque Country will emigrate almost 4 times in their lives

Emigration is normally intra-provincial. In other words, the municipality of destination is in the same province as the municipality of origin. Such was the case of more than half of the migrations (2.1 out of a total of 4 for men and 2 out of a total of 3.7 for women). In contrast, on average men emigrated 1.6 times to destinations outside of the Basque Country, which represented 40% of the total number of emigrations, whereas women emigrated this way 1.4 times, which represented 38% of the total.

By province, there was quite a pronounced difference in the case of men between Bizkaia and Álava: Álava had an average number of emigrations of 3.3, whilst in Bizkaia it was 4.2 per person; Gipuzkoa stood in the middle with 3.9 emigrations. These differences among men were due to intra-provincial mobility, as Bizkaia had 2.4 movements, whereas men in Álava had on average only 1 movement. Álava stood out in terms of movements between provinces, with 0.5 per person, double those in Bizkaia (0.2); Gipuzkoa stood in the middle with 0.3. Women had the same ratios, but with lower rates.

Among women, as the distance covered by the emigrants increased, their average age rose. Thus, those who emigrated outside of the Basque Country were the oldest, 35.5 years, and those who moved within the same province did so with an average age of 33.3. This was also the case for men, but with higher average ages. Thus, the youngest, with an average age of 34, were those who emigrated within the province, and the oldest, 36.3 years, were those who moved outside of the Autonomous Region.

With regards to changes of residence within the same municipality, the men and women of Álava showed the highest mobility rate, with 4.8 on average for both sexes, some way ahead of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, with averages of around 4 moves per person.

If the number of emigrations are added to changes of address, both sexes will change their place of residence 8 times, either within their municipality or outside of it.

Indicators for the analysis of demographic phenomena. 2020/2021

Mortality Indicators		Basque Country	
		Men	Women
Life expectancy from birth		80,7 years	86,4 years
Life expectancy without external causes		81,4 years	86,7 years
Life expectancy without traffic accidents		80,8 years	86,4 years
Life expectancy without tumours		84,6 years	89,2 years

Fertility Indicators		Basque Country	
		Women	
Average of children per woman		1,25	
First children		0,63	
Second children		0,46	
Third and subsequent children		0,16	
Average age of maternity		33,2 years	
First child		32,2 years	
Second child		34,1 years	
Third and subsequent child		34,6 years	

Marriage Indicators		Basque Country	
		Men	Women
Average number of first marriages per 100 individuals		31,7	33,6
Average age at first marriage		38,6 years	36,7 years

Emigration Indicators		Basque Country	
		Men	Women
Average number of migrations		4,0	3,7
To a destination outside the Basque Country		1,6	1,4
To a destination in the same province		2,1	2,0
To a destination in another province		0,3	0,3
Average number of changes of residence in the same municipality		4,0	4,2
Average age at emigration total		34,9 years	34,2 years
To a destination outside the Basque Country		36,3 years	35,5 years
To a destination in the same province		34,0 years	33,3 years
To a destination in another province		34,4 years	34,2 years
Average age at change of residence in the same municipality		33,0 years	33,1 years

Source: Eustat. Indicators for the analysis of demographic phenomena

For further information:

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