

## The economic, demographic and social impact of the Spanish flu pandemic in Bizkaia (1918-1920)

### *Impacto económico, demográfico y social de la pandemia de gripe española en Bizkaia (1918-1920)*

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#### ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

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The article analyses the economic, demographic and social impact of the Spanish flu pandemic in Bizkaia (1918-1920). Bizkaia's condition as an industrialised, densely populated, spatially segregated province with an autonomous treasury, and the fact that it had been a neutral territory in the First World War, make it an ideal and original case study for developing an interdisciplinary analysis on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in both the public and private spheres. The article aims to study the health and demographic consequences of the pandemic in relation to economic, labour and treasury indicators and factors.

Firstly, the article studies the evolution and distribution of the mortality rates that can be attributed to the flu pandemic in 1918. Excess mortality is calculated at 12.3 per 1.000 inhabitants for the metropolitan area of Bilbao and 8.6 per 1.000 inhabitants for the rest of Bizkaia. The article contextualises the pandemic's demographic impact in the framework of the healthcare transition and focuses on its socio-spatial distribution. The impact on mortality was greater in the more industrial municipalities and a relation can be appreciated between population size and density and the incidence of the pandemic. Additionally, the virus showed a clear orientation towards young adults, preferentially affecting the core of the economically active population in Bizkaia.

Secondly, based on the analysis of the socio-spatial distribution and influence of the virus, the article analyses the pandemic's impact on the provincial economy. Based on the sample of businesses analysed, it concludes that in the context of the adaptation to lower production that occurred after the end of the First World War, the business sector did not suffer significantly from the pandemic's effects on economic and entrepreneurial activity or the labour supply. Finally, the article also analyses the public policies adopted to counter the pandemic by the main public administrations of the province and the budgetary footprint left by these policies. It demonstrates the shortcomings of the "liberal assistance" model of that period and the reduced budgetary efforts made by the administrations in their fight against the disease.

The methodology employed presents variations according to the characteristics of each source. The demographic and health section employs two main sources: the mortality registers of the Civil Registry and the Statistical Bulletin of Bilbao. In both cases the methodology consisted in the computerisation and statistical treatment of these sources by means of specialised programs. The tools employed to develop the study of the economy and the provincial treasury were the budgetary and accountancy analyses of a selection of primary sources: company minutes, memoranda and statistics; and official documentation, minutes and budgets of the main institutions of the province: the Provincial Council of Bizkaia and the City Council of Bilbao.