

Everyday life Infrastructure and Well-Being Across the Life Course: Evidence from Access to Care, Health, Mobility and Leisure Services

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Abstract

Infrastructure is usually assessed through its contribution to growth, productivity and competitiveness, while its role in sustaining everyday life remains less visible. This research examines how access to everyday life infrastructure is associated with assessments of excellent living conditions in Spain, adopting a feminist economics, Capability Approach and life course perspective. Using a nationally representative survey conducted in 2024 (N = 1,502), hierarchical regression models are estimated by gender and age group. The findings show that infrastructure matters for perceived living conditions beyond education and income, but its relevance is gendered and varies across the life course. Among women in midlife, facilities for dependent persons are significantly associated with excellent living conditions, highlighting the importance of infrastructure that sustains care and social reproduction. Among women aged 65 and over, cultural, leisure and sports facilities, together with markets and local commerce, become especially salient, pointing to infrastructure that enables autonomy, participation and

community belonging. The paper contributes to infrastructure studies by distinguishing between infrastructure for sustaining life and infrastructure for living well.

Keywords: feminist economics; well-being; infrastructure; social reproduction; life course; capabilities; gender; care; public investment; infrastructure for sustaining life; infrastructure for living well.

1. Introduction

Infrastructure has traditionally occupied a central place in economic analysis and public policy. For decades, investments in transport, energy, communications and other forms of public infrastructure have been justified primarily through their contribution to economic growth, productivity and competitiveness. More recently, however, growing attention has been devoted to the broader social consequences of infrastructure and to its role in shaping quality of life, social inclusion and well-being.

This shift reflects wider transformations in the understanding of development and social progress. The emergence of the Capability Approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011), multidimensional well-being frameworks (Stiglitz et al., 2009; OECD, 2020) and feminist critiques of conventional economic indicators have challenged the assumption that economic growth alone provides an adequate measure of social progress (Nussbaum, 2011). Instead, increasing attention has been directed towards the conditions that enable individuals to live well, participate in society and develop valued capabilities.

Within this context, public infrastructure acquires a significance that extends beyond their productive functions. They shape access to health care, education, mobility, care services, cultural participation and social interaction. Consequently, infrastructure influences not only economic outcomes but also the conditions under which everyday life is organised and experienced. This study addresses this gap through the concept of *everyday life infrastructure*, understood as the network of public services, facilities and spaces that support daily life and contribute to individual and collective well-being.

The main objective of this research is to examine the relationship between access to everyday life infrastructure and individuals' assessments of their living conditions, analysing how this relationship varies by gender and across stages of the life course. More specifically, the study pursues five objectives. First, it examines whether access to everyday life infrastructure is positively associated with individuals' assessments of excellent living conditions, beyond the contribution of socio-economic characteristics such as education and income. Second, it analyses whether the infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions differs between women and men. Third, it explores whether these associations vary across stages of the life course, reflecting changing needs, responsibilities and opportunities. Fourth, it assesses whether infrastructure for sustaining life, particularly care-related infrastructure, becomes especially relevant during life course stages characterised by intensive care responsibilities. Fifth, it examines whether infrastructure for living well, understood as infrastructure that enables autonomy, social participation and community engagement, becomes particularly salient in later life course stages.

Feminist scholarship has been particularly important in expanding this perspective. By emphasising the centrality of care, social reproduction and everyday life, feminist economists have demonstrated that infrastructure is not gender-neutral investments. Rather, they affect women and men differently because they occupy different positions within the organisation of paid work, unpaid care and social reproduction (Elson, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Pérez Orozco, 2014). Public infrastructure therefore plays a crucial role in shaping the opportunities available to individuals and the ways in which care responsibilities are distributed and managed.

Despite these advances, important gaps remain in literature. First, most economic analyses continue to evaluate infrastructure primarily in terms of their contribution to economic performance, while their contribution to well-being remains comparatively underexplored. Second, existing studies often assume that the relationship between infrastructure and well-being is relatively stable across the population. However, individuals' needs, responsibilities and opportunities evolve throughout the life course, suggesting that the infrastructure associated with well-being may also change over time. Third, although a growing body of feminist research has analysed infrastructure, mobility and care, relatively little attention has been devoted to examining how the infrastructure associated with women's well-being vary across different stages of life.

This study contributes to bridging these gaps by examining the issue through multiple, complementary perspectives. First, building on feminist economics, life course theory and multidimensional approaches to well-being, the study argues that infrastructure contribute to well-being through different mechanisms at different stages of women's lives.

Our research agenda has evolved towards the concept of **everyday life infrastructure** (Alarcón-García, 2023). The concept of **Infrastructure for Everyday Life**, first introduced by Horelli and Vepsä (1994) and later developed in Spain by Sánchez de Madariaga (2004) within the urban planning literature, provides the conceptual foundation for the present research from an economic perspective.

Its objective is to move beyond conventional understandings of infrastructure by incorporating those material, social and institutional dimensions that sustain life and contribute to human well-being throughout the course of everyday life.

This concept refers to the network of public services, facilities and spaces that support the organisation of daily life and contribute to individual and collective well-being. It encompasses not only traditionally recognised infrastructure such as transport systems and health services but also care facilities, cultural amenities, neighbourhood services, public spaces and other infrastructure that facilitate everyday functioning and social participation.

The concept of everyday life infrastructure represents a significant departure from conventional infrastructure frameworks because it places well-being rather than economic growth at the centre of analysis. Infrastructure are evaluated according to their capacity to expand capabilities, facilitate care, reduce inequalities, strengthen social participation and contribute to quality of life. The question is therefore no longer simply whether infrastructure contribute to economic development, but how they contribute to human flourishing and the sustainability of life.

More specifically, this research proposes a distinction between two complementary dimensions of everyday life infrastructure. The first, **infrastructure for sustaining life**, refers to infrastructure that supports social reproduction and the organisation of care. These infrastructures contribute to well-being by facilitating the reconciliation of paid and unpaid work, reducing care burdens and sustaining the practical conditions necessary for everyday life. The second, **infrastructure for living well**, refers to infrastructure that facilitates autonomy, social participation, community engagement and the exercise of personal and relational capabilities. While both dimensions contribute to well-being, they do so through different mechanisms and are expected to acquire different levels of importance throughout the life course.

The empirical analysis draws on data from the survey *Everyday life Infrastructure and Well-being*, conducted in Spain in 2024. The survey was specifically designed to investigate the relationship between infrastructure and well-being from a feminist perspective, incorporating objective and subjective dimensions of well-being, access to infrastructure, capabilities, care responsibilities and socio-demographic characteristics.

Using this dataset and regression analysis, the study examines whether the infrastructure associated with positive evaluations of living conditions differ according to gender and age. Particular attention is devoted to women aged 31-44 years and women aged 65 years and over, as these groups represent distinct stages in the life course characterised by different configurations of care responsibilities, labour market participation, autonomy and social engagement.

The paper makes three principal contributions to the literature. First, it contributes to feminist economics by advancing a conceptualisation of infrastructure that moves beyond conventional approaches centred on productivity and economic growth. Instead, infrastructure is analysed as determinants of well-being whose value lies not only in their economic effects but also in their contribution to the sustainability of daily life and the expansion of capabilities. Second, the study highlights the importance of infrastructure for individuals's well-being from a gender perspective. In doing so, it shows that infrastructure is not gender-neutral, but rather shapes well-being in ways that are mediated by gendered roles, responsibilities and inequalities. Third, the research contributes to the growing literature on infrastructure and well-being by introducing a life course perspective. Rather than assuming that infrastructure affect all individuals in similar ways, it examines how the infrastructure associated with well-being vary according to changing social roles, responsibilities and opportunities. Fourth, the study develops a novel distinction between infrastructure for sustaining life and infrastructure for living well. This distinction provides a framework for understanding how the mechanisms through which infrastructure contribute to well-being evolve throughout women's lives, moving from infrastructure primarily associated with the organisation of care and social reproduction towards infrastructure that facilitate autonomy, participation and community belonging.

The findings suggest that the infrastructure associated with women's positive evaluations of living conditions are not constant throughout the life course. Instead, different infrastructure becomes salient at different stages of life, reflecting changing configurations of care responsibilities, social participation and opportunities for autonomy. By demonstrating this dynamic relationship, the research argues for a broader

understanding of infrastructure as a key determinant of well-being and as a relevant dimension in the evaluation of public investment from a feminist economics perspective.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 develops the theoretical framework, drawing on multidimensional well-being approaches, feminist economics and life course theory. Section 3 presents the methodology, survey design and analytical strategy. Section 4 reports the empirical results. Section 5 discusses the findings and their implications for feminist economics and infrastructure evaluation. Finally, Section 6 summarises the main conclusions and identifies avenues for future research

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Measuring Well-Being Through Everyday life Infrastructure: Integrating Objective and Subjective Dimensions

The measurement of well-being has undergone profound transformations over recent decades. Throughout much of the twentieth century, development and social progress were predominantly assessed through macroeconomic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), income per capita, productivity growth, employment rates, inflation and external balances. These indicators provided valuable information about economic performance and productive capacity, but they offered only a partial understanding of the conditions under which people live and the extent to which economic growth translates into improvements in quality of life (Stiglitz et al., 2009).

The limitations of this approach became increasingly evident from the 1970s onwards. Economic growth did not necessarily imply improvements in living conditions for all social groups, nor did it adequately capture inequalities, health outcomes, educational attainment, social participation or other dimensions of human well-being. As a result, a growing body of literature began to question the assumption that economic prosperity could be equated with social progress.

One of the most influential responses to these limitations emerged through the Capability Approach developed by Sen (1985, 1999) and subsequently expanded by Nussbaum (2000, 2011). This perspective challenged resource-based conceptions of welfare by arguing that well-being depends not simply on the possession of resources but on individuals' real opportunities to achieve the lives they have reason to value. Resources are important, but their contribution to well-being depends upon people's ability to transform them into valuable functionings and capabilities. Consequently, development should be understood as the expansion of substantive freedoms rather than merely the accumulation of economic wealth (Sen, 1999).

The influence of the Capability Approach extended far beyond academic debates. It provided the conceptual foundations for the Human Development paradigm adopted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990. Through the Human Development Index (HDI), development began to be assessed not only through income but also through objective indicators of health and education, reflecting a broader understanding of human progress and social welfare (UNDP, 1990). This represented a

decisive starting point from purely economic conceptions of development and contributed to the institutionalisation of multidimensional approaches to well-being.

Alongside these developments, increasing attention was devoted to individuals' own evaluations of their lives. The literature on subjective well-being argued that understanding quality of life also requires examining how people perceive and assess their circumstances. Subjective well-being encompasses cognitive evaluations such as life satisfaction as well as affective dimensions related to positive and negative emotions (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999). Rather than treating individuals as passive recipients of objective conditions, this approach recognises them as active evaluators of their own lives.

Over time, it became increasingly apparent that neither objective indicators nor subjective evaluations alone were sufficient to understand well-being. Objective indicators provide information about material conditions, resources and opportunities, while subjective indicators capture how individuals experience and evaluate those conditions. Contemporary frameworks therefore increasingly advocate the integration of both perspectives. The report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Stiglitz et al., 2009), OECD well-being frameworks (OECD, 2020) and subsequent multidimensional well-being initiatives have consistently emphasised the need to combine objective and subjective dimensions in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of quality of life and social progress.

This integrated perspective has been particularly influential within the emerging field of well-being economics. Rather than focusing exclusively on economic growth, well-being economics seeks to understand how institutions, public policies and collective arrangements contribute to people's opportunities to live well. Well-being is therefore conceived as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing material living conditions, capabilities, social participation, autonomy, health, social relationships and subjective evaluations of life circumstances (Robeyns, 2017).

Feminist economics has played a particularly important role in expanding these debates. Feminist scholars have demonstrated that many dimensions central to well-being remain largely invisible within conventional economic analysis, including care work, social reproduction, time use, emotional labour and the sustainability of everyday life (Elson, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Pérez Orozco, 2014). These contributions have challenged the traditional separation between production and reproduction and have highlighted the importance of analysing the institutional and material conditions that make daily life possible.

From this perspective, well-being cannot be understood independently from the infrastructure that support everyday life. Access to health services, educational facilities, transport systems, care services, public spaces, cultural amenities and commercial services influences not only material living conditions but also individuals' autonomy, mobility, social participation, security and opportunities to pursue valued activities. Consequently, infrastructure emerge as important determinants of both objective and subjective dimensions of well-being.

Nevertheless, conventional economic analyses have generally evaluated infrastructure according to its contribution to productivity, competitiveness and economic growth. This

orientation has been particularly visible in the literature on infrastructure and development, where infrastructure are frequently analysed as inputs into economic production and engines of growth (Straub, 2008; Calderón & Servén, 2010; Estache, 2010). While such contributions remain important, they provide only a partial understanding of the social value of infrastructure.

Building upon the Capability Approach, well-being economics and feminist economics, a growing body of research has begun to explore the relationship between infrastructure and well-being. From a capability perspective, infrastructure can be understood as conversion factors that enable individuals to transform resources into capabilities and functionings (Robeyns, 2017). Public transport facilitates access to employment, education and social relationships; care services may reduce time poverty and support participation in paid work and community life; cultural and recreational facilities may foster social interaction, physical activity and personal development. In this sense, infrastructure are not merely physical assets or mechanisms of service delivery. They are institutional and spatial arrangements that expand or constrain people's opportunities to live well.

The present research builds upon a long-standing line of research examining the relationship between infrastructure, gender and well-being (Alarcón-García & Colino, 2011, 2013; Alarcón-García et al., 2012; Alarcón-García, 2019; Alarcón-García et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d; Alarcón-García, 2023; Alarcón-García et al., 2022; Alarcón-García et al., 2024; Alarcón-García et al., 2025a, 2025b). This body of work has progressively shifted the analysis of infrastructure away from a narrow focus on economic performance towards a broader understanding centred on well-being, gender equality, capabilities and the sustainability of everyday life.

A particularly important contribution of this research programme has been the development of the concept of *everyday life infrastructure*. This concept refers to the network of public services, facilities and spaces that support daily life and contribute to individual and collective well-being. Unlike conventional infrastructure frameworks, which focus primarily on economic outputs, everyday life infrastructure are understood as key determinants of well-being because they facilitate care, mobility, social participation, autonomy and the exercise of capabilities.

The concept has evolved through successive studies examining educational infrastructure, sports facilities, urban mobility, health services, care infrastructure and broader forms of public service provision from a gender perspective (Alarcón-García & Colino, 2011; Alarcón-García et al., 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). More recently, this line of research has been extended to the analysis of subjective well-being and everyday life infrastructure within both European and Spanish contexts (Alarcón-García et al., 2022; Alarcón-García et al., 2024; Alarcón-García et al., 2025a).

Within this broader framework, the present study focuses on one specific dimension of well-being: individuals' evaluations of their living conditions. While the survey employed in this study incorporates both objective and subjective dimensions of well-being, the analysis concentrates on respondents' assessments of whether their living conditions are excellent. This indicator is not intended to replace objective measures of well-being but rather to explore one particular dimension of a wider analytical framework.

More specifically, the research examines how access to different everyday life infrastructure is associated with women's evaluations of their living conditions across different stages of the life course. This focus is particularly relevant because the opportunities generated by infrastructure are mediated by gendered social roles, care responsibilities, mobility patterns and forms of social participation. These factors evolve throughout the life course and may influence both the infrastructure women use and the ways in which those infrastructure contribute to their well-being.

2.2. Everyday life Infrastructure, Gender and Social Reproduction

While multidimensional approaches to well-being have significantly expanded the criteria used to evaluate social progress, feminist economics has challenged a more fundamental assumption: the apparent neutrality of the institutions, policies and infrastructure through which well-being is produced and sustained. From this perspective, well-being cannot be understood solely as an individual outcome resulting from income, employment or access to market resources. Rather, it emerges from a complex set of social, economic and institutional arrangements that organise everyday life, distribute responsibilities and shape individuals' opportunities to achieve valued ways of living (Elson, 1998; Fraser, 2016).

One of the central contributions of feminist economics has been the recognition that all economic systems depend upon processes of social reproduction. Social reproduction encompasses the activities, relationships and institutions involved in sustaining life on a daily and intergenerational basis, including childcare, elder care, domestic work, emotional support, education, community participation (Tronto, 1993; Bhattacharya, 2017; Folbre, 2021), and leisure. These activities constitute an indispensable precondition for economic production and social sustainability. However, because they occur largely outside markets and have historically been disproportionately undertaken by individuals, they have remained largely invisible within mainstream economic analysis.

This invisibility extends beyond care work itself and affects the infrastructure that enable, support or constrain the organisation of social reproduction. Conventional economic approaches have generally evaluated infrastructure according to their contribution to productivity, competitiveness and economic growth. In this literature, infrastructure are typically conceptualised as inputs into production processes, determinants of investment and drivers of economic development (Straub, 2008; Calderón & Servén, 2010; Estache, 2010). Such approaches have been particularly influential in studies of developing economies, where infrastructure investment is commonly justified through its expected contribution to economic growth.

Although these contributions remain valuable, they provide only a partial understanding of the social value of infrastructure. Feminist economics argues that infrastructure also perform essential reproductive functions. Public transport systems, health services, educational facilities, care centres, public spaces and neighbourhood services influence how care responsibilities are organised, how daily life is coordinated, how time is distributed and how individuals gain access to activities and opportunities. Consequently, infrastructure should not be understood exclusively as productive assets but also as

institutions that sustain social reproduction and contribute directly to well-being (Elson, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Bhattacharya, 2017).

From this perspective, infrastructure investment is never gender neutral. Women and men interact differently with infrastructure because they occupy different positions within the organisation of paid work, unpaid care and household responsibilities. As a result, apparently universal infrastructure policies may generate unequal outcomes and reproduce existing gender inequalities. Early feminist analyses of mobility and urban planning demonstrated that women's patterns of mobility, service use and spatial behaviour differ significantly from those of men, reflecting their greater involvement in care activities and household responsibilities (Hanson, 2010; Sánchez de Madariaga, 2013). These findings challenged the assumption that infrastructure can be designed and evaluated independently of gender relations.

Building upon these debates, a growing body of research has examined the relationship between infrastructure, gender and well-being. Within this literature, a distinctive line of research has progressively developed a feminist approach to infrastructure centred on well-being, capabilities and everyday life (Alarcón-García & Colino, 2011, 2013; Alarcón-García et al., 2012). Early contributions demonstrated that public expenditure on educational and sports facilities could not be assumed to be gender neutral and that infrastructure investment influences opportunities and capabilities differently for women and men (Alarcón-García & Colino, 2011; Alarcón-García et al., 2012).

These studies represented an important departure from conventional infrastructure analysis because they shifted attention from economic outputs towards distributive effects, capabilities and well-being. Rather than asking whether infrastructure contribute to economic growth, this perspective asked how infrastructure affect people's opportunities to participate in social, economic and community life. In doing so, it established the foundations for a broader understanding of infrastructure as a determinant of well-being.

This conceptual shift was further reinforced through research examining the relationship between public infrastructure, transport and gender equality. Alarcón-García (2019) argued that the benefits of infrastructure investment should be assessed not only in terms of economic returns but also in terms of their contribution to gender equality and well-being. This work highlighted the importance of analysing infrastructure through the lens of capabilities, access to opportunities and everyday experiences rather than exclusively through traditional indicators of productivity and growth.

A major advance in this research agenda emerged through a series of studies conducted for the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). These investigations examined infrastructure provision, care infrastructure, health-service infrastructure and urban mobility across European Union member states (Alarcón-García et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). Collectively, this body of work demonstrated that infrastructure influence gender equality not only through their effects on labour-market participation but also through their impact on care arrangements, mobility opportunities, access to services and the organisation of everyday life.

Particularly important was the recognition that infrastructure affect the distribution of time and the capacity of individuals to reconcile paid work, unpaid care and social

participation. Care infrastructure, health services and transport systems emerged as critical determinants of women's opportunities to participate in economic and social life. In this sense, infrastructure constitute part of the institutional architecture through which societies organise both production and reproduction work. Their effects therefore extend beyond economic efficiency and directly influence the sustainability of everyday life.

This perspective also connects with broader developments in gender budgeting. Klatzer, Addabbo, Alarcón-García and O'Hagan (2018) argue that gender-responsive budgeting requires moving beyond narrow expenditure analyses and examining how public policies and investments contribute to gender equality in practice. Infrastructure investment occupies a particularly important position within this framework because of its capacity to influence both material conditions and opportunities for participation, care and well-being.

Recent empirical research has reinforced this argument by demonstrating significant relationships between infrastructure provision and subjective well-being from a gender perspective. Alarcón-García, Buendía-Azorín and Sánchez-de-la-Vega (2022) found that access to infrastructure contributes significantly to subjective well-being and that these effects differ according to gender. Subsequent research at the European level further confirmed the relationship between everyday life infrastructure and subjective well-being, highlighting the importance of analysing infrastructure through multidimensional and gender-sensitive frameworks (Alarcón-García et al., 2024). More recently, studies have also explored the relationship between gender roles, everyday life infrastructure and well-being, reinforcing the importance of social reproduction and gender relations in understanding infrastructure outcomes (Alarcón-García et al., 2025).

Taken together, this body of research suggests that infrastructure should be understood not merely as technical systems or productive assets but as central components of the institutional arrangements that sustain everyday life. However, while existing studies have demonstrated that infrastructure contribute to well-being and gender equality, much less attention has been devoted to understanding whether the infrastructure associated with well-being remain constant throughout life or whether they change according to individuals' positions within the life course.

Addressing this question requires moving beyond static understandings of both infrastructure and well-being. Individuals' lives are characterised by changing configurations of care responsibilities, labour-market participation, household organisation, autonomy and social engagement. Consequently, the infrastructure that contribute most strongly to well-being may also evolve throughout the life course. Exploring this possibility constitutes the central objective of the present study and provides the bridge to the following section.

2.3. Infrastructure, Life Course and Well-Being: From Sustaining Life to Living Well

Research examining the relationship between infrastructure and well-being has consistently shown that access to infrastructure contributes to quality of life, capabilities and subjective well-being (Alarcón-García et al., 2022; Alarcón-García et al., 2024).

However, most existing studies tend to assume that this relationship is relatively stable across populations and throughout the life course. In doing so, they overlook an important dimension of human experience: the fact that individuals' needs, responsibilities, opportunities and aspirations change over time.

The life-course perspective provides a useful framework for understanding these dynamics. Rather than viewing well-being as a static condition or individual lives as a sequence of isolated events, life-course approaches emphasise how social roles, family arrangements, employment trajectories, care obligations, autonomy and opportunities for participation evolve over time (Elder et al., 2003; Giele & Elder, 1998). These changes affect not only individuals' needs, but also the material and institutional conditions required to sustain well-being at different stages of life.

From this perspective, infrastructure should be understood as part of the institutional environment that supports individuals throughout the life course. The infrastructure that is particularly relevant for a young adult entering the labour market may differ substantially from that required by a person with intensive care responsibilities or by an older person seeking to maintain autonomy, social participation and community belonging. Consequently, the contribution of infrastructure to well-being should not be assumed to be homogeneous across populations or constant over time.

This argument is particularly relevant from a feminist economics perspective. Women's life trajectories continue to be shaped by gendered divisions of labour and unequal distributions of unpaid care responsibilities (Elson, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Folbre, 2021). Although these patterns vary across countries, generations and social groups, women remain more likely than men to assume primary responsibility for childcare, elder care and other forms of social reproduction. These responsibilities influence how women use infrastructure, the constraints they face and the benefits they derive from public services and facilities.

Feminist scholarship has repeatedly shown that social reproduction is not distributed evenly throughout the life course. Different stages of life are characterised by distinct combinations of productive and reproductive activities, generating different demands on time, mobility, care arrangements, public services and social support systems (Bhattacharya, 2017; Pérez Orozco, 2014; Tronto, 1993). Consequently, the infrastructure that facilitates well-being is unlikely to remain constant throughout women's lives.

Building upon this perspective, the present study argues that infrastructure contributes to well-being through different mechanisms at different stages of the life course. More specifically, it proposes a distinction between two complementary dimensions of

everyday-life infrastructure: infrastructure for sustaining life and infrastructure for living well.

The first dimension, infrastructure for sustaining life, refers to infrastructure that supports social reproduction and the practical organisation of everyday living. Its primary contribution to well-being lies in its capacity to facilitate care, reduce time poverty, alleviate daily constraints and support the reconciliation of multiple responsibilities. Care facilities, health services, public transport systems and other infrastructure that enable individuals to manage daily obligations can be understood within this category. From a feminist economics perspective, such infrastructure is particularly important because it supports the material and institutional conditions necessary for sustaining everyday life and reduces the burdens associated with social reproduction (Elson, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Pérez Orozco, 2014).

The second dimension, infrastructure for living well, refers to infrastructure that contributes to autonomy, social participation, community engagement and the development of personal and relational capabilities. Cultural facilities, sports amenities, public spaces, neighbourhood services and local commerce may all contribute to this dimension because they create opportunities for social connection, leisure, belonging, self-development and participation in community life.

This distinction resonates with research on active ageing, social participation and loneliness, which highlights the importance of community infrastructure in supporting autonomy, quality of life and social connection, particularly in later stages of life (Buffel et al., 2012; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; Victor et al., 2005; Walker, 2002). Such infrastructure contributes to well-being because it strengthens social relationships, facilitates participation and reduces the risks of social isolation.

Importantly, the distinction between infrastructure for sustaining life and infrastructure for living well should not be interpreted as a rigid dichotomy. All individuals require both forms of infrastructure throughout their lives, and both contribute to well-being. The argument advanced here is instead that their relative importance changes according to life circumstances. During life stages characterised by intensive care responsibilities, infrastructure that supports the organisation of social reproduction may become particularly relevant because it facilitates the management of daily obligations and reduces the costs associated with care. In contrast, during later stages of life, when concerns related to autonomy, social participation, belonging and active ageing acquire increasing importance, infrastructure that facilitates participation and community engagement may become more salient.

The central proposition of this research is therefore not simply that infrastructure contributes to well-being. Rather, it is that the social value of infrastructure evolves throughout women's lives. At some stages, well-being may depend more strongly on infrastructure that sustains everyday life and supports the organisation of care. At others, well-being may become increasingly associated with infrastructure that facilitates autonomy, participation and belonging. This shift from infrastructure for sustaining life to infrastructure for living well constitutes a central conceptual contribution of the present study.

Understanding these dynamics is important not only for advancing feminist scholarship, but also for informing public policy. If the infrastructure associated with well-being varies across the life course, infrastructure planning and evaluation should move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches and consider the changing needs that emerge throughout women's lives. In this sense, infrastructure policy becomes not only a question of economic efficiency, but also a question of well-being, gender equality and the sustainability of life.

2.4. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The theoretical framework developed throughout the previous sections suggests that the relationship between infrastructure and well-being is multidimensional, gendered and dynamic. Drawing on the Capability Approach, feminist economics and life course theory, this research conceptualises everyday life infrastructure as a key determinant of well-being because it shapes individuals' opportunities to participate in economic, social and community life while simultaneously supporting the sustainability of everyday living.

From a capability perspective, infrastructure operate as conversion factors that enable individuals to transform available resources into valued functionings and capabilities (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017). Access to transport, health services, care facilities, cultural amenities and neighbourhood services influences the opportunities available to individuals and therefore affects both objective living conditions and subjective evaluations of well-being.

At the same time, feminist economics emphasises that infrastructure cannot be understood independently from the organisation of social reproduction. Access to infrastructure, patterns of use and the benefits derived from infrastructure are mediated by gendered divisions of labour, unequal distributions of unpaid care work and differentiated experiences of everyday life (Elson, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Pérez Orozco, 2014). Consequently, the relationship between infrastructure and well-being is expected to differ according to gender and life circumstances.

Building upon the concept of everyday life infrastructure, the present study advances a dynamic understanding of the relationship between infrastructure and well-being. Rather than assuming that the infrastructure associated with well-being remain constant throughout life, the research argues that their contribution evolves according to changing configurations of care responsibilities, labour-market participation, autonomy and social engagement.

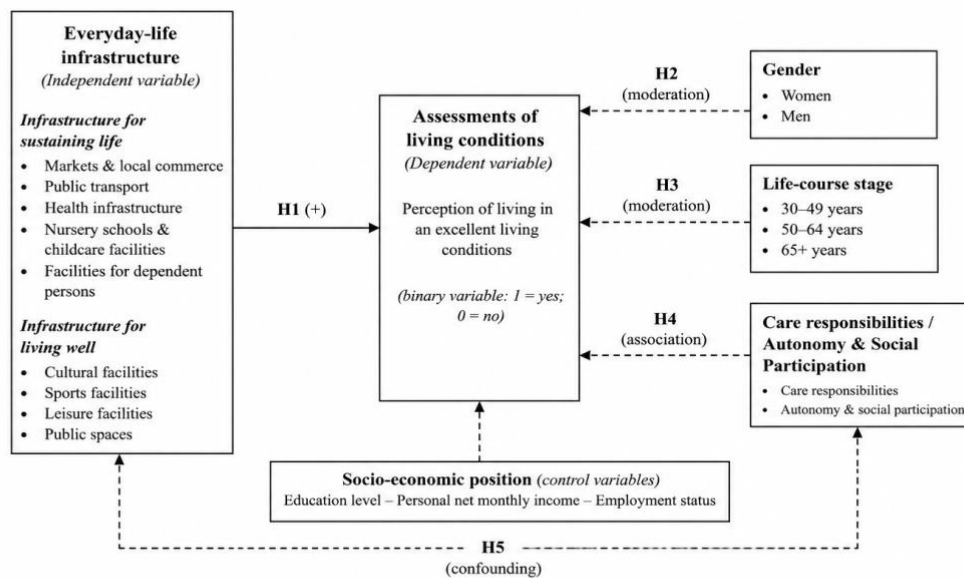
More specifically, the study proposes a distinction between two complementary dimensions of everyday life infrastructure. The first, **infrastructure for sustaining life**, refers to infrastructure that support social reproduction and the organisation of everyday living through the provision of care-related services, health services, mobility opportunities and other resources necessary for managing daily responsibilities. The second, **infrastructure for living well**, refers to infrastructure that facilitate autonomy, social participation, community engagement and the development of personal and relational capabilities through access to cultural, recreational and neighbourhood resources.

The central proposition advanced here is not simply that infrastructure contributes to well-being, but that the social value of infrastructure evolves throughout women's lives. At some stages, well-being may depend more strongly on infrastructure that sustain daily life and facilitate the organisation of care. At other stages, well-being may become increasingly associated with infrastructure that promote autonomy, participation and belonging. Understanding this evolution constitutes the principal objective of the present study.

Figure 1 summarises the conceptual framework underpinning the empirical analysis. It conceptualises everyday life infrastructure as a multidimensional determinant of living conditions and shows how its association with well-being may be shaped by gendered life trajectories, care responsibilities, socio-economic position and stages of the life course.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual framework and research hypotheses



Note. Solid arrows indicate the direct relationship between the independent variable (everyday-life infrastructure) and the dependent variable (assessments of living conditions). Dashed arrows indicate moderation (H2, H3), association (H4) and confounding (H5) relationships.

Based on this conceptual framework, this study proposes six research hypotheses. Taken together, these hypotheses move beyond the general question of whether everyday life infrastructure contributes to well-being and examine how the infrastructure associated

with positive assessments of living conditions varies according to gender, care responsibilities and stages of the life course.

H1. Access to everyday life infrastructure is positively associated with individuals' assessments of their living conditions.

This hypothesis is grounded in multidimensional approaches to well-being and the Capability Approach, which emphasise that quality of life depends not only on individual resources, but also on the material, institutional and spatial conditions that expand or constrain people's real opportunities to achieve valued ways of living (Sen, 1999; Stiglitz et al., 2009; Robeyns, 2017).

H2. The everyday life infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions varies by gender.

This hypothesis draws on feminist economics and gender-sensitive infrastructure research, which argue that infrastructure is embedded in the gendered organisation of everyday life. Because women and men occupy different positions in relation to paid work, unpaid care, household responsibilities and mobility patterns, the infrastructure that supports well-being is expected to differ across gender groups (Elson, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Hanson, 2010; Sánchez de Madariaga, 2013; Folbre, 2021).

H3. The everyday life infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions differs across stages of the life course.

This hypothesis follows from life course theory and feminist analyses of social reproduction, which suggest that individuals' needs, responsibilities, opportunities and constraints evolve over time. As people move through different stages of life, the infrastructure that contributes most strongly to well-being is therefore expected to change (Elder et al., 2003; Moen, 2003; Folbre, 2021).

H4. During life course stages characterised by intensive care responsibilities, everyday life infrastructure that sustains daily life is expected to play a particularly salient role in shaping positive assessments of living conditions.

This hypothesis is derived from feminist analyses of social reproduction, which highlight the importance of infrastructure that facilitates care, reduces time poverty and supports the practical organisation of everyday life. In these stages, infrastructure for sustaining life is expected to be especially relevant because it helps individuals manage care responsibilities, paid work and daily obligations (Tronto, 1993; Elson, 1998; Pérez Orozco, 2014).

H5. In later life course stages, everyday life infrastructure that enables autonomy, social participation and community engagement is expected to play a particularly salient role in shaping positive assessments of living conditions.

This hypothesis is informed by research on active ageing, social participation and community well-being, which identifies autonomy, social connection and participation as central dimensions of quality of life in later life. In these stages, infrastructure for living well is expected to become particularly important because it supports belonging,

participation and the maintenance of personal and relational capabilities (Walker, 2002; Buffel et al., 2012; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015).

This hypothesis integrates feminist economics and life course theory by arguing that the gendered relationship between infrastructure and well-being is not fixed, but changes over time. Since women and men occupy different and shifting positions within the organisation of paid work, unpaid care and social reproduction, the infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions is expected to vary by gender across life course stages (Elson, 1998; Hanson, 2010; Fraser, 2016; Folbre, 2021).

Together, these hypotheses support a dynamic understanding of everyday life infrastructure as a determinant of well-being. Rather than treating infrastructure as a neutral or static resource, the study examines how its social value depends on gendered life trajectories, care responsibilities and changing opportunities for autonomy, participation and social reproduction.

Taken together, these hypotheses move beyond the question of whether infrastructure contributes to well-being and instead examine how the infrastructure associated with well-being evolve throughout women's lives. In doing so, the research advances a dynamic understanding of infrastructure as a determinant of well-being whose social value depends not only on its characteristics but also on the life circumstances of those who use it.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research framework

This study forms part of the research project *Infrastructure for everyday life from the perspective of feminist welfare economics*, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. The project seeks to advance a feminist approach to the analysis of public infrastructure by moving beyond conventional economic frameworks that evaluate infrastructure primarily through its contribution to productivity, employment creation and economic growth. While recognising the importance of these dimensions, the project adopts a broader understanding of development in which infrastructure is analysed according to their contribution to human well-being, capabilities and the sustainability of everyday life. The research framework combines three complementary perspectives. First, the Capability Approach provides a multidimensional understanding of well-being based on individuals' real opportunities to achieve valued ways of living (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Second, multidimensional well-being approaches emphasise the need to integrate objective and subjective dimensions of quality of life (Stiglitz et al., 2009; OECD, 2020). Third, feminist economics highlights the importance of social reproduction, care responsibilities and everyday life as central dimensions of economic and social organisation (Elson, 1998; Pérez Orozco, 2014; Fraser, 2016).

Rather than treating infrastructure as neutral productive assets, the project conceptualises them as institutional and spatial arrangements that shape everyday life. Consequently, the survey was designed to capture dimensions that are frequently absent from conventional infrastructure assessments, including care responsibilities, access to services, mobility, social participation, emotions and subjective evaluations of living conditions. Within this framework, the survey was specifically designed to operationalise the concept of *everyday life infrastructure* and to examine how these infrastructures contribute to both objective living conditions and subjective assessments of quality of life.

The present research constitutes a specific exploitation of this broader research framework. While the survey incorporates multiple dimensions of well-being, this study focuses on one subjective indicator in order to analyse how the infrastructure associated with positive evaluations of living conditions differ according to gender and stage in the life course.

3.2. Survey design and data collection

The empirical analysis is based on the survey *Infrastructure for everyday life from the perspective of feminist welfare economics*, conducted in Spain between 1 and 26 April 2024 through Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). CATI platform was programmed to control quotas and automate questionnaire routing. The target population consisted of women and men aged 18 years and over residing in Spain. The sampling design combined territorial and demographic criteria in order to ensure the representation of different social and spatial contexts.

A two-stage stratified sampling procedure was employed. In the first stage, the sample was stratified according to municipality size. Three habitat strata were established: municipalities with 5,000 inhabitants or fewer, municipalities with between 5,001 and 400,000 inhabitants, and municipalities with more than 400,000 inhabitants. A non-proportional allocation strategy was adopted to guarantee sufficient representation within each territorial category. In the second stage, proportional quotas were established according to sex and age. Four age groups were considered: 18-30 years, 31-44 years, 45-64 years, and 65 years and over. These groups correspond to different stages in the life course and reflect the theoretical interest of the project in analysing how infrastructure contribute to well-being under different configurations of paid work, care responsibilities and social participation.

The final sample comprised 1,502 valid interviews. For the overall sample, the estimated sampling error was $\pm 2.53\%$ at a confidence level of 95.5% under the most conservative assumption of maximum variance ($p=q=0.5$).

3.3. Survey structure and measures

The questionnaire was designed specifically to investigate the relationship between infrastructure and well-being from a feminist perspective. Unlike conventional infrastructure surveys, which typically focus on service provision or user satisfaction, this

instrument examines how infrastructure contribute to daily life, capabilities and well-being.

The survey consists of six substantive dimensions: a) Access to everyday life infrastructure, b) Objective well-being, c) Subjective well-being, d) Capabilities and opportunities, e) Time use and care responsibilities and f) Socio-demographic characteristics. This multidimensional structure reflects the theoretical framework of the project and allows the simultaneous consideration of objective and subjective dimensions of well-being.

Dependent variable

The dependent variable employed in this research is respondents' level of agreement with the statement: "The conditions of my life are excellent". This item forms part of the subjective well-being module and was measured on a ten-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 10 ("strongly agree").

The indicator was selected because it captures a global assessment of living conditions while remaining consistent with broader multidimensional understandings of well-being. Although the survey incorporates objective and subjective dimensions, the present study focuses specifically on this subjective assessment in order to explore how evaluations of living conditions are associated with different infrastructure throughout the life course.

Infrastructure variables

The explanatory variables correspond to respondents' evaluations of access to different categories of public infrastructure are: a) Nursery schools and childcare facilities, b) Health centres and hospitals, c) Facilities for dependent persons, d) Public transport, e) Pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces, f) Markets and local commerce, g) Cultural, leisure and sports facilities and h) Industrial parks and business areas. Access was measured using ten-point scales ranging from 1 ("completely non-existent") to 10 ("excellent").

These infrastructure encompass both the infrastructure for sustaining life and the infrastructure for living well identified in the theoretical framework.

Socio-economic variables

Following previous literature on well-being, educational attainment and monthly income were incorporated as control variables. These variables are consistently associated with quality of life and subjective evaluations of living conditions and therefore provide an important baseline against which to assess the contribution of infrastructure variables.

Gender and age were used both as explanatory characteristics and as criteria for subgroup analyses.

3.4. Analytical procedure

The analytical procedure was designed to examine whether the infrastructure associated with positive evaluations of living conditions differ according to gender and stage in the life course. The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, descriptive analyses are conducted in SPSS 24.0 in order to characterise the sample and explore the distribution of key variables according to gender and age group. Second, hierarchical regression analysis is performed, where two models are estimated separately with individuals' evaluations of living conditions are excellent as the dependent variable. Model 1 includes socio-economic characteristics (educational attainment and monthly income). Model 2 adds access of infrastructure variables proposed in this study. The established hypotheses were checked with the results of model 2. This modelling strategy allows the assessment of the additional explanatory contribution of infrastructure beyond the effects of education and income. After using the general sample, gender is considered selection variable to identify the infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions and to examine whether these relationships differ according to gender. Third, age-specific models are estimated in order to analyse how the relationship between infrastructure and living conditions evolves throughout the life course. Particular attention is paid to women aged 31-44 years and women aged 65 years and over because these groups represent markedly different configurations of care responsibilities, labour market participation, autonomy and social engagement. Consistent with the theoretical framework developed in this research, the objective is not simply to determine whether infrastructure matter for well-being. Rather, the analysis seeks to identify which infrastructure become particularly salient at different stages of individuals' lives and how these patterns contribute to a feminist understanding of infrastructure as a dynamic determinant of well-being.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive results

Table 1 presents the main socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. Women and men are represented in similar proportions, while the age distribution reflects the life course structure established during the sampling process. The sample also includes considerable diversity in educational attainment, income levels and territorial contexts, providing an appropriate basis for examining variations in the relationship between infrastructure and living conditions.

From a feminist well-being perspective, the life course composition of the sample is particularly relevant. Different age groups are associated with distinct configurations of paid employment, care responsibilities, social participation and autonomy. Consequently, the infrastructure that contribute most strongly to well-being cannot be assumed to be identical throughout the life course. This consideration provides the rationale for the age-specific analyses developed later in this study.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Total		Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
N	1,502	100.00%	766	51.00%	736	49.00%
Age						
Age 18-30	242	16.11%	119	15.54%	123	16.71%
Age 31-45	340	22.64%	168	21.93%	172	23.37%
Age 46-65	545	36.28%	273	35.64%	272	36.96%
Age 65+	375	24.97%	206	26.89%	169	22.96%
Education						
Primary education	164	10.92%	83	10.84%	81	11.01%
Secondary education	698	46.47%	356	46.48%	342	46.47%
University education	640	42.61%	327	42.69%	313	42.53%
Income categories						
Up to €300	118	7.9%	78	10.2%	40	5.4%
From €301 to €600	95	6.3%	73	9.5%	22	3.0%
From €601 to €900	129	8.6%	83	10.8%	46	6.3%
From €901 to €1,200	201	13.4%	126	16.4%	75	10.2%
From €1,201 to €1,800	313	20.8%	143	18.7%	170	23.1%
From €1,801 to €2,400	284	18.9%	115	15.0%	169	23.0%
From €2,401 to €3,000	121	8.1%	37	4.8%	84	11.4%
From €3,001 to €4,500	63	4.2%	17	2.2%	46	6.3%
From €4,501 to €6,000	19	1.3%	5	.7%	14	1.9%
Over €6,000	13	.9%	5	.7%	8	1.1%
N/A	146	9.7%	84	11.0%	62	8.4%
Habitats						
Less than 5,000 h	500	33.3%	242	31.6%	258	35.1%
5,000 < h < 400,000	502	33.4%	257	33.6%	245	33.3%
More than 400,000	500	33.3%	267	34.9%	233	31.7%

Table 2 reports the average evaluations of access to everyday life infrastructure. Overall, respondents report relatively positive assessments of access to nursery schools, facilities for dependent persons, pedestrian areas (and parks, green spaces) and health services, while greater variation is observed in access to public transport. Gender differences were found in the access of the public transport, because women perceive it more than men do, with a medium effect size, according to Cohen's d values (.38).

Although these descriptive statistics do not reveal causal relationships, they illustrate the diversity of infrastructural contexts experienced by respondents. Importantly, they suggest that everyday life infrastructure is not equally distributed across the population and therefore may contribute differently to individuals' evaluations of their living conditions.

Table 2. Mean comparison of the items of infrastructure access

Access Infrastructure	Total		Women		Men		p t-student (bilateral)	Effect size Cohen's d
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Nursery Schools & childcare Facilities	9.61	15.249	9.42	14.206	9.82	16.271	.616	-

Health centres & hospitals	7.56	2.336	7.65	2.347	7.47	2.322	.135	-
Facilities for dependent persons	8.88	17.338	8.76	16.866	9.00	17.826	.791	-
Pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces	7.66	2.210	7.75	2.237	7.57	2.179	.102	-
Markets and local commerce	7.22	4.250	7.36	5.390	7.07	2.572	.199	-
Public transport	6.97	7.368	7.32	8.676	6.59	5.680	.055**	.38
Cultural, leisure and sports facilities	6.98	4.168	6.96	4.207	7.01	4.130	.807	-
Industrial parks and business areas	6.40	8.499	6.51	9.983	6.29	6.615	.615	-

*** p<0.001; **p<0.05; * p<0.1

Table 3 presents mean scores for the statement “The conditions of my life are excellent” according to gender and age group. Two observations are particularly noteworthy. First, evaluations of living conditions vary across the life course, suggesting that well-being is associated with changing social circumstances and opportunities. Second, differences between women and men are not constant across age groups, indicating that gender and life course position interact in shaping assessments of living conditions. Significant gender differences are found in youngers women and men, where men perceive living conditions better than women do, with a medium effect size, according to Cohen’s d values (.28).

These descriptive findings are consistent with the theoretical argument developed in the previous sections. Individuals' well-being is likely to be influenced by different infrastructure at different stages of life because care responsibilities, social participation and opportunities for autonomy evolve over time.

Table 3. Mean evaluations of living conditions by sex and age group

Age Group	Total		Women		Men		p t-student (bilateral)	Effect size Cohen’s d
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Age 18-30	6.88	2.250	6.50	2.407	7.24	2.033	.011***	.28
Age 31-45	7.05	5.384	7.45	7.369	6.66	2.033	.177	-
Age 46-65	6.74	2.073	6.67	2.249	6.81	1.880	.436	-
Age 65+	7.87	5.143	8.02	6.736	7.69	1.858	.138	-
Total	7.11	3.964	7.18	5.204	7.05	1.974	.515	-

*** p<0.001; **p<0.05; * p<0.1

Taken together, these descriptive results provide preliminary support for the life course perspective adopted in this research. They suggest that living conditions and access to infrastructure are not experienced uniformly across the population and justify a more detailed examination of the infrastructure associated with positive evaluations of living conditions among women and men at different stages of life.

The following section therefore moves beyond descriptive analysis and examines the infrastructure associated with living conditions through multivariate models estimated separately by sex and age group.

4.2. Regression results

Table 4 presents the hierarchical regression models predicting excellent living conditions, estimated separately by gender and age group. Model 1 includes education and income level, whereas Model 2 incorporates the set of everyday life infrastructure variables. The results provide relevant empirical evidence for the hypotheses advanced in this study and support the argument that everyday life infrastructure constitutes a significant, gendered and aged determinant of well-being. The variance inflation factors (VIFs) suggested no multicollinearity problems.

Across the general sex models, the inclusion of infrastructure variables increases the explanatory power of the regressions, especially among women. Model 2 explains 9.6% of the variance among men and 36.4% among women. In the male model, significant positive associations are found for pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces, cultural, leisure and sports facilities, and public transport. In the female model, significant positive associations are observed for cultural, leisure and sports facilities, markets and local commerce, facilities for dependent persons, and while pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces and industrial parks and business areas show negative significant associations.

The age-specific models show that the infrastructure associated with excellent living conditions varies across the life course. Among women aged 18-30, health centres and hospitals are positively associated with excellent living conditions, whereas cultural, leisure and sports facilities show a negative association. Among women aged 31-45, facilities for dependent persons are positively and significantly associated with excellent living conditions. In the 46-65 age group, facilities for dependent persons remain significant among women, while among men the significant predictors are pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces and cultural, leisure and sports facilities. Among those aged 65 and over, the strongest associations are found among women, for whom markets and local commerce and cultural, leisure and sports facilities are positively associated with excellent living conditions, while health centres and hospitals and industrial parks and business areas show negative associations. Among older men, pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces are positively associated with excellent living conditions, whereas markets and local commerce are negatively associated.

Overall, the results support H1, as the inclusion of everyday life infrastructure improves the explanatory power of the models beyond education and income. H2 is also supported, since the infrastructure associated with excellent living conditions differs between women and men. H3 is supported, as the significant infrastructure predictors vary across age groups. H4 is partially supported, particularly among women aged 31-45 and 46-65, for whom facilities for dependent persons are positively associated with excellent living conditions. H5 is supported mainly among women aged 65 and over, for whom cultural,

leisure and sports facilities and markets and local commerce are significant positive predictors.

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Table 4. Hierarchical regression analysis predicting Excellent life conditions.

	General (N= 1502) Standardized Coefficients		18-30 years (N= 242) Standardized Coefficients		31-45 years (N= 340) Standardized Coefficients		46-65 years (N= 545) Standardized Coefficients		> 65 years (N= 375) Standardized Coefficients	
	Men (N= 736)	Women (N= 766)	Men (N= 123)	Women (N= 119)	Men (N= 172)	Women (N= 168)	Men (N= 272)	Women (N= 273)	Men (N= 169)	Women (N= 206)
Model 1	$R^2=0.002$	$R^2=0.014$	$R^2=-0.008$	$R^2=0.056$	$R^2=0.025$	$R^2=0.095$	$R^2=0.006$	$R^2=0.059$	$R^2=0.000$	$R^2=0.015$
Education	0.040	-0.017	0.079	0.226**	0.137*	0.050	0.078	0.162**	-0.018	-0.120*
Income Level	-0.016	0.120***	0.049	-0.082	-0.087	0.304***	-0.036	0.171**	-0.005	0.041
Model 2										
Education	0.036	0.010	0.069	0.309***	0.095	0.017	0.049	0.144**	0.040	0.015
Income Level	-0.014	0.136***	0.024	-0.152	-0.058	0.280***	-0.034	0.162**	-0.005	0.061**
Nursery Schools & childcare Facilities	-0.002	0.023	-0.049	0.081	-0.128	-0.027	0.049	-0.076	0.096	0.041
Health centres & hospitals	0.051	-0.051	0.108	0.187*	0.005	0.117	-0.078	0.032	0.082	-0.073**
Facilities for dependent persons	-0.005	0.136***	0.000	-0.026	-0.029	0.298***	-0.021	0.142**	-0.038	0.022
Pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces	0.186***	-0.096**	0.227**	0.118	0.098	-0.105	0.248***	0.066	0.243***	-0.038
Markets and local commerce	0.015	0.160***	0.006	0.053	0.092	-0.095	0.010	0.069	-0.173*	0.147***
Public transport	0.092**	0.003	-0.188	0.073	0.099	0.060	0.085	-0.039	0.154	0.005
Cultural, leisure and sports facilities	0.105**	0.479***	0.125	-0.207*	0.174*	0.130	0.185**	0.073	0.121	0.809***
Industrial parks and business areas	0.037	-0.110***	0.115	-0.107	0.021	-0.108	0.035	-0.011	-0.049	-0.094**
VIF max.	1.381	1.946	2.166	1.782	1.766	1.699	1.609	1.806	2.332	2.334
F	7.698***	43.144***	1.395	1.789*	2.590	4.115***	4.996***	3.223***	1.831*	92.635***
R ²	0.096***	0.364***	0.111	0.142*	0.136	0.208***	0.161	0.110***	0.104	0.826
Adjusted R ²	0.084	0.355***	0.031	0.063	0.082**	0.157***	0.129***	0.076**	0.047	0.817
ΔR^2	0.082	0.350	0.119	0.086	0.111	0.113	0.155	0.051	0.104	0.811

*p<.10. **p<.05. *** p<.01

5. Discussion

5.1. Everyday life infrastructure as a significant determinant of living conditions

The findings indicate that access to everyday life infrastructure is associated with assessments of living conditions beyond the contribution of socio-economic characteristics, confirming H1. In the baseline model, education and income explain only a very small proportion of the variance in excellent living conditions for both men and women. However, once infrastructure variables are introduced in Model 2, the explanatory power of the models increases substantially. This confirms that living conditions cannot be adequately understood through individual socio-economic resources alone, but must also be analysed in relation to the material, institutional and spatial conditions that shape everyday life and expand or constrain capabilities.

5.2. Infrastructure and living conditions: a gender perspective

The results provide particularly strong support for H2, which proposed that the everyday life infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions varies by gender. The explanatory power of the model is markedly higher among women (36.4%) than among men (9.6%). Similarly, the increase in explained variance after the inclusion of infrastructure variables is much larger for women than for men. This suggests that everyday life infrastructure is more strongly embedded in women's evaluations of their living conditions, a finding consistent with feminist economics and gender-sensitive infrastructure research.

The specific infrastructure variables associated with excellent living conditions also differ clearly between women and men. Among men, significant positive associations are found for pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces; cultural, leisure and sports facilities (as infrastructure for living well); and public transport (as infrastructure for sustaining life). These results suggest that men's assessments of living conditions are primarily associated with infrastructures related to public space, mobility and leisure (infrastructure for living well). Similarly, among women, positive and statistically significant associations are observed for cultural, leisure and sports facilities, and markets and local commerce (infrastructure for living well), and facilities for dependent persons (sustaining life). Income level also remains significant in the female model. These findings indicate that women's assessments of living conditions are more closely linked to infrastructures that support participation in everyday social life (living well) and care.

From the perspective of the theoretical framework, these results reinforce the argument that infrastructure is not gender neutral. Women and men do not relate to infrastructure from equivalent social positions. Rather, their evaluations of living conditions are shaped by gendered patterns of paid work, unpaid care, household responsibilities, mobility and social participation. The stronger explanatory capacity of infrastructure among women suggests that everyday life infrastructure plays a particularly important role in the organisation and sustainability of women's daily lives.

The positive coefficient for facilities for dependent persons in the female model is especially relevant for the feminist economics argument developed in the research. This

result points to the importance of infrastructure for sustaining life, understood as infrastructure that supports social reproduction, care arrangements and the practical organisation of everyday life. The fact that this variable is significant only among women suggests that care-related infrastructure remains closely connected to women's assessments of their living conditions, reflecting the persistent gendered distribution of care responsibilities in Spain (Goñi-Legaz & Ollo-López, 2015; EIGE, 2023). By contrast, nursery schools and childcare facilities do not emerge as a significant predictor. One possible explanation is that the demand for this type of infrastructure may be affected by Spain's demographic structure, characterised by low fertility rates and a highly ageing population. In this context, care needs may be more strongly associated with dependency and long-term care than with early childhood care. In addition, the relevance of nursery schools and childcare facilities may be limited by the relatively short period during which they are used (3 years), particularly in contexts where public provision of early childhood education reduces reliance on nursery schools after the age of two. These factors may help explain why facilities for dependent persons, rather than childcare facilities, appear more strongly associated with women's assessments of living conditions.

At the same time, the strong positive association between cultural, leisure and sports facilities and excellent living conditions among women points to the importance of infrastructure for living well. This finding suggests that women's well-being is not shaped only by infrastructures that alleviate care burdens or support daily obligations, but also by infrastructures that enable participation, leisure, personal development and social connection. In this sense, the results support the research's conceptual distinction between infrastructure for sustaining life and infrastructure for living well. Both dimensions matter, but they do so through different mechanisms.

The negative associations observed among women for pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces, as well as for industrial parks and business areas, should be interpreted with caution. These coefficients should not be read as evidence that such infrastructure reduces well-being. Rather, they may reflect differences in quality, accessibility, location, perceived safety or correspondence with women's everyday needs. In particular, the negative association with industrial parks and business areas may indicate that infrastructures primarily oriented towards productive or economic activity are less aligned with women's subjective assessments of excellent living conditions than infrastructures connected to care, proximity services and social participation.

Overall, the results of Table 4 support the central proposition of the study: everyday life infrastructure matters for well-being, but its relevance is gendered. The findings are consistent with H1 and H2 and provide a basis for the subsequent life course analysis proposed in H3, H4 and H5. They show that infrastructure should not be evaluated solely as a productive asset or as a neutral public good, but as part of the institutional architecture that sustains everyday life, enables capabilities and shapes well-being in gender-differentiated ways.

Having established that the relationship between everyday life infrastructure and living conditions differs by gender, the next step is to examine whether these associations also vary across stages of the life course. This is particularly relevant for women, whose life trajectories are shaped by changing configurations of care responsibilities, labour-market participation, autonomy and social engagement.

5.3. Everyday life infrastructure and living conditions across the life course

Table 4 reports the hierarchical regression models estimated separately by gender and age group. These models make it possible to examine whether the everyday life infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions varies across stages of the life course and whether these patterns differ between women and men. Overall, the results provide empirical support for the central argument of this study: the relationship between infrastructure and well-being is not static, but changes according to individuals' position within the life course and is shaped by gendered life trajectories.

The explanatory power of the models varies considerably across age and gender groups. Among women, the inclusion of infrastructure variables substantially improves the models, particularly in the 31-45 age group and, most notably, among women aged 65 years and over. For women aged 31-45, Model 2 explains 20.8% of the variance in excellent living conditions, while for women aged 65 and over the model explains 82.6%. Among men, the explanatory power of the models is more modest and more evenly distributed across the life course. These differences suggest that everyday life infrastructure is more strongly associated with women's assessments of living conditions at specific stages of life, especially during periods linked to care responsibilities and later life.

The results provide support for H3, which proposed that the everyday life infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions differs across stages of the life course. The significant predictors are not the same across age groups. Among younger women aged 18-30, health centres and hospitals are positively associated with excellent living conditions, whereas cultural, leisure and sports facilities show a negative association. Among women aged 31-45, facilities for dependent persons emerge as the strongest infrastructure predictor. Among women aged 46-65, facilities for dependent persons remain positively associated with living conditions, although with a smaller coefficient. Finally, among women aged 65 and over, cultural, leisure and sports facilities show a very strong positive association, while markets and local commerce are also positively related to excellent living conditions. This changing pattern confirms that the infrastructure associated with well-being is not constant across the female life course.

For men, the life course pattern is different. Pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces are positively associated with excellent living conditions among men aged 18-30, 46-65 and 65 and over. Cultural, leisure and sports facilities are positively associated with living conditions among men aged 31-45 and 46-65. However, care-related infrastructure does not emerge as a significant predictor for men in any age group. These findings suggest that men's assessments of living conditions are more consistently associated with public space and leisure-related infrastructure (infrastructure for living well), whereas women's assessments vary more markedly according to care responsibilities, income, health services, proximity services and opportunities for participation.

The results also provide substantial support for H4, although with an important gender qualification. H4 proposed that, during life course stages characterised by intensive care responsibilities, everyday life infrastructure that sustains daily life would play a

particularly salient role in shaping positive assessments of living conditions. This expectation is clearly supported among women aged 31-45, where facilities for dependent persons are positively and significantly associated with excellent living conditions. This result is particularly relevant from a feminist economics perspective, as this stage of life is often marked by the coexistence of paid work, household responsibilities and care obligations. The significance of facilities for dependent persons indicates that infrastructure supporting social reproduction and the practical organisation of everyday life is closely linked to women's subjective evaluations of their living conditions.

The finding for women aged 46-65 further reinforces this interpretation. In this age group, facilities for dependent persons remain positively associated with excellent living conditions. This suggests that care-related infrastructure continues to matter beyond the early adult stage, possibly reflecting responsibilities associated with elder care, family support or intergenerational care arrangements. However, the absence of significant effects for nursery schools and childcare facilities suggests that H4 should be interpreted in relation to broader care infrastructure rather than exclusively childcare infrastructure. Thus, H4 is supported, but mainly through the relevance of facilities for dependent persons and particularly among women.

The results for later life provide strong support for H5 among women. H5 proposed that, in later life course stages, everyday life infrastructure that enables autonomy, social participation and community engagement would play a particularly salient role in shaping positive assessments of living conditions. Among women aged 65 and over, cultural, leisure and sports facilities show by far the strongest positive coefficient in the model. Markets and local commerce are also positively and significantly associated with excellent living conditions. These findings are highly consistent with the theoretical argument that, in later life, well-being becomes more closely connected to infrastructure for living well: infrastructure that supports autonomy, social participation, proximity, community engagement, leisure and the maintenance of relational capabilities.

For older men, the evidence is more mixed. Pedestrian areas, parks, public lighting and green spaces are positively associated with excellent living conditions, suggesting that public space remains relevant for men's well-being in later life. However, markets and local commerce show a negative association among older men, and cultural, leisure and sports facilities are not statistically significant in this group. Therefore, H5 is strongly supported for older women, while for older men the evidence suggests a narrower association centred mainly on public space and the urban environment.

To sum up, these results also support all hypotheses because of the relationship between everyday life infrastructure and assessments of living conditions differs by gender across stages of the life course. Gender differences are not uniform across age groups. Among women aged 31-45 and 46-65, care-related infrastructure is significantly associated with excellent living conditions, whereas this is not the case for men. Among women aged 65 and over, cultural, leisure and sports facilities and local commerce are especially relevant, whereas among men in the same age group public space is the only clearly positive infrastructure predictor. These findings indicate that gender differences in the infrastructure-well-being relationship are themselves life course dependent.

The negative coefficients observed in some models should be interpreted cautiously. Among young women, cultural, leisure and sports facilities are negatively associated with

excellent living conditions, while among older women, health centres and hospitals and industrial parks and business areas show negative associations. These results should not be read as evidence that such infrastructure reduces well-being. Rather, they may reflect differences in accessibility, quality, perceived adequacy, territorial location, safety, or the extent to which these infrastructures correspond to the needs and expectations of specific groups. In particular, the negative association with industrial parks and business areas among older women suggests that infrastructure oriented primarily towards productive activity may be less connected to subjective evaluations of living conditions than infrastructures linked to proximity, social participation and everyday life.

Taken together, the age-specific models reinforce the theoretical framework of this study. The findings show that everyday life infrastructure matters for assessments of living conditions, but not in the same way for all groups or at all stages of life. For women in midlife, infrastructure for sustaining life, especially facilities for dependent persons, is particularly salient. For women in later life, infrastructure for living well, especially cultural, leisure and sports facilities and local commerce, becomes central. Among men, the relevant infrastructure is more consistently related to public space, mobility and leisure (living well), and less clearly connected to care infrastructure (sustaining life).

Overall, H3 and H6 are supported: the infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions varies across the life course and these variations differ by gender. H4 is supported mainly among women in life stages associated with care responsibilities, particularly through the significance of facilities for dependent persons. H5 is strongly supported among older women, for whom infrastructure enabling participation, proximity and community engagement is especially relevant. These findings confirm the need to move beyond static and gender-neutral approaches to infrastructure evaluation. They support a dynamic feminist understanding of infrastructure as a determinant of well-being whose social value depends on the changing organisation of care, autonomy and participation across the life course.

5.4. Theoretical implications

This study has several theoretical implications for feminist economics, well-being research and infrastructure studies. First, the findings support the need to move beyond conventional understandings of infrastructure as a productive asset primarily evaluated through its contribution to economic growth, competitiveness or efficiency. By showing that *everyday life infrastructure* is associated with individuals' assessments of their living conditions, the study reinforces the argument that infrastructure should also be conceptualised as a determinant of well-being, capabilities and the sustainability of daily life.

Second, the results contribute to feminist economics by demonstrating that everyday life infrastructure is not a gender-neutral component of the built and institutional environment. The infrastructure associated with positive assessments of living conditions differs between women and men, and the explanatory power of infrastructure is substantially higher among women. This finding supports feminist arguments that access to services, facilities and public spaces is mediated by gendered divisions of paid work, unpaid care, household responsibilities and social reproduction. In this sense, the study

extends the analysis of infrastructure from a distributive perspective to a relational one: infrastructure matters not only because it is available, but because individuals occupy different social positions from which they use, need and value it.

Third, the study advances the literature on everyday life infrastructure and well-being by introducing a life course perspective. The results show that the everyday life infrastructure associated with excellent living conditions is not constant across age groups. Instead, different types of everyday life infrastructure become salient at different stages of life. This finding challenges static approaches to infrastructure evaluation and supports a dynamic understanding of well-being, in which needs, responsibilities, opportunities and constraints evolve over time.

Fourth, the study develops and empirically supports the distinction between infrastructure for sustaining life and infrastructure for living well. Infrastructure for sustaining life refers to those services and facilities that support care, social reproduction and the practical organisation of everyday life. Infrastructure for living well refers to those that enable autonomy, participation, leisure, community engagement and the development of personal and relational capabilities. The results suggest that these two dimensions are not mutually exclusive, but their relative importance varies across the life course. Among women in midlife, care-related infrastructure is particularly relevant, whereas among older women, cultural, leisure, sports and local commercial infrastructure become especially important.

Finally, the study contributes to the Capability Approach by showing that infrastructure can be interpreted as a set of conversion factors that shape individuals' real opportunities to achieve valued ways of living. Access to care facilities, health services, public transport, public spaces, cultural amenities and neighbourhood services does not merely provide material resources. It also expands or constrains autonomy, time use, participation, care arrangements and social connection. The findings therefore reinforce the value of integrating feminist economics, the Capability Approach and life course theory to understand the social value of infrastructure.

5.5. Practical implications

The findings also have important implications for public policy, infrastructure planning and the evaluation of public investment. First, they suggest that infrastructure policy should not be assessed only through economic indicators such as productivity, employment creation or territorial competitiveness. Although these dimensions remain relevant, they provide only a partial account of the social value of infrastructure. Public investment should also be evaluated according to its capacity to improve living conditions, support care, expand capabilities and enable participation in everyday life.

Second, the results point to the need for gender-sensitive infrastructure planning. Since women's assessments of living conditions are more strongly associated with everyday life infrastructure than men's, infrastructure policies should explicitly consider the gendered organisation of care, mobility, proximity services and social participation. Treating infrastructure as a neutral public good may obscure the unequal ways in which women and men experience access, usefulness, safety and adequacy. Gender-responsive

planning should therefore incorporate evidence on how different groups use infrastructure and how infrastructure affects their daily constraints and opportunities.

Third, the findings indicate that care-related infrastructure should be recognised as a core component of public investment. Facilities for dependent persons are positively associated with women's assessments of excellent living conditions, particularly in age groups where care responsibilities are especially relevant. This suggests that care infrastructure should not be considered a residual or secondary area of social policy, but a strategic component of well-being, gender equality and the sustainability of everyday life. Investment in care infrastructure may contribute not only to reducing care burdens, but also to expanding women's opportunities for employment, participation and personal autonomy.

Fourth, the results underline the importance of proximity infrastructure and community-based services, especially in later life. Among older women, cultural, leisure and sports facilities, together with markets and local commerce, are strongly associated with positive assessments of living conditions. These findings suggest that ageing policies should move beyond health and dependency frameworks alone and incorporate infrastructure that supports autonomy, social participation, community belonging and everyday interaction. In this regard, neighbourhood-level infrastructure is central to promoting quality of life in later stages of the life course.

Fifth, the study has implications for gender-responsive budgeting and public expenditure evaluation. If infrastructure contributes differently to well-being depending on gender and life course stage, then public budgets should assess not only how much is invested, but also whose capabilities are expanded by that investment. Infrastructure appraisal should incorporate indicators related to care, time use, accessibility, perceived safety, social participation, proximity and subjective well-being. This would allow public investment to be evaluated in terms of its contribution to both economic development and the sustainability of life.

Finally, the findings suggest that infrastructure policy should avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. The same type of infrastructure does not have the same relevance for all groups or at all stages of life. Planning processes should therefore consider the changing needs associated with youth, midlife, care responsibilities, ageing, autonomy and social participation. A life course approach to infrastructure policy can help design more responsive, inclusive and equitable public services, facilities and spaces.

6. Conclusions, limitations and future research

This study has examined the relationship between access to everyday life infrastructure and individuals' assessments of excellent living conditions in Spain. Drawing on feminist economics, the Capability Approach and life course theory, the research highlights that infrastructure constitutes part of the material and institutional arrangements that sustain everyday life, expand capabilities and shape well-being.

The empirical findings support this argument. The inclusion of everyday life infrastructure variables improves the explanatory power of the regression models beyond

education and income, confirming that assessments of living conditions are associated not only with individual socio-economic resources but also with access to services, facilities and spaces that organise daily life. The results also show that this relationship is gendered. The infrastructure associated with excellent living conditions differs between women and men, and the explanatory capacity of infrastructure is considerably higher among women.

The life course analysis further demonstrates that the infrastructure associated with well-being is not stable across age groups. Among women in midlife, facilities for dependent persons are particularly relevant, suggesting the importance of infrastructure that supports care and social reproduction. Among women aged 65 years and over, cultural, leisure and sports facilities, together with markets and local commerce, are especially strongly associated with excellent living conditions. These findings support the central theoretical proposition of the study: the social value of infrastructure changes across the life course.

The research therefore contributes to the literature by proposing a distinction between infrastructure for sustaining life and infrastructure for living well. The former refers to infrastructure that supports care, reduces daily constraints and facilitates the organisation of social reproduction. The latter refers to infrastructure that enables autonomy, participation, leisure, community engagement and the exercise of personal and relational capabilities. The findings suggest that both dimensions are relevant, but their relative importance changes according to gendered life trajectories and life course position.

Despite these contributions, the study has several *limitations*. First, the analysis is based on cross-sectional data, which limits the possibility of establishing causal relationships. The results should therefore be interpreted as associations between access to infrastructure and assessments of living conditions, rather than as evidence of causal effects. Second, the dependent variable captures one specific subjective assessment of well-being: agreement with the statement that one's living conditions are excellent. Although this is a relevant indicator, it does not capture all dimensions of well-being included in broader multidimensional frameworks. Third, access to infrastructure is measured through respondents' evaluations, which may reflect both objective availability and subjective perceptions of quality, accessibility, adequacy or safety. Fourth, the analysis focuses on gender and age, but other axes of inequality (such as income, territory, disability, migration status, household composition or rural-urban location) may also shape the relationship between infrastructure and well-being.

Future research should address these limitations in several ways. First, longitudinal studies would be valuable for examining how changes in infrastructure provision affect well-being over time and whether the relevance of different infrastructure evolves as individuals move through life course transitions. Second, future studies should incorporate more detailed measures of care responsibilities, time use and household arrangements in order to better understand the mechanisms linking infrastructure, social reproduction and well-being. Third, mixed-methods research could complement survey analysis by exploring how individuals interpret, use and value infrastructure in their everyday lives. Qualitative evidence would be particularly useful for understanding why certain infrastructure shows positive or negative associations with living conditions among specific groups.

Further research should also examine territorial inequalities in everyday life infrastructure. Access, quality and proximity may vary significantly across urban, semi-urban and rural contexts, and these differences may condition the extent to which infrastructure contributes to well-being. Comparative studies across countries or regions would also help assess whether the patterns identified in Spain are reproduced in other welfare, urban and gender regimes.

Finally, future research should further develop the concept of everyday life infrastructure as a framework for public investment evaluation. This requires designing indicators capable of capturing not only physical provision, but also accessibility, affordability, quality, safety, time savings, care support, participation and subjective well-being. Advancing this agenda would contribute to a more comprehensive assessment of infrastructure, one that recognises its role in sustaining life, enabling capabilities and promoting gender equality across the life course.

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