

## February 21, International Mother Language Day

### **18.7% of Basque youths aged 15 to 29 has Basque as their only mother language**

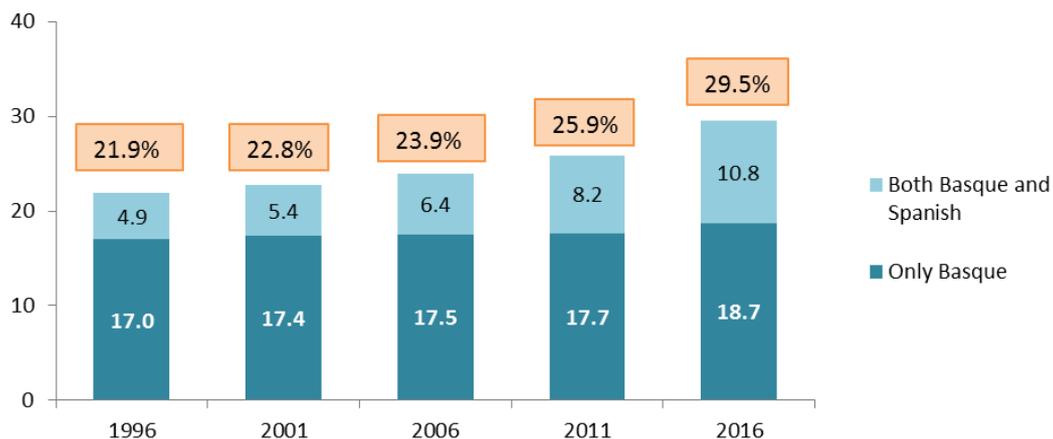
In 1999, UNESCO declared February 21 the International Mother Language Day. The mother language is understood to be the language that children learn at home up to the age of three. The purpose of establishing an international mother language day is to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism, i.e. preserve and protect all the languages that the peoples of the world use.

The Basque Youth Observatory has studied data relating to the mother language of young people in the Basque Country.

In the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, Basque is the only mother language of 18.7% of young people aged 15 to 29, according to data from Eustat, Basque Statistical Office. Another 10.8% has both Basque and Spanish as mother languages, so three out of ten Basque youths learned Basque at home when they were child under the age of three (29.5%).

This percentage has increased in last twenty years from 21.9% in 1996 to 29.5% in 2016. But, in fact, there are more young people who have learned both Basque and Spanish when they were babies, while the percentage of those who have only Basque as mother language is very similar along last years.

**Evolution of the percentage of young people aged 15 to 29 in the Basque Country who say their mother language is only Basque or both Basque and Spanish**

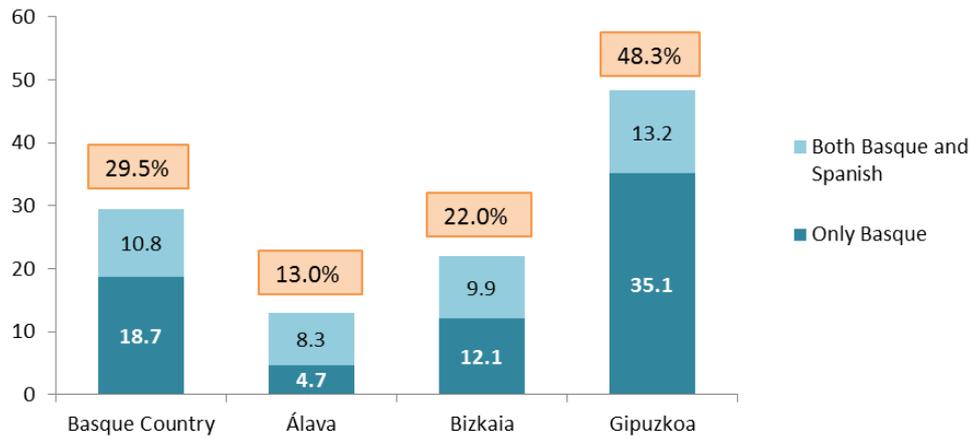


Source: Basque Youth Observatory based on data from Eustat (Population and Housing Census)

In addition, these data hide great differences between provinces. In Gipuzkoa one third of young people living in that province only heard Basque at home when they were under the age of three (35.1%), but in Álava, i.e., only 4.7% of youths aged 15 to 29 are in the same situation.

And if we take into account all young people who have only Basque or both Basque and Spanish as mother languages, we can see they are almost half of total youth in Gipuzkoa (48.3%), but considerably less in Bizkaia (22.0%) and in Álava (13.0%).

**Percentage of young people aged 15 to 29 in the Basque Country who say their mother language is only Basque or both Basque and Spanish, by province**



Source: Basque Youth Observatory based on data from Eustat (Population and Housing Census)

However, it seems that educational system is relieving those differences between provinces, because in Álava only 13.0% of young people learnt Basque at home but 51.4% of youths in that province say they speak Basque well or very well. 63.8% of young people who live in Bizkaia say they speak Basque fluently, as well as 78.9% of young people living in Gipuzkoa. As we can see, they are much more than those who learnt Basque at home.