

February 21, International Mother Language Day

28.6 % of Basque youths aged 16 to 24 speak Basque as their mother language

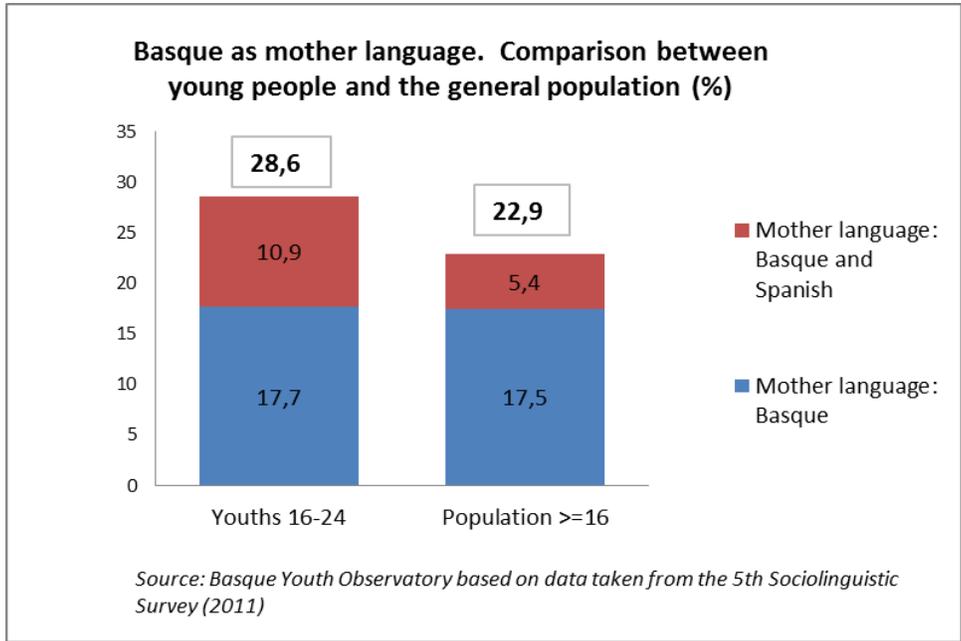
In 1999, UNESCO declared February 21 the [International Mother Language Day](#). The mother language is understood to be the language that children learn at home up to the age of three. The purpose of establishing an international mother language day is to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and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

The Basque Youth Observatory, as part of its mission to disseminate timely information on the reality of Basque youths, has studied data relating to the mother language of young people in the Basque Country. The basis of the study is the [5th Sociolinguistic Survey](#) conducted in 2011 by the Vice-ministry of Language Policy of the Basque Government.

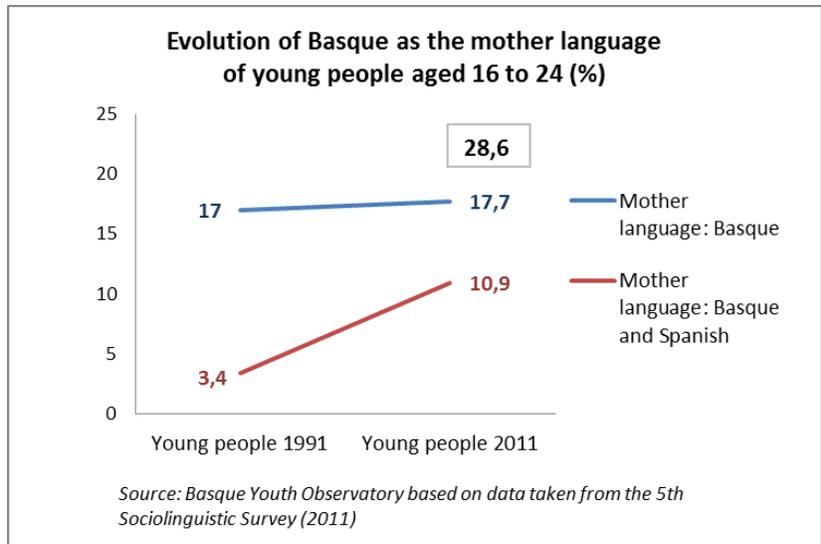
In the Basque Country, Basque is the mother language of 28.6 % of young people aged 16 to 24. This percentage includes 17.7 % that have only listened to Basque in their homes up to the age of three and the remaining 10.9 % whose first language is both Basque and Spanish.

Among the general population of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (aged 16 and over), the percentage of those whose mother language is Basque (22.9 %) is lower than among young people.

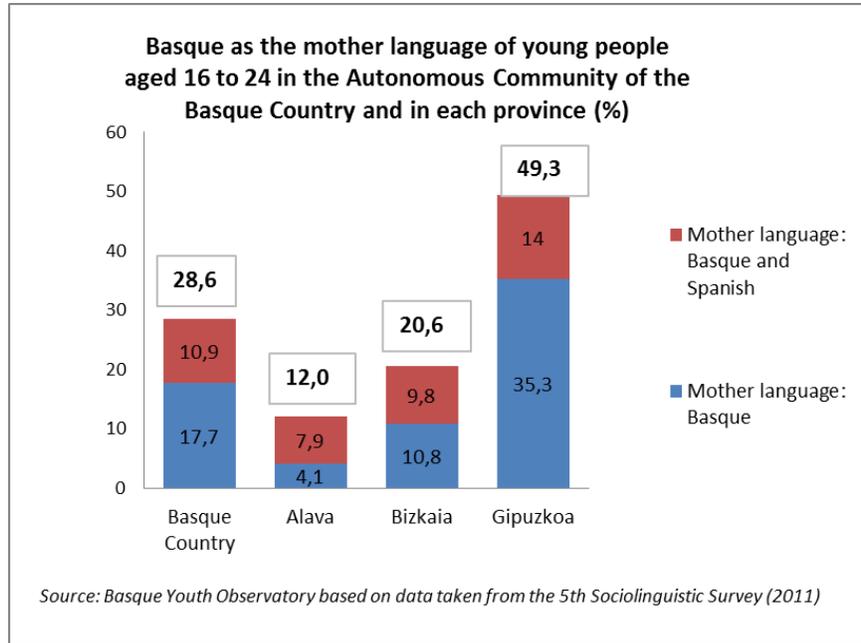
The difference between the figures for young people and those for the general population is due to the fact that the percentage of those whose mother language is both Basque and Spanish is 10.9 % in the case of young people and only 5.4 % among the general population, while there are no major differences between both groups regarding the percentage of those whose only mother language is Basque.



From 1991 to 2011, i.e. a period of 20 years, the percentage of young people whose mother language was Basque increased from 20.4 % to 28.6 %. Once again, the differences lie in the higher percentage of young people in 2011 who state that their mother language, up to the age of three, was both Basque and Spanish (10.9 % in 2011 compared to 3.4 % in 1991).



In addition, the differences by provinces are well known: in 2011, the percentage of young people aged 16 to 24 in Alava who stated that their mother language was Basque, either solely or together with Spanish, totalled 12 %; in Bizkaia, this percentage was 20.6 % and in Guipuzkoa, it reached 49.3 %.



In addition, you can see more data about young people aged 15 to 29 years in the [Statistics](#) of Basque Youth Observatory website, specifically in the section called "Euskera".

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