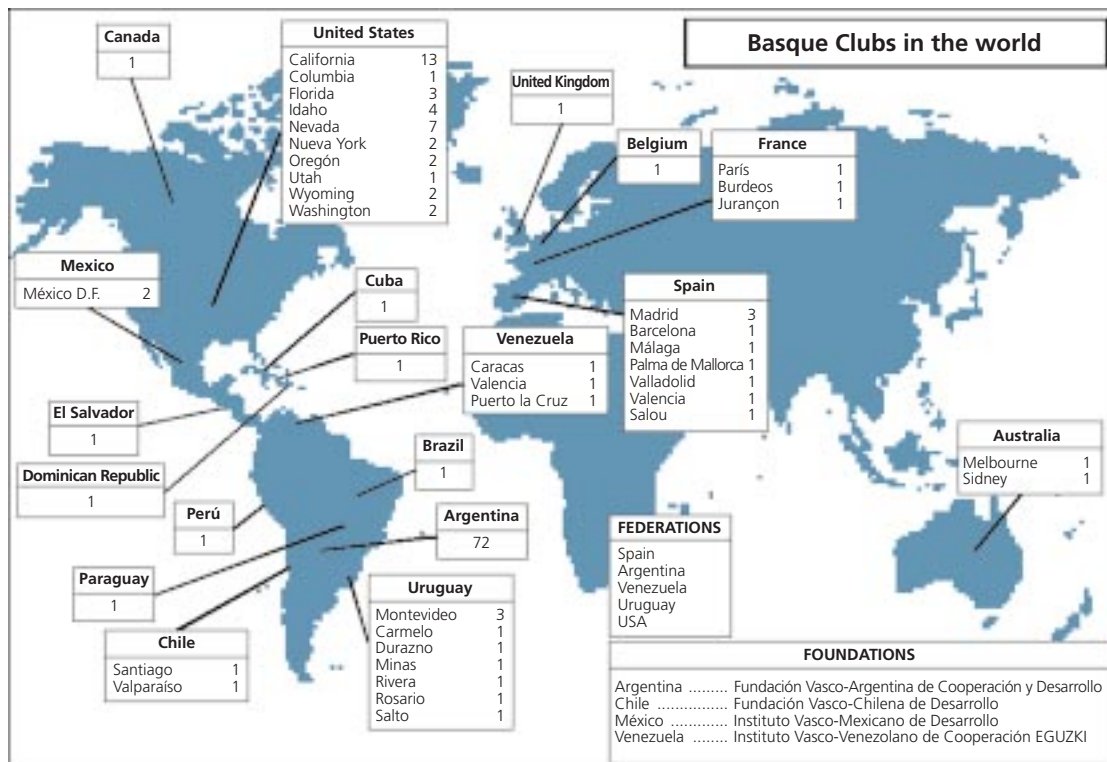


# STATISTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE BASQUE CENTRES

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## Presentation

In response to a request from the Basque Government's Secretariat for Overseas Affairs' Office of Relations with Basque Communities, the aim of this report is to analyse the data which has been collected by the Office regarding the various Basque Centres throughout the world and their members.

The report is divided into five sections. The first is a brief theoretical introduction, the second gives information about the centres themselves, the third is dedicated to Basque centre members, the fourth to individuals born in countries with the largest Basque populations, and finally, the fifth section offers a series of conclusions.

## Introduction

From the moment we are born, we are all immersed in what is known as the «socialisation process», where we learn the rules which govern our social group, i.e. what is considered right or

wrong, as well as a specific way of interpreting reality, developing tastes and expressing emotions. According to sociologist Guy Rocher, the socialisation process also determines the way we think, the result being, from a sociological point of view, that «each person adapts and learns to integrate themselves into a community, in such a way as to ensure its survival and continuity»<sup>1</sup>.

The socialisation process does not finish at any specific moment, but continues all through our lives. A number of external influences come into play at different moments, having a greater or lesser effect depending on our age. Among these we could name: family, school, friends, company/job, political parties or Basque centres, for example.

Although sociology studies tend to concentrate on primary groups (which Charles Horton Cooley defines as «a small group of people closely linked by emotional ties»), such as the family, and on bureaucratic organisations which are accepted as being the most important factors of modern society, as Anthony Giddens so rightly points out, other kinds of groups also exert a profound influence over their members, and furthermore, have grown increasingly popular over the last century. We are talking, of course, of voluntary, charity and self-help organisations.

In our opinion, Basque Centres can be considered self-help organisations since, according to Giddens, these groups «are made up of people who find themselves in a similar situation and who gather together to help each other with the aim of sharing common interests and solving common problems»<sup>2</sup>.

To return to the theme of socialisation, when an individual abandons their place of birth to live in a new society with a different culture, that individual must undergo a process of social readjustment. The more different the culture, the more problematic the process becomes.

In the United States, where a multitude of ethnic groups live side by side, Gordon<sup>3</sup> identifies the following three reactions on the part of immigrants:

- Firstly they can opt for assimilation, i.e. they shed their customs and traditions and adapt to the majority cultural dictates of their new country.
- Another option is the so-called melting pot, where the customs of immigrants mix with those of the native population to create a new culture.
- And finally, there is cultural diversity, or cohabitation, where different cultures live side by side, each one respecting the others.

Basque Centres are perhaps best defined by this last behavioural group. They play a vital role in so far as they help newcomers adapt and integrate into the new culture, while at the same time ensuring that they do not lose their original identity. They also serve as a point of reference for generations born in the new country, guaranteeing the survival of the knowledge, value system and traditions, etc. handed down by previous generations.

If these communities are to survive into the future, in addition to aiding the socialisation process they should also preserve those aspects which remind members of their identity, distinguish them from other similar groups and increase internal solidarity.

### Statistics regarding recognised Basque Centres and their members

There are currently 5 official federations and 120 recognised Basque Centres located throughout 18 different countries. The total number of members is 17,761. We should point out that some centres have not provided information about their members.

<sup>1</sup> ROCHER, Guy (1975:138): *Introduction to General Sociology*. Barcelona. Herder.

<sup>2</sup> GIDDENS, Anthony (1991:325): *Sociology*. Madrid. Alianza Universidad.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* Page. 301.

Columns 2 and 3 of table 1 show the distribution of the (120) centres according to country in absolute values and percentages. Argentina has the most centres (51), followed by the United States (31) and then Uruguay (8).

The figures in columns 4 and 5 of the same table refer to the number of members. The three countries with the most members echoes the order specified above: Argentinean members constitute over half of the total with 53.4 %, the United States has the second highest number of members (13.1 %) and Uruguay is next with 11.8 %. Following these are Spain (8.1 %), France (3,8 %) and Venezuela (3,2 %), the remaining thirteen countries representing only 6.6 % of the total group.

Table 1

**Distribution of recognised centres and their members according to country**

Countries	Num. centres	% centres	Num. people	% people
Argentina	51	41.6	9,490	53.4
Australia	2	1.6	205	1.2
Belgium	1	0.8	26	0.1
Brazil	1	0.8	37	0.2
Canada	1	0.8	80	0.5
Chile	3	2.4	220	1.2
El Salvador	1	0.8	36	0.2
Spain	7	6.4	1,430	8.1
USA	31	25.6	2,329	13.1
France	2	1.6	671	3.8
Mexico	3	2.4	217	1.2
Paraguay	1	0.8	73	0.4
Peru	1	0.8	86	0.5
Puerto Rico	1	0.8	80	0.5
United Kingdom	1	0.8	113	0.6
Dominican Republic	1	0.8	19	0.1
Uruguay	8	7.2	2,087	11.8
Venezuela	4	4.0	562	3.2
TOTAL	120	100.0	17,761	100.0

**Statistics regarding members of recognised Basque Centres**

With regard to the distribution of members of the various recognised Basque Centres throughout the world according to **sex**, there is a greater proportion of men to women (59 % and 41 % respectively).

Table 2 shows the distribution according to **age**:

Table 2

**Distribution of Basque Centre members according to age**

Age	%
< 18 years	4
18-29	10
30-45	21
46-64	35
> = 65 years	29
NK/NS	1
TOTAL	100

*As the table clearly shows, the largest group is made up of members of between 46 and 64 years of age, followed by members of 65 or over. The proportion of older members is much higher than that of younger generations, the most common age being 54.*

As a matter of curiosity, Basque Centre members cover all areas of the age spectrum, even the extremes: there are 10 members who have reached 99 years of age, and another three who are already full members despite being only 1 year old.

*The vast majority (97 %) only have one nationality, while the remaining three percent have dual nationality. Nearly half of all members (49.4 %) possess Argentinean nationality, a figure far higher than for any other country. The second largest group (only 17 %) are Spanish passport holders, the third group corresponds to United States nationals, the fourth to Uruguayan citizens and the fifth to French residents.*

If we consider the relations maintained with the centre, almost all are members (96 %). A small percent (2 %) are sympathisers and the remaining two percent are unknown.

As regards the languages spoken by the Basque Community, 22 % speak English, 9 % French and 90 % Spanish. Only 13.3 % speak Basque. Finally, 2 % speak other languages such as Italian, German or Portuguese, among others.

If we analyse Basque language speakers according to country of birth, we see that the largest group is made up of those members born in France: no less than 54 % claim to speak Basque. Those born in the United States (34 %) are the second largest group, followed by those born in Spain (33 %).

Let us now consider the origin of our community. It is logical to assume that those born in the Basque Country will maintain closer ties with the motherland than those born overseas. We can also surmise that with each new generation, these ties will become increasingly thin if care is not taken to preserve them. We will now analyse the distribution of our community in this sense.

When carrying out this analysis, we have excluded the Basque Communities based in France and Spain, as the forms collected from these members do not specify whether they were born within the Basque territory located within their country's borders. We have also discarded those members who have not provided information about their country of birth.

Table 3 shows the distribution of countries with Basque Centres according to the percentage of people who were born in the Basque Country (column 2, First Generation) and the percentage of those born in the country where the centre is located (column 3, Natives).

As the table shows, the vast majority (83 %) of members were born in the country in which their Basque Centre is located, while only 17 % are first generation immigrants.

The centres which have the highest proportion of first generation members are those situated in the United Kingdom (90 %), Belgium (85 %), Brazil (78 %) and Australia (74 %). Paraguay (19 %), Chile (18 %), Argentina (9 %) and Uruguay (6 %), on the other hand, have the lowest proportion.

The average age for both groups is high (almost 60 for first generation immigrants and 51 for natives).

Table 3

**Distribution of countries with centres according to the number of members and the percentage of First Generation immigrants and Natives**

Countries	Num. people	% 1.st gen.	% natives
Argentina	9,490	9	91
Australia	205	74	26
Belgium	26	85	15
Brazil	37	78	22
Canada	80	55	45
Chile	220	18	82
El Salvador	36	61	39
USA	2,329	32	68
Mexico	217	64.5	35.5
Paraguay	73	19	81
Peru	86	37	63
Puerto Rico	80	65	35
United Kingdom	113	90	10
Dominican Republic	19	**	**
Uruguay	2,087	6	94
Venezuela	562	52	48
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,771*</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>83</b>

\* From the previously given total of 17,761, we have eliminated the Spanish and French centres and the 889 (5 %) members that did not provide information about their country of birth. There are also another 111 who were born in countries with no Basque Centres. These have been categorised as «First Generation» as their country of birth is different from the country in which their Basque Centre is located.

\*\* We do not have details regarding the country of birth of the 19 members from this country.

**Statistics regarding those born in countries with the highest number of Basque Centre members**

Of the 17,761 Basque Centre members in the world, 45 % (7,955) were born in Argentina, 20 % in Spain (3,499), 11 % in Uruguay (1,977), 9 % in the United States (1,581) and 5 % in France (878). Venezuela (1.5 %), Chile (1 %), Mexico (0.6 %) and Paraguay (0.4 %) also figure fairly near the top of the list (see Table 4).

Table 4 also shows the distribution according to sex and average age of those born in countries with the highest number of Basque Centre members. In all countries there is a higher percentage of men than women, with the exception of the United States where the statistics are reversed.

Table 4

**Distribution of countries according to the number, sex and average age of those born in each**

Countries	Num. people	Sex (%)		Aver age (years)
		Men	Women	
Argentina	7,955	57	43	53
Spain	3,499	65	35	55
Uruguay	1,977	63	37	50
USA	1,581	46	54	48
France	878	60	40	53
Venezuela	264	69	31	38
Chile	195	76	24	55.5
Mexico	100	74.5	25.5	44
Paraguay	65	61.5	38.5	53

The average age of people born in Argentina and France is 53, in Spain 55, in Uruguay 50 and in the United States 48. Argentina has a younger average (38) and although figures for certain other countries are both higher and lower than those mentioned above, they are not given here due to the smallness of the corresponding communities.

## Conclusions

### Summary

- ✓ There are 5 federations and 120 Basque Centres with a total of 17,761 members. The countries which have the highest number of centres (and members also) are, in this order, Argentina, the United States, Uruguay, Spain, France and Venezuela.
- ✓ Among those affiliated with the Basque Centres, men, the middle aged and elderly, those with only one nationality, members, Spanish speakers and those born outside the Basque country predominate.

### Looking to the future

- ✓ Moving on from the theoretical considerations dealt with in the introduction, and having analysed the current reality of the Basque Centres, we would like to highlight the following aspects:
  - Bearing in mind that the average age of members is fairly high, Basque Centres must attract young people in order to ensure their survival once those who are currently maintaining the flame of past generations alive have themselves passed away. Centres must find a way of making themselves attractive to the younger generations.
  - It may also be useful to consider the reason why there are so many centres in Argentina. This phenomenon could be due to the fact that, given that Argentina was the principal destination for Basque emigrants, there is simply a larger Basque Community in that country. Nevertheless, could it not be possible that the abundance of organised centres owes itself to the community itself, its motivation, enthusiasm, etc.? This should be investigated in the hope that other countries will be able to profit from the experience.
  - Another group which, in the light of the data given in this report, could be considered marginalised, is women. It is curious that, in a community which, judging by the average age of its members, is mainly made up of married couples, men predominate over women. Could this be due to the false image of Centres as being «men-only clubs»? Similarly to the problem with young members, perhaps we should study ways of counteracting this impression.
- ✓ There are two factors which have yet to be clarified: the image that potential members have of the centres and the reasons why those who could join do not.
- ✓ Given that most centres no longer receive large numbers of immigrants from the Basque Country, we believe that the future of overseas centres lies in attracting higher numbers of young people and women.
- ✓ We should consider the possibility of carrying out a study to extend the information obtained from the forms in order to improve our knowledge of the community with the aim of drawing up a strategy to help consolidate existing centres and prevent their disappearance when the older generation passes away.
- ✓ This study would be not excessively expensive given that the subject population has already been identified and that the centres themselves could collaborate in the co-ordination process.