

Hizkuntzen erabileraren kale neurketa

Measurement
of the street use
of languages

**BASQUE COUNTRY,
2021**

Summary
report of results



**SOZIOLINGUISTIKA
KLUSTERRA**
Euskara biziberritzeko
ikergunea

Hizkuntzen
erabileraren
kale
neurketa

Soziolinguistika Klusterra

Martin Ugalde Kultur Parkea z.g.
20140 Andoain (Basque Country)

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Report authors: Olatz Altuna Zumeta, Maialen Iñarra Arregi and Asier Basurto Arruti

Director of the Study: Olatz Altuna Zumeta

Head of Field Work: Maialen Iñarra Arregi

Scientific Committee: Eneko Gorri, Iñaki Iurrebaso Biteri, Iñaki Martinez de Luna Perez de Arriba, Paula Kasares Corrales, Xabier Isasi Balantzategi

Analysis of the public space: Oihana Santolaria del Campo, Koldo Telleria Andueza and Irati Otamendi Irizar

Head of Finance: Isabel Godinez Hidalgo

Head of Communication: Asier Basurto Arruti

Person responsible for the database: Nestor Urrestaratzu Ramos (Datu Tailerra)

Head of IT infrastructure: IZT Informatika Zerbitzu Integrala

Statistics Consultant: Eñaut Urrestaratzu Ramos (Datu Tailerra)

Coordination of measurers: Arrate Arbaiza Lekue (Araba), Lorea Zulaika Arriaga (Biscay), Belén Uranga Arakistain (Gipuzkoa), Maialen Iñarra Arregi (Northern Basque Country) and Oianko Garde Jaunsaras (Navarre).

Sponsors:

Basque Government | Government of Navarre | Territorial Administration of Araba | Territorial Administration of Biscay | Territorial Administration of Gipuzkoa | Fundación Kutxa | Bilbao City Council | Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council | Pamplona City Council | Donostia City Council | Town Council of Aoiz | Aittu Euskara Elkarte | Town Council of Amasa | Town Council of Andoain | Town Council of Anoeta | Town Council of Antzuola | Town Council of Aretxabaleta | Town Council of Astigarraga | Town Council of Azpeitia | Town Council of Bermeo | Town Council of Deba | Town Council of Eibar-Akebai | Town Council of Erandio | Town Council of Ermua | Town Council of Errearteria | Town Council of Eskoriatza | Town Council of Galdakao | Town Council of Gernika-Lumo | Town Council of Getxo | Gorbeialdeako kuadrilla | Town Council of Hernani | Town Council of Hondarribia | Town Council of Llodio | Town Council of Legazpi | Town Council of Lekunberri | Town Council of Lezo | Town Council of Oiartzun | Town Council of Oñati | Town Council of Ordizia | Town Council of Pasaia | Area Services Board of Sakana | Area Services Board of El Txorierrri | Town Council of Orduña | Town Council of Urnieta | Town Council of Urretxu | Town Council of Usurbil | Town Council of Zaldibar | Town Council of Zarautz | Town Council of Zestoa | Town Council of Zumaia | Town Council of Zumarraga |

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1 PRESENTATION

Measurement of the street use of languages. Basque Country, 2021

This report summarizes the results of the measurement of the street use of languages in the Basque Country in 2021. It is the 8th edition of the study, which has been carried out since 1989. **Measuring this variable out on the streets quantifies the presence of different languages by observing people's informal conversations.** The large data sample allows to know the results for the Basque Country as a whole, in the historical territories and the main cities, as well as analysing their impact according to age, sex and the presence of children.

Those results, together with the technical report of the study that describes all the information and results in detail, is available at www.sociolinguistika.eus/kaleneurketa2021.

The sociolinguistic journal BAT will publish a monograph on the measurement of the use of languages in 2022.

In parallel to this study, local focused measurements of the street use of languages have been made in many municipalities as a service for town councils.



SOME CONTEXT NOTES

Language use has a
polyhedric nature, with
several nuances.

Language use is neither stable nor individual; it is determined by the location, the interlocutors and the context of each moment. Therefore, to interpret the data one has to take into account the usual **social norms and the sociological, demographic and sociolinguistic indicators of the languages** in contact.


Language use is neither stable nor individual; it is determined by the location, the interlocutors and the context of each moment.

- There has been a **positive migratory balance** in the population of the Basque Country in recent years, with a consequent increase in cultural diversity. At the same time, the rate of ageing has increased.
- From 2020, **under the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic**, the climate of change has been even more notable. In general, the pandemic has clearly affected the atmosphere out on the streets as well as direct relationships between people. The fear of getting infected, lockdowns of towns, curfews, limits on the number of people that can get together, shorter opening hours of bars/restaurants, etc. have affected people's lives.
- In the last 30 years, **places and streets have been modified**, as well as **modes of behaviour** and the use of these places. The environments and streets of the Basque Country have entered the logic of globalisation and are evolving in the same direction as any other Western town or city, i.e. more homogeneity, standardisation and –as a result– a loss of local identity.
- The urban planning strategy of zoning and the proliferation of zones has meant, among other things, that **people are using public spaces less and the time they spend in them is shorter**. Personal contact has been reduced, as has sociability, and people's sense of security has even been compromised.
- Our streets and squares are designed for consumption and production more than mutual care. A **process of commodification** has taken place. Smaller local shops have been gradually disappearing and activities aimed at tourists or leisure have taken their place.
- **Globalisation** is bringing about deep and rapid transformations in society. Inter-territorial **mobility** has been facilitated and has increased, which has meant an increase in the development of **intercultural relations**.
- The dissemination of the digital environment, the development of linguistic technology and social media **have reinforced non-presential relations**.
- Most of the world's languages are endangered or vulnerable. There has been a significant **loss of linguistic diversity** in recent years and, according to most experts, if there are no significant changes, language loss will greatly increase in the coming years.
- A number of **people responsible for language policy at the State level** have expressed concern in the face of globalisation and, above all, at the pervasiveness of the English language, whose presence and use is rising continuously.



- The use of a language is mainly related to the number of speakers and to language speaking habits. However, data on the proportion of Basque **speakers and the level of use of Basque spoken in the streets are not directly comparable**. Level of knowledge is a recognised and individual value, while the street use of a language is something observed and collective.
- **The profile of the present-day Basque speaker** is not the same as it was 30–40 years ago. Many more people can speak Basque nowadays but they express themselves better in Spanish or French. Indeed, most young Basque speakers now have Basque as their second language –inherited from school– and it is probably the case that many of them tend to use Spanish in practice.
- (Almost) all Basques are able to express themselves in Spanish or French. In other words, all exchanges with Basque speakers (100%) could take place in Spanish. However, the rate for speaking in Basque is well below 100%, as it is sufficient to have one interlocutor that does not to speak Basque to end up using Spanish. **In a multilingual social context**, knowledge does not determine the use of the language, just the possibility of using it.
- **Language use has a polyhedric nature**, with several nuances. The trend of street use may vary from one measurement to another, and the complexity of the phenomenon does not complicate the idea of which factors (or combinations of factors) have led to this change. Therefore, it is not advisable to restrict the reading of isolated data to notions of increase/decrease, but rather **focusing on the trends** and, above all, their continuity over time.





3 EVOLUTION OF THE STUDY

The measurement of the street use of languages goes back a long way. The method of measurement by observation was created in 1983 by the Siadeco research group, headed by the sociolinguistic pioneer Iñaki Larrañaga. It was developed when data on language competence started to be collected from the census in the Basque self-governing region (EAE) to describe the sociolinguistic situation in more detail. After these initial experiences, Euskal Kultur Batzordea (EKB) organised in 1989 and 1993 the first and second edition of the measurement in the Basque Country. Since then, the Sociolinguistic Cluster (previously called SEI Elkartea) has published it six more times: in 1997, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021.

All the editions of the study have used the same methodological base, although improvements have been introduced to increase the consistency and the rigour of the results. In 2011 a **mathematical model to calculate sample error** was created in order to learn about the level of representativeness of the data on language use. Another step was taken in 2016, **collecting data via mobile phones** in smaller towns and villages. In 2021 the collection of data by mobile phone was extended to all localities, as well as improving the **sampling model**.

At present, this study is an essential reference to describe the situation of the Basque language and to define lines of work and help language policymakers, researchers or people who work to promote Basque in their work, for example.

OBJECTIVES

The 2021 edition had 3 main objectives:

1.-

Obtaining empirical data on language use in the streets of the Basque Country.

2.-

Analysing and interpreting data on the street use of Basque.

3.-

Disseminating the evolution of the street use of languages for purposes of reflection, deciding language policies and designing language planning with a view to revitalising Basque.





METHODOLOGY



CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEASUREMENT

The study was carried out using the method of measuring the use of languages by observation. The basis of this method is described in the guide titled “Methodological guides to measure the use of language by observation”⁽¹⁾.

Empirical data on the **oral use** of languages was collected. The information has been extracted from conversations heard on the streets, observing the **actions of speakers** in **open spaces**.

The results quantify the use of Basque on the streets of the Basque Country. This is a **descriptive** study with a **quantitative approach**, using the **direct observation** technique to measure the street use of Basque.

One of the pillars of this technique is **discretion**. Information on people's language practices has been collected without the subjects realising that they have been observed. No personal data have been treated in the study. Information was collected anonymously, with no identifiable data nor information on the content of conversations.

The unit of observation is the **interview** (exchange): a conversation between one or more individuals in the street. In these conversations

speakers can be recorded on more than one occasion. Nevertheless, in those cases in which the same group of interlocutors has been listened to on more than one occasion in the same language, the practice is only recorded once.

The measurers recorded the **language** (Basque, Spanish, French or other) of the conversations heard in the street. Furthermore, some characteristics of the interlocutors who have participated in these conversations have been collected, which we can assign to people by direct observation, without asking anybody any questions: **gender, age** and **active participation of children as speakers**.

Each interview has been classified in a **single language**, because that is how the methodology of the study was designed from the outset, so as not to lose the comparability of data, among other things.

The measurers collected the data **in pairs**. The data were mainly collected through **Neurgailua**, a mobile phone app. This gives a greater guarantee of discretion in collecting the data, and the number of exchanges observed on each occasion has been closely monitored.

⁽¹⁾ Altuna, Olatz and Asier Basurto. 2013. Methodological guide for measuring the use of language by observation. Vitoria: Central Publications Service of the Basque Government.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FIELD WORK

- Samples were taken in **145 municipalities** all the territories in the Basque Country, covering all sociolinguistic areas and different numbers of inhabitants.
- 418 itineraries** were observed in these municipalities. The routes of observation in each locality were completed with the busiest streets, which enables the measurement of people of different sociological characteristics.
- 6 hours of observation were made in all the routes of** southern Basque Country on Wednesday afternoons, Saturday mornings and Saturday evenings. **In northern Basque Country** the data were collected over **12 hours** on each route, aware that the number of people out on the streets is lower; in other words, each trajectory was measured over 2 weeks for 6 hours.
- The total number of observations of language practice carried out in this study was **7,637 hours**, from **17 September** to **30 October 2021**. In this way, the sample could be taken before the clocks went back in the autumn, taking advantage of maximum hours of sunlight.
- Throughout the Basque Country, **336 professional observers** have been involved in data collection.
- Furthermore, from the start of the pandemic **more open health and legal requirements** were applied for people to move and meet outdoors: the level of infection was low, the use of a facemask in the street was not obligatory, there was no limitation on the number of people who could get together in bars/ restaurants, nor was there any restriction on opening hours or a prohibition on moving from one place to another.
- There were no serious incidents** reported during the field work. When the observers found a particular circumstance out on the streets (a ceremony, demonstration, celebration, etc.), for example, they delayed taking the measurements. All these decisions were taken in consultation with the Study Director or the Head of Field Work.
- The universe of the study is made up of speakers on the streets of the Basque Country. The street is an area of great mobility and it is not possible to know the list of members and exchanges that make up that universe. For this reason, **the sample is used** to draw conclusions on the whole universe.
- In total, **603,497 interlocutors in 215,396 exchanges** were observed in the whole of the Basque Country, **ensuring that the data are sufficiently representative in statistical terms**.

145 municipalities

215.396 exchanges

603.497 interlocutors

- The data were weighted on the basis of the number of inhabitants in each municipality** to calculate the results of the sociolinguistic districts, territories and areas.
- The margin for error** in the street use of Basque in the whole Basque Country is $\pm 0.3\%$ for the total sample of the study, with a confidence interval of 95% and $p=12.6\%$.
- More hours than ever were observed in the 2021 edition. This has enabled the **observation of the highest number of people ever**. Bearing in mind the number of interlocutors observed, it can be said that this is one of the biggest quantitative studies ever carried out in the Basque Country.

← Elkarrizketa: 1/0

Euskara

| | Ema | Giz |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Haurrak (2-14) | - 1 + | - 1 + |
| Gazteak (15-24) | - 0 + | - 0 + |
| Heldu- gazteak (25-44) | - 0 + | - 0 + |
| Heldu- nagusiak (45-64) | - 0 + | - 0 + |
| Adinekoak (65etik gora) | - 0 + | - 0 + |

Ez / Bai

Haurrak hitz egiten?



EUSKARAZ ERE BAI

GAZTELANIAZ ERE BAI

FRANTSESEZ ERE BAI

Oharrak



6.

RESULTS

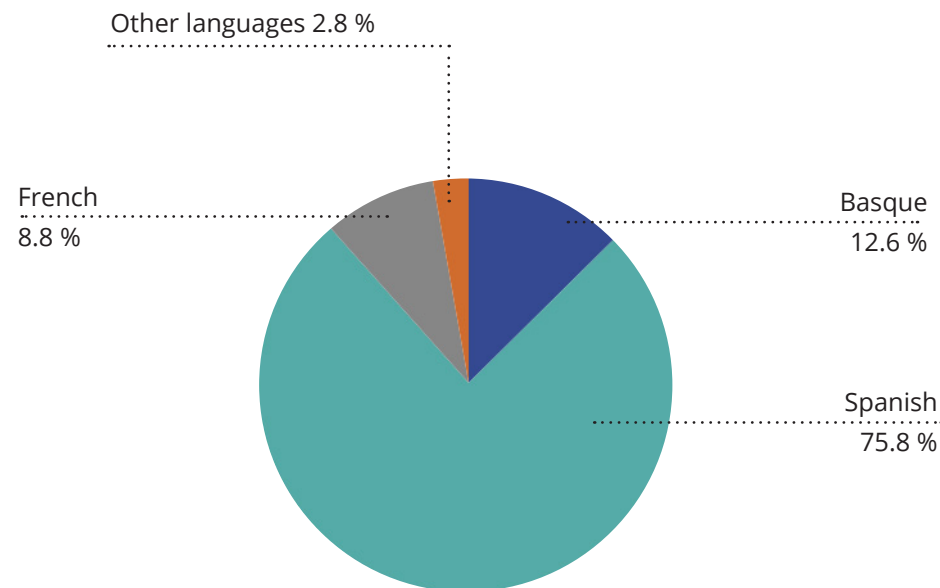
In the last five years no incidents have been recorded in the general street use of Basque

On the streets of the Basque Country, **1 in 8 people** speak **Basque**. Most of them participated in one or other conversations in Spanish and the rest were observed speaking French or another language.

In general, the presence of Basque has not undergone major changes; it has not lost presence in the street. Indeed, since 1989 the street use of Basque has increased by 1.8 percentage points.

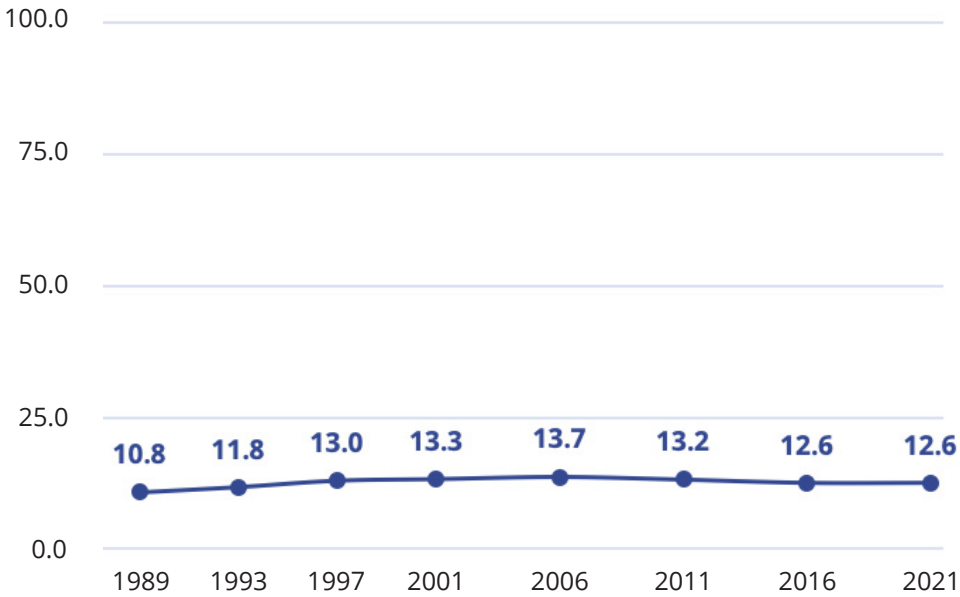
| In Basque | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 2016 | 2021 |
| | 12,6 % |

STREET USE OF LANGUAGES, GENERAL DATA, BASQUE COUNTRY, 2021 (%)



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE, BASQUE COUNTRY, 1989-2021 (%)



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF LANGUAGES, BASQUE COUNTRY, 1989-2021 (%)

| Language | 1989 | 1993 | 1997 | 2001 | 2006 | 2011 | 2016 | 2021 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Basque | 10.8 | 11.8 | 13.0 | 13.3 | 13.7 | 13,2 | 12,6 | 12,6 |
| Spanish or french | 89.2 | 88.2 | 87.0 | 86.7 | 83.7 | 83,1 | - | - |
| Spanish | - | - | - | - | - | - | 76.4 | 75.8 |
| French | - | - | - | - | - | - | 8.3 | 8.8 |
| Other languages | - | - | - | - | 2.6 | 3.7 | 2.7 | 2.8 |
| TOTAL | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

The use of Basque in Northern Basque Country continues to decline; there are peaks and troughs in other territories

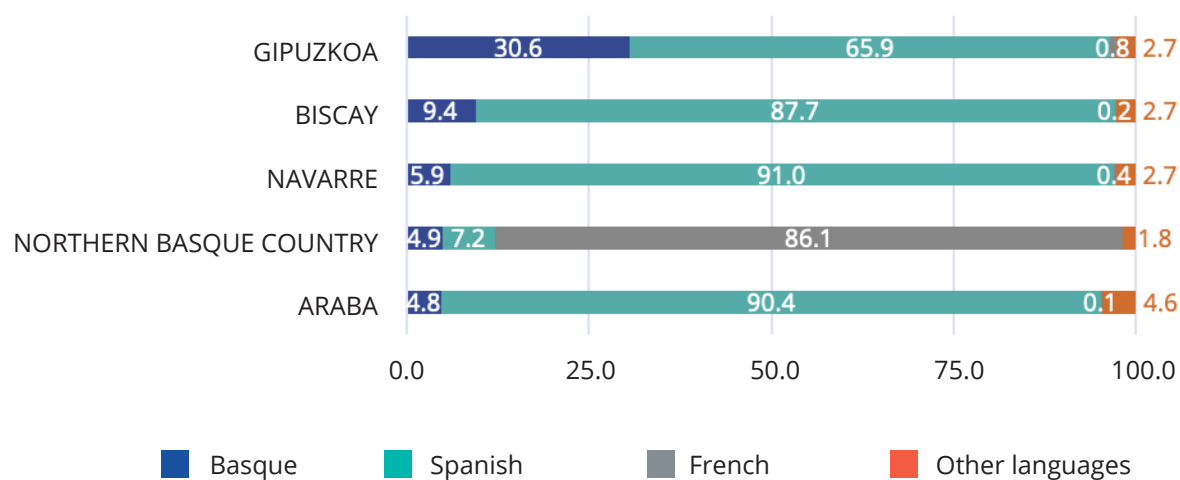
The level of use of Basque

31 % Gipuzkoa

9 % Biscay

5-6 % Navarre, Northern
Basque Country, Araba

The territories can be classified into **3 groups** regarding the level of use of Basque: Gipuzkoa is the territory where it is most spoken (31%), followed by Biscay (9%) and around 5-6% in Araba, Navarre and northern Basque Country.

STREET USE OF LANGUAGES BY TERRITORY, BASQUE COUNTRY, 2021 (%)²

Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

In contrast, **Araba is the territory where the other languages are spoken most outdoors** (4.6%), on a par with the use of Basque. The streets of northern Basque Country are the places where the other languages are heard least (1.8%), and among them are the rest of the territories (2.7%). The same percentage is observed in Gipuzkoa, Biscay and Navarre.

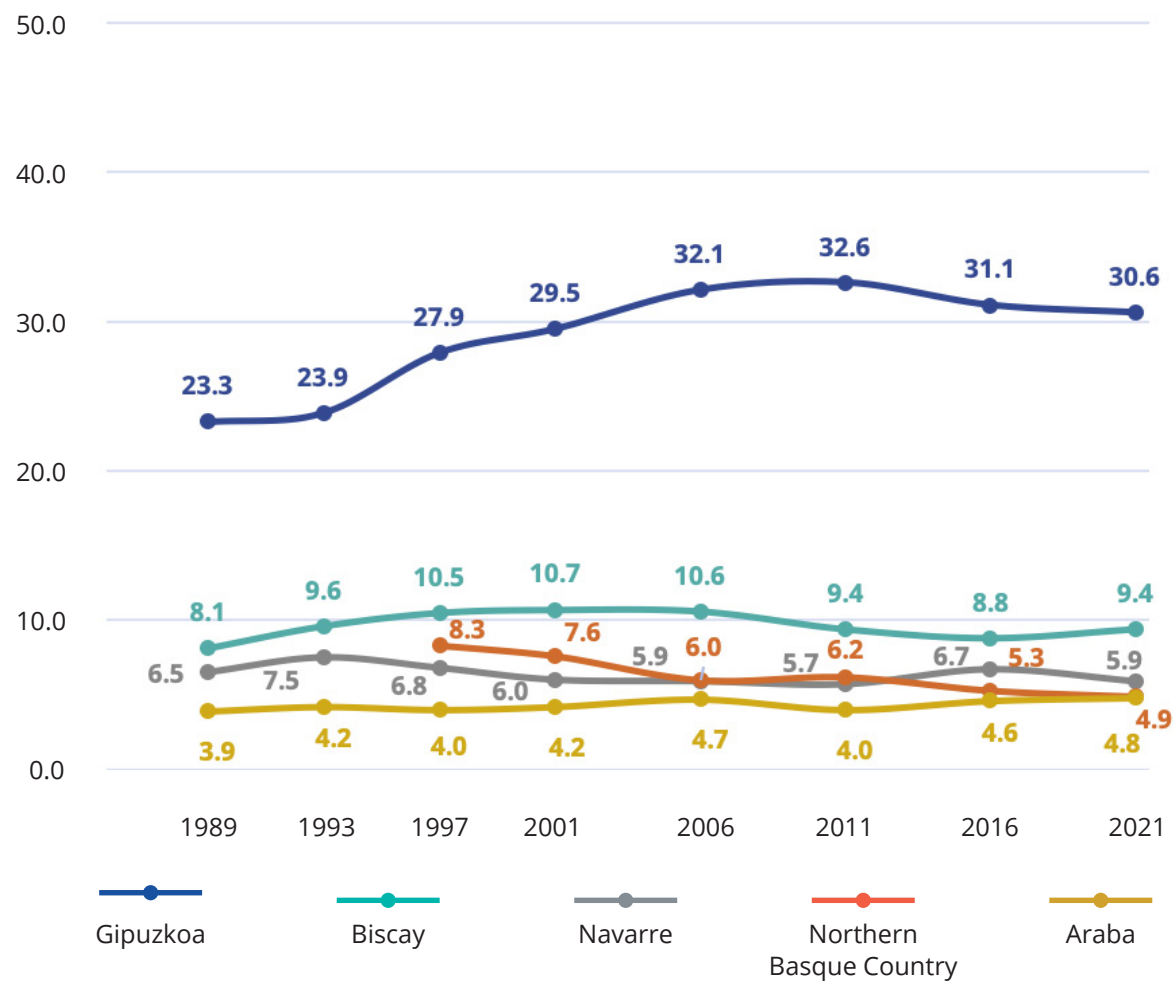
Over the last five years, no significant changes have occurred in the use of Basque on the streets of the territories, as the fluctuation in the data comes within the margin of error.²

A downward trend in the street use of Basque has been observed in northern Basque Country since 1997.

A similar trend is observed in Gipuzkoa over the last 10 years. In Araba, however, the trend is on the rise over the last 10 years. A small change has been observed in the last 5 years in Navarre and Biscay (the change in Biscay is within the margin of error); its use has fallen in Navarre and risen in Biscay. More measurements will be necessary to confirm these trends.

As regards the evolution between 1989 and 2021, an increase in the use of Basque is seen in the territories of the Basque self-governing region (EAE), while the trend fluctuates in Navarre although the biggest oscillation is 1.8 percentage points.

STREET USE OF BASQUE BY TERRITORY, 1989-2021 (%)



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

⁽²⁾ The margin of error in Gipuzkoa is $\pm 0.7\%$, in Biscay $\pm 0.6\%$, in Navarre $\pm 0.4\%$, in the Northern Basque Country $\pm 0.6\%$ and in Araba $\pm 0.3\%$. These errors correspond to the uses of Basque in the street in 2021, calculated with a confidence level of 95.0%.

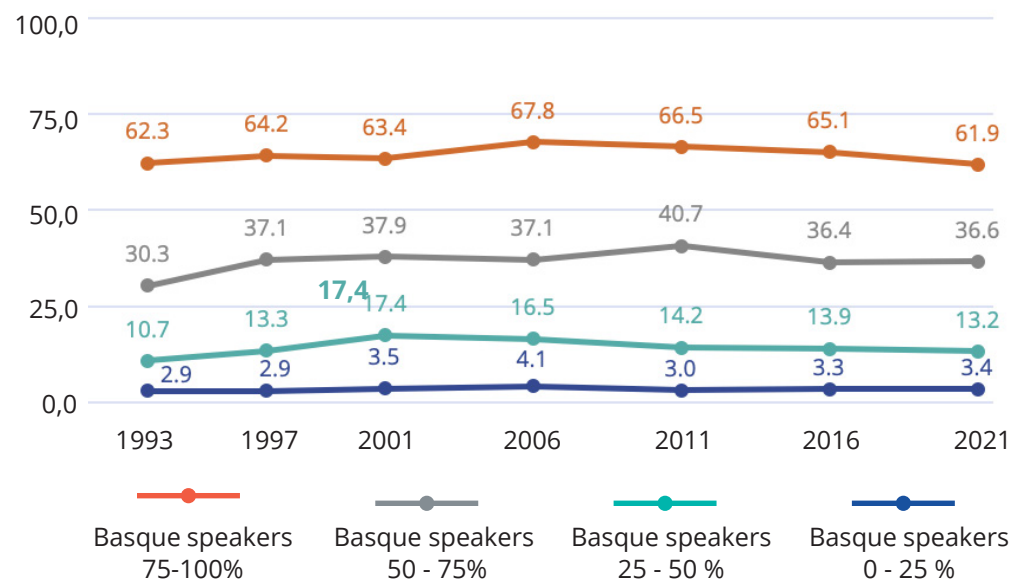
The use of Basque in the area with the highest proportion of Basque speakers is falling

Since 1993, the use of Basque in the street has increased in the rest of South Basque Country.

Between 1993 and 2006, the use of Basque in the street was on the increase in all sociolinguistic spheres. Since 2006, however, there has been a downward trend. Over the last five years, it is in the most Basque-speaking areas where the decline in the use of Basque in the street is most noticeable.

As far as the Northern Basque Country is concerned, in the last five years, in areas of lesser knowledge (BAM⁴ and inland Lapurdi), there have been no significant differences in the use of Basque in the street. In the areas of greater knowledge (Lower Navarre and Zuberoa), however, its use has fallen, returning to 2011 levels.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE BY SOCIOLINGUISTIC AREAS. SOUTHERN BASQUE COUNTRY 1993-2021 (%)³



EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE BY ZONES. NORTHERN BASQUE COUNTRY 2011-2021 (%)

| | 2011 | 2016 | 2021 |
|---|------|------|------|
| BAM (Basque speakers 8%) | 2.4 | 1.6 | 1.9 |
| inland Lapurdi (Basque speakers 25%) | 8.7 | 5.4 | 5.7 |
| Lower Navarre and Zuberoa (Basque speakers 50%) ⁵ | 10.7 | 14.6 | 10.5 |

Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

⁽³⁾ In order to differentiate the sociolinguistic areas of the South Basque Country, the data on knowledge of Basque from the 2001 census have been used. This classification has been maintained year after year.

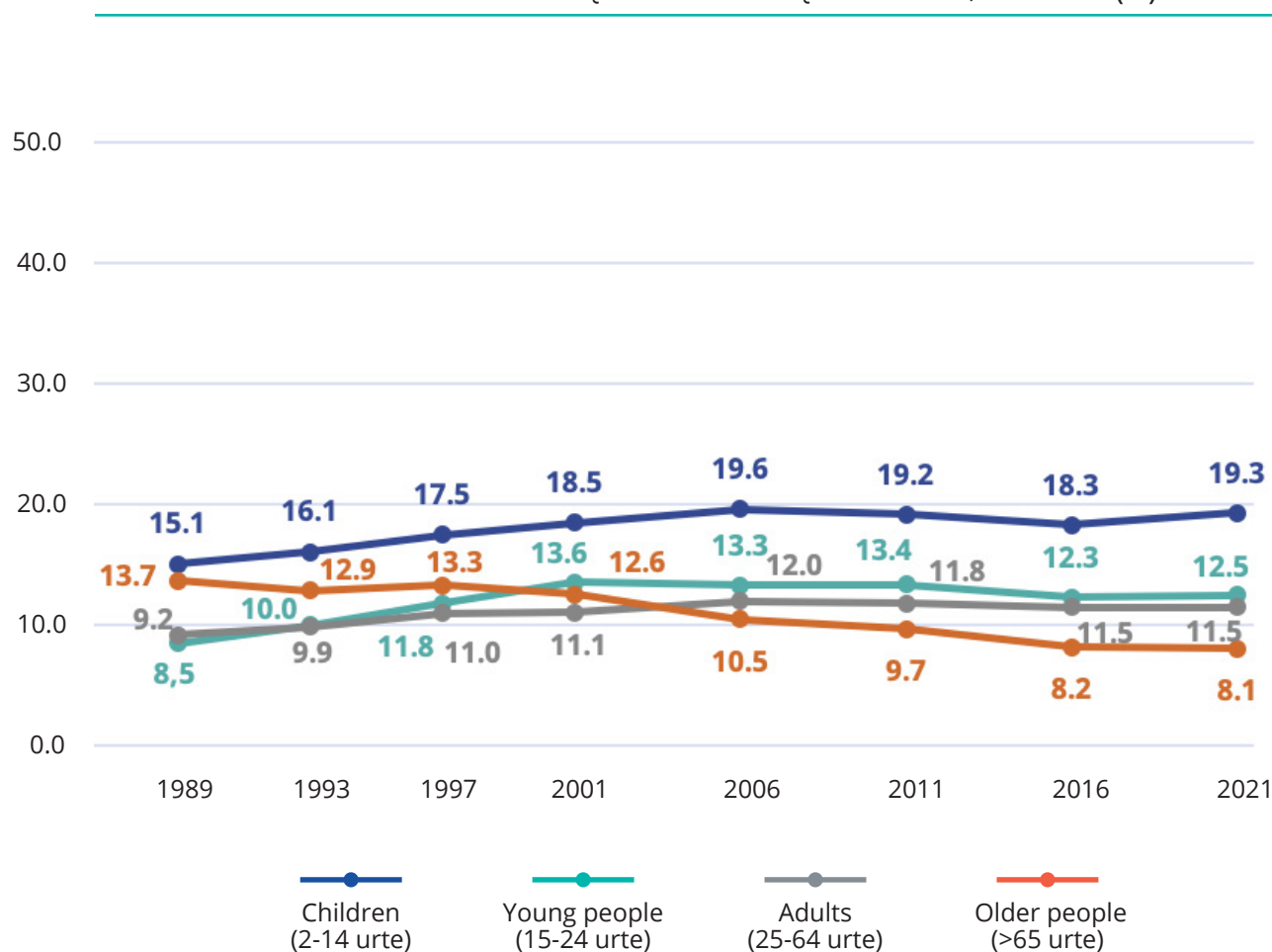
⁽⁴⁾ The area known in Basque as BAM is made up of the municipalities of Bayonne, Anglet, Biarritz, Bidart and Bokale.

⁽⁵⁾ In Lower Navarre and Zuberoa, in the 2016 and 2021 editions, an effort has been made to optimise the sample. Taking the same localities as in 2011, the use of Basque in 2016 would be 13.1% and in 2021 9.3%. Consequently, the trend shown in the table below is confirmed.

Over the last five years, the use of Basque by young children has increased

Since 1989, the street use of Basque has increased in all age groups (especially in children and young people), the only exception being older people.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE BY AGE. BASQUE COUNTRY, 1989-2021 (%)

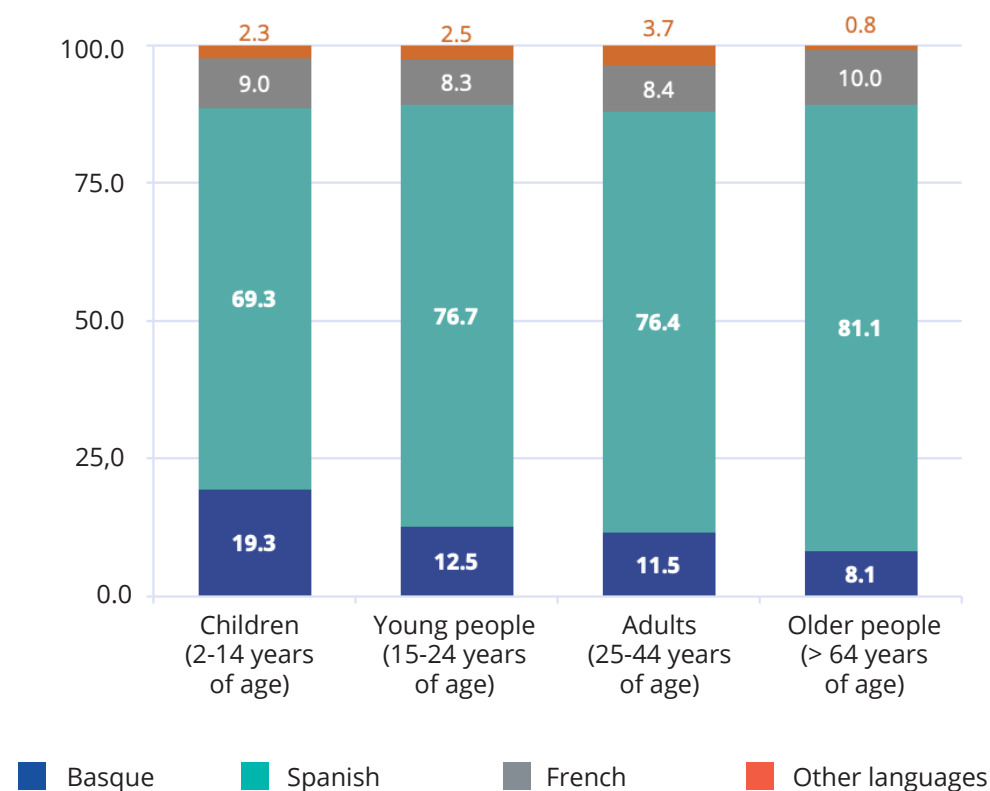


Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

From greater to lesser street use of Basque, the order of age groups is as **follows: children, young people, adults and older people**. It is interesting to point out that the biggest difference is between the use by children and young people. Adults use the other languages more and older people use them less.

In the 2021 measurement, the adult age group was divided into two for the first time. Young adults (25-44 years of age) speak more Basque than older adults (45-64 years of age) with a difference of 5 percentage points. Moreover, we have heard more young adults (25-44) speaking Basque than young people (15-24).

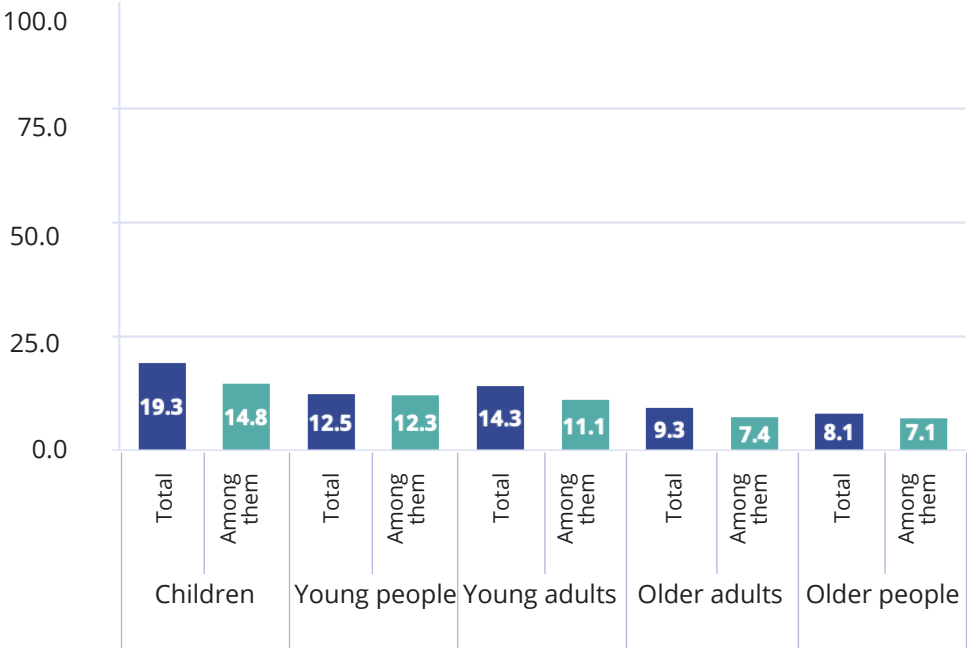
STREET USE OF LANGUAGES BY AGE. BASQUE COUNTRY, 2021 (%)



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

In conversations between people of the same age, **the younger they are the higher the street use of Basque**. In this case, use among young adults is not greater than among young people. In contrast, its use among older adults is closer to the level of older people. Finally, the difference between the use of Basque by children and young people is not so great.

STREET USE OF BASQUE BY AGE AND AMONG PEOPLE IN THE SAME AGE GROUP.
BASQUE COUNTRY, 2021 (%)



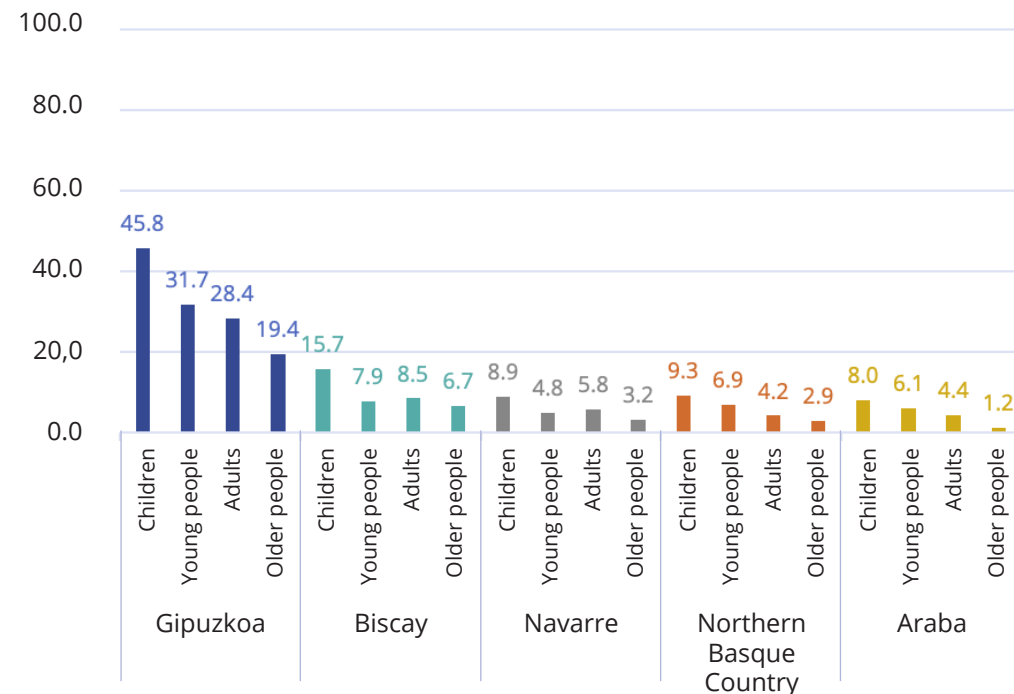
Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

Young people use Basque more than adults in Gipuzkoa, northern Basque Country and Araba

In Navarre and Biscay, adults use Basque more than young people. In all the territories, it is the children who speak Basque the most, while older people speak it the least.

If we look only at conversations between people of the same age, the use of Basque in the street among young people (7.7%) is higher than among adults (5.8%) in Biscay. In Navarre, there are no differences between the two (4.4% and 4.6% respectively). Finally, in Araba and the Northern Basque Country, use among young people is the highest (6.2% and 6.7% respectively), above that of children (3.9% and 4.9% respectively).

STREET USE OF BASQUE BY AGE PER HISTORICAL TERRITORY.
BASQUE COUNTRY, 2021 (%)



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

The evolution by age group of the use of Basque in the territories is not homogeneous

WE CAN DRAW THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DATA FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS:

An increase in the use of Basque by children in Biscay and a fall in northern Basque Country; in the rest of the territory there are no significant differences. The trend of use by children in Biscay and northern Basque Country should be carefully followed in the next edition.



An increase in the use of Basque in Araba, Biscay and particularly in Northern Basque Country, with a fall in Navarre and Gipuzkoa.



The use of Basque is falling among adults and older people in northern Basque Country and Navarre. No significant changes have occurred in the other territories.



SINCE 1989, WE CAN HIGHLIGHT THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS:

The use of Basque by older people is descending in all the territories. They have gone from speaking more (or almost) to speaking less.



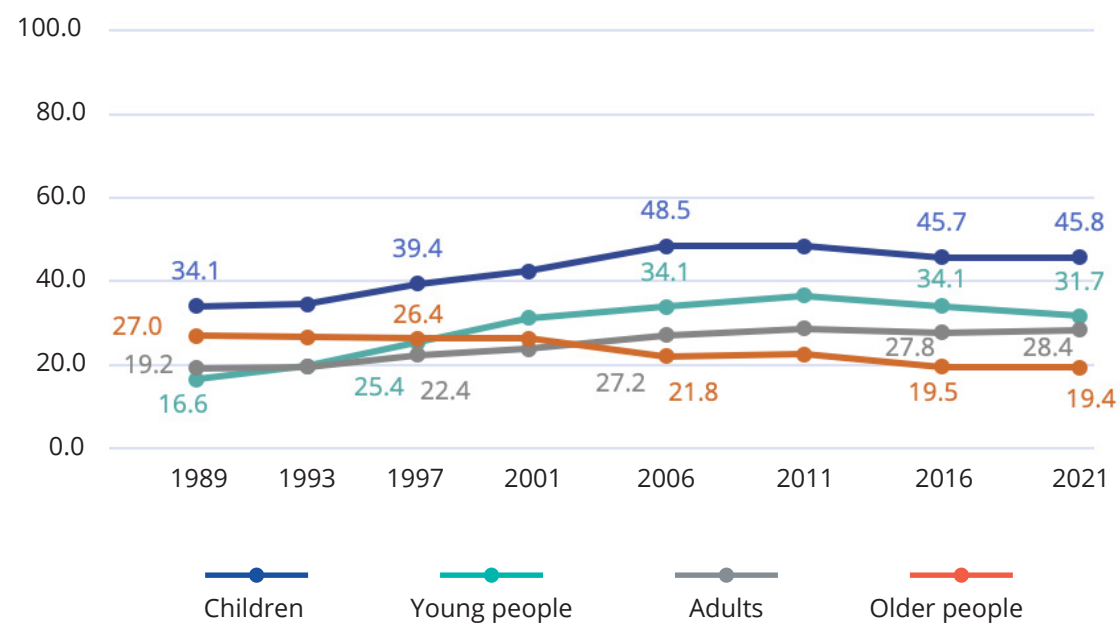
The use of Basque by children is rising in almost all the territories. Children in Navarre have a similar level of use to 30 years ago.



As regards use by young people and adults, this has risen in the territories of the Basque self-governing region (EAE); significant changes have not been detected in Navarre, and use among young people has increased in Northern Basque Country while it has fallen among adults there.

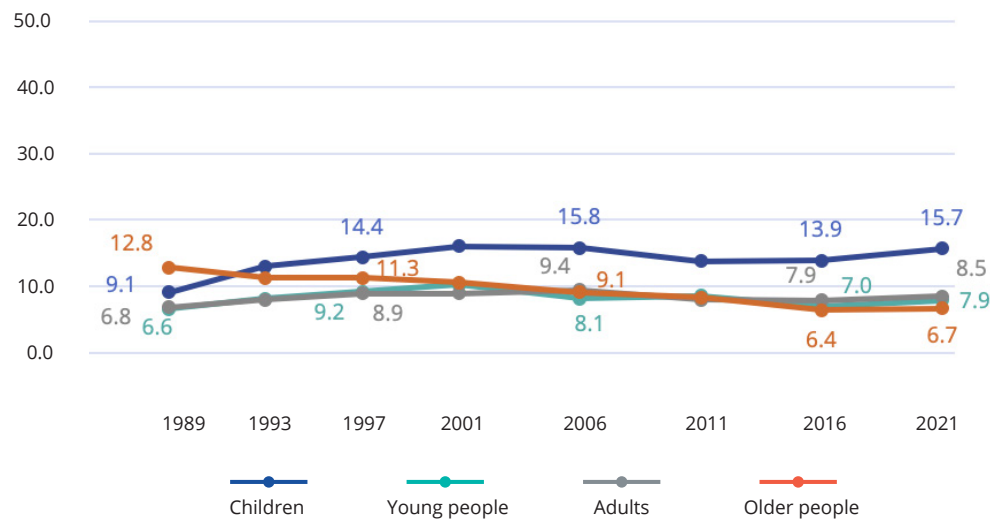


EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE BY AGE.
GIPUZKOA, 1989-2021 (%)



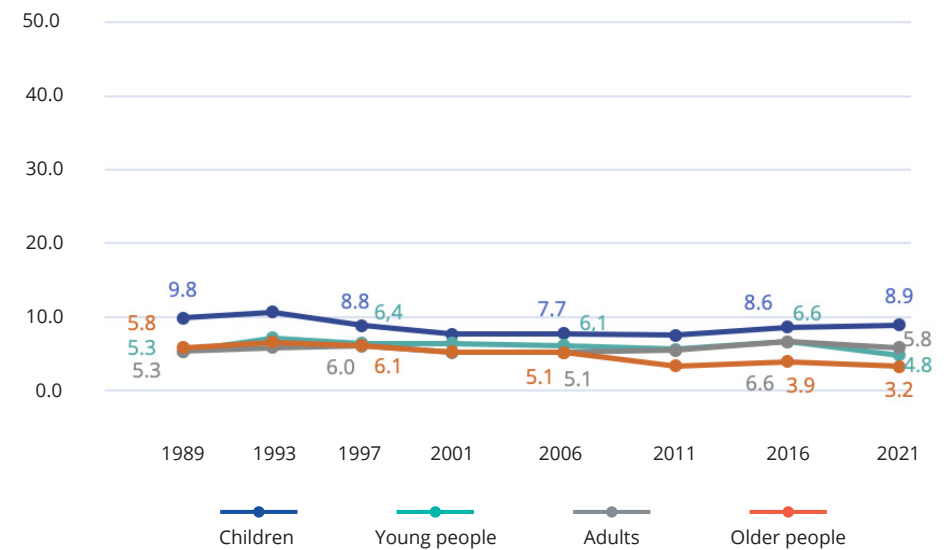
Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE BY AGE.
BISCAY, 1989-2021 (%)



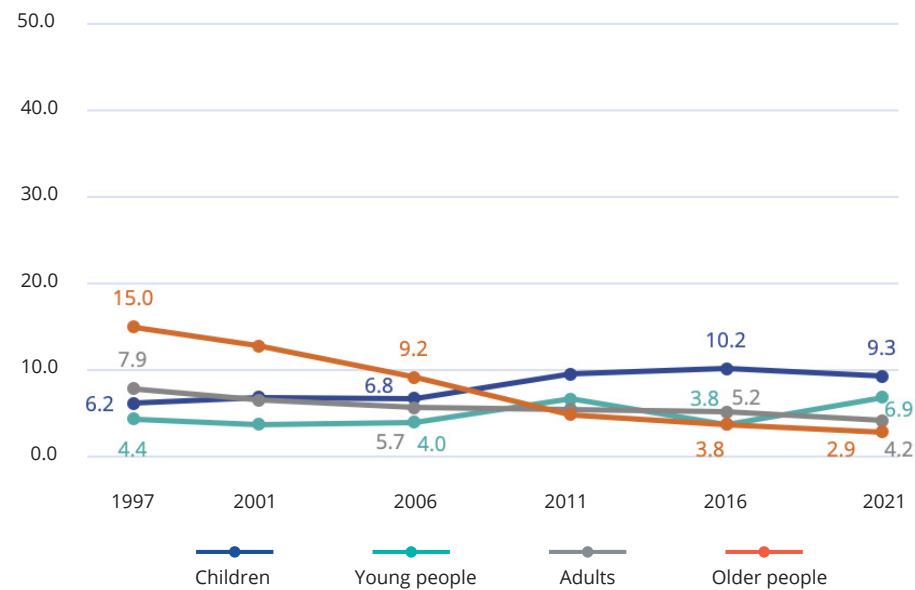
Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE BY AGE.
NAVARRE, 1989-2021 (%)



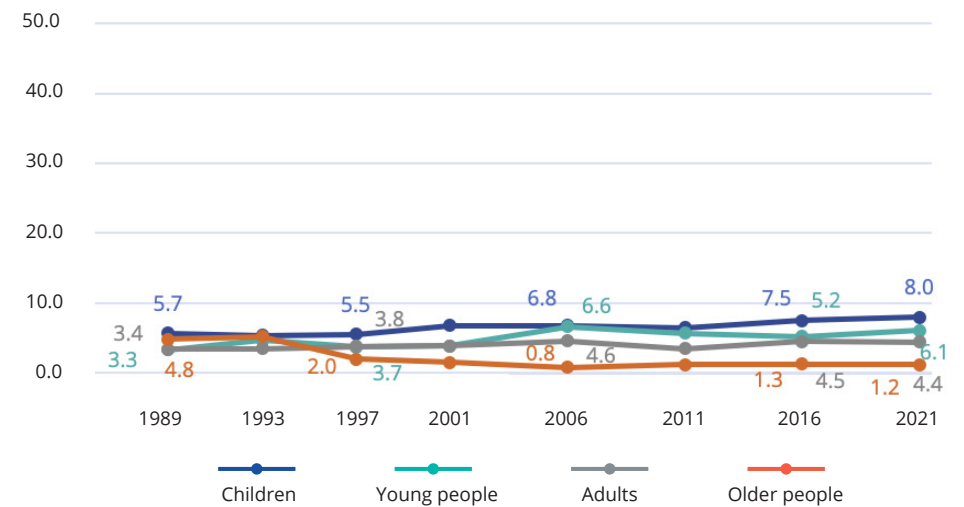
Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE BY AGE.
NORTHERN BASQUE COUNTRY, 1989-2021 (%)



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE BY AGE.
ARABA, 1989-2021 (%)



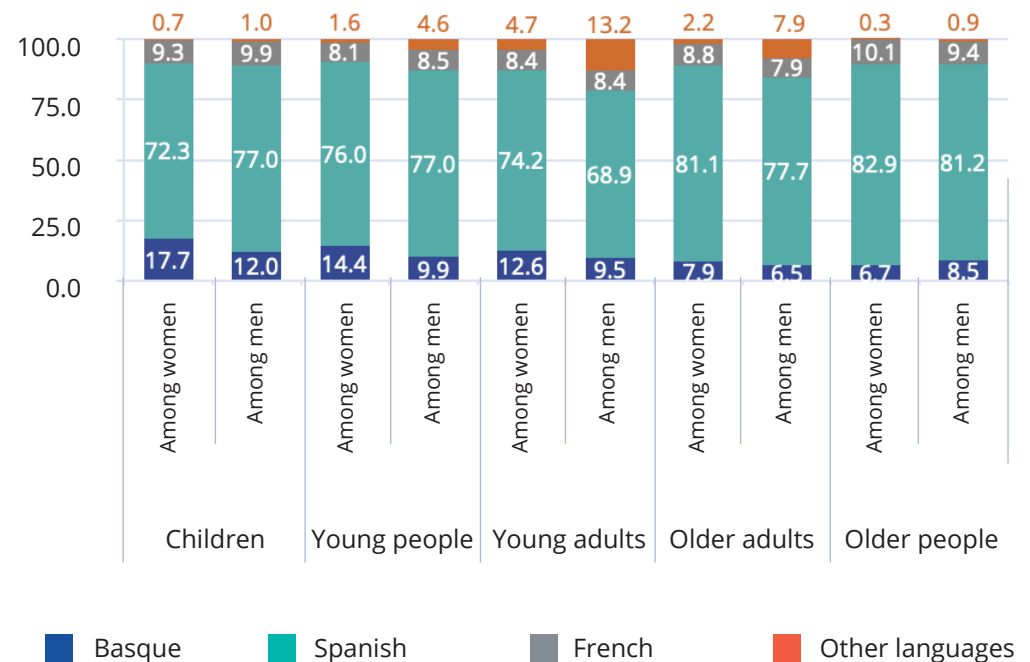
Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

The younger, the higher prevalence of women over men in the use of Basque

In almost all groups (children, young people and adults), the use of Basque is more frequent among women than among men. **This behaviour has already been observed in previous editions.** The greatest difference between women and men is found in the children's and young people's age groups. Among older people, however, men use Basque more than women.

The other languages have a much greater presence in conversations between male adults, and in young adults more than older adults.

STREET USE OF LANGUAGES BY PEOPLE OF THE SAME AGE AND SEX.
BASQUE COUNTRY, 2021 (%)



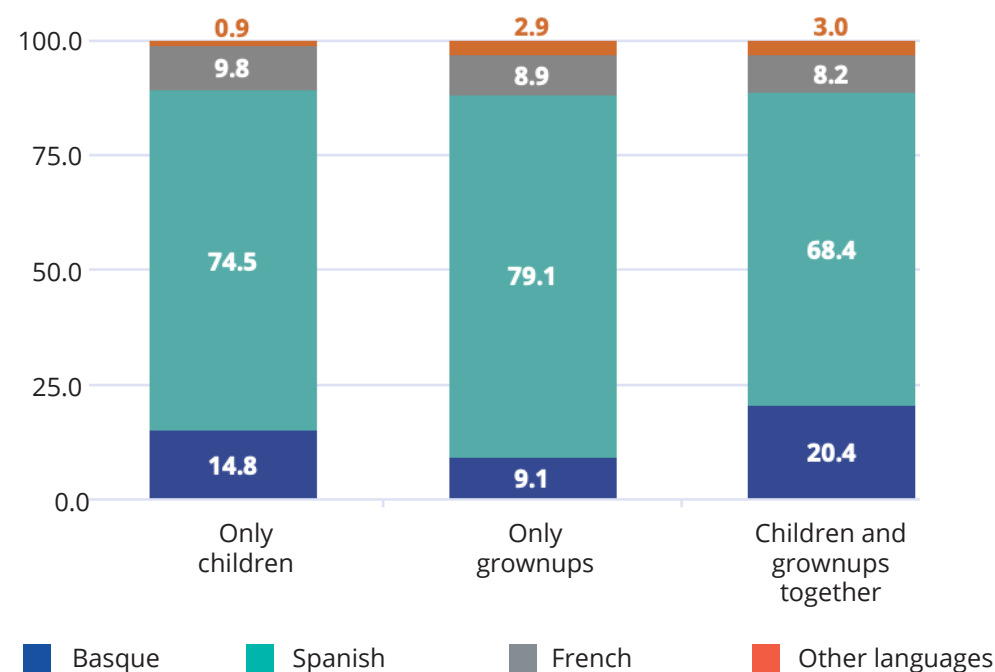
Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

The use of Basque is higher when children and older people are together than when they are apart

The highest figures for the use of Basque are seen in children and older people, and the lowest in conversations where there are no children present. **Doubling or tripling use by grownups means that children are interlocutors** in all the territories.

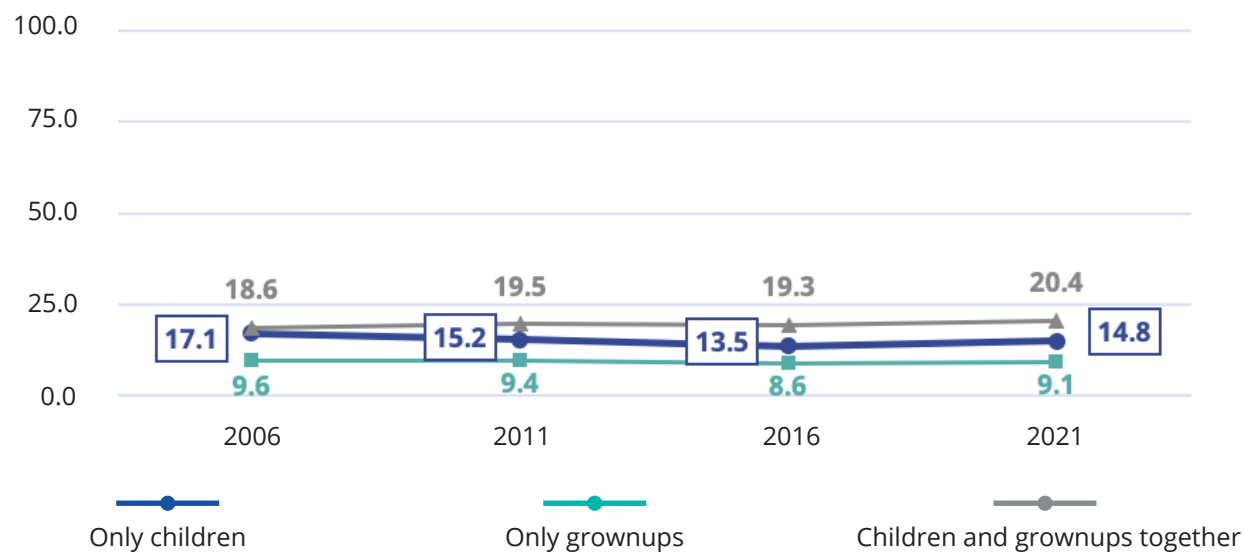
In the case of the other languages, use among children is very slight, although when they get together with grownups the street use of other languages increases to reach a level similar to that observed among grownups.

STREET USE OF LANGUAGES DEPENDING ON THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN.
BASQUE COUNTRY, 2021 (%)



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

STREET USE OF BASQUE DEPENDING ON THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN. BASQUE COUNTRY, 2006-2021 (%)



The use of Basque when mixing children and grownups was the highest in **all editions**. An **upward trend is** also observed. In conversations among children, reversing the previous negative trend, the use of Basque has increased over the last five years. More measurements will be needed to confirm the change in the trend of the street use of the language among children.

Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.



The use of other languages is higher in the main cities than in the whole Basque Country

The use of Basque in Donostia is 15.3%, while it is between 2.5 and 4% in the other cities. It is notable that **Vitoria-Gasteiz occupies second place**, particularly because Araba is the territory with the lowest use of the language. In the case of Vitoria-Gasteiz and Bilbao, the outstanding feature is the use of other languages that are not Basque, Spanish or French: 4-5%. In Bayonne, the street use of Spanish is 3.4%.

The use
of Basque

15.3%
Donostia

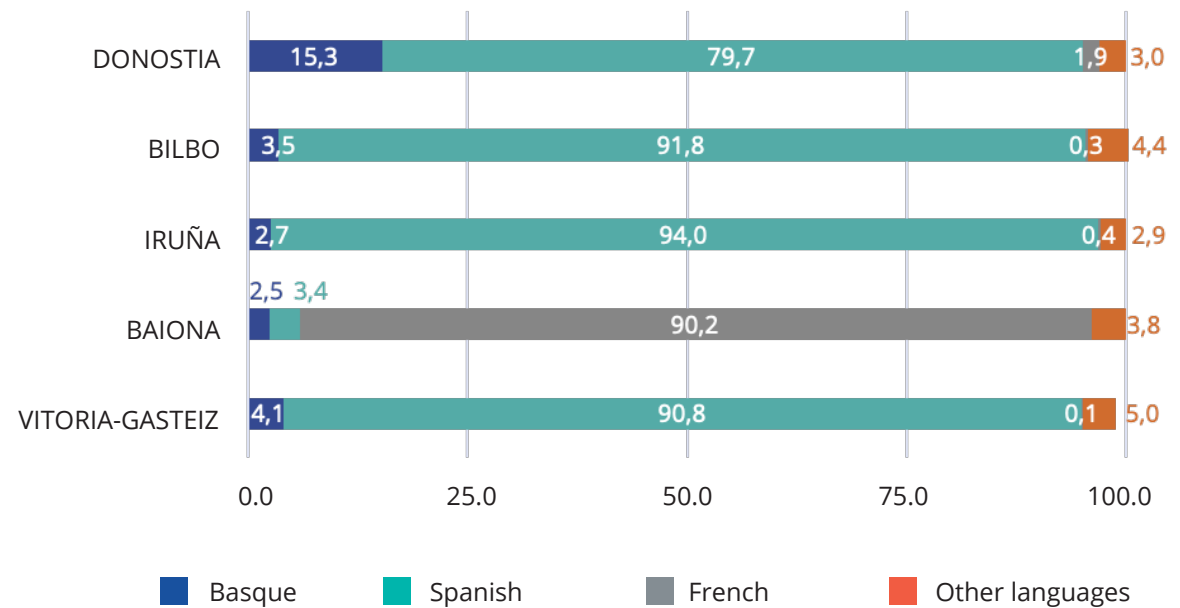
3.5%
Bilbao

% 2.7%
Iruña

2.5%
Bayonne

4.1%
Vitoria-Gasteiz

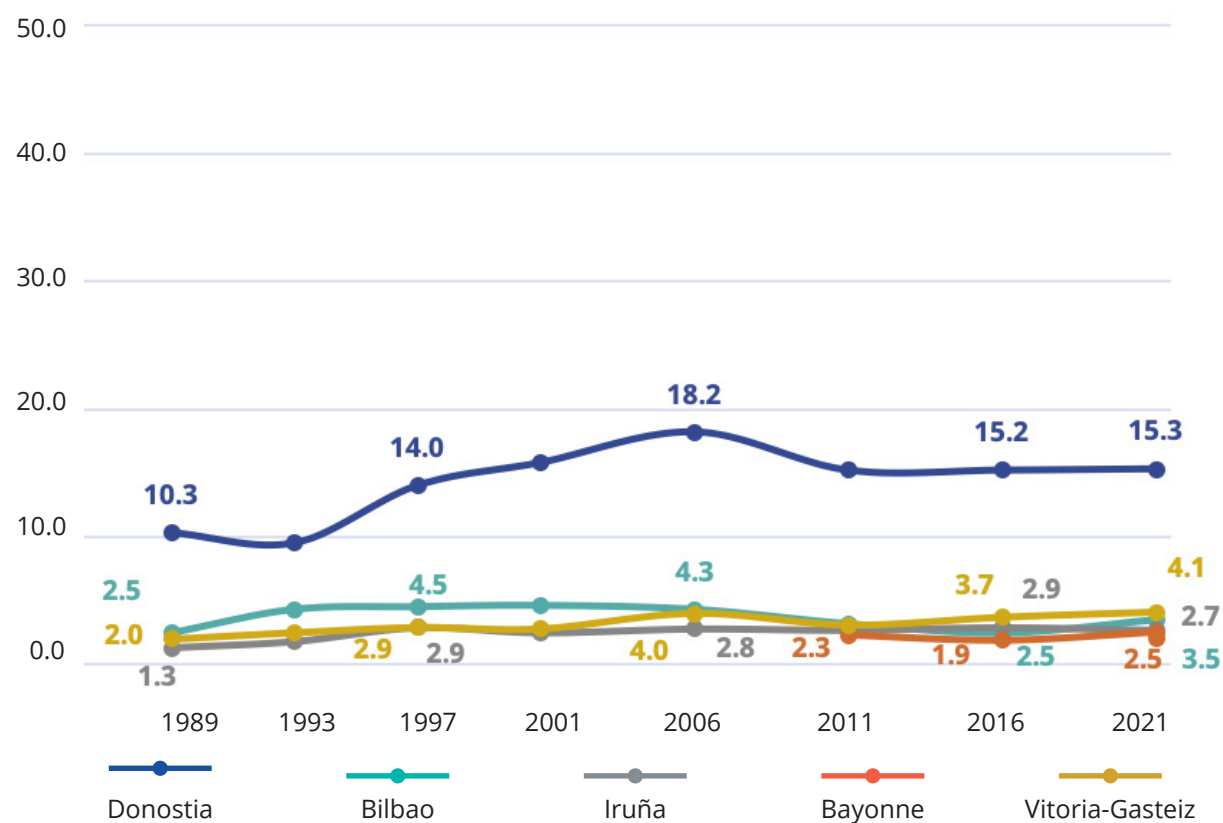
STREET USE OF LANGUAGES IN THE MAIN CITIES. BASQUE COUNTRY, 2021 (%)



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

In the last ten years the use of Basque has increased in Vitoria-Gasteiz. No significant changes have taken place in the other main cities, and the use of the language has increased in all the main cities of the southern Basque Country.

EVOLUTION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE IN THE MAIN CITIES.
BASQUE COUNTRY, 1989-2021 (%)⁶



Source: Soziolinguistika Klusterra.

⁽⁶⁾ Two more neighbourhoods have been measured in Donostia since 2016: Igeldo and Añorga. If the figures for these two neighbourhoods are not taken into account, use was 13.9% in 2016 and 12.9% in 2021. One new area in Bayonne was observed in 2021; Saint Croix. If the data of this area are not taken into account, the level of use is 2.1% and if it is taken into account, 2.5%.



7

CONCLUSIONS

Which is the current situation of the street use of basque language?

7.1

WHICH IS THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE STREET USE OF BASQUE LANGUAGE?

On the streets of Basque Country, 1 in 8 people speak Basque

Most of the conversations that take place on the streets of the southern Basque Country are in Spanish, while those in northern Basque Country are in French. **Conversations in Basque are in a notable minority.** Basque is a minority language, but above all it is minoritized. Basque is in a **vulnerable situation.**

Only a minority speaks Basque fluently in its territory. In northern Basque Country, however, almost all the people who live there speak French, and those in the southern Basque Country speak Spanish. Furthermore, all the functions of personal and social life can be carried out without any problems in French or Spanish. In contrast, it is impossible to use Basque to interact and carry out a number of tasks and steps.

An observation of speaking patterns demonstrates that the use of Basque is conditioned. On one hand, by its minority nature, because the bilingual Basque speaker needs other Basque interlocutors

to be able to use the language. On the other, the minority nature of the language has an influence on the choice of one language or the other, **depending on whether the legal, political, social and cultural conditions are easier or more difficult** for the bilingual speakers.

In the last 5 years no incidents in the general use of Basque have occurred

In general, the presence of the Basque language has not undergone significant changes since the last measurement (2016–2021); it has not lost presence in the streets. Furthermore, the street use of Basque has increased by 1.8 percentage points since 1989. The highest level of street use of Basque was measured in 2006 (13.7%), followed by a slight fall (2011, 2016), and **in the last 5 years data on usage is neither increased nor decreased** in a statistically significant manner.

The process of revitalisation of a small language in decline has been fruitful since the mid-20th

century, and the sociolinguistic situation of Basque has generally improved considerably since then. In the first quarter of the 21st century, in a globalised and changing world, the major languages –Spanish and French among them– have great power and influence and they are dominant in the territory of the Basque language.

Most languages in the world also find themselves in a worrying or serious situation, as UNESCO and other organisations and experts have warned on many occasions. **In the same way as biodiversity is being lost, we are losing linguistic diversity in the world**, with the consequent loss of social and cultural knowledge.

The evolution of the Basque language is not guaranteed. It could even take a turn towards the harsh reality of linguistic communities that are in the process of extinction, or alternatively it could get closer to the situation of medium-sized languages in Europe **if it succeeds in adapting to the current conditions and fulfils a significant function in the lives of people who choose to speak Basque.**

Territorial differences in the street use of Basque over the last 30 years are not homogeneous in all the territories

Basque Country is not homogeneous in terms of presence, knowledge and use of the Basque language. The results of its street use highlight this diversity: Gipuzkoa is the territory where it is spoken most, followed by Biscay and finally Navarre, northern Basque Country and Araba (with similar figures in these three territories).

From a long-term perspective (1989 to 2021) the administrative areas have followed different trends: the use of Basque in the territories of the Basque self-governing region has increased; in northern Basque Country the tendency has been downwards since 1997, and in Navarre the evolution fluctuates, although with small oscillations (1.8 percentage points).

The use of languages depends on demographic, economic, political and cultural conditions. **The evolution of their use cannot be explained by single-factor cause-and-effect dynamics.** This complexity means that it is impossible to create an effective intervention formula for all spaces and conditions. Nevertheless, in the territorial evolution **it is clear that it is possible to improve conditions and gradually increase the use of the language.** This requires an ongoing legal and economic effort, both at the political and social levels, and also by individuals. Sustainable

active policies will be needed to promote Basque alongside social support and a conscious choice by citizens, because doing nothing will always favour the dominant languages.

The use of Basque in the area with the highest proportion of Basque speakers is falling

The sociolinguistic context has a great influence on the street use of a language: the area where Basque is most spoken is the one where it is most heard; conversely, it is least heard in the area where Spanish speakers are more numerous. This has occurred in all the editions of this study, although there are differences in the evolution of its use in the different areas.

The street use of Basque has increased since 1993 and in localities where Basque speakers were fewer than 75% thirty years ago. The highest growth in comparison with the starting correspondence to the knowledge area 25–50%, followed by knowledge area 50–75%.

In general, the internal composition of each area has varied over the years. The use of Basque has increased in the Spanish-speaking areas, while Spanish has increased in the Basque-speaking areas. **A trend towards convergence has been observed in towns and villages:** as the level of knowledge of Basque varies, **there are more municipalities in the central sociolinguistic areas** while there are fewer and fewer in the outer zones.

It is worth noting that in the Spanish-speaking area, **where Basque had not been heard for decades, the use of Basque has increased.** However, its use is very low in larger population centres and other geographical areas. Some of the municipalities in these areas are quite large and even though a large number of Basque speakers live there they remain a small proportion. The reduction in proportion of speakers and their public visibility represents a decline. If other **'comfort zones' of high density of Basque speakers** are not created or found they will not be able to use the language.

In contrast, **the use of Basque has diminished in the area where Basque is spoken most.** Many of the towns and villages in this area are medium-sized or small. They are of strategic interest for the revitalisation of areas of high density of Basque speakers, where the language can be transmitted, reborn and nurtured in a natural way. Changes that take place in the factors that affect the vital strength of the language in these municipalities need to be followed attentively, as well as opportunities for developing viable projects for life in the area, the impact of urban planning projects and internal and external migratory patterns.

The use of Basque has increased in all the age groups since 1989, except in the older people groups

From 1989 to 2021 the use of Basque among children and young people has increased by about 4%, and in adults by 2.3%. Its use by grownups has fallen by 5.6%. Since the last measurement (2016–2021) an increase in the use of Basque children has been observed (from 18.3 to 19.3%). In contrast, its use among young, adult and older people does not show significant variations (± 0.2) over the five years. **Basque is spoken less between speakers of the same age group.**

Thirty years ago young people spoke less Basque in the streets; nowadays, however, it is grownups who do not speak it there. The number of Basque speakers is rising in the young generations and is falling among grownups. Indeed, as those who made up the group of grownups in 1989 gradually disappeared –a significant proportion of Basques– a group of adults who speak more Spanish have joined the group of older people, i.e. the group that speaks Spanish most. Furthermore, transmission in the Basque language has been considerably extended over the last four decades, and thousands of children and young people have learned Basque at school.

Looking at the age pyramid of the population **in a context of an ageing society, the use of Basque has been rejuvenated.** The language has managed to revolutionise the age pyramid: children and young people speak Basque more,

while adults and grownups do so less. The fact that this order has changed is a great achievement by society. Indeed, most of the minority languages in the world, and in Europe, the order of loss is maintained, particularly in terms of use: older people speak it more and younger people less. For this reason, in qualitative terms, the language is in the **most favourable situation to be revitalised** in the coming generations.

When it comes to observing the evolution over the next few years, it is important to focus on trends in the child and youth population, even though it has little weight in the pyramid and, therefore, also on general data on use. It should be borne in mind that **the linguistic profile of these new Basque speakers thanks to schooling differs from the one that was more common among Basque speakers in the past.** Nowadays, most children and young people who are able to express themselves in Basque have Spanish or French as their first language, and they find it easier to express themselves in those languages.

It is also striking that the street use of Basque is lower among young people than among children. Indeed, **the world of youth is not so closely linked to the language as children are.** For example, Basque has a strong presence in activities aimed at children (cultural activities, organised leisure time, summer camps, etc.) while in the case of younger people the range of activities is closer to what is offered to adults and grownups, i.e. opportunities in Basque are fewer (social media, music, sports).

The younger the person, the street use of Basque is more common among women than men

Women speak Basque more than men in all the age groups, except for older people. The difference is greater in children and young people. In general, the phenomenon is repeated in all the territories of Basque Country and was observed in previous editions of the study.

The presence of women has taken on prominence in the process of revitalisation of the Basque language. For example, the presence of women in euskaltegiak (Basque language schools) or projects to promote the language is usually much higher. An analysis of the image and the values that women and men associate Basque with, and their influence on the choice of language, can be illustrative to better understand what we observe outdoors. **The relationship between the use of Basque and gender roles** is a subject that needs to be studied in more depth in Basque sociolinguistics.

The use of Basque in exchanges in which children and older people are together is higher than when they are apart

Furthermore, the street use of Basque increases in exchanges between children and older people. This demonstrates that **the interaction between children and older people favours the use of the Basque language.** Being a parent often represents reinforcing awareness around Basque and its use by speaking the language with their children. **There is a social norm that encourages people to speak in Basque in conversations between children and adults.** However, **this does not have a complete impact on relationships between equals** in groups with horizontal relations.

The street use of other languages that are not Basque, Spanish or French is around 3% in the last 15 years

People from other countries and tourists are the main potential speakers of these other languages.

As for the migrant population and people of foreign origin, it should be remembered that their percentage in the population has tripled

in Navarre and quadrupled in the Basque self-governing region (EAE). Currently, their weight in the population of the territories of Basque Country oscillates between 10 and 16%. In sociolinguistic terms, it is significant that within this group, **50% speak Spanish from the start of their stay.**

Regarding street use, the speakers of other languages are in a minority so the stability of expressing themselves in those other languages is limited. Despite the increase in the population of foreign origin, data on the use of other languages remain at the same level. This suggests that **this recently-arrived population uses the most frequent languages in the territory in the short-medium term, mainly Spanish and French.**

The data on the street use of other languages collected in the measurements partly **coincide with the demographic characteristics of the population of foreign origin.** On the streets of Araba other languages are heard that are different from Basque, Spanish and French, and the highest use has taken place in conversations between adult men, although more in young adults than in older adults.

The presence of other languages stands out in the main cities. The use of other languages that are not Basque, Spanish and French on the streets of Vitoria-Gasteiz, Bilbao and Bayonne is higher than that of Basque. In Iruña the level of use of other languages and Basque is similar. It should be borne in mind that **these cities have special characteristics** as places of residence and also as tourist destinations for foreigners.

7.2

WHICH WAY TO TAKE

In this context, if one wishes to achieve a significant increase in the use of the Basque language over the next few decades, innovations will have to be applied to the initiatives of revitalisation that were undertaken in the last century. Among these are language policies and actions by institutions and movements that make up Basque cultural activity.

An efficient response to the new challenges and needs posed both at the international and Basque levels requires an in-depth recovery.

Sociolinguistic research has an important role to play here. The understanding of situations and social dynamics related to language and the generation and improvement of effective interventions **should be based on rigorous scientific knowledge**. Likewise, spaces for exchanges, comparison and reflection are required on the information and knowledge obtained from studies and research projects. Basically, a shared project of linguistic revitalisation **requires a shared network of knowledge and reflection**.

To ensure the possibility of the 'comfortable' use of Basque in all areas of social life it is necessary to reinforce and extend the process of linguistic revitalisation to be able to carry it out without

impediment or difficulty. In this process of guaranteeing **comfortable conditions for the use of the language, the universalisation of knowledge** about Basque can intervene as an intermediate objective, among other things.

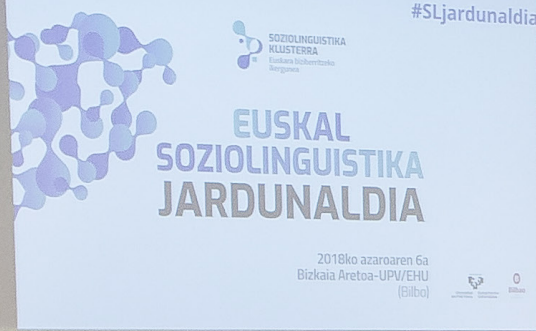
Based on research studies, public statements and intervention projects over the last few years, it could be said that **there is a wide-ranging consensus on the areas that need to be worked on**. Among the most often quoted are: guaranteeing a suitable level of knowledge of Basque in the education system, raising awareness and consolidating habits of use among the child and youth population, the teaching of Basque to adults, the socio-economic area, the digital field and language technologies, guaranteeing and multiplying the range of Basque in the informal domain (audiovisuals, sports, leisure...), together with the inclusion of migrants who arrive in Basque Country and the encouragement of diversity, the consolidation of the Basque cultural system (creation and consumption) and guaranteed language rights.

The measures and policies applied in these areas should not be the same everywhere and should

adapt to the diverse realities of the administrative and sociolinguistic areas of Basque Country, as well as to the situation of the sectors and entities that need to be addressed. Territorial diversity, the situation of each area or sector of work, living conditions and the customs of each group should be taken into account so that the initiatives and policies implemented can be effective.

Furthermore, the process of revitalisation of the Basque language should construct **new narratives and discourses** adapted to the new times. The process of revitalisation of Basque should be worked on in parallel with a defence of cultural and linguistic diversity. Indeed, establishing links with currents of thought such as feminism or ecologism and other movements that demonstrate **their ability to activate and transform society** could be very useful.

The revitalisation of Basque is an innovative and transforming process that needs to be carried out with enthusiasm, determination, empathy and intelligence, while fostering harmonious coexistence on the way to building a better society.



8 SEMINAR

The results of measuring the street use of languages give an idea of the language practices that take place there. With this information available, the challenge is now to interpret and understand the complex sociolinguistic reality that lies behind these practices. The Sociolinguistic Cluster proposes a collective exercise of interpretation, debate, reflection and comparison and has organised a forum to do this. Researchers, technical personnel, policymakers, advisers, professors and citizens interested in the subject who work on the revitalisation of Basque can take part in the following forum:

BASQUE SOCIOLINGUISTIC SEMINAR 2022

22 June 2022

Bikaia Aretoa (UPV/EHU – University of the Basque Country)

Organised by: Soziolinguistika Klusterra

Other sponsors: Territorial Administration of Biscay and Bilbao City Council

www.soziolinguistika.eus/jardunaldia

The Sociolinguistic Cluster is a research centre for the revitalisation of the Basque language. It generates and manages sociolinguistic knowledge to respond to the needs of this process of revitalisation. It sets out to take advantage of an increase in the sociolinguistic skills of the stakeholders who are working on the revitalisation of Basque. To do this, it develops projects together with university researchers, technical personnel from the public and private sectors, organised euskaltzaleak and a wide range of experts and individuals to build bridges between theoretical knowledge and the field of practical application.

It operates according on the basis of scientific rigour, which legitimates it to act autonomously vis-à-vis the stakeholders involved.

It is based on complementarity and cooperation to develop synergies and increase the added value of projects and initiatives. To do this, it prioritises collaborative projects within the framework of open innovation.

Its raison d'être is to make progress in the challenge of revitalising the Basque language and disseminate the results of projects transparently to society. It is also committed to a more equal society in areas such as gender equality, sustainability and the fight against discrimination.

It covers all the Basque territories when analysing the socio-linguistic situation of the language and, through its activity, sets out to have an influence on all of them.

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Martin Ugalde Kultur Parkea z/g 20140 Andoain (Gipuzkoa)

☎ 943 592556 🐦 @slklusterra 📘 /slklusterra

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