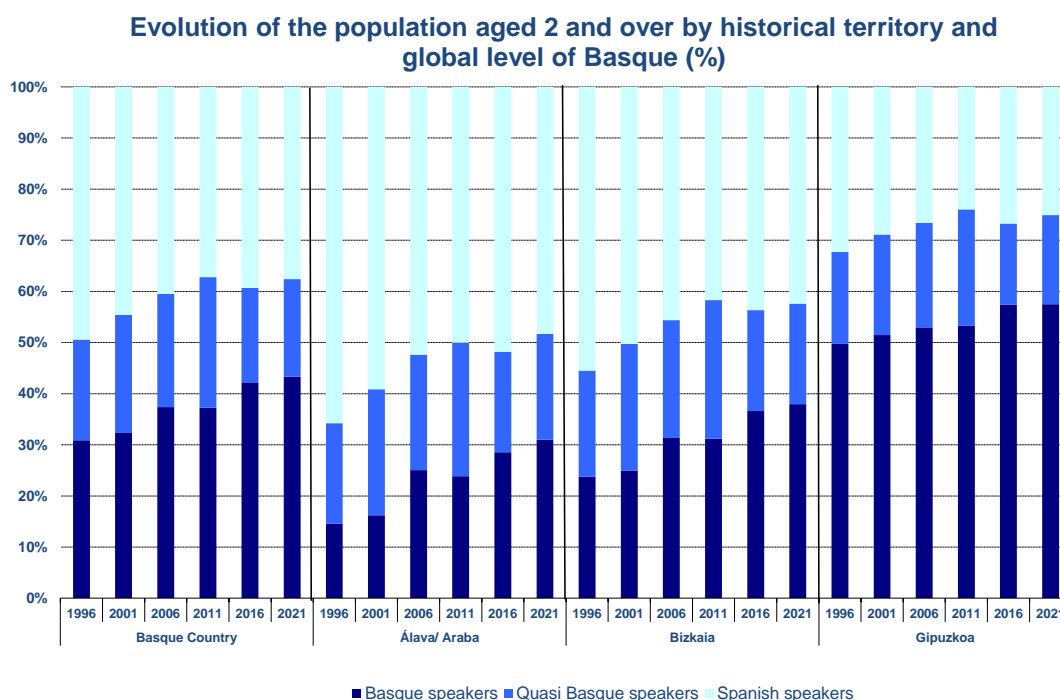


In 2021, 62.4% of people residing in the Basque Country had some knowledge of Basque

The proportion of Basque speakers grew by more than 6 percentage points between 2011 and 2021

62.4% of the population aged 2 and over in the Basque Country (1,349,808 people) had some knowledge of Basque in 2021, according to Eustat data. According to their level of knowledge, there were 936,812 Basque speakers, i.e. people who understand and speak Basque well, and 412,996 quasi-Basque speakers, with an average or good level of understanding, but difficulty speaking.

Furthermore, in the last decade studied, the proportion of Basque speakers went from 37.2% in 2011 to 43.3%, i.e. it rose by 6.1 percentage points, to the detriment of the quasi-Basque speakers' category, which saw a drop of 6.5 percentage points compared to 2011. The evolution in the percentage of Basque speakers over the last two decades represented an increase of 11 percentage points between 2001 and 2021.



Source: Eustat. Population and housing censuses 2001, 2011, 2021 and Population and housing statistics 1996, 2006, 2016

At the provincial level, Gipuzkoa maintained its position in 2021 as the province with the highest percentage of Basque speakers, with 57.5%, a rise of 4.3 percentage points in respect of 2011. It was followed by Bizkaia, with a Basque-speaking population of 37.9%, an increase of 6.7 percentage points, and Álava, with 31.0% and growth of 7.1 points, which was the most significant rise over these 10 years. Moreover, if quasi-Basque speakers are included, **three out of four people in Gipuzkoa had knowledge of Basque, nearly three out of five in Bizkaia and one in two in Álava.**

At a more detailed geographical level, the regions with the greatest number of Basque speakers were, in this order: Gran Bilbao (268,018 Basque speakers), Donostialdea (161,649), Llanada Alavesa (79,006), Urola Kosta (58,461) and Duranguesado (51,263), although four of them were also the regions with the largest populations. Altogether, these regions contributed 117,133 additional Basque speakers between 2011 and 2021.

Furthermore, **the level of knowledge has increased in practically all the regions of the Basque Country in the 10 years since 2011.** In Álava, the regions that saw the biggest rises in the proportion of Basque speakers were Cantábrica Alavesa (up 7.5 percentage points), closely followed by Llanada Alavesa (7.3 points) and Montaña Alavesa (7.0 points); in Bizkaia they were Encartaciones (8.8 points), Gran Bilbao (up 7.6 percentage points) and Arratia-Nervión (4.9 points). Lastly, in Gipuzkoa, the regions with the most significant variations were: Donostia/San Sebastián (5.7 percentage points more), Bajo Bidasoa (5.1 points) and Goierri (3.9 points). All the increases in this province stood below the average (6.1 percentage points). On the other hand, only Markina-Ondarroa saw a decline in the percentage of Basque speakers, albeit of just 0.9 percentage points.

The percentage of Basque speakers rose in the three provincial capitals

Bilbao was the capital with the greatest increase in the proportion of the population who spoke Basque in relation to 2011, 7.66 percentage points more than in 2011, reaching a figure of 103,631 Basque speakers, 30.6% of the total. In San Sebastián, 46.7% of the population was Basque-speaking in 2021, 83,866 people in total and 6.1 percentage points more than in 2011. In the case of Vitoria-Gasteiz, growth in the percentage of Basque speakers stood at 7.4 percentage points and the 72,778 Basque speakers accounted for 29.8%.

The municipal analysis revealed that, of the 251 municipalities in the Basque Country, 202 saw their Basque-speaking population grow by between 0.1 and 15.1 percentage points, 46 municipalities saw the proportion of the population who spoke Basque fall by between 0.1 and 8.1 percentage points compared to 2011, and the remaining 3 municipalities showed no change in the proportion of Basque speakers over the last 10 years.

In 68 municipalities, more than 80% of the population spoke Basque

In Gipuzkoa, there were 40 municipalities with a percentage of Basque speakers over 80%, most remarkably Oresa (93.7%), Errezil (93.1%), Zerain (92.3%) and Abaltzisketa (92.1%). Moreover, 69 of its 88 municipalities saw the proportion of Basque speakers increase; of particular note, in this order, were Zumarraga, Leintz Gatzaga, San Sebastián, Pasaia and Errenteria, all with rises of more than 5 percentage points.

In Álava, only Aramaio, with a Basque-speaking population of 86.2%, exceeded the 80% threshold. The proportion of Basque speakers increased in another 49 municipalities, while it fell in 2. Among those that registered growth, Armiñon, Ayala/Aiara, Erriberagoitia/Ribera Alta, Zalduondo, Zuia, Urkabustaiz and Arraia-Maeztu stood out, with increases ranging from 9 to 15.1 percentage points.

Lastly, in Bizkaia, there were 26 municipalities where more than 80% of the population spoke Basque, particularly Ajangiz (92.2%), Nabarniz (89.1%) and Ziortza-Bolibar (88.9%). The Basque-speaking population grew in 90 municipalities in Bizkaia and

declined in 21, while it remained unchanged in another. Noteworthy examples of municipalities with an increased percentage of Basque speakers were Etxebarri, Sopuerta, Galdames, Arakaldo and Valle de Trápaga-Trapagaran, where growth varied between 11.6 and 10 percentage points.

There were significant differences by age in knowledge of Basque

The proportion of the population who spoke Basque ranged from a maximum of 90.5% in the 10-14 age range to a minimum of 22.1% in the 70-74 and 75 and over age ranges, with knowledge of Basque generally decreasing with age. More than 70% of the population aged under 30 were Basque speakers, while this proportion was lower in older age groups.

In contrast, **the differences by gender in the level of knowledge of Basque were minimal in the Basque Country: 43.4% of women were Basque speakers compared to 43.2% of men.** In the case of Álava, the proportion of women who spoke Basque (32.0%) was 1.9 points up on that of men; in Bizkaia, women stood one tenth of a point above men (38%); and in Gipuzkoa, the proportion of men (57.6%) was slightly higher than that of women (57.4%).

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