The Digital Language

Diversity Project

Breton — a digital language?

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Imprint

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1. Overview

How does the linguistic diversity of Europe reflect in the new media? Do regional and minority languages contribute to EU digital language diversity, and to what extent? Is it possible for regional or minority language speakers to have a digital life in those languages?

In this report we present the results of the first survey about the actual needs of European minority language speakers regarding digital opportunities. The survey is part of the work carried out by the Digital Language Diversity Project (DLDP), a three-year Erasmus+ project started in September 2015.

The goal of the DLDP is to help minority language speakers in the acquisition of intellectual and practical skills to create, share, and re-use online digital content, and, at the same time, defining general guidelines and best practices for the promotion of minority languages with poor digital representation. This lack of digital presence further prevents their usability on digital media and devices.

The focus of the project is on four European minority languages at different stages of digital development (Basque, Breton, Karelian and Sardinian). This focus enables a comparison on the role of the availability of digital content for the promotion of digital usage of these languages and the development of language-based digital applications.

With the aim of understanding the specific needs and the particular behaviour of speakers of these languages, during the spring of 2016 we conducted a survey focused on gathering information about their personal digital use of the language and about any known digital resource and services that make use of the language. We received feedback from almost 2,000 speakers and we are now in the position of showing the results for future actions.

The survey was launched on the Internet, using social media in particular; thus, the profile of the respondent belongs to a person who makes at least a minimal digital use of the language in their everyday life. This fact must be taken into account by the reader.

2. Breton, a Brief Profile

Brezhoneg (Breton) is an indigenous Celtic language spoken mainly in western Brittany, but also spoken in the main cities in the east, Rennes and Nantes. Breton was brought from south west Britain to Armorica by migrating Britons during the early Middle Ages. In this period it was the language of most of Brittany, but over the centuries the linguistic border gradually moved westwards so that by the 20th century the language was spoken in Breizh-Izel (Lower Brittany), to the west of a line from Plouha (west of Saint-Brieuc) to La Roche-Bernard (east of Vannes).

Linguistically, Breton forms part of the Brittonic branch of the Celtic languages, along with Welsh and Cornish, being most closely related to Cornish. Breton is made up of four dialects: Kerneveg, Leoneg, Tregerieg and Gwenedeg. At the beginning of WWI, the Breton-speaking parts of Brittany had ca. 900,000 monoglot Breton speakers, with some 400,000 bilinguals. There were only 50,000 unable to speak Breton. It was at the time the most widely spoken Celtic language. However, by 200, out of a total population of over four million, it was estimated that there were around 172,000 speakers who use the language on an everyday basis, with the majority of these speakers being over the age of sixty.

These are estimates, for the French authorities do not allow questions about regional languages in the general censuses. Breton is defined as 'severely endangered' by UNESCO. Breton has no legal status. France, since the Revolution, has implemented language policies designed to eradicate all regional languages in the name of a perceived threat to state unity that has left most regional languages endangered. In addition, France is yet to ratify the Council of Europe ECRML, the European benchmark for regional language protection. However, the 2008 inclusion of Breton in the French constitution (Article 75-1) as part of France's cultural heritage, while not conferring legal status, does offer some recognition by the State.

It is problematic to try and discuss language usage in each sociolinguistic domain as there are no official figures, only surveys. The most recent survey was conducted by Fanch Broudic for TMO in 2007[1] which estimated 172,000 everyday speakers most of whom are over 65.

According to the TMO survey ordinary societal usage amongst this cohort of native speakers is usually restricted to family and friends and mainly to inland, non-urban, central west Brittany. The survey found that a typical speaker is a married female, over 60 years old and living in the Finistère.

However, Breton is used publically on an informal basis at Breton social events, fest-noz, in the local pubs and bars, by all age groups across Brittany. There is an increasing amount of Breton signage erected across Brittany, a policy supported by the Breton regional government[2].

As with other 'regional' languages there is the growth of a Breton language industry from book publishers, software developers, film dubbing, to pedagogy developers. Breton-medium education is steadily increasing with schools providing both Breton immersion (Diwan) and Breton/French bilingual education (Catholic and Private). For 2016 the total number of children enrolled in immersion and bilingual education, primary and secondary, is 17,024 in 490 schools. In addition, 7,830 have some teaching about Breton in primary. There are 3,354 adults learning Breton.

There is a growing amount of usage in the media with several Breton language radio stations (Radio Kerne, Arvorig FM, Radio Kreiz Breizh, Radio Bro Gwened) and an increasing amount of internet content and use on social media. However, while Breton online TV provision continues to expand (e.g. Brezhoweb, France 3 Breizh with children's programmes such as Mouchig Dall) Breton speakers are yet to gain their own dedicated, publically financed TV channel. There are some Breton language theatre companies (Ar Vro Bagan, Teatr Piba) and films and TV shows are occasionally dubbed into Breton (e.g. Braveheart).

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1   For a summary see http: //www. langue-bretonne.com/sondages/NouveauSondage.html
2   See the Breton region's language policy paper
     http: //www.bretagne.bzh/upload/docs/application/pdf/2012-04/rapport_dactualisation_de_la_politique_linguisique_201 2.pdf

3. Speakers' Identities: Gender, Age and Provenance

For the analysis of digital activity in the Breton language survey we received 200 replies. The survey results seen in figs. 1 and 2 show quite an even response from across Brittany but with a noticeable concentration of responses from coastal towns and the main towns possibly reflecting where many organisations are based rather than where speakers are concentrated.

A majority of responses to the survey originated via Facebook (51.5%), with 20.5% learning about the survey from e-mail, 20.5% by 'other' means, and a small group via Twitter and the DLDP website (see fig. 3).

The age groups of respondents are fairly evenly distributed. There is a slight majority in the 30-39 age group (22.5%), compared with 18% for those aged 20-29. The under 20s account for 7% of respondents (see fig. 4).

Responses regarding gender indicate a prevalence of male respondents (60.5%) to 38% female respondents (see fig. 5). The majority of respondents (75.5%) are active in Breton revitalization activities (see fig. 6). A slight majority (34%) of respondents are not professionally involved with Breton, while 16.5% have an 'other' occupation with Breton. This is followed by 13.5% who work in Breton education and 12.5% who work with Breton in the public sector (see fig. 7).
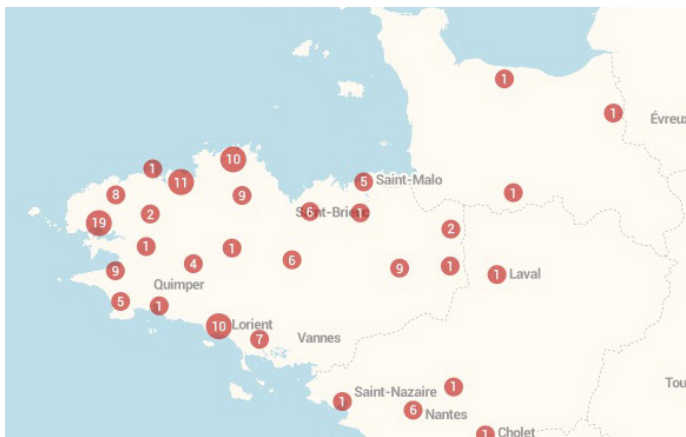

Fig. 1 - Distribution of places of birth

Fig. 2 - Distribution of places of residence
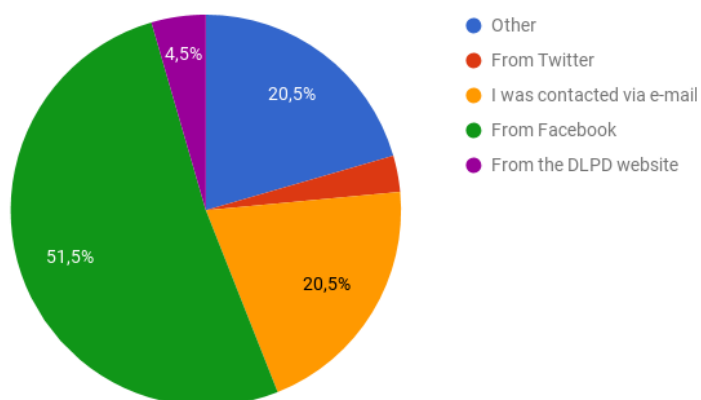
How did you learn about this survey?

Legend:
- Other
- From Twitter
- I was contacted via e-mail
- From Facebook
- From the DLPD website

20,5%
4,5%
51,5%
20,5%

Fig. 3 - Source of information on this survey

Age distribution of respondents

Legend:
- 50 - 59
- 40 - 49
- 30 - 39
- 60 - 69
- 21 - 29
- < 20
- > 70

7,0%
19,0%
18,0%
20,0%
11,5%
22,5%
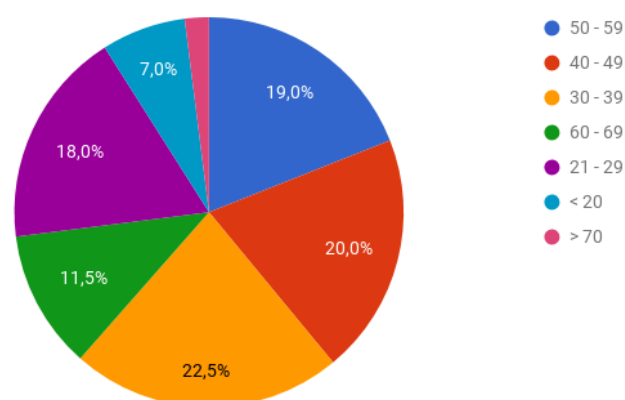
Fig. 4 - Age of respondents

Gender

Legend:
- Male
- Female
- I prefer not to specify

38,0%
60,5%
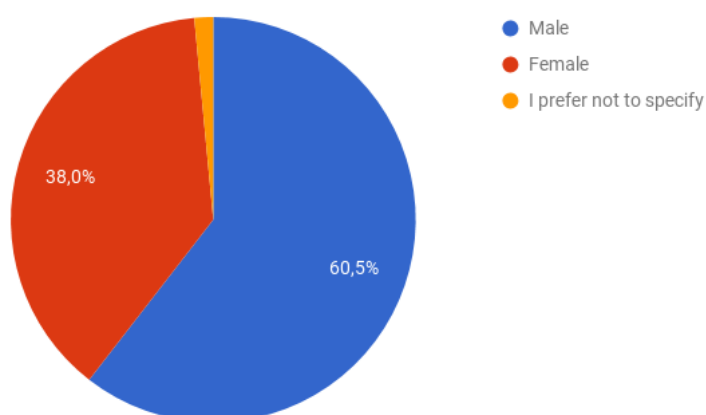
Fig. 5 - Gender

Do you take part in any revitalization or protection activity related to Breton?

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

6,5%
18,0%
75,5%
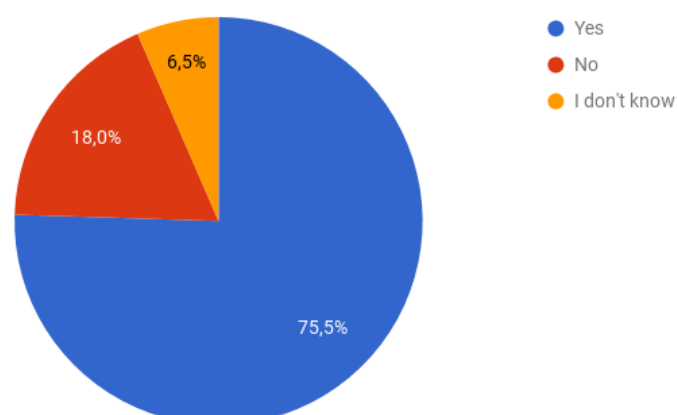
Fig. 6 - Breton revitalization activities

Are you professionally involved with Breton?

Legend:
- Yes, as a public officer or an organisation for the promotion of Breton
- Yes, as an educator of the public sector
- Other
- Yes, other
- No
- Yes, as a member of a speaker community
- Yes, as a member of local/national association

8,0%
5,5%
12,5%
34,0%
13,5%
10,0%
16,5%

Fig. 7 - Professional involvement with Breton

4. Self-Evaluation of Competence in Breton

A slight majority (44.5%) define themselves as bilingual Breton-French speakers followed closely by French native speakers (43.5%). 10.5% define themselves as Breton native speakers (see fig. 8).
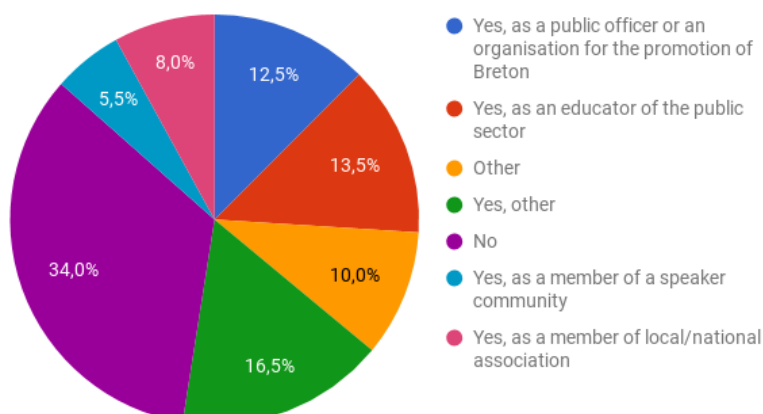
The majority of respondents have a very good to good knowledge of Breton, with the ability to read and understand receiving the highest scores (see fig. 9).

The majority of respondents use the language everyday in an institutional setting with very high scores in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Those who use the language regularly, occasionally and rarely, scored far less in the four language abilities (see fig. 10).

Language usage outside of an institutional setting is more evenly balanced between everyday usage and regular usage, with the majority using the language everyday. All four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing scored highly (see fig. 11).

From the point of view of the relationship with French, how would you describe yourself?

- French native speaker
- Bilingual
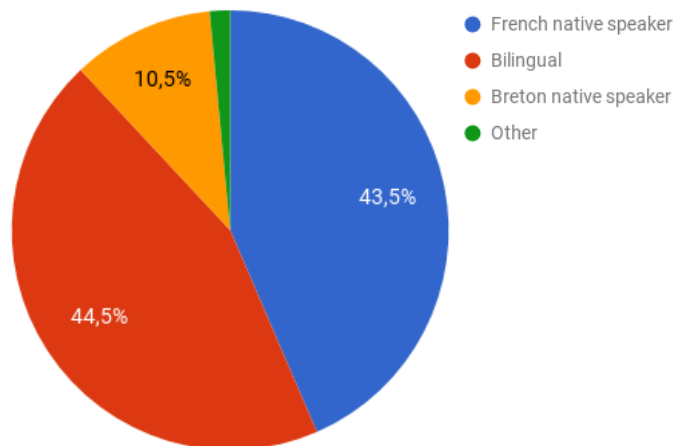- Breton native speaker
- Other

43,5%
44,5%
10,5%

Fig. 8 - Native language

Out of a score from 0-200, respondents strongly agreed that Breton is important because it embodies the history and culture of the country (see fig. 12). Just over half (100) strongly agreed that Breton is important because it is the language of their childhood/parents/grandparents reflecting a substantive presence of the language throughout the lives of respondents. The majority strongly agreed that it gives them a sense of who they are and where they belong. Most strongly agree or agree that Breton is useful for communication in their community, and most strongly agree or agree that the language provides access to work or study opportunities.
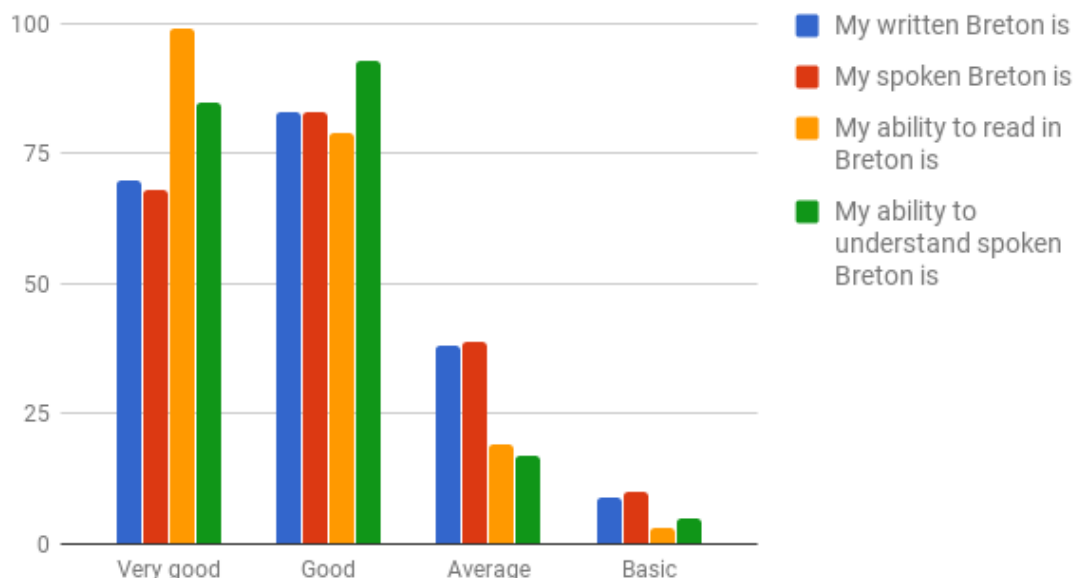
How would you evaluate your own knowledge of Breton?

- My written Breton is
- My spoken Breton is
- My ability to read in Breton is
- My ability to understand spoken Breton is

Fig. 9 - Knowledge of Breton

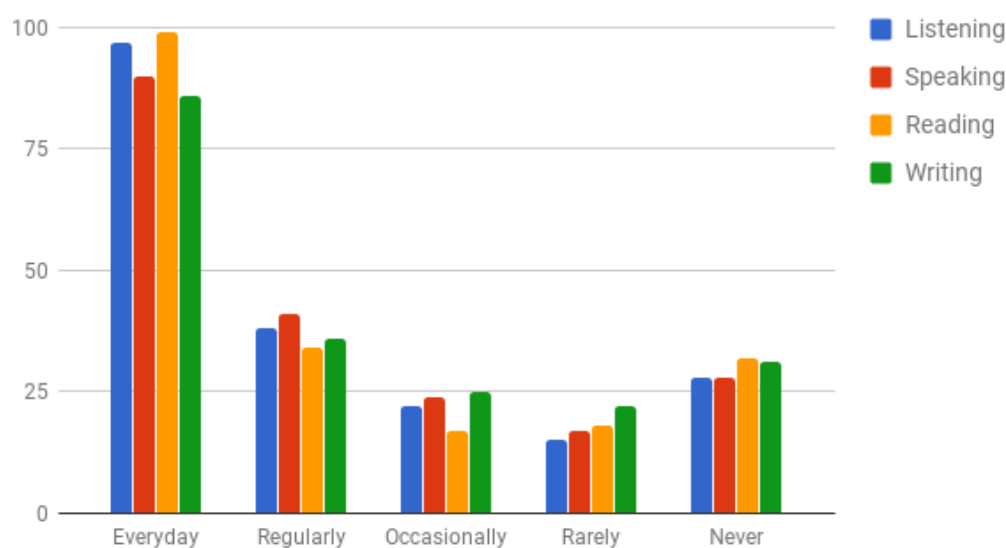## How and how often do you use Breton in an institutional setting?

Fig. 10 - Use of Breton in an institutional setting

How and how often do you use Breton outside an institutional setting?
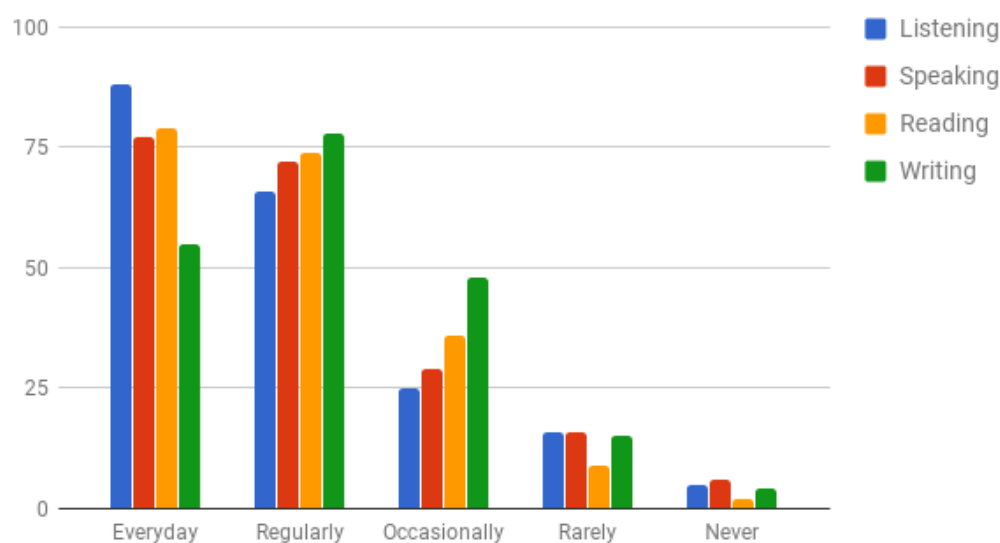

Fig. 11 - Use of Breton outside an institutional setting

Breton is important because...

1) ...it embodies the history and culture of the region/country.
2) ...it is the language of my childhood/my parents/grandparents.
3) ...it gives me a sense of who I am and where I belong.
4) ...it is a tool for communicating with the people of the community I belong to.
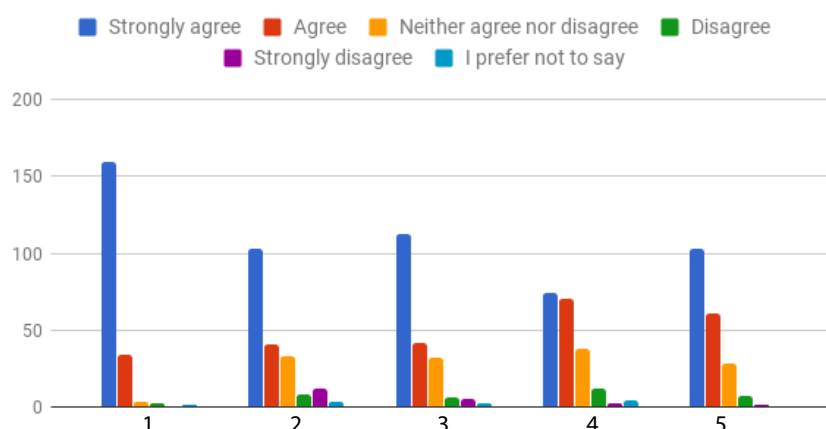5) ...it provides access to opportunities (work, studies, access to information).

Fig. 12 - Importance of Breton

5. Digital Use of Breton

94.5% of respondents use Breton on the Internet (see fig. 13). The majority of respondents read Breton on the net with many reading and writing, while some have their own blog in Breton (see fig. 14).

A vast majority use Breton for e-mails (88.5%) with some respondents only reading e-mails. 5% say that they never use Breton in e-mails (see fig. 15). A majority use Breton for e-mails, texts and chatting everyday and regularly (see fig. 16).

A vast majority, 150 out of a scoring of 0-200, strongly agree or agree with the statement „I'd like to be able to use Breton in every aspect of my life, and the Internet is one of them". A vast majority also strongly agree or agree with the idea that using Breton on the Internet shows that the language is relevant in the modern world. The majority strongly agree or agree also with the statement that more Breton on the Internet would make it more appealing to the younger generation.

The majority strongly disagree with the belief that it is not worth using Breton on the Internet, while for the statement „It's easier to use French instead" the majority disagree, with a minority neither agreeing or disagreeing.

Finally, the vast majority strongly disagree with the statement „Breton is a spoken language mainly and cannot be used on the Internet".
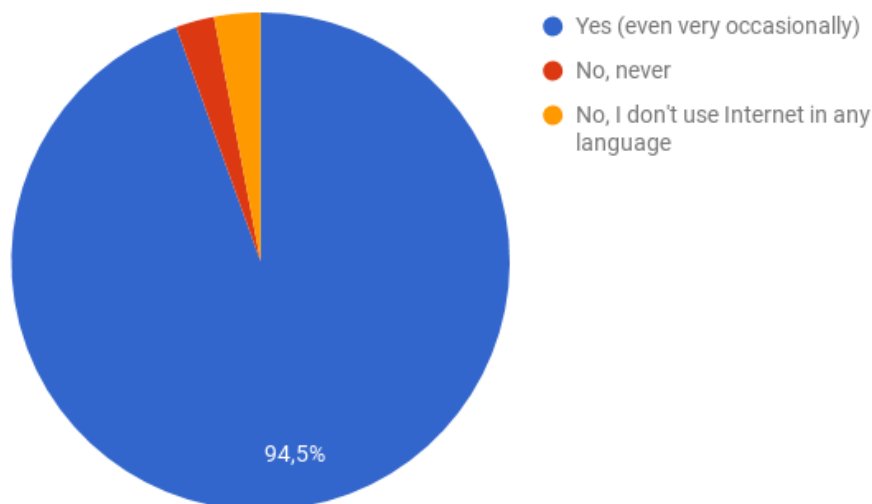
Do you use Breton on the Internet?

Fig. 13 - Use of Breton on the Internet
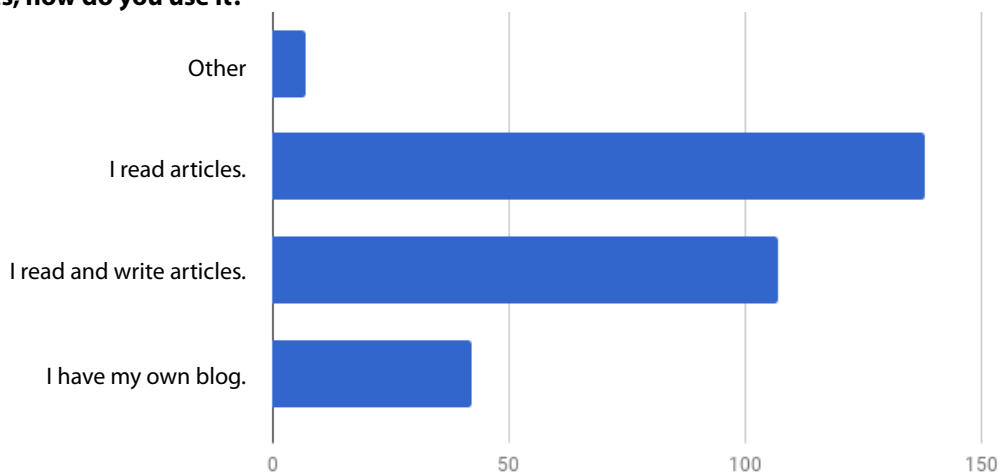
If yes, how do you use it?

Fig. 14 - Breton language activities on the Internet

Do you ever use Breton for electronic communication?

- Yes, for reading and for writing
- I don't use electronic communication in any language
- Yes, only for reading
- No, never
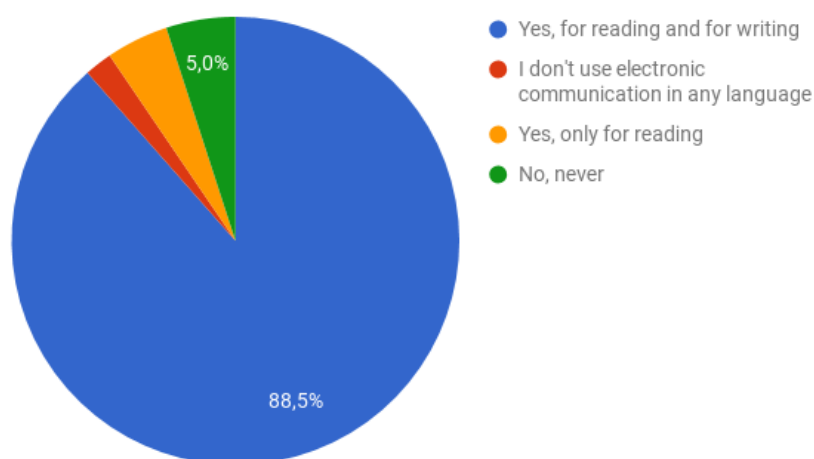
Fig. 15 - Use of Breton for electronic communication

How often do you use Breton for electronic communication?

- Everyday
- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Fig. 16 - Frequency of use of Breton for electronic communication

How much do you agree to the following statements?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree not disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I prefer not to say

Fig. 17 - Statements on Breton

5.1 Breton on Digital Media

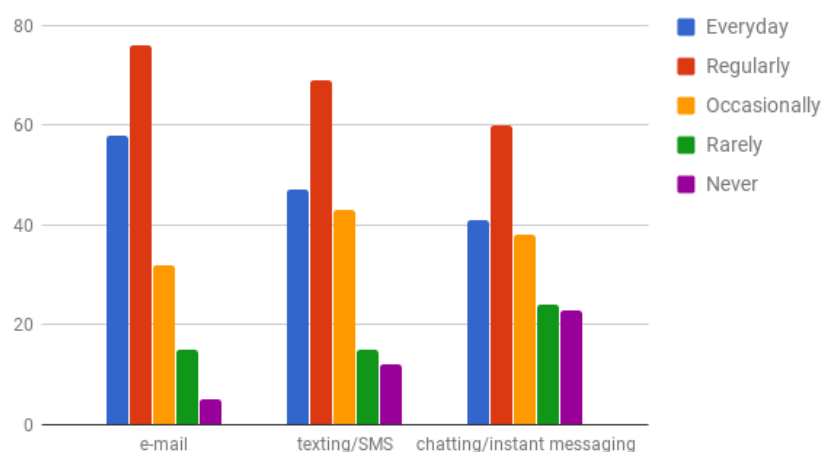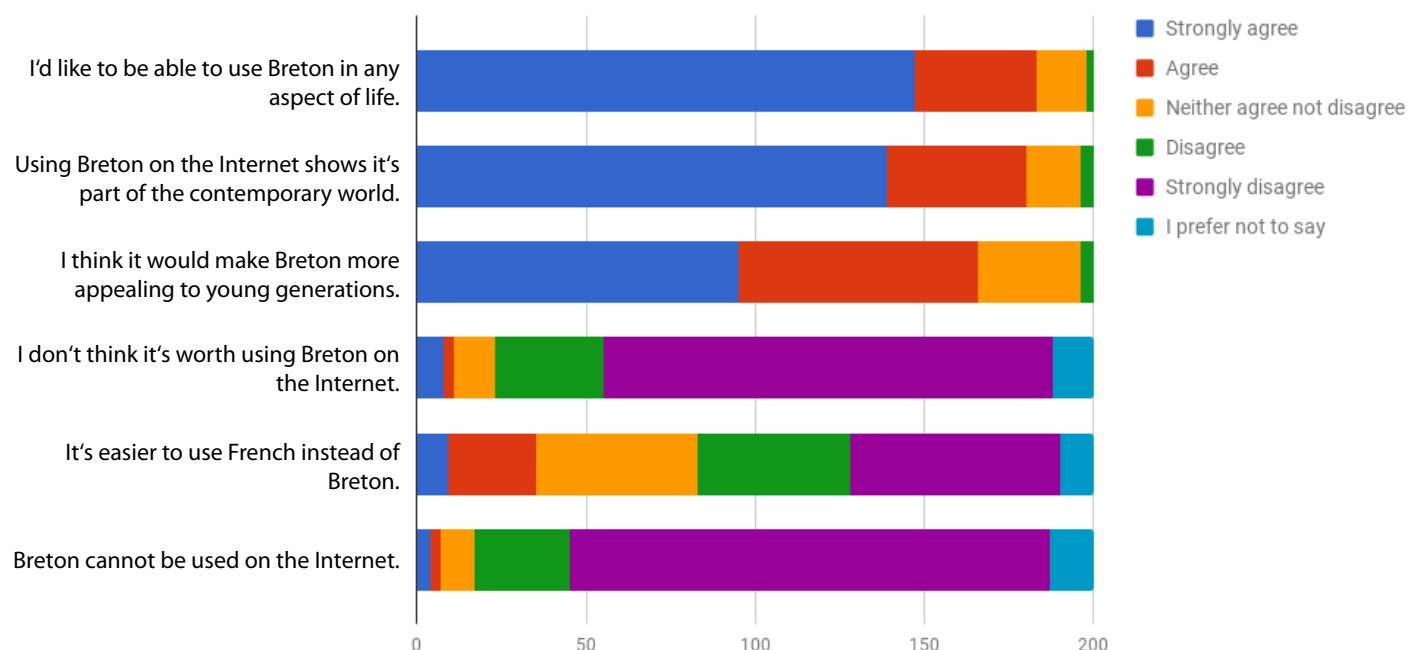Out of a score of 0-200 there is a good to high awareness (75-175) of the various digital media available in Breton. According to the results the respondents are least aware of smartphone apps and e-books in Breton (see fig. 18).

The majority of respondents browse Wikipedia in Breton with 10.8% browsing and editing and 8.1% browsing, editing and writing new articles (see fig. 19 and 20). The response to the question on why people don't use Wikipedia in Breton was statistically insignificant.

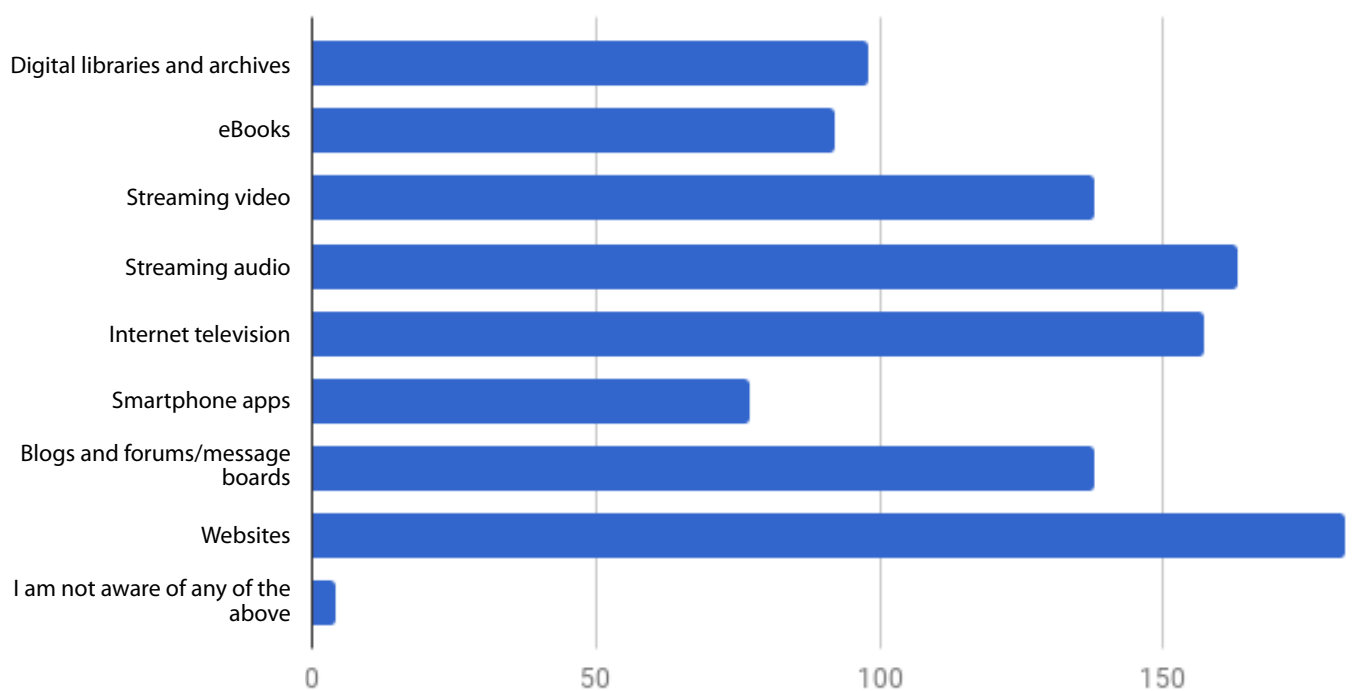**To your best knowledge, which of the following media are available in Breton?**

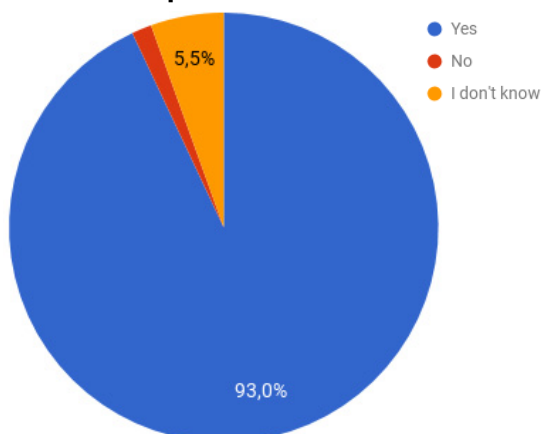Fig. 18 - Existing media in Breton

Is there a Wikipedia for Breton?

Fig. 19 - Existence of Breton Wikipedia

If yes, how do you use it?
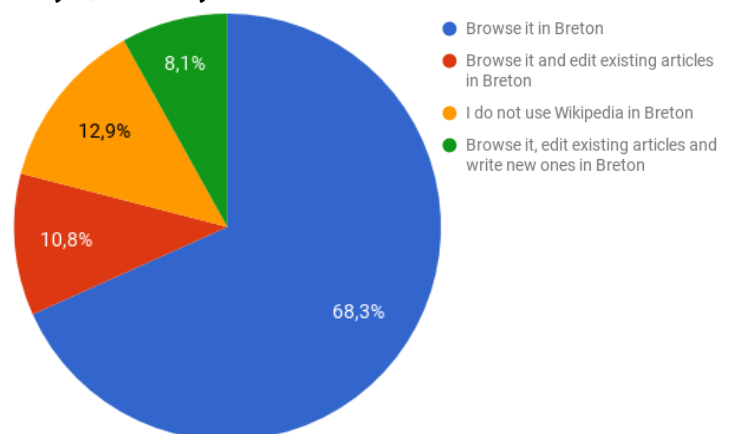
Fig. 20 - Use of Breton Wikipedia

5.2 Breton on Social Networks

Facebook is by far the most used social media by Breton speakers, with the majority posting, reading and messaging on the network. Its higher use is no doubt explained by the fact that Facebook is available in Breton and signalling that other social media could follow this lead. Many also use Twitter in Breton which is relatively straightforward except that the interface is yet to be provided in Breton (see fig. 21).

Facebook is by far the most used, everyday and regularly, social media format for Breton speakers. With Twitter having a significant but less frequent use (see fig. 22).

Do you ever use Breton on the following networks?

Fig. 21 – Use of Breton on social networks

How often do you use Breton on those networks?

Fig. 22 - Frequency of use of Breton on social networks

5.3 Localised Digital Services/Interfaces for Breton
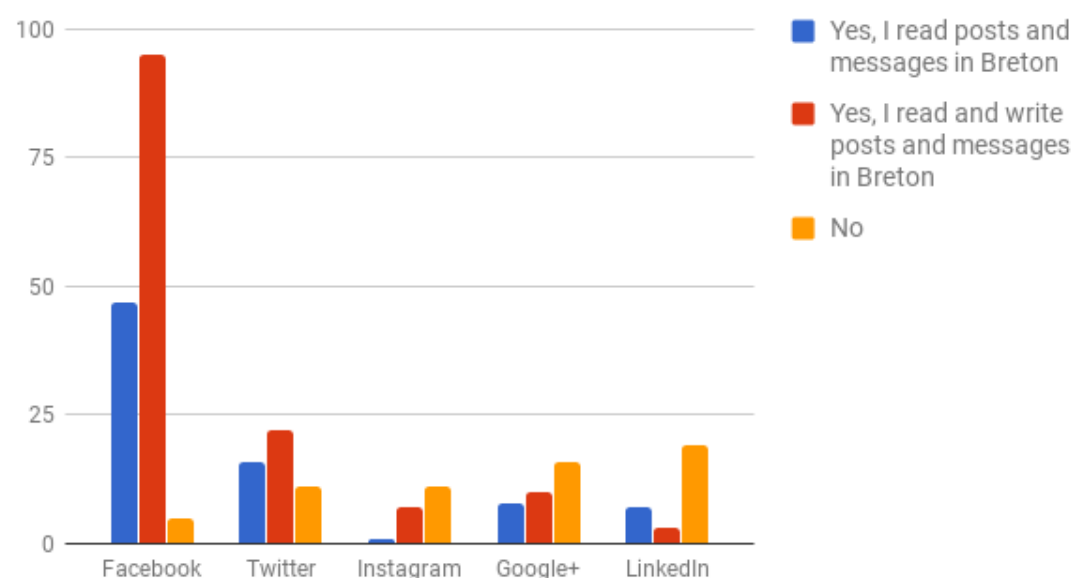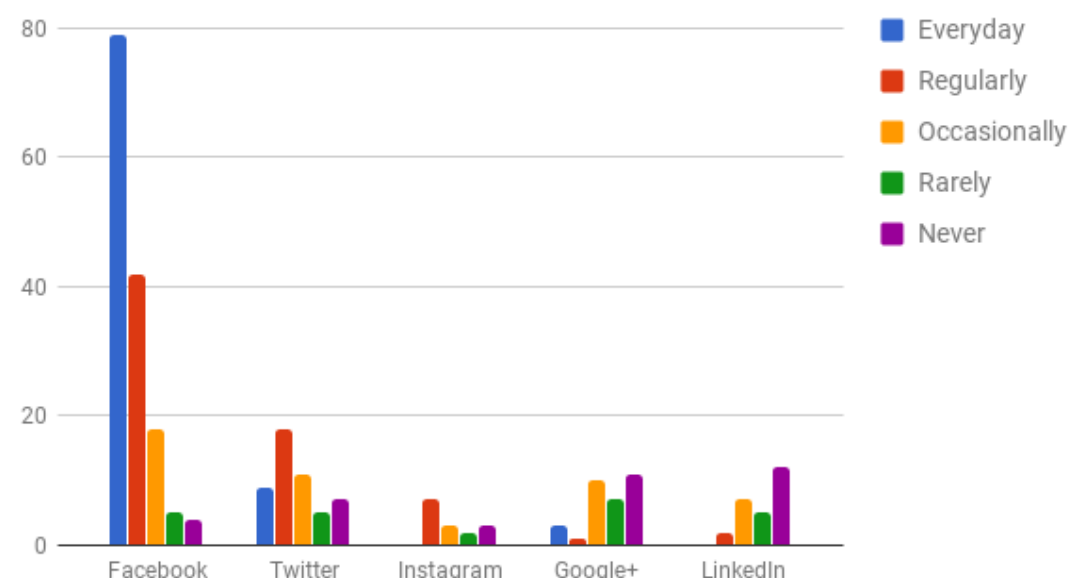
The results regarding the question "To the best of your knowledge, which of the following services are available in Breton" reveal a fascinating gap between actual provision and what the language community would like to have in terms of localized digital services (see fig. 23).

The greatest demand by far is for healthcare and customer care in Breton. The lack of digital provision for health care raises many rights issues especially for more elderly speakers and parents. There is a high demand across all sectors, from entertainment to tourist information to video subtitling and, interestingly, slightly less demand for online news and newspapers.

Both Firefox and LibreOffice attain the highest scores of respondents knowing that there is a Breton version. For all of these popular software products the clear message is that most Breton respondents don't know if software is available in Breton and many, while not knowing about availability, would like to have the software in Breton (see fig. 24).

Only Firefox and Mozilla score relatively highly in the question about the selection of localised version of software as first choice (see fig. 25).

Bilingual e-dictionaries are the most well-known digital resource in Breton, followed by terminology resources and spelling correctors. Machine translation and pronunciation resources are the least well-known (see fig. 26). A vast majority (88%) have no problem using their keyboard for Breton, with 61% saying that they can type all characters and 27% able to type most characters (see fig. 27).

A small majority (37.5%) would like a dedicated Breton keyboard, but interestingly the vote is quite evenly split into three, with several (29%) saying that they don't and 33.5% saying that they don't know (see fig. 28).

To the best of your knowledge, which of the following services are available in Breton?
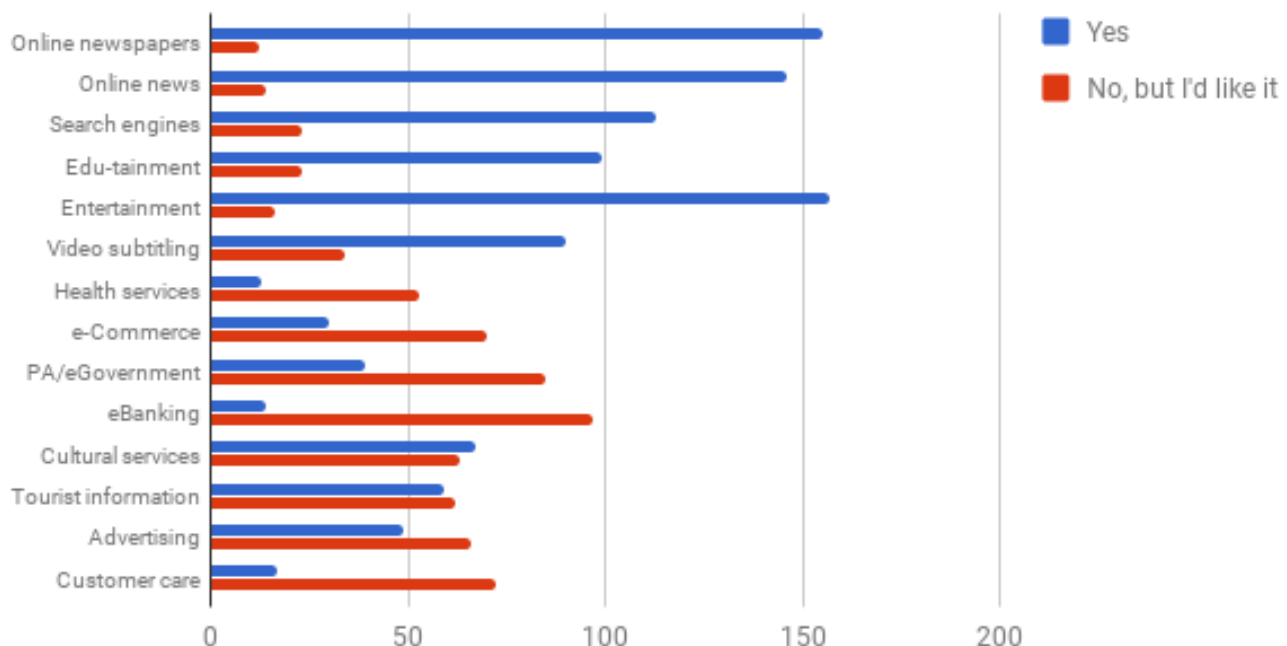
Fig. 23 - Existence of Breton internet services

Do you know if any of the following software can be set to Breton?
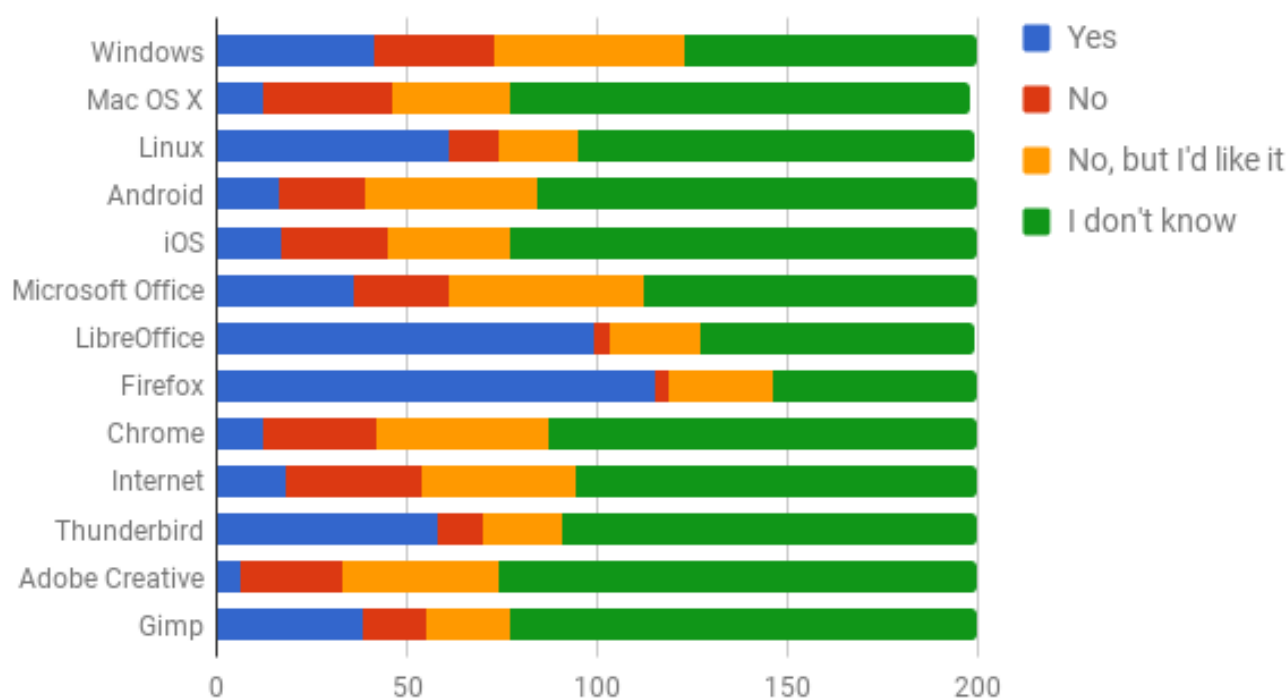
Fig. 24 - Software in Breton

If yes, did you select Breton as first in the list?

Fig. 25 - Use of software in Breton

To the best of your knowledge, which of the following digital resources are available in Breton?

Fig. 26 - Existence of digital resources in Breton
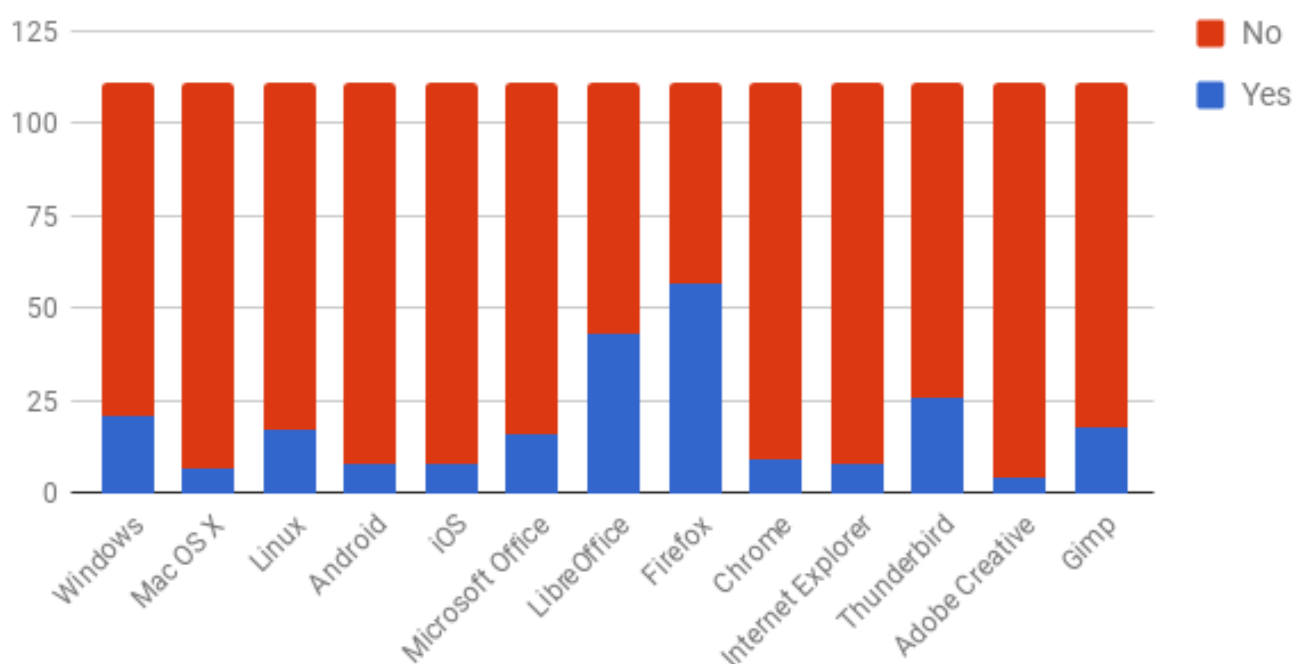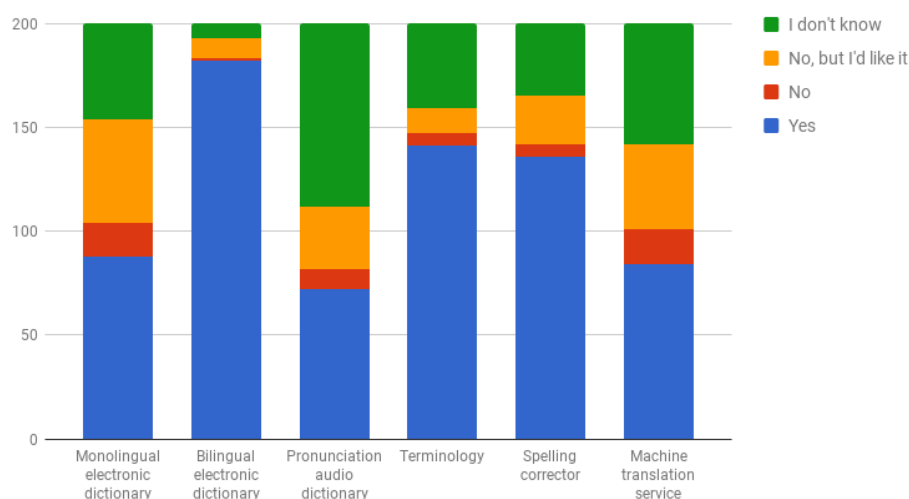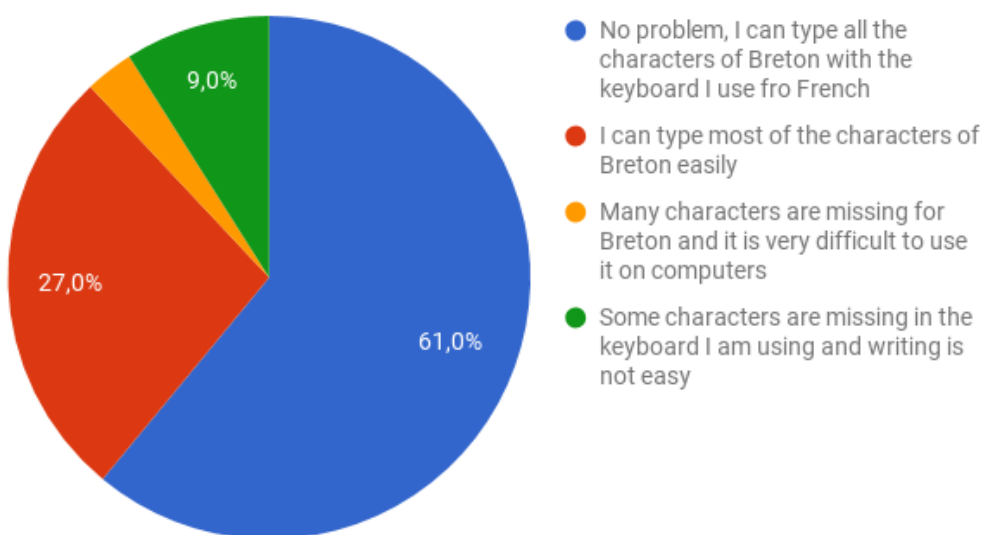
Is your PC keyboard adapted to Breton?

Fig. 27 - Breton PC keyboard

Would you like a specific keyboard for writing in Breton?
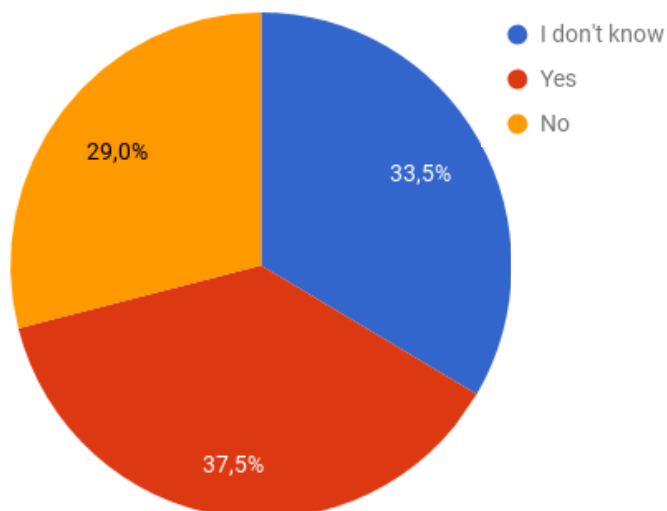

Fig. 28 - Need for Breton PC keyboard

6. Conclusion

Some features that stand out are, firstly, the relative lack of apps in the language. It is of note that many respondents to the survey call for more apps, more software, and for Windows in Breton. The underlying theme being that people want to be able to live their (digital) lives in Breton.

While the Bretons have worked to get the digital basics in place, there is a clear need sign for popular apps to be provided in Breton. If these are not provided it will leave the language less able to compete with the huge number of French apps and will therefore make the language appear less attractive to young speakers and learners.

Regarding social media, there is some provision in social media in Breton, for example a Breton interface version of Facebook. However, users complain of poor translation for this.

Furthermore, Breton will need to have machine translation and inclusion on apps such as Google Translate. Machine translation is almost completely lacking except for the online translation of Breton to French offered by Ofis ar Brezhoneg.

By far the most worrying feature is the lack of provision in healthcare and customer care despite Breton demand for it. Breton has an ageing population with most speakers being over the age of 65. Increasingly state health service provision is being digitalized but Bretons will not be able to access these services in their own language therefore compelling them to use French. One example of this being a life threatening problem is that patients who have strokes often lose the ability to speak in their second language and can only speak in their mother tongue. Evidence from hospitals in the Highlands of Scotland has several cases of patients saying that they are in pain in Gaelic but with no staff available who can understand them. The same situation is happening with Breton. Furthermore, in terms of rights, Breton speaking taxpayers who have paid into the French health system all of their lives should have access to services in Breton.

To a great extent Breton is a fairly well developed digitally, compared to other minoritised languages, and able, with care, to be further developed so as to prepare itself for increasing digitalization during the 21 st century. However, there are various structural issues that need to be addressed. So far, much of the development has been conducted voluntarily by a hugely under-resourced speech community relying on activists to make the provision that most small, medium and large state languages would be able to take for granted, and that are sponsored by the state itself. It is this kind of unfair playing field that could lead to Breton being further marginalized digitally in the future leading to speakers being compelled to use French simply to access basic services. This scenario would further undermine Breton revitalisation and its use as an everyday language, and especially undermine the language amongst young people.

7. List of Relevant Websites

http://www.kevrebreizh.org
http://www.brezhoneg.bzh/
http://www.tiarbrezhoneg.com/
http://www.preder.net/index.php/br/
http://www.skolvreizh.com/komzoubrezhonegmenu
http://7seizh.info/
http://abp.bzh/
http://argwiad.online.fr/
http://dbbrezhoneg.weebly.com/
http://www.breizhvod.com/films.html
http://ya-ouank.com/
http://www.bretania.bzh/
http://memoubrezhonek.tumblr.com/
http://labourzo.ubapar.bzh/?lang=br
http://www.brezhoneg.org/br
https://emglev.wordpress.com/
http://embann.an.hirwaz.online.fr/
http://keit-vimp-bev.info/
http://www.ubapar.bzh/
http://www.b-heol.com/accueil
https://dipode.wordpress.com/2015/01/
https://soubennargeek.wordpress.com/
https://alennebrezhoneg.wordpress.com/
http://hadenn.bzh/
http://www.comboutique.com/fr/shop/breiz.atav
http://www.kenti-kentan.bzh/
http://www.disuj.eu/
http://skoedhabanniel.blogspot.fr/
http://www.arundro.fr/
http://app.plantkelt.bzh/akp/web/about?2
http://www.centre-foretbocage.com/?lang=br
http://www.ugbrezhoneg.com/index.php
http://kostimatisto.eklablog.com/
http://www.webklas.org/
https://kletergerkleteker.wordpress.com/
http://distribilh.bzh/index.php/fr/
http://waranhent.bzh/index.php
http://douarhatan.free.fr/index.php
http://bzh.quimper.bzh/

http://canope.ac-rennes.fr/tes
http://drouizig.org
http://ecomusee-monts-arree.fr/brt/
http://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/bretagne/
http://gcompris.net/index-br.html
http://google.bzh.bz/
http://klask.com
http://tiarvro-kemper.bzh/br/
http://www.abp.bzh
http://www.abpweb.fr/
http://www.breizhvod.com/
http://www.bretagne.bzh/
http://www.brezhoneg.bzh/
http://www.brezhoweb.com/
http://www.dastum.bzh/?lg=BZH
http://www.radiobreizh.bzh/bzh/index.php
http://yabzh.com/
http://www.deezer.com ;
http://www.dizale.bzh/,
http://www.drouizig.org/
http://www.drouizig.org/index.php/br/,
http://www.gwenood.bzh/
http://www.klask.com
http://www.leschampslibres.fr/bretagne/
http://www.quimperle-communaute.bzh/Version-bretonne,
http://www.radiobreizh.bzh/bzh/index.php ;
http://www.scoop.it/t/livres-en-breton?page=6,
http://www.stered.eu/br/
http://www.tebeo.bzh/replay/183-arvest-kafe,
http://www.touristerezh-breizh.bzh
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Some Comments from Respondents

Traoù zo na implijan ket e brezhoneg peogwir n'eus ket kalz a dra e-barzh : da skouer Wikipedia. Klask a ran gwech ha gwech all, met n'eo ket ur reflex : ha forzh penaos e implijan muioc'h ar Wikipedia saozneg evit an hini galleg. Pezh a gont evitoñ war Internet eo kavout ar pezh ,meus afer : neuze ez an e galleg, e saozneg pe en alamaneg, hervez ma ezhommoù. Ma vefe muioc'h a draoù e brezhoneg e vefe brav, ya, sur, met gant ma vo troidigezhioù brav en ur yezh yac'h (a wechioù e vez ken divalav ar c'hinnigoù n'am bez ket c'hoant d'ober ar brezhoneg-se, zo diouzh patrom ar galleg). Ha pa soñjer en amzer da zont, ken geek eo ar re yaouank ez eo ret kinnig traoù all, akord on gant se.

There are things that I do not use much in Breton because there is not a lot of content: for example Wikipedia. I have a look from time to time, but it's not automatic: and anyway I use English Wikipedia more than the French one. What matters to me on the Internet is to find what I need: so I browse in French, in English or in German, according to my needs. If there were more things in Breton it would be great, for sure, but on the condition of having good translations in the proper language (sometimes the proposals are so ugly that I don't want to use them, it's too close to French patterns). And when we think about the future, so geeky are the young people that it is a necessity to present them with other things, well I agree with that.

En amzer a hiziv ez eo sot-mik ar grennarded gant ar ristennoù Youtube (videogaming, tuto maquillage, fent, sport...), ne gomzont ken met eus se. Setu un dra a vank e brezhoneg!

Nowadays the teenagers are completely crazy with things like Youtube (videogaming, make-up tutorials, humour, sport ...), they always talk about that. This is something missing in Breton!

Ur c'houlennaoueg talvoudus eo evit gouiet resisoc'h ar mod ma ra ar vrezhonegerion get o yezh dre internet. N'em eus ket amzer henoazh da vonet pelloc'h mes eh an da (glask) lâret en-dro e berr gerioù penaos en em lec'hian e-keñver implij ar brezhoneg hag an teknologiezhoù nevez. Implij a ran ar brezhoneg e kement implij a ran ag an teknologiezhoù nevez (posteloù, skridtreterezh, klask titouroù...) mes ma buhez niverel a chom dister a-fet teknik, na bout e kemer amzer em buhez. Implijout a ran (re) nebeut meiziantoù zo en o stumm brezhoneg, get an aon a vout kollet get meiziantoù ne vestronian ket tamm ebet ha pa vehe e galleg ma yezh vamm. Mes mat e vehe din deskiñ gober se, da vihanañ evit ma etrefas àr internet (Google Chrome), ma moteur enklask (Google) ha ma meiziant skridtreterezh (windows office)... Ur blog am eus bet (e brezhoneg evit an 90 % anezhañ) mes n'em eus ket mui, n'em eus ket amzer ken ; karout a rahen a-walc'h kemer perzh e magiñ Wikipedia mes ne gavan ket amzer. Plijout a rahe din ivez lakaat muioc'h àr ar rouedad a oustilhoù evit treuzkas ar pezh am eus bet dastumet e brezhoneg (pa oan gopret evit se), pe ar pezh a ran bremañ (kelenn brezhoneg d'an dud daet). Hag ivez evit krouiñ traoù e brezhoneg, a fet faltazi, barzhoniezh...

It is a useful questionnaire to learn more precisely how Breton speakers manage with their language on Internet. I don't have time tonight to go further, but I am going to try to say again in short words how I manage with Breton and new technologies. I use Breton in every situation with new technologies (emails, writing, searching for information...) But my digital life remains insignificant on the technical side, it takes too much time in my life. I don't use software in their Breton form enough, out of a fear to be lost with those softwares I don't master at all even though they would be in French my mother's language. But it could be nice to learn to do this, at least for my internet interface (Google Chrome), my search engine (Google) and my software (Windows Office). I used to have a blog (90% in Breton) but it's over, I don't have time anymore. I'd love to participate more in inputting into Wikipedia but I cannot find the time. It would also be great to add more tools on the net to transmit what I had picked up in Breton (when I was paid for it), or what I do now (teaching Breton to grown ups). And also to create things in Breton, such as stories, poetry, and so on.

Ur yezh bev eo ur yezh implijet bemdez, dre gomz, dre skrid ha ret eo dezhi implijout binviji a vreman ivez evit bezañ dastumet, enrollet, miret, skignet hag implijet e meur a stumm. Kaout ur statud ofisiel ouzhpenn a sikourfe an implij melestradurel met arabat gortoz un „aotre politikel" araok implij ar Brezhoneg gant mignoned e lec'hioù foran ha skignan d'an holl plijadur ha pinvidigezh ar Brezhoneg !!! Kalon vat deoc'h evit ho labour.

The living language is a language which is daily used, orally, in writing, and it must also use tools from today to be picked up, recorded, guarded, disseminated and used in various forms. Above this official status would help in its administrative use, but we don't wait for "political permission" to use the Breton language with friends in public places and to spread to all the pleasure and the wealth of the Breton language!!! Good luck for your work.