

## The Deaf of Spain

### The Spanish Sign Language Community



The Deaf community (capital D) is the group of deaf people who identify and communicate with each other using their own sign language. Spanish Sign Language is a language totally different from simply signing or spelling Spanish. Nearly all Deaf Spaniards can read some written Spanish and communicate to a limited degree by lip reading. Their ability to read Spanish, however, is very limited.

Only ten percent of deaf people have deaf parents; few deaf children can communicate adequately with their hearing parents. Instead, deaf people congregate with each other at "associations" in urban centers. These "associations" are open most nights and provide full programs of social, cultural, sporting and support services so that most socialization takes place with other Deaf in these settings.

Spanish Deaf are nominally Catholic but most have no interest in pursuing an understanding of spiritual things. There are no churches just for Deaf. Two groups of Deaf meet regularly as part of a hearing church and there are Catholic services with signing in most of the larger population centers.

**Primary Religion:**  
Unknown

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**  
Unknown

**Churches:**  
2

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**  
No Scripture

**Population (date):**  
102,000



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### Have They Heard The Gospel

Number of Missionaries Working 2

Number of Churches 2

Any Hindrance to Scripture  
Distribution?

Scripture in video format is extremely expensive and impractical for daily use. At this point no written form of sign language is widely accepted although efforts to introduce a writing system are under way.

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## Group Description

### Geography & Environment

Location	Western Europe, Iberian peninsula
Country	Spain
Ecosystem Type	Other
Geological Type	Other
Climate	Temperate
Comment	Most Deaf people live in urban centers. the geography and climate vary from arid Mediterranean climates in the south and east, arid high planes in the central regions, wet and mountainous in the north.

### Language & Linguistics

Comment	<p>They are 7% monolingual. This figure refers to those who are able to read fluently. nearly all Deaf Spaniards can read some written Spanish and communicate to a limited degree using speech and lip reading.</p> <p>The dialect names refer to the sign language varieties used in various regions of the country. All dialects except for Lengua de Signos Catalana are considered part of LS Espanola. There is sharp disagreement as to whether or not LS Catalana is part of LS Espanola or not. Those within the region of Cataluna say that their sign language is a different language from LS Espanola. Those in other regions are divided in opinion with the majority preferring to consider LS Catalana as a very distinct dialect of LS Espanola. there is between 60% and 70% lexical similarity with all other dialects tested in Spain (18 locations). However, intelligibility between the varieties is high.</p>
Alternate Language Names	Lengua de Signos Espanola, Lengua de Signos de Espana.
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	SPANISH
Neighboring Languages	FRENCH SIGN LANGUAGE

### Literacy

Literacy Attitude	Very receptive
Active Literacy Program	Yes
Comment	Adult literacy is 2% . Extensive literacy efforts are made to teach Deaf persons the spoken languages of Spain. However even with good programs only about 25% ever gain fluency. Efforts are currently underway to introduce a system for writing and reading sign language. Response to these efforts has been positive.

## **The Deaf of Spain**

### **Economics**

Subsistence Type	Industrial
Occupation	Mostly labor intensive jobs that do not require high communication skills.
Income Sources	Employment, some government pension based on level of hearing loss.
Modernization / Utilities	Most Deaf persons have access to VCRs. However, for many, this access is limited to use in a Deaf club or with family members.
Comment	Having better employment opportunities is seen as definite felt need of the community.

### **Community Development**

Health Care (Quality)	Very good
Diet (Quality)	Very good
Water (Quality)	Very good
Shelter Description	Urban, usually apartment living
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Very good
Clothing	Typical of urban European styles.
Transportation	Access to all types of private and public transportation.

### **Society & Culture**

Family Structures	10% of deaf have deaf parents. The majority of hearing parents never learn the language resulting in many dysfunctional families. Deaf youth often learn their morals and values from their deaf peers.
Neighbor Relations	Although deaf persons are surrounded by hearing persons, most deaf-hearing relationships are at a surface level only.
Authority / Rule	In the deaf community there are three levels of organization. the confederation coordinates deaf activities at a national level and acts on behalf of the deaf community at the national level. Regional Federations coordinate the activities of the deaf community on a regional level and interact with the regional governments. At the local level, most cities have at least one deaf association which provides the main source of social interaction among the deaf.
Social Habits/Groupings	Most members of the Deaf community are active members of at least one deaf association. May associations are open 3-7 nights a week. The larger association offer almost every type of social, cultural, sporting and support service imaginable.
Cultural Change Pace	Medium

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Identification With National Culture	Integrated
Self Image	Prestigious
Judicial / Punishment System	Problems within the deaf community may occasionally be arbitrated through the various deaf organizations (association, federation or confederation). All other arbitration is handled through the Spanish court system.
Celebrations	In addition to the national and local Spanish holidays, the deaf celebrate " The Day of the Deaf" and anniversary celebrations for the deaf associations.
Art Forms	Visual and performing arts are very popular. This includes international competitions for mime and drama. Painting and photography and also popular.
Recreations	Sports of all sorts especially soccer.
Media	There are several TV news and information programs in sign language. A 1/2 hour weekly program is aired on national television from Madrid. In the southern regions another 1/2 hour weekly news and information program is aired on TV. in other regions there are occasional 5 minutes spots of news in sign language.
Local Language Broadcasting	20 minutes to 1 hour daily
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat resistant
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive

### Youth

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Most youth attend school until the age of 15 and up to 20. After that time they begin looking for a job. Most live with their families until they are married or financially independent.
Youth Problems (Teens)	Because few deaf children can communicate adequately with their hearing parents there is often a dysfunctional home situation.

### Education

Comment (Education)

In the past there have been many residential schools where all the students and some of the staff were deaf. Now there is a trend towards integration of deaf students in hearing schools.

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### Status of Christianity

#### Church Growth

Total Baptized	25
Lay Leaders	3
Comment (Church Growth)	There are two deaf groups meeting regularly as part of a hearing church. No fully indigenous church yet. There are deaf catholic services in most of the big cities.

#### Religion and Response

Attitude To Christianity	Indifferent
Attitude To Religious Change	Somewhat resistant
Resistance / Receptivity	The expected norm is to be nominally Catholic. Deviation from the norm is OK as long as such views are not imposed on others.
Spiritual Climate And Openness	Most are nominal in their beliefs. There is a general knowledge of basic catholic traditions, but seldom is there a desire to pursue a deeper understanding of spiritual things. For some, religion is from the hearing person's culture, not deaf culture. There is a general attitude that each person has a right to believe whatever he or she wants but that those beliefs should not be imposed on others

#### Scripture

Translation Status	Definite
Available Scripture	None

#### Christian Literature / Media Status

Literature Available	None
Audio Recordings Available	None
Films Available	None
Radio Programs Available	None
Videos Available	None
Audio Visual Available	None