

List of languages by total number of speakers

This is an approximate list of languages by the total number of speakers. It lists 34 languages having more than 45 million speakers.

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***Ethnologue* (2019, 23rd edition)**

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Background

Lists such as these should be used with caution, for the following reasons:

- First, it is difficult to define exactly what constitutes a language as opposed to a dialect. For example, some languages, including Chinese and Arabic, cover several mutually unintelligible varieties and are sometimes considered single languages and sometimes language families. Conversely, colloquial registers of Hindi and Urdu are almost completely mutually intelligible, so they are sometimes classified as one language, Hindustani, instead of two separate languages.^[a]
- Second, there is no single criterion for how much knowledge is sufficient to be counted as a second-language speaker. For example, English has about 400 million native speakers but, depending on the criterion chosen, can be said to have as many as 2 billion speakers.^[1]

***Ethnologue* (2019, 23rd edition)**

The following 34 languages are listed as having 45 million or more total speakers in the 2019 edition of *Ethnologue*, a language reference published by SIL International, which is based in the United States.^[2] Entries identified by *Ethnologue* as macrolanguages are not included in this section.

Rank	Language	Family	Branch	First language (L1)		Second language (L2)		Total No. of speakers
				No. of speakers	Rank	No. of speakers	Rank	
1	<u>English</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Germanic</u>	369.7 million	3	898.4 million	1	1.268 billion ^[3]
2	<u>Mandarin Chinese</u> (incl. <u>Standard Chinese</u>)	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>	921.5 million	1	198.7 million	4	1.120 billion ^[4]
3	<u>Hindi</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	342.0 million	4	295.3 million	2	637.3 million ^[5]
4	<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>	463.0 million	2	74.9 million	9	537.9 million ^[6]
5	<u>French</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>	77.3 million	15	199.3 million	3	276.6 million ^[7]
6	<u>Standard Arabic</u>	<u>Afro-Asiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>	—	—	274.0 million	—	274.0 million ^[8]
7	<u>Bengali</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	228.5 million	5	36.8 million	13	265.2 million ^[9]
8	<u>Russian</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Slavic</u>	153.6 million	7	104.3 million	6	258.0 million ^[10]
9	<u>Portuguese</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>	227.9 million	6	24.2 million	15	252.2 million ^[11]
10	<u>Indonesian</u>	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>	43.6 million	24	155.4 million	5	199.0 million ^[12]
11	<u>Urdu</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	69.0 million	18	101.6 million	7	170.6 million ^[13]
12	<u>German</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Germanic</u>	75.5 million	17	56.1 million	10	131.6 million ^[14]
13	<u>Japanese</u>	<u>Japonic</u>	—	126.2 million	8	0.1215 million	27	126.4 million ^[15]
14	<u>Swahili</u>	<u>Niger–Congo</u>	<u>Bantu</u>	16.2 million	27	82.3 million	8	98.5 million ^[16]
15	<u>Marathi</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	83.1 million	10	12.2 million	17	95.3 million ^[17]
16	<u>Telugu</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South-Central</u>	82.4 million	11	11.0 million	18	93.0 million ^[18]
17	<u>Turkish</u>	<u>Turkic</u>	<u>Oghuz</u>	79.5 million	13	5.7 million	20	85.2 million ^[19]
18	<u>Yue Chinese</u> (incl. <u>Cantonese</u>)	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>	84.5 million	9	0.402 million	24	84.9 million ^[20]
19	<u>Tamil</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South</u>	77.8 million	14	6.0 million	19	83.8 million ^[21]
20	<u>Western Punjabi</u> (Lahnda)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	—	—	—	—	82.8 million ^[22]
21	<u>Wu Chinese</u> (incl. <u>Shanghainese</u>)	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>	81.7 million	12	0.063 million	28	81.8 million ^[23]

Rank	Language	Family	Branch	First language (L1)		Second language (L2)		Total No. of speakers
				No. of speakers	Rank	No. of speakers	Rank	
22	Korean	Koreanic	—	—	—	—	—	79.4 million ^[24]
23	Vietnamese	Austroasiatic	Vietic	76.0 million	16	1.0 million	23	77.0 million ^[25]
24	Hausa	Afro-Asiatic	Chadic	47.7 million	23	25.0 million	14	72.7 million ^[26]
25	Javanese	Austronesian	Malayo-Polynesian	—	—	—	—	68.3 million ^[27]
26	Egyptian Arabic	Afro-Asiatic	Semitic	—	—	—	—	67.8 million ^[28]
27	Italian	Indo-European	Romance	64.6 million	19	3.1 million	22	67.7 million ^[29]
28	Thai	Kra–Dai	Zhuang–Tai	20.7 million	26	40.0 million	12	60.7 million ^[30]
29	Gujarati	Indo-European	Indo-Aryan	56.5 million	20	4.2 million	21	60.7 million ^[31]
30	Kannada	Dravidian	Southern	43.6 million	25	12.9 million	16	56.5 million ^[32]
31	Persian	Indo-European	Iranian	—	—	—	—	55.0 million ^[33]
32	Bhojpuri	Indo-European	Indo-Aryan	52.2 million	21	0.160 million	26	52.4 million ^[34]
33	Southern Min (incl. Hokkien)	Sino-Tibetan	Sinitic	48.2 million	22	0.387 million	25	48.5 million ^[35]
34	Filipino	Austronesian	Malayo-Polynesian	—	—	45.0 million	11	45.0 million ^[36]

See also

- [Linguistic demography](#)
- [Lists of endangered languages](#)
- [Lists of languages](#)
- [List of languages without official status by total number of speakers](#)
- [List of languages by number of native speakers](#)
- [List of languages by the number of countries in which they are recognized as an official language](#)
- [Number of languages by country](#)
- [World language](#)
- [Languages used on the Internet](#)

Notes

a. For further examples of mutually intelligible varieties that are often, and even legally, classified as separate languages, see [Malay language](#), [Persian language](#) and [Serbo-Croatian](#).

References

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External links

- Most Widely Spoken Languages (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110927062910/http://www2.ignatius.edu/faculty/turner/languages.htm>)
- (in French) Qu'est-ce que la Francophonie? (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110623113030/http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/francophonie/francophonie.htm>)
- Top 10 Most spoken languages in the world 2016 (<http://irisharoundoz.com/blog/2015/11/16/most-spoken-languages-in-the-world/>)

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