

Languages Of Pakistan

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Total Languages: Over 70
Official Languages: Urdu and English
Endangered Languages Domaaki, Ushojo, Gowro (UNESCO listed)
Challenges: Language preservation, education medium, identity issues
Main Language Families Indo-Aryan, Iranian, Dravidian, Dardic, Isolate

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Languages: Pakistan is a land of rich linguistic diversity. It is home to dozens of languages, each carrying a unique cultural, historical, and regional identity. From majestic mountains to vibrant plains, different regions of Pakistan speak different languages — reflecting the nation’s complex multicultural fabric. .

1.Official language

Urdu

National and official language of Pakistan.

Usage: Used in government documents, courts, education, literature, and media.
History: Urdu developed in the 18th century through a blend of Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and native South Asian languages. It evolved as a lingua franca during the Mughal period.
Script: Written in the Nastaliq style of the Persian-Arabic script.
Speakers: Though native to only a small percentage, most Pakistanis understand and speak Urdu as a second language.

2. Major Regional Languages

* Punjabi

Speakers: Around 40–45% of the population.
Region: Punjab province.
script: Shahmukhi, a variant of the Persian-Arabic script.
Cultural Significance: Rich in folk poetry, Sufi traditions (Bulleh Shah, Waris Shah), and music.
Concern: Despite being the most spoken language, it has limited presence in formal education and media.

* Sindhi

Speakers: About 14–15% of Pakistanis.
Region: Sindh province
script: Arabic script with additional characters for unique Sindhi sounds.
Significance: Ancient language with deep literary roots, known for Sufi poetry and folklore.
Historical Link: Associated with the Indus Valley Civilization and old trade cultures.

* Pashto

Speakers: About 15–18%.
Region: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and parts of Balochistan.
script: Modified Arabic script.
Culture: Known for strong oral traditions, poetry (Tappa, Charbeta), and a warrior code of honor.
Notable poets: Khushal Khan Khattak, Ghani Khan.

* Balochi

Speakers: 3–5% of the population.
Region: Balochistan and parts of southern Punjab.
script: Arabic-style script.
Roots: An Iranian language with ties to ancient Persian culture.
Traditions: Famous for epic oral storytelling.

* Saraiki

Speakers: About 15–18%.
Region: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and parts of Balochistan.
script: Modified Arabic script.
Status: Known for strong oral traditions, poetry (Tappa, Charbeta), and a warrior code of honor.
Cultural Values: Khushal Khan Khattak, Ghani Khan.

3. Other Regional and Minority Languages

Hindko

Region: Hazara (Abbottabad, Mansehra) and parts of KP.
Speakers: 2–3%.
Blend: Shares features with both Punjabi and Kashmiri.

Brahui

Unique Identity: A Dravidian language — rare in this region.
Region: Central Balochistan (Kalat).
Speakers: Around 1–2 million.

Kashmiri

Region: Azad Jammu & Kashmir.
Family: Belongs to the Dardic group.
Current Status: Losing ground to Urdu in public life.

Gilgit-Baltistan Languages

, **Khowar** **(Chitrali)**, **Wakhi**, **Burushaski:**
Burushaski: A language isolate — unrelated to any known language family.
Shina: Main language of Gilgit region.
Wakhi & Khowar: Spoken in the northern valleys.

4.Role Of English

Status: Co-official language; widely used in legal, academic, bureaucratic, and corporate environments. Domains: Higher education, science, elite media, IT, and official documents. Social Divide: English fluency is seen as a class marker; often creates a divide between urban/rural or elite/non-elite groups.

5. Linguistic Politics and Education

Urdu was promoted post-independence to unify the nation, but it overshadowed regional languages. The marginalization of native languages (like Bengali in East Pakistan) has led to identity and political conflicts. Most public schools teach in Urdu or English, ignoring the child’s mother tongue — which affects early education and comprehension.

6. Impact of Media and Technology

Regional TV channels and YouTube content have revived interest in native languages (e.g., Pashto drama, Saraiki songs). Social media allows users to promote and preserve their linguistic identity. Mobile apps and podcasts in regional languages are on the rise.

7. Preservation and Challenges

Many minority languages (e.g., Domaaki, Ushojo, Gowro) are listed by UNESCO as endangered. NGOs, linguistic scholars, and cultural institutions are working to preserve and document dying languages. Educational policies promoting multilingualism are still lacking in implementation.

Final Thoughts

Pakistan's linguistic landscape is as diverse as its geography. While Urdu and English dominate the formal spheres, regional languages are the soul of the people. Protecting this heritage is crucial — not only for culture, but for identity, unity, and education.