

# Nigerian Languages: Mother Language, Region, and Population

**Total Population:** 229.5 million (2024) **Total Languages:** 520+ varieties

## MAJOR LANGUAGE FAMILIES AND THEIR DISTRIBUTIONS

### 1. NIGER-CONGO FAMILY

**Total Speakers:** ~180+ million

#### A. YORUBOID BRANCH

**Mother Language:** Proto-Yoruboid

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Yoruba (Standard)	39.5 million	Southwest	Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti
Igala	2 million	North-Central	Kogi, Benue
Itsekiri	500,000	South-South	Delta

#### B. IGBOID BRANCH

**Mother Language:** Proto-Igboid

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Igbo (Central)	27 million	Southeast	Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia, Ebonyi
Ikwerre	800,000	South-South	Rivers
Ekpeye	150,000	South-South	Rivers

#### C. EDOID BRANCH

**Mother Language:** Proto-Edoid

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Edo (Bini)	1.5 million	South-South	Edo
Esan	800,000	South-South	Edo
Etsako	400,000	South-South	Edo
Urhobo	2 million	South-South	Delta
Isoko	800,000	South-South	Delta

#### D. CROSS RIVER BRANCH

**Mother Language:** Proto-Cross River

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Ibibio	6 million	South-South	Akwa Ibom
Efik	2 million	South-South	Cross River
Annang	1.5 million	South-South	Akwa Ibom
Ejagham	150,000	South-South	Cross River

**E. IJOID BRANCH**

**Mother Language:** Proto-Ijoid

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Central Izon	1.5 million	South-South	Bayelsa
Kalabari	800,000	South-South	Rivers
Nembe	600,000	South-South	Bayelsa
Okrika	500,000	South-South	Rivers

**F. BANTOID BRANCH**

**Mother Language:** Proto-Bantoid

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Tiv	5 million	Middle Belt	Benue, Taraba
Jukun	400,000	Middle Belt	Taraba
Kutep	200,000	Middle Belt	Taraba

**G. NUPOID BRANCH**

**Mother Language:** Proto-Nupoid

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Nupe	2.5 million	Middle Belt	Niger, Kwara
Gbagyi	1 million	Middle Belt	Niger, FCT

**H. PLATEAU BRANCH**

**Mother Language:** Proto-Plateau

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Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Berom	500,000	Middle Belt	Plateau
Goemai	300,000	Middle Belt	Plateau
Tarok	400,000	Middle Belt	Plateau

I. ADAMAWA-UBANGI BRANCH

Mother Language: Proto-Adamawa-Ubangian

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Mumuye	600,000	Northeast	Taraba, Adamawa
Longuda	150,000	Northeast	Adamawa, Gombe
Chamba	300,000	Northeast	Taraba

J. ATLANTIC BRANCH

Mother Language: Proto-Atlantic

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Fulfulde (Sokoto)	6 million	Northwest	Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara
Fulfulde (Adamawa)	5 million	Northeast	Adamawa, Taraba
Fulfulde (Gombe)	3 million	Northeast	Gombe, Bauchi
Bororo Fulfulde	2 million	Middle Belt	Plateau, Nasarawa

2. AFROASIATIC FAMILY

Total Speakers: ~70+ million

A. CHADIC BRANCH

Mother Language: Proto-Chadic

West Chadic (Group A)

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Hausa (Kano)	48 million	North/Northwest	Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Kaduna
Bole	250,000	Northeast	Yobe, Gombe
Tangale	150,000	Northeast	Gombe
Warji	50,000	Northeast	Bauchi

Central Chadic (Group B)

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Bura	400,000	Northeast	Adamawa, Borno
Margi	300,000	Northeast	Borno, Adamawa
Kilba	200,000	Northeast	Adamawa

East Chadic (Group C)

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Migama	50,000	Northeast	Adamawa
Dangaleat	30,000	Northeast	Adamawa

B. SEMITIC BRANCH

Mother Language: Proto-Semitic

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Arabic (Shuwa)	500,000	Northeast	Borno, Yobe

3. NILO-SAHARAN FAMILY

Total Speakers: ~8+ million

SAHARAN BRANCH

Mother Language: Proto-Saharan

Language/Dialect	Population	Primary Region	States
Kanuri (Central)	4 million	Northeast	Borno
Kanuri (Manga)	2 million	Northeast	Yobe, Borno
Kanembu	200,000	Northeast	Borno
Teda	50,000	Northeast	Borno

REGIONAL LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION

NORTHERN NIGERIA (Core North + Northwest + Northeast)

Total Population: ~110 million Primary Language Families: Afroasiatic, Niger-Congo (Atlantic)

Region	Dominant Mother Languages	Major Languages	Population
Northwest	Proto-Chadic, Proto-Atlantic	Hausa, Fulfulde	~45 million
Northeast	Proto-Chadic, Proto-Saharan	Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfulde	~25 million
North-Central	Proto-Chadic, Proto-Plateau	Hausa, Berom, Gbagyi	~40 million

## MIDDLE BELT

**Total Population:** ~35 million **Primary Language Families:** Niger-Congo (Multiple branches)

Sub-region	Mother Languages	Major Languages	Population
Upper Middle Belt	Proto-Plateau, Proto-Bantoid	Tiv, Berom, Jukun	~15 million
Lower Middle Belt	Proto-Nupoid, Proto-Yoruboid	Nupe, Igala, Gbagyi	~20 million

## SOUTHERN NIGERIA

### Southwest

**Total Population:** ~45 million **Primary Language Family:** Niger-Congo (Yoruboid)

Mother Language	Languages/Dialects	Population
Proto-Yoruboid	Standard Yoruba, Ekiti, Ijebu, etc.	~42 million

### Southeast

**Total Population:** ~30 million **Primary Language Family:** Niger-Congo (Igboid)

Mother Language	Languages/Dialects	Population
Proto-Igboid	Central Igbo, Onitsha, Owerri, etc.	~28 million

### South-South

**Total Population:** ~35 million **Primary Language Families:** Niger-Congo (Multiple branches)

Mother Language	Major Languages	Population
Proto-Cross River	Ibibio, Efik, Annang	~10 million
Proto-Ijoid	Izon, Kalabari, Nembe	~5 million
Proto-Edoid	Edo, Urhobo, Isoko	~8 million
Various others	Multiple minority languages	~12 million

# SUMMARY BY LANGUAGE FAMILIES

Language Family	Total Speakers	Primary Regions	Number of Languages
Niger-Congo	~180 million	All regions	400+ languages
Afroasiatic	~70 million	Northern Nigeria	80+ languages
Nilo-Saharan	~8 million	Northeast	40+ languages

**Note:** Population figures are estimates based on multiple sources including census data, linguistic surveys, and demographic projections. Actual numbers may vary due to migration patterns, urbanization, and multilingual communities.