

Linguistic diversity



National Languages and Linguistic Diversity

English (associate official)

Hindi (in the Devanagiri script)

The Indian Constitution also officially recognizes 22 regional languages. But around 33 different languages and 2000 dialects have been identified in India.



Linguistic Families

Indo-European (hindi)

Dravidian (tamil)

Austroasiatic (Austic)

Sino-Tibetan

Language	Official Language of	Spoken by
Bengali	Tripura & West Bengal	67 million
Dogri	Jammu and Kashmir	
Gujarati	Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu & Gujarat	43 million
Hindi	Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh & Uttaranchal	180 million
Kannada	Karnataka	35 million
Konkani	Goa	
Maithili	Bihar	22 million
Malayalam	Kerala & Lakshadweep	34 million
Marathi	Maharashtra	65 million
Nepali	Sikkim	
Oriya	Orissa	30 million
Punjabi	Punjab	26 million
Tamil	Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry	66 million
Telugu	Andhra Pradesh	70 million
Urdu	Jammu and Kashmir	46 million

- India has become a land of many tongues and has been called “as a tower of veritable languages” or a “Museum of languages”. In 1950, the States in India were reorganized on linguistic basis. As a result, the domiciles of a particular state speak a particular language. The Constitution of India has approved of 22 languages.
- According to some of the scholars, the total number of language and dialect in a country is about 700 (nearly 175 languages and 550 dialects). Out of these numerous languages, 22 are recognised as national languages of the country as they are included in the eight schedule of the constitution.
- These languages are: Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Kannada, Sanskrit, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Urdu, Konkani, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Manipuri, Nepali, Punjabi and Gujarati, Maithili, Bodo, Dogri, Santhali. Hindi is the official language of India and it is understood by the largest number of people in the country.

- The languages of India can be conveniently grouped into four categories.
- (1) Indo-European Family (Arya)
- (2) Dravidian Family (Dravida)
- (3) Austric Family (Nishada)
- (4) Sino-Tibetan Family (Kirata)
- It is interesting to note that the strength of the four families is very uneven: Aryan languages (73. %), Dravidian languages (20%), Austric languages (1.38%), and the Sino-Tibetan languages (0.85%).

- **(1) Indo-European Family – Aryan Language:**

- Nearly three-fourth of population of India speaks one or the other forms of the Aryan languages.
- Dardic and Indo-Aryan are its two main branch.
- The Dardic group includes Dardi, Shina, Kohistani and Kashmiri. Except Kashmiri which is spoken by more than 20 lakh people, none of these speeches are spoken by a population of more than 7000.
- The Indo-Aryan branch is subdivided into the North-Western, Southern, Eastern, East-Central, Central and Northern groups.

- Landa, Kachchi and Konkani are included in North-Western group. Marathi and Konkani are included in Southern group.
- The Oriya, Bihari, Bengali and Assamese are included in Eastern group.
- Among the dialects of Bihari may be included Maithili, Bhojpuri and Magadhi.
- The East-Central group consists of three main sub-groups: (a) Avadhi, (b) Baghaili and (c) Chattisgarhi.
- The Central Group includes Western Hindi, Punjabi, Rajasthani and Gujarati.
- The Rajasthani itself consists of several dialects. The principal of them being Marwari, Mewari and Malawi.
- The speeches that fall in the Northern group consist of one or other variety of Pahari speeches. They include Nepali, Central Pahari and Western Pahari.

- **(2) Dravidian Language:**

- Dravidian languages are older than the Aryan languages. Languages of this family are concentrated over the northern states including Gujarat and Maharashtra. In terms of the number of speakers, Hindi occupies fourth place in the world.
- It consists of several dialects; Khadi Boli is one of them. Urdu is very akin to Hindi and is widely spoken in this belt. Other languages of this group are Punjabi, and Gujarati concentrated in the states of Punjab and Gujarat, respectively.

- Kachchi and Sindhi, belong to this family; they are spoken in Gujarat and Rajasthan. The concentration of Marathi is in Maharashtra. Oriya, Bengali and Assamese are languages of the eastern group and are spoken in eastern India, mainly in Orissa, West Bengal and Assam respectively. Kashmiri, Kohistani, Shina and Dardi are spoken in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Dravidian family of languages consists of a number of groups such as (i) South-Dravidian, (ii) Central-Dravidian and (iii) North Dravidian. The major languages such as Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, as well as the minor languages or dialects such as Tulu, Kurgi and Yerukala are included in the South- Dravidian group. Central Dravidian group mainly consists of Telugu and probably Gondi. The Northern Dravidian group consist of Kurukh (Oraon) and Malto.
- It is noted that the Dravidian languages are less diverse than the other languages families of India. The major language groups like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam themselves account for 96 per cent of the total population of the Dravidian speakers.

- **(3) Austric Languages:**

- The Austric languages of India belong to the Austro-Asiatic sub-family. This sub-family is further divided into two main branches; (a) Munda and (b) Mon-Khmer. The Mon-Khmer branch consists of the two groups: Khasi and Nicobari. The Munda branch—the largest of the Austric—consists of 14 tribal language groups. More than 6.2 million people speak the Austro-Asiatic languages mainly the tribal population. Santhal language is the most widely spoken by more than 50 per cent people.

- **(4) Sino -Tibetan Languages:**

- The Sino-Tibetan languages are spoken by a variety of people. Depending upon their region and settlement, they are put into several groups and sub-groups. The three main branches are (i) Tibeto-Himalayan (ii) North-Assam and (iii) Assam-Myanmari (Burmese). The Tibeto-Himalayan branch consists of the following: (a) Bhutia group; and (b) Himalayan group.
- The Bhutia group includes Tibetan, Balti, Ladakhi, Lahuli, Sherpa and Sikkim Bhutia. The Himalayan group consists of Chamba, Kanauri and Lepcha. Ladakhi has largest number of speakers followed by Sikkim, Bhutia and the Tibetan. In the Himalayan group the speakers of Kanauri have the highest numerical strength. The North-Assam or Arunachal branch includes the following six speeches: (i) Aka (ii) Dafla (iii) Abor (iv) Miri (v) Mishmi and (vi) Mishing. In this group the Miris have the largest number of speakers.

- The Assam-Myanmari (Burmese) branch of the Sino-Tibetan family is divided into the following groups, (i) Bodo or Bero, (ii) Naga (iii) Kachin (iv) Kukichin and (v) Myanmar (Burma) group. There are several speeches in each of these groups. Among them the Naga group displays the highest degree of density there are as many as six speeches having a total strength varying between 1 and 7 lakhs. Manipuri has the largest number of speakers

