

Ethnologue: Languages of Belarus

Twenty-sixth edition data

David M. Eberhard, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, Editors

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List of Abbreviations

A	Agent in constituent word order
<i>alt.</i>	alternate name for
<i>alt. dial.</i>	alternate dialect name for
AOV	Agent-Object-Verb
C	Consonant in canonical syllable patterns
CDE	Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)
<i>Class</i>	Language classification
CPPDCE	Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)
CSICH	Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)
DBS	Deaf Bible Society
<i>dial.</i>	primary dialect name for
DOOR	Deaf Opportunity Outreach
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
km	kilometer(s)
L1 / L2	first language / second (or other additional) language
<i>Lg Dev</i>	Language development
<i>Lg Use</i>	Language use
m	meter(s)
P	Patient in constituent word order
PARADISEC	Pacific And Regional Archive for Digital Sources In Endangered Cultures
<i>pej.</i>	pejorative
pl.	plural
S	Subject in constituent word order
sg.	singular
SIL	SIL International
SVO	Subject-Verb-Object
<i>Type</i>	Typological information
UNCPRD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
V	Vowel in canonical syllable patterns

How to Use This Digest

This *Ethnologue* country digest provides an extract of the information about the language situation in Belarus that is published in the 26th edition of *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (see <http://www.ethnologue.com>), including some ways of presenting the information that are not available in the online version. The digest begins with a “Country Overview” (page 6) and “Statistical Summaries” (page 8) of languages and number of speakers by language size, by language status, and by language family.

The “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) provides detailed information on the 14 languages listed in the *Ethnologue* for the country of Belarus. This includes languages that are indigenous to the country, languages that have developed well-established multigenerational speaker communities after immigrating in the past, and languages that have a significant presence in the country but are not established (that is, not being transmitted to the next generation within the country). A complete language entry has the following form and content:

Primary language name [ISO 639-3 code] (Alternate names). Autonym. *Users*: Country user population. Population stability comment. Population remarks. Monolingual population. Ethnic population. *Location*: Location. *Status*: EGIDS level. Special cases. Language function in country. *Class*: Linguistic classification. Macrolanguage membership. *Dialects*: Dialect names. Intelligibility and dialect relations. Lexical similarity. *Type*: Linguistic typology information. *Lg Use*: Remarks on use of the language. Domains of use. User age range. Language attitudes. Bilingualism remarks. Use as second language. *Lg Dev*: Literacy rates. Literacy remarks. Use in education. Publications and use in media. Revitalization efforts. Language development agencies. *DLS*: Digital support. *Writing*: Scripts used. *Other*: Non-indigenous. General remarks. Religion. *Worldwide*: Total population in all countries. Other countries where used.

See <http://www.ethnologue.com/methodology/#languagePages> for a full description of these information elements. If the autonym contains the “?” character, this indicates a complex non-Roman character that the PDF-creating software we are using is not able to render. We regret the inconvenience.

Many ways of finding languages are provided. “Languages by Population” (page 14) lists the languages in order of their first-language speaker populations. “Languages by Status” (page 16) lists the languages by their level of development or endangerment as measured on EGIDS, the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Lewis and Simons 2010). “Languages by Family” (page 18) lists the languages by their linguistic classifications. “Language Code Index” (page 19) gives an alphabetical listing of all the three-letter codes from ISO 639-3 that are used in this digest to uniquely identify languages. “Language Name Index” (page 20) lists every name that appears in the language listings as a primary or alternate name of a language or dialect. A total of 24 unique names are associated with the 14 languages described in this digest.

Finally, a listing of all the published sources cited within this digest is found in “Bibliography”

(page 21). The published sources are cited using standard in-text citations enclosed in parentheses, consisting of the author's or editor's surname followed by the year of publication. Unpublished sources including personal communications and unpublished reports are also acknowledged when specific statements or facts are attributed to them. They are identified using in-text citations enclosed in parentheses in which the year of the communication is given first, followed by the source's first initial and surname. In such a case, there is no corresponding entry in the bibliography.

This digest is designed for use in both digital and print formats. The cross-references are thus rendered as page numbers that are hyperlinks. When using the document in printed form, simply turn to the referenced page by number. When using it in digital form, click on the blue text to jump to the cross-referenced location.

If you believe any of the information about a language in this digest is in error or if you are able to supply missing information, please send your proposed change to the editor using one of the means given below. Provide as much information as possible about the source of your information. Full bibliographic details of published sources are especially helpful.

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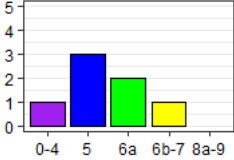
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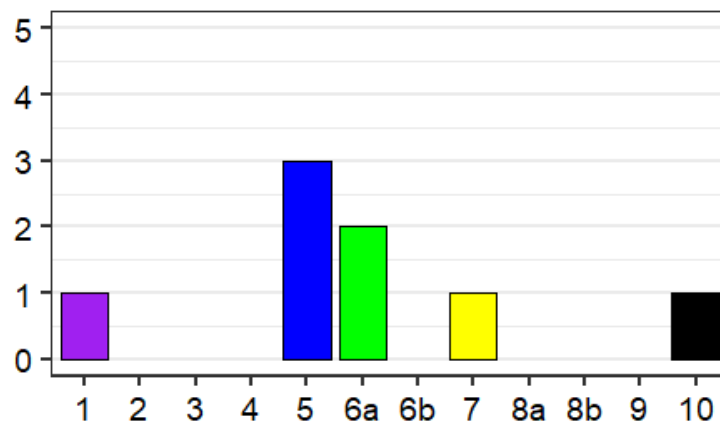
Country Overview

Name of country	Belarus												
Other names	Republic of Belarus												
Population	9,380,000 (2020 World Bank)												
Principal language	Russian												
Literacy rate	100% (2018 UNESCO)												
International conventions	CDE (1962), CPPDCE (2006), CSICH (2005), ICCPR (1973), UNCRPD (2016), UNDRIP (2007)												
General references	Campbell and King 2011												
Language counts	<p>The number of established languages listed for Belarus is 8. Of these, 7 are living and 1 is extinct. Of the living languages, 2 are indigenous and 5 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 1 is institutional, 3 are developing, 2 are vigorous, and 1 is in trouble. Also listed are 6 unestablished languages.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Language Vitality Counts for Belarus</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Vitality Category</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0-4</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6a</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6b-7</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8a-9</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Vitality Category	Count	0-4	1	5	3	6a	2	6b-7	1	8a-9	0
Vitality Category	Count												
0-4	1												
5	3												
6a	2												
6b-7	1												
8a-9	0												

See the next page for an explanation of the summary categories for language vitality used in the above counts and graph.

Language Status Profile

The following histogram gives a graphic profile of the established languages in Belarus with respect to their status of language development versus language endangerment. This includes all of the languages appearing in the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) that report an EGIDS level after *Status*; macrolanguages and unestablished languages are not included in the profile. The horizontal axis plots the estimated level of development or endangerment as measured on the EGIDS scale (Lewis and Simons 2010). The height of each bar indicates the number of languages that are estimated to be at the given level. Consult “Languages by Status” (page 16) in order to see the specific languages for each level.



The color coding of the bars in the histogram above matches the color scheme used in the summary profile graph on the preceding page. In this scheme, the EGIDS levels are grouped as follows:

- Purple = Institutional (EGIDS 0–4) — The language has been developed to the point that it is used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community.
- Blue = Developing (EGIDS 5) — The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
- Green = Vigorous (EGIDS 6a) — The language is in vigorous use among all generations and remains unstandardized.
- Yellow = In trouble (EGIDS 6b–7) — Intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken, but the child-bearing generation can still use the language so it is possible that revitalization efforts could restore transmission of the language in the home.
- Red = Dying (EGIDS 8a–9) — The only fluent users (if any) are older than child-bearing age, so it is too late to restore natural intergenerational transmission through the home; a mechanism outside the home would need to be developed.
- Black = Extinct (EGIDS 10) — The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Statistical Summaries

The “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) provides a detailed listing of all the languages of Belarus. This section steps back from the detail to offer a summary view of the language situation in the country. Specifically, it offers three numerical tabulations of the living established languages of Belarus and their users: by language size, by language status, and by language family.

Summary by language size

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of living established languages in Belarus by number of L1 speakers. The *Population range* column categorizes the sizes of the languages by order of magnitude (in terms of the number of digits in the population of first-language speakers). Consult “Languages by Population” (page 14) for a listing of the specific languages in each range category.

The *Count* column gives the number of living established languages within the specified population range. The *Percent* column gives the share of the count for that population range as a percentage of the total number of languages given at the bottom of the Count column. The *Cumulative* column gives the cumulative sum of the percentage of languages going from top to bottom in the column.

The *Total* column gives the total L1 population of all the languages in the given range category. The second *Percent* column gives the percentage of the total country population as estimated at the bottom of the Total column. Note that if the table has a row for Unknown, representing languages for which the *Ethnologue* does not have a population estimate, the calculation of population percentage is not able to take those languages into account. The final *Cumulative* column gives the cumulative sums of the population percentages going from top to bottom in the column.

Table 1: Distribution of languages by number of first-language speakers

Population range	Living languages			Number of speakers		
	Count	Percent	Cumulative	Total	Percent	Cumulative
1,000,000 to 9,999,999	2	28.6	28.6%	7,840,000	99.40408	99.40408%
10,000 to 99,999	2	28.6	57.1%	40,000	0.50716	99.91125%
1,000 to 9,999	1	14.3	71.4%	7,000	0.08875	100.00000%
Unknown	2	28.6	100.0%			
<i>Totals</i>	7	100.0		7,887,000	100.00000	

Summary by language status

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of living established languages in Belarus by their status in terms of language development or language endangerment. The *EGIDS* column categorizes the languages by their level on the EGIDS scale. Consult “Languages by Status” (page 16) for a

listing of the specific languages that have been assigned to each level. Note that the EGIDS level reported here is for the status of the language in Belarus. Languages that are also used in other countries may be assigned to a different EGIDS level in those countries.

The next six columns are as in Table 1. In addition, the *Mean* column gives the average L1 population of all the languages with the given EGIDS level and the *Median* column gives the median L1 population for the languages at that level, that is, half of the languages at that level have a higher population and half have a lower population. If there are any languages with an unknown population, these are ignored in the calculation of the mean and the median.

Table 2: Distribution of languages by vitality status

EGIDS	Living languages			Number of speakers			<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative</i>		
1	1	14.3	14.3%	6,720,000	85.2035	85.2035%	6,720,000	6,720,000
5	3	42.9	57.1%	12,000	0.1521	85.3556%	4,000	12,000
6a	2	28.6	85.7%	35,000	0.4438	85.7994%	17,500	17,500
7	1	14.3	100.0%	1,120,000	14.2006	100.0000%	1,120,000	1,120,000
<i>Totals</i>	7	100.0		7,887,000	100.0000			

Summary by language family

The genealogical classifications given in the language entries of the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) name 2 different top-level groups. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of living established languages and their L1 populations within these families. The columns are as for table 2, with the exception that *Cumulative* is excluded since there is no inherent ordering of the families.

Table 3: Distribution of languages by language family

Language family	Living languages		Number of speakers			
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>
Indo-European	6	85.7	7,859,000	99.6	1,309,833	566,000
Sign language	1	14.3	28,000	0.4	28,000	28,000
<i>Totals</i>	7	100.0	7,887,000	100.0		

Alphabetical Listing of Languages

Belarusian [bel] (Belarusan, Belorussian, Bielorussian, Byelorussian, White Russian, White Ruthenian). *Users*: 3,510,000 in Belarus, all users. L1 users: 1,120,000 in Belarus (2020 census), decreasing. The majority of Belarusians speak Russian [rus] as their L1. L2 users: 2,390,000 (2020). Ethnic population: 7,990,000 (2019 census). *Status*: 7 (Shifting). Statutory language of national identity (1994, Constitution, Article 17(1)), largely symbolic use. *Class*: Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Slavic, East. *Dialects*: Northeast Belarusian (Polots, Viteb-Mogilev), Southwest Belarusian (Grodnen-Baranovich, Slutska-Mazyrski, Slutsko-Mozyr), Central Belarusian. Linguistically between Russian [rus] and Ukrainian [ukr], with transitional dialects to both. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head final; gender (masculine/feminine/neuter); no articles; case-marking (6 cases); verb affixes mark person, number, gender of subject (in past tense); passives; tense and aspect; 37 consonant and 6 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; free stress. *Lg Use*: Adults only. Shifting to Russian [rus]. *Lg Dev*: Few schools remain in which Belarusian is used as a language of instruction. Taught in a few primary and secondary schools. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1973–2017. *DLS*: Vital (0.74). *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant, developed in the 16th century. Braille script, no longer in use. Cyrillic script, official usage. Latin script, official usage 1941–1944, modern occasional usage. *Other*: Russian is dominant in all spheres of life, including public and private services, legislation, education, and the media (2018 BelarusFeed). Christian, Muslim. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 3,766,550 (as L1: 1,376,550; as L2: 2,390,000). Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Also established in: Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine. Unestablished in: Argentina, Azerbaijan, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United States, Uzbekistan.

English [eng]. Autonym: English. *Users*: 1,000,000 in Belarus (2020), L2 users. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). *Class*: Indo-European, Germanic, West, English. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; genitives after noun heads; articles, adjectives, numerals before noun heads; question word initial; word order distinguishes subject, object, indirect objects, given and new information, topic and comment; active and passive; causative; comparative; consonant and vowel clusters; 24 consonants, 13 vowels, 8 diphthongs; non-tonal; free stress; phrasal verbs. *Lg Dev*: Taught as subject in secondary schools. Fully developed. Bible: 1382–2002. *Writing*: Braille script. Deseret Alphabet, developed in 1854 with limited usage until 1877. Duployan shorthand. Latin script, primary usage. Shavian (Shaw) script, no longer in use. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1,076,766,120). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: Ireland, United Kingdom. Also established in 167 other countries and unestablished in 16 more.

Erzya [myv]. *Users*: 2,600 in Belarus. *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Uralic, Mordvin. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. NT: 1827–2006. *Writing*: Cyrillic script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 245,780. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Indigenous in: Russian Federation. Also established in: Armenia. Unestablished in:

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

German, Standard [deu]. Autonym: Deutsch. *Users*: 300,000 in Belarus (2020), L2 users. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). *Class*: Indo-European, Germanic, West, High German, German, Middle German, East Middle German. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head final; gender (masculine/feminine/neuter); definite and indefinite articles; case-marking (4 cases); verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense; comparatives; 22 consonants, 22 vowels, 3 diphthongs; non-tonal; stress on first syllable of the root. *Lg Dev*: Taught as subject in secondary schools. Fully developed. Bible: 1466–2016. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. Latin script, Fraktur variant, used until 1940. Runic script, no longer in use. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 133,245,880 (as L1: 75,282,080; as L2: 57,963,800). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Italy. Also established in 39 other countries and unestablished in 23 more.

Korean [kor]. *Users*: 1,000 in Belarus (2012 census). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Koreanic. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. Bible: 1911–1993. *Writing*: Braille script. Hangul and Han scripts, primary usage. Latin script, used for maps and signs. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 81,740,540 (as L1: 81,721,540; as L2: 19,000). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: North Korea, South Korea. Also established in: China, Japan, Russian Federation, United States, Uzbekistan. Unestablished in: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Brazil, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, China–Taiwan, Denmark, France, Germany, Guam, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Mariana Islands, Norway, Paraguay, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Vietnam.

Latvian, Standard [lvs]. Autonym: Latviešu valoda, Latviski. *Users*: 1,000 in Belarus. *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Baltic, Eastern. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head final; gender (masculine/feminine); no articles; case-marking (7 cases); verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense and aspect; comparatives; 26 consonants, 11 vowels, 10 diphthongs; tonal (3 tones: even, falling, broken); stress on first syllable. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. Bible: 1689–1995. *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 2,005,550 (as L1: 1,554,520; as L2: 451,030). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Latvia. Unestablished in: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Norway, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela.

Polish [pol]. *Users*: 4,510 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Most Poles in Belarus speak Belarusian [bel] or Russian [rus] as their L1. Ethnic population: 288,000 (2019 census). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Slavic, West, Lechitic. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head final; gender (masculine/feminine/neuter); no articles; case-marking (7 cases); verb affixes mark person, number; passives; aspect; comparatives; 30 consonant and 8 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; stress on penultimate syllable. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. Bible: 1561–2018. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous.

Worldwide: Total users in all countries: 40,589,930 (as L1: 39,896,930; as L2: 693,000). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Czechia, Poland, Ukraine. Also established in: Germany, Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia. Unestablished in: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan.

Romani, Baltic [rml] (Balt Romani, Balt Slavic Romani, Baltic Slavic Romani). Autonym: Romani. *Users*: 12,000 in Belarus (2015 L. Jouve). *Location*: Gomel and Vitebsk regions; Minsk City. *Status*: 5* (Developing). *Class*: Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Intermediate Divisions, Western, Romani, Northern. *Dialect*: White Russian Romani. *Lg Dev*: Printed or pre-recorded Romani language materials may not be understandable outside the country (or context of surrounding languages) in which they were produced. Bible: 2015. *Writing*: Cyrillic script, used in Belarus, Russian Federation, and Ukraine. Latin script, used in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 33,570. Also established in: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russian Federation.

Russian [rus]. *Users*: 7,028,000 in Belarus, all users. L1 users: 6,720,000 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Russian [rus] is spoken by most of the population in Belarus as their L1. L2 users: 308,000 (Arefyev 2012). Ethnic population: 707,000 (2019 census). *Status*: 1 (National). Statutory national working language (1998, Languages Act, Article 2(1)). *Class*: Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Slavic, East. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; genitives after noun heads; adjectives, numerals before noun heads; question word initial; 1 prefix on a word; recursive addition of suffixes allowed; gender (masculine/feminine/neuter); no articles; case-marking (6 cases); verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense and aspect; comparatives; 32 consonants, 5 vowels, 4 diphthongs; non-tonal; free stress. *Lg Dev*: Taught in most primary and secondary schools. Taught in all tertiary schools. Fully developed. Bible: 1876–2011. *Writing*: Braille script. Cyrillic script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 254,997,130 (as L1: 146,954,150; as L2: 107,987,980). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Also indigenous in: Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine. Also established in 17 other countries and unestablished in 30 more.

Russian Sign Language [rsl] (RSL). *Users*: 28,000 in Belarus (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). Estimated 19,000–38,000 deaf signers, assuming 0.2%–0.4% of total population. *Location*: Scattered. *Status*: 6a (Vigorous). *Class*: Sign language, Deaf community sign language. *Dialects*: High lexical similarity and intelligibility with Russian SL in Russia, with some dialect differences. *Type*: One-handed fingerspelling (Cyrillic script). *Lg Use*: Used by all. *Lg Dev*: TV. Videos. Dictionary. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 909,000. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Indigenous in: Russian Federation. Also established in: Armenia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. Unestablished in: Israel.

Sudovian [xsv] (Jatvingian, Yatvingian, Yotvingian). *Users*: No known L1 speakers in Belarus.

Last speaker died by the 1600s. *Location*: Grodno region: Grodno district. *Status*: 10 (Extinct). *Class*: Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Baltic, Western. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: none known. Also indigenous in: Lithuania, Poland.

Tatar [tat]. *Users*: 12,000 in Belarus. *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Turkic, Western, Uralian. *Type*: SOV; case-marking (6 cases); verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense; causatives; 21 consonant and 12 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; stress on final syllable; vowel harmony; evidentiality. *Lg Dev*: Literature. Newspapers. Periodicals. Radio. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 2016. *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant, used prior to 1928. Cyrillic script. Latin script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 5,127,970 (as L1: 4,317,970; as L2: 810,000). Global EGIDS level: 2 (Provincial). Indigenous in: Russian Federation. Also established in: China, Kazakhstan, Turkey. Unestablished in: Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United States, Uzbekistan.

Ukrainian [ukr]. *Users*: 8,060 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Most Ukrainians in Belarus speak Russian [rus] as their L1. Ethnic population: 160,000 (2019 census). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Slavic, East. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head final; gender (masculine/feminine/neuter); no articles; case-marking (7 cases); verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense and aspect; comparatives; 32 consonant and 6 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; free stress. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. Bible: 1903–2020. *Writing*: Cyrillic script. Latin script, used in the 19th century, limited usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 33,026,920 (as L1: 26,862,920; as L2: 6,164,000). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine. Also established in: Brazil, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland. Unestablished in: Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan.

Yiddish, Eastern [ydd]. *Users*: 7,000 in Belarus (2017). *Location*: Widespread. *Status*: 6a* (Vigorous). *Class*: Indo-European, Germanic, West, High German, Yiddish. *Dialect*: Northeastern Yiddish (Litvish). *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head final; gender (masculine, feminine, neuter); definite and indefinite articles; verb affixes mark person, number; 20 consonant, 6 vowels and 3 diphthongs; non-tonal; stress on first syllable. *Lg Dev*: Periodicals. Radio. Grammar. Bible: 1821–1936. *Writing*: Hebrew script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 408,547 (as L1: 401,947; as L2: 6,600). Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Indigenous in: Ukraine. Also established in 19 other countries and unestablished in 3 more.

Languages by Population

In this section the languages of Belarus are listed in order of their population of first-language speakers within the country, from highest to lowest. The entries report just the population and status elements.

1,000,000 to 9,999,999

Russian [[rus](#)] *Users:* 6,720,000 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Russian [[rus](#)] is spoken by most of the population in Belarus as their L1. 7,028,000 in Belarus, all users. L2 users: 308,000 (Arefyev 2012). Ethnic population: 707,000 (2019 census). *Status:* 1 (National). Statutory national working language (1998, Languages Act, Article 2(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 254,997,130 (as L1: 146,954,150; as L2: 107,987,980).

Belarusian [[bel](#)] *Users:* 1,120,000 in Belarus (2020 census), decreasing. The majority of Belarusians speak Russian [[rus](#)] as their L1. 3,510,000 in Belarus, all users. L2 users: 2,390,000 (2020). Ethnic population: 7,990,000 (2019 census). *Status:* 7 (Shifting). Statutory language of national identity (1994, Constitution, Article 17(1)), largely symbolic use. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 3,766,550 (as L1: 1,376,550; as L2: 2,390,000).

10,000 to 99,999

Russian Sign Language [[rsl](#)] *Users:* 28,000 in Belarus (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). Estimated 19,000–38,000 deaf signers, assuming 0.2%–0.4% of total population. *Status:* 6a (Vigorous). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 909,000.

Romani, Baltic [[rml](#)] *Users:* 12,000 in Belarus (2015 L. Jouve). *Status:* 5* (Developing). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 33,570.

Tatar [[tat](#)] *Users:* 12,000 in Belarus. *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 5,127,970 (as L1: 4,317,970; as L2: 810,000).

1,000 to 9,999

Ukrainian [[ukr](#)] *Users:* 8,060 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Most Ukrainians in Belarus speak Russian [[rus](#)] as their L1. Ethnic population: 160,000 (2019 census). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 33,026,920 (as L1: 26,862,920; as L2: 6,164,000).

Yiddish, Eastern [[ydd](#)] *Users:* 7,000 in Belarus (2017). *Status:* 6a* (Vigorous). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 408,547 (as L1: 401,947; as L2: 6,600).

Polish [[pol](#)] *Users:* 4,510 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Most Poles in Belarus speak Belarusian [[bel](#)] or Russian [[rus](#)] as their L1. Ethnic population: 288,000 (2019 census). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 40,589,930 (as L1: 39,896,930; as L2: 693,000).

Erzya [[myv](#)] *Users:* 2,600 in Belarus. *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 245,780.

Korean [[kor](#)] *Users:* 1,000 in Belarus (2012 census). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 81,740,540 (as L1: 81,721,540; as L2: 19,000).

Latvian, Standard [[lvs](#)] *Users:* 1,000 in Belarus. *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 2,005,550 (as L1: 1,554,520; as L2: 451,030).

0

Sudovian [[xsv](#)] *Users:* No known L1 speakers in Belarus. Last speaker died by the 1600s. *Status:* 10 (Extinct). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: none known.

Unknown

English [[eng](#)] *Users:* L2 users: 1,000,000 in Belarus (2020), L2 users. *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120).

German, Standard [[deu](#)] *Users:* L2 users: 300,000 in Belarus (2020), L2 users. *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 133,245,880 (as L1: 75,282,080; as L2: 57,963,800).

Languages by Status

In this section the languages of Belarus are listed in order of their status within the country as represented by their level on the EGIDs scale (Lewis and Simons 2010). The language entries are reduced to just the information elements that are relevant to assessing the EGIDS level: population, status, language use, language development, and writing.

1 (National)

Russian [[rus](#)] *Users:* 7,028,000 in Belarus, all users. L1 users: 6,720,000 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Russian [[rus](#)] is spoken by most of the population in Belarus as their L1. L2 users: 308,000 (Arefyev 2012). Ethnic population: 707,000 (2019 census). *Status:* Statutory national working language (1998, Languages Act, Article 2(1)). *Writing:* Braille script. Cyrillic script, primary usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 254,997,130 (as L1: 146,954,150; as L2: 107,987,980).

5 (Developing)

Romani, Baltic [[rml](#)] *Users:* 12,000 in Belarus (2015 L. Jouve). *Writing:* Cyrillic script, used in Belarus, Russian Federation, and Ukraine. Latin script, used in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 33,570.

5 (Dispersed)

English [[eng](#)] *Users:* 1,000,000 in Belarus (2020), L2 users. *Writing:* Braille script. Deseret Alphabet, developed in 1854 with limited usage until 1877. Duployan shorthand. Latin script, primary usage. Shavian (Shaw) script, no longer in use. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120).

German, Standard [[deu](#)] *Users:* 300,000 in Belarus (2020), L2 users. *Writing:* Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. Latin script, Fraktur variant, used until 1940. Runic script, no longer in use. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 133,245,880 (as L1: 75,282,080; as L2: 57,963,800).

6a (Vigorous)

Russian Sign Language [[rsl](#)] *Users:* 28,000 in Belarus (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). Estimated 19,000–38,000 deaf signers, assuming 0.2%–0.4% of total population. *Lg Use:* Used by all. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 909,000.

Yiddish, Eastern [[ydd](#)] *Users:* 7,000 in Belarus (2017). *Writing:* Hebrew script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 408,547 (as L1: 401,947; as L2: 6,600).

7 (Shifting)

Belarusian [bel] *Users:* 3,510,000 in Belarus, all users. L1 users: 1,120,000 in Belarus (2020 census), decreasing. The majority of Belarusians speak Russian [rus] as their L1. L2 users: 2,390,000 (2020). Ethnic population: 7,990,000 (2019 census). *Status:* Statutory language of national identity (1994, Constitution, Article 17(1)), largely symbolic use. *Lg Use:* Adults only. Shifting to Russian [rus]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1973–2017. *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant, developed in the 16th century. Braille script, no longer in use. Cyrillic script, official usage. Latin script, official usage 1941–1944, modern occasional usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 3,766,550 (as L1: 1,376,550; as L2: 2,390,000).

10 (Extinct)

Sudovian [xsv] *Users:* No known L1 speakers in Belarus. Last speaker died by the 1600s. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: none known.

Unestablished

Erzya [myv] *Users:* 2,600 in Belarus. *Writing:* Cyrillic script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 245,780.

Korean [kor] *Users:* 1,000 in Belarus (2012 census). *Writing:* Braille script. Hangul and Han scripts, primary usage. Latin script, used for maps and signs. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 81,740,540 (as L1: 81,721,540; as L2: 19,000).

Latvian, Standard [lvs] *Users:* 1,000 in Belarus. *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 2,005,550 (as L1: 1,554,520; as L2: 451,030).

Polish [pol] *Users:* 4,510 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Most Poles in Belarus speak Belarusian [bel] or Russian [rus] as their L1. Ethnic population: 288,000 (2019 census). *Writing:* Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 40,589,930 (as L1: 39,896,930; as L2: 693,000).

Tatar [tat] *Users:* 12,000 in Belarus. *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant, used prior to 1928. Cyrillic script. Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 5,127,970 (as L1: 4,317,970; as L2: 810,000).

Ukrainian [ukr] *Users:* 8,060 in Belarus (2021 UNSD). Most Ukrainians in Belarus speak Russian [rus] as their L1. Ethnic population: 160,000 (2019 census). *Writing:* Cyrillic script. Latin script, used in the 19th century, limited usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 33,026,920 (as L1: 26,862,920; as L2: 6,164,000).

Languages by Family

This index gives an alphabetical listing of the linguistic classifications used for the established languages of Belarus. The entries in this index represent the full path in the linguistic family tree from the highest level grouping down to the lowest. All the languages listed in the same entry are members of the same lowest-level subgroup. The referenced page contains the main entry that describes the language.

Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Baltic, Western

Sudovian [xsv], [12](#)

Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Slavic, East

Belarusian [bel], [10](#)

Russian [rus], [12](#)

Indo-European, Germanic, West, English

English [eng], [10](#)

Indo-European, Germanic, West, High German, German, Middle German, East Middle German

German, Standard [deu], [11](#)

Indo-European, Germanic, West, High German, Yiddish

Yiddish, Eastern [ydd], [13](#)

Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Intermediate Divisions, Western, Romani, Northern

Romani, Baltic [rml], [12](#)

Sign language, Deaf community sign language

Russian Sign Language [rsl], [12](#)

Language Code Index

This index gives an alphabetical listing of all 14 three-letter codes that are used in this work to uniquely identify languages. The referenced page contains the main entry that describes the language. All codes listed are part of the ISO 639-3 standard; see <http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/>.

bel	Belarusian, 10	rml	Romani, Baltic, 12
deu	German, Standard, 11	rsl	Russian Sign Language, 12
eng	English, 10	rus	Russian, 12
kor	Korean, 11	tat	Tatar, 13
lvs	Latvian, Standard, 11	ukr	Ukrainian, 13
myv	Erzya, 10	xsv	Sudovian, 12
pol	Polish, 11	ydd	Yiddish, Eastern, 13

Language Name Index

This index lists every name that appears in the language listings as a primary or alternate name of a language or dialect. The following abbreviations are used in the index entries: *alt.* ‘alternate name for’; *alt. dial.* ‘alternate name for a dialect of’; *dial.* ‘primary name for a dialect of’; *pej. alt.* ‘pejorative alternate name for’; and *pej. alt. dial.* ‘pejorative alternate name for a dialect of’. Each index entry resolves to the primary name for the language with which the indexed name is associated, followed by square brackets containing the unique three-letter language code from ISO 639-3. The referenced page contains the main entry that describes the language. If the language appears on a map, the entry for the primary name also lists page numbers for the maps on which the language occurs.

- Balt Romani**, *alt.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 12
- Balt Slavic Romani**, *alt.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 12
- Baltic Slavic Romani**, *alt.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 12
- Belarusan**, *alt.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Belarusian** [bel], 10
- Belorussian**, *alt.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Bielorussian**, *alt.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Byelorussian**, *alt.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Central Belarusian**, *dial.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- English** [eng], 10
- German, Standard** [deu], 11
see German, Standard [deu], 11
- Grodnen-Baranovich**, *alt. dial.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Jatvingian**, *alt.* Sudovian [xsv], 12
- Standard Latvian**, *see* Latvian, Standard [lvs], 11
- Litvish**, *alt. dial.* Yiddish, Eastern [ydd], 13
- Northeast Belarusian**, *dial.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Northeastern Yiddish**, *dial.* Yiddish, Eastern [ydd], 13
- Polots**, *alt. dial.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Romani, Baltic** [rml], 12
see Romani, Baltic [rml], 12
- RSL**, *alt.* Russian Sign Language [rsl], 12
- Russian** [rus], 12
- Russian Sign Language** [rsl], 12, 0
- Slutska-Mazyrski**, *alt. dial.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Slutsko-Mozyr**, *alt. dial.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Southwest Belarusian**, *dial.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Sudovian** [xsv], 12
- Viteb-Mogilev**, *alt. dial.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- White Russian Romani**, *dial.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 12
- White Russian**, *alt.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- White Ruthenian**, *alt.* Belarusian [bel], 10
- Yatvingian**, *alt.* Sudovian [xsv], 12
- Yiddish, Eastern** [ydd], 13
see Yiddish, Eastern [ydd], 13
- Yotvingian**, *alt.* Sudovian [xsv], 12

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