

# Ethnologue: Languages of Belize

## 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
<i>Type</i>	Typological information
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
V	Vowel in canonical syllable patterns
VOS	Verb-Object-Subject

## How to Use This Digest

This *Ethnologue* country digest provides an extract of the information about the language situation in Belize 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 11 languages listed in the *Ethnologue* for the country of Belize. 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. *Map*: Map page. *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.

The “Language Map” (page 14) shows the locations of the listed languages. If the location of a language is given on a map, the *Map* element of the language entry indicates the page number of the map. If the language is identified on a map by name, but that name differs from the primary name in the language entry, the name on the map is given in parentheses. If the language is represented on the map by an index number, rather than by its name, the index number is given following the page number (with a colon as separator).

Many ways of finding languages are provided. “Languages by Population” (page 15) lists the languages in order of their first-language speaker populations. “Languages by Status” (page 17) 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

District” (page 19) lists the top-level administrative subdivisions of Belize and the languages located within each. “Languages by Family” (page 20) lists the languages by their linguistic classifications. “Language Code Index” (page 21) 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 22) lists every name that appears in the language listings as a primary or alternate name of a language or dialect. A total of 35 unique names are associated with the 11 languages described in this digest.

Finally, a listing of all the published sources cited within this digest is found in “Bibliography” (page 23). 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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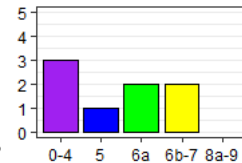
Editor, Ethnologue  
SIL International  
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road  
Dallas, TX 75236, U.S.A.

## Country Overview

Name of country	Belize
Population	404,900 (2021 UNDESA)
Principal language	English
Literacy rate	83% (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina 2018)
Deaf population	3,000
International conventions	CDE (1982), CPPDCE (2015), CSICH (2007), ICCPR (1996), UNCRPD (2011), UNDRIP (2007)

### General references

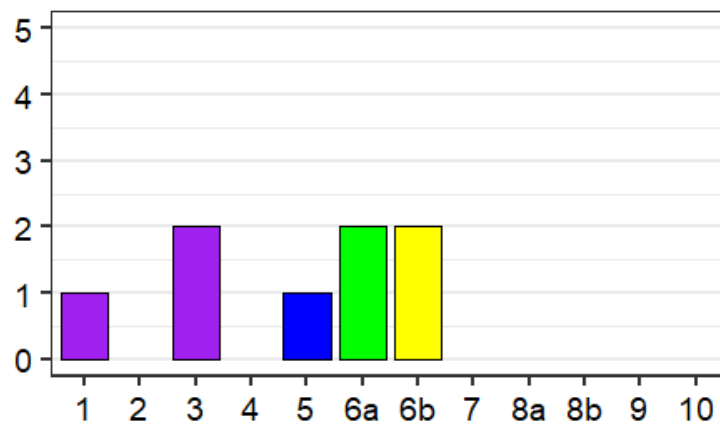
Language counts      The number of established languages listed for Belize is 8. All are living languages. Of these, 5 are indigenous and 3 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 3 are institutional, 1 is developing, 2 are vigorous, and 2 are in trouble. Also listed are 3 unestablished languages.



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 Belize 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 17) 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 Belize. 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 Belize 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 Belize 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 15) 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
100,000 to 999,999	3	37.5	37.5%	543,000	91.79740	91.79740%
10,000 to 99,999	2	25.0	62.5%	28,200	4.76738	96.56478%
1,000 to 9,999	3	37.5	100.0%	20,320	3.43522	100.00000%
<i>Totals</i>	8	100.0		591,520	100.00000	

### Summary by language status

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of living established languages in Belize 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 17) 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 Belize. 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>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>
1	1	12.5	12.5%	184,000	31.1063	31.1063%	184,000	184,000
3	2	25.0	37.5%	359,000	60.6911	91.7974%	179,500	179,500
5	1	12.5	50.0%	10,600	1.7920	93.5894%	10,600	10,600
6a	2	25.0	75.0%	26,960	4.5577	98.1471%	13,480	13,480
6b	2	25.0	100.0%	10,960	1.8529	100.0000%	5,480	5,480
<i>Totals</i>	8	100.0		591,520	100.0000			

### Summary by language family

The genealogical classifications given in the language entries of the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) name 4 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>
Creole	1	12.5	130,000	22.0	130,000	130,000
Indo-European	3	37.5	422,360	71.4	140,787	184,000
Maipurean	1	12.5	8,440	1.4	8,440	8,440
Mayan	3	37.5	30,720	5.2	10,240	10,600
<i>Totals</i>	8	100.0	591,520	100.0		

## Alphabetical Listing of Languages

**American Sign Language** [ase] (ASL, Belize Sign Language, Belizean Sign Language). *Users:* 3,000 in Belize (2011 L. Parks). Estimated population 3,000 (2011 L. Parks), approximately 0.7% of the total population. Another estimate, assuming 0.2%–0.4%: 800–1,600 (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). *Status:* Unestablished. *Class:* Sign language, Deaf community sign language. *Type:* One-handed fingerspelling system derived from French Sign Language [fsl]. SVO, topic comment structures; adjectives, numerals, genitives, question word initial or final, relative clause after noun head. *Lg Dev:* TV. Videos. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 2020. *Other:* Non-indigenous. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 989,605 (as L1: 858,605; as L2: 131,000). Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Indigenous in: United States. Also established in 24 other countries and unestablished in 11 more.

**Belize English Creole** [bzj] (Belize Kriol English, Miskito Coast English Creole, Western Caribbean Creole). Autonym: Kriol. *Users:* 130,000 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Location:* Widespread, including communities on Ambergris and Caulker cays. *Status:* 3 (Wider communication). Developed and grew between 1650 and 1930 as a result of the slave trade. Lingua franca of Belize. L1 of some Garifunas, Mestizos, Maya and other ethnic groups. *Class:* Creole, English based, Atlantic, Western. *Dialects:* None known. Reportedly similar to Nicaragua English Creole [bzk] and Islander (San Andrés) [icr] creoles. Historically an extension of Nicaragua English Creole. There is a spectrum of varieties from standard American English usage to creole. *Lg Use:* Creoles, people of East Indian descent. Most domains. Positive attitudes. Used as L2 by Garifuna [cab], Plautdietsch [pdt]. *Lg Dev:* Newspapers. Radio. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. NT: 2012. *DLS:* Ascending (0.16). *Writing:* Latin script. *Map:* 14. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 170,000. Unestablished in: United States.

**Chinese, Mandarin** [cmn]. *Users:* 2,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Status:* Unestablished. *Class:* Sino-Tibetan, Chinese. *Type:* SVO; prepositions; noun head final; 6 full (concrete meaning) word classes; no articles; passives; 24 consonants, 8 vowels, 6 diphthongs; tonal (4 phonemic tones). *Lg Dev:* Fully developed. Bible: 1874–1983. *Writing:* Bopomofo script, used since 1913, revised in 1920 and 1932, mainly used in Taiwan. Braille script. Han script, Simplified variant, used since 1956, official in Mainland China (1956) and Singapore (1969), also used elsewhere. Han script, Traditional variant, used since mid-19th century, official in Taiwan, also used elsewhere. Latin script. *Other:* Non-indigenous. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,138,222,350 (as L1: 939,237,350; as L2: 198,985,000). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: China. Also established in 17 other countries and unestablished in 60 more.

**English** [eng]. Autonym: English. *Users:* 240,000 in Belize, all users. L1 users: 184,000 in Belize (2014 UNSD). L2 users: 56,000 (Crystal 2003a). *Location:* Widespread. *Status:* 1 (National). De facto national language. *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 Use*: Education, government, commerce. *Lg Dev*: Taught in all primary and 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. When Creole languages exist alongside their lexifier language, as in Belize, a continuum forms of variations between the Creole and the lexifier language. It is therefore difficult to substantiate the number of Creole speakers and English speakers. *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.

**Garifuna** [cab] (Caribe, Central American Carib, Garínagu, “Black Carib” *pej.*, “Moreno” *pej.*). Autonym: Garifuna. *Users*: 8,440 in Belize (2014 UNSD). Ethnic population: 15,100 (2013 census). *Location*: Belize, Stann Creek, and Toledo districts: 6 villages. *Status*: 6b (Threatened). *Class*: Maipurean, Northern, Maritime, Ta-Maipurean, Iñeri. *Dialect*: Western Garifuna. *Type*: VSO. *Lg Use*: Some young people, all adults, few children (2013 census). Also use Belize English Creole [bjz]. Also use English [eng]. *Lg Dev*: Radio. Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. Bible: 2002. *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Ancestors taken from Saint Vincent Island in 1796–1797, and taken to Roatan Island. Most went to Trujillo, Honduras in 1937. About 35 years later political troubles threatened their existence, and they fled further east into Honduras and Belize. Later they emigrated to other countries. *Map*: 14. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 119,400. Also indigenous in: Guatemala, Honduras. Also established in: Nicaragua. Unestablished in: United States.

**Kekchí** [kek] (Cacché, Ketchi, K’eqchi’, Q’eqchi’, Quecchí). Autonym: Q’eqchi’. *Users*: 17,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Location*: Southwest corner, inland following east slopes, Maya Mountains, Toledo and Stann Creek districts; also in Cayo District, Belmopan area. *Status*: 6a\* (Vigorous). *Class*: Mayan, Yucatecan-Core Mayan, K’ichean-Mamean, K’ichean. *Type*: VOS; negatives before verb; verbal affixation marks person and gender, passives and voice; 19 consonant and 15 vowel phonemes; nontonal. *Lg Dev*: Literature. Radio. TV. Videos. Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. Bible: 1988–2019. *Writing*: Latin script. *Map*: 14. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,149,200. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Also indigenous in: Guatemala (Q’eqchi’). Also established in: Mexico (Q’eqchi’).

**Maya, Mopán** [mop] (Mopan, Mopane). Autonym: Maya Mopán. *Users*: 10,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Location*: Cayo, Stann Creek, and Toledo districts: highlands. *Status*: 5\* (Developing). *Class*: Mayan, Yucatecan-Core Mayan, Yucatecan, Mopan-Itzá. *Type*: VOS. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. NT: 1979–2012. *DLS*: Emerging (0.09). *Writing*: Latin script. *Map*: 14. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 12,610. Also indigenous in: Guatemala.

**Maya, Yucatec** [yua] (Maaya, Maaya t’aan, Maayáa, Maya, Yucantán Maya, Yucateco).

Autonym: Maaya t'aan. *Users*: 2,520 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Location*: Cayo district: San Antonio and Succoths; possibly also Corozal and Orange Walk districts near the Mexico border. *Status*: 6b (Threatened). *Class*: Mayan, Yucatecan-Core Mayan, Yucatecan, Yucatec-Lacandon. *Type*: VSO; prepositions; 3 noun classifiers; no articles; ergative; 19 consonants; tonal (3 tones: neutral, high, low). *Lg Use*: Concern about language loss among the youth; trying to start youth classes. Some young people, all adults. People in Succoths village say older people speak Maya. Most also use Spanish [spa], especially the youth who are using it as their L1. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1992. *Writing*: Latin script. *Map*: 14. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 802,520. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Also indigenous in: Mexico. Unestablished in: United States.

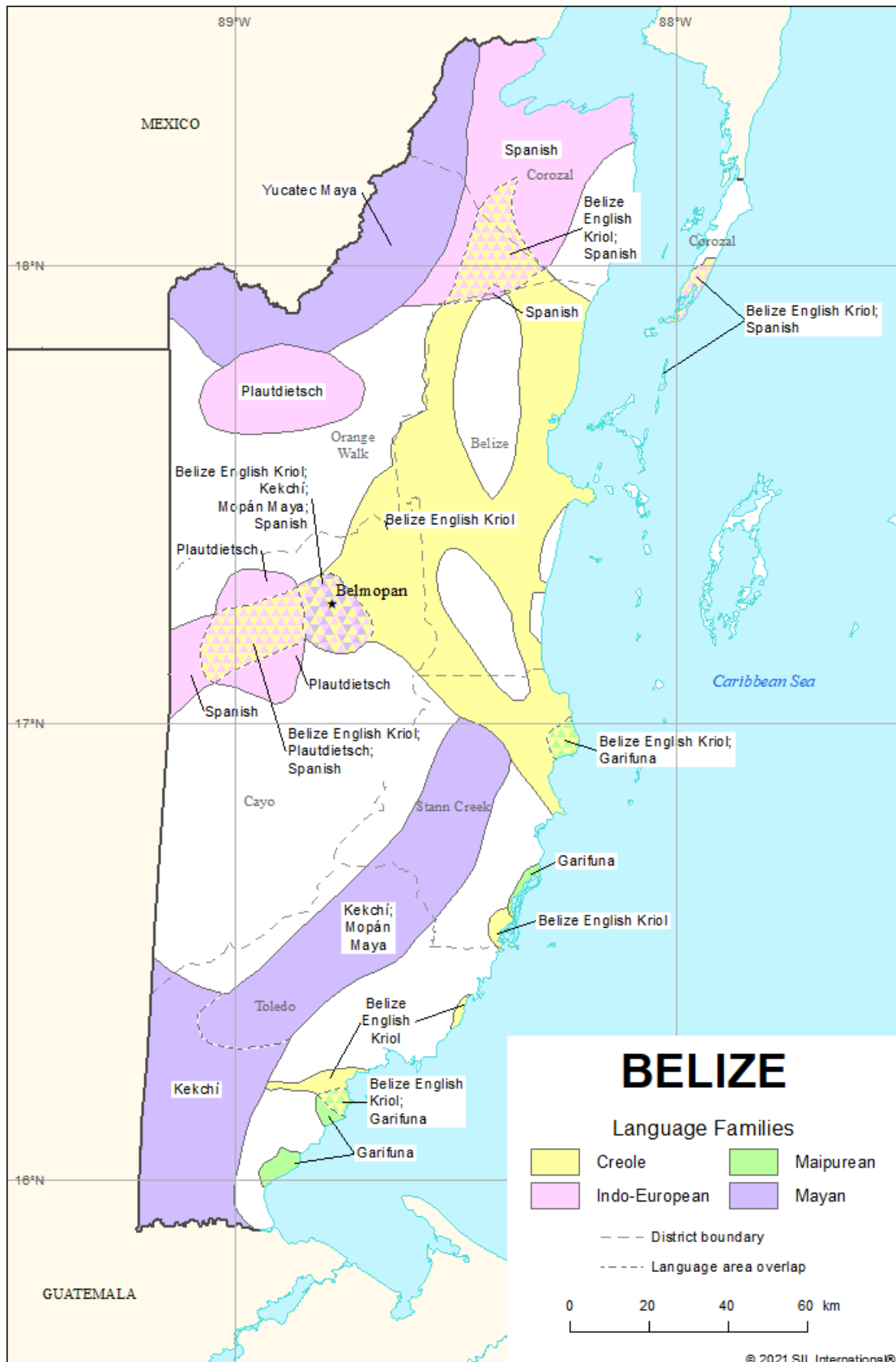
**Plautdietsch** [pdt] (German, Mennonite German). Autonym: Plautdietsch. *Users*: 9,360 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Location*: Cayo and Orange Walk districts: inland. *Status*: 6a\* (Vigorous). *Class*: Indo-European, Germanic, West, Low Saxon-Low Franconian, Low Saxon. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; genitives after noun heads; question word initial; 5 prefixes; 2 suffixes; nontonal. *Lg Use*: 110,735 or more in Latin America are fairly monolingual. Also use Belize English Creole [bjz]. Also use English [eng]. Also use Spanish [spa]. *Lg Dev*: Bible: 2003. *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. Christian. *Map*: 14. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 362,560 (as L1: 356,860; as L2: 5,700). Also established in: Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Paraguay, United States. Unestablished in: Argentina, Russian Federation, Uruguay.

**Sindhi** [snd]. *Users*: 1,200 in Belize (2011). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Outer Languages, Northwestern, Sindhi. *Type*: SOV; noun head final; gender (masculine/feminine); case-marking (8 cases); verb affixes mark person, number, gender of subject; passives; tense and aspect; 24 consonant and 15 vowel phonemes. *Lg Dev*: Literature. Radio. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1954. *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant, primary usage. Devanagari script, used in India. Gurmukhi script, used in India. Khojki script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 33,214,680 (as L1: 33,211,620; as L2: 3,060). Global EGIDS level: 3 (Wider communication). Indigenous in: India, Pakistan. Also established in: Philippines, Singapore. Unestablished in: Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United States.

**Spanish** [spa] (Castellano, Español). Autonym: Castellano, Español. *Users*: 258,400 in Belize, all users. L1 users: 229,000 in Belize (2021 World Factbook). L2 users: 29,400 (2021). *Location*: Corozal, Orange Walk, and Cayo districts. *Status*: 3 (Wider communication). *Class*: Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Ibero-Romance, West Iberian, Castilian. *Dialect*: Central American Spanish (Castellano centroamericano, Español centroamericano). *Type*: SVO; prepositions; genitives, relatives after noun heads; articles, numerals before noun heads; adjectives before or after noun heads depending on whether it is evaluative or descriptive; question word initial; gender (masculine/feminine); definite and indefinite articles; verb affixes mark number, person; passives; tense; comparatives; 20 consonants, 5 vowels, 5 diphthongs; non-tonal; stress on penultimate syllable. Silbo Gomero

whistled variety of Spanish used in Canary Islands. *Lg Use*: Used as L2 by Plautdietsch [pdt], Yucatec Maya [yua]. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. *Bible*: 1553–2012. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Map*: 14. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 559,078,890 (as L1: 485,063,960; as L2: 74,014,930). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: Andorra, Gibraltar, Spain. Also established in 39 other countries and unestablished in 33 more.

# Language Map



## Languages by Population

In this section the languages of Belize 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.

### 100,000 to 999,999

**Spanish** [[spa](#)] *Users:* 229,000 in Belize (2021 World Factbook). 258,400 in Belize, all users. L2 users: 29,400 (2021). *Status:* 3 (Wider communication). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 559,078,890 (as L1: 485,063,960; as L2: 74,014,930).

**English** [[eng](#)] *Users:* 184,000 in Belize (2014 UNSD). 240,000 in Belize, all users. L2 users: 56,000 (Crystal 2003a). *Status:* 1 (National). De facto national language. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1,076,766,120).

**Belize English Creole** [[bjzj](#)] *Users:* 130,000 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Status:* 3 (Wider communication). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 170,000.

### 10,000 to 99,999

**Kekchí** [[kek](#)] *Users:* 17,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Status:* 6a\* (Vigorous). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,149,200.

**Maya, Mopán** [[mop](#)] *Users:* 10,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Status:* 5\* (Developing). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 12,610.

### 1,000 to 9,999

**Plautdietsch** [[pdt](#)] *Users:* 9,360 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Status:* 6a\* (Vigorous). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 362,560 (as L1: 356,860; as L2: 5,700).

**Garifuna** [[cab](#)] *Users:* 8,440 in Belize (2014 UNSD). Ethnic population: 15,100 (2013 census). *Status:* 6b (Threatened). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 119,400.

**American Sign Language** [[ase](#)] *Users:* 3,000 in Belize (2011 L. Parks). Estimated population 3,000 (2011 L. Parks), approximately 0.7% of the total population. Another estimate, assuming 0.2%–0.4%: 800–1,600 (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 989,605 (as L1: 858,605; as L2: 131,000).

**Chinese, Mandarin** [[cmn](#)] *Users:* 2,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,138,222,350 (as L1: 939,237,350; as L2: 198,985,000).

**Maya, Yucatec** [[yua](#)] *Users:* 2,520 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Status:* 6b (Threatened). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 802,520.

**Sindhi** [[snd](#)] *Users:* 1,200 in Belize (2011). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 33,214,680 (as L1: 33,211,620; as L2: 3,060).

## Languages by Status

In this section the languages of Belize 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)

**English** [eng] *Users:* 240,000 in Belize, all users. L1 users: 184,000 in Belize (2014 UNSD). L2 users: 56,000 (Crystal 2003a). *Status:* De facto national language. *Lg Use:* Education, government, commerce. *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).

### 3 (Wider communication)

**Belize English Creole** [bjz] *Users:* 130,000 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Status:* Developed and grew between 1650 and 1930 as a result of the slave trade. Lingua franca of Belize. L1 of some Garifunas, Mestizos, Maya and other ethnic groups. *Lg Use:* Creoles, people of East Indian descent. Most domains. Positive attitudes. Used as L2 by Garifuna [cab], Plautdietsch [pdt]. *Lg Dev:* Newspapers. Radio. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. NT: 2012. *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 170,000.

**Spanish** [spa] *Users:* 258,400 in Belize, all users. L1 users: 229,000 in Belize (2021 World Factbook). L2 users: 29,400 (2021). *Lg Use:* Used as L2 by Plautdietsch [pdt], Yucatec Maya [yua]. *Writing:* Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 559,078,890 (as L1: 485,063,960; as L2: 74,014,930).

### 5 (Developing)

**Maya, Mopán** [mop] *Users:* 10,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. NT: 1979–2012. *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 12,610.

### 6a (Vigorous)

**Kekchí** [kek] *Users:* 17,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,149,200.

**Plautdietsch** [pdt] *Users:* 9,360 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Lg Use:* 110,735 or more in Latin America are fairly monolingual. Also use Belize English Creole [bjz]. Also use English [eng]. Also use Spanish [spa]. *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 362,560

(as L1: 356,860; as L2: 5,700).

## 6b (Threatened)

**Garifuna** [[cab](#)] *Users*: 8,440 in Belize (2014 UNSD). Ethnic population: 15,100 (2013 census). *Lg Use*: Some young people, all adults, few children (2013 census). Also use Belize English Creole [[bjz](#)]. Also use English [[eng](#)]. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 119,400.

**Maya, Yucatec** [[yua](#)] *Users*: 2,520 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Lg Use*: Concern about language loss among the youth; trying to start youth classes. Some young people, all adults. People in Succoths village say older people speak Maya. Most also use Spanish [[spa](#)], especially the youth who are using it as their L1. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 802,520.

## Unestablished

**American Sign Language** [[ase](#)] *Users*: 3,000 in Belize (2011 L. Parks). Estimated population 3,000 (2011 L. Parks), approximately 0.7% of the total population. Another estimate, assuming 0.2%–0.4%: 800–1,600 (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 989,605 (as L1: 858,605; as L2: 131,000).

**Chinese, Mandarin** [[cmn](#)] *Users*: 2,600 in Belize (2014 UNSD). *Writing*: Bopomofo script, used since 1913, revised in 1920 and 1932, mainly used in Taiwan. Braille script. Han script, Simplified variant, used since 1956, official in Mainland China (1956) and Singapore (1969), also used elsewhere. Han script, Traditional variant, used since mid-19th century, official in Taiwan, also used elsewhere. Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,138,222,350 (as L1: 939,237,350; as L2: 198,985,000).

**Sindhi** [[snd](#)] *Users*: 1,200 in Belize (2011). *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant, primary usage. Devanagari script, used in India. Gurmukhi script, used in India. Khojki script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 33,214,680 (as L1: 33,211,620; as L2: 3,060).

## Languages by District

This index gives an alphabetical listing of the top-level administrative subdivisions within Belize. Under the name of each district is a list of the language communities that are located within its area.

### **Belize**

Garifuna [cab], [11](#)

### **Cayo**

Kekchí [kek], [11](#)

Maya, Mopán [mop], [11](#)

Plautdietsch [pdt], [12](#)

Spanish [spa], [12](#)

### **Corozal**

Maya, Yucatec [yua], [11](#)

Spanish [spa], [12](#)

### **Orange Walk**

Maya, Yucatec [yua], [11](#)

Plautdietsch [pdt], [12](#)

Spanish [spa], [12](#)

### **Stann Creek**

Garifuna [cab], [11](#)

Kekchí [kek], [11](#)

Maya, Mopán [mop], [11](#)

### **Toledo**

Garifuna [cab], [11](#)

Kekchí [kek], [11](#)

Maya, Mopán [mop], [11](#)

## Languages by Family

This index gives an alphabetical listing of the linguistic classifications used for the established languages of Belize. 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.

### **Creole, English based, Atlantic, Western**

Belize English Creole [bzi], [10](#)

### **Indo-European, Germanic, West, English**

English [eng], [10](#)

### **Indo-European, Germanic, West, Low Saxon-Low Franconian, Low Saxon**

Plautdietsch [pdt], [12](#)

### **Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Ibero-Romance, West Iberian, Castilian**

Spanish [spa], [12](#)

### **Maipurean, Northern, Maritime, Ta-Maipurean, Iñeri**

Garifuna [cab], [11](#)

### **Mayan, Yucatecan-Core Mayan, K'ichean-Mamean, K'ichean**

Q'eqchi' [kek], [11](#)

### **Mayan, Yucatecan-Core Mayan, Yucatecan, Mopan-Itzá**

Maya, Mopán [mop], [11](#)

### **Mayan, Yucatecan-Core Mayan, Yucatecan, Yucatec-Lacandon**

Maya, Yucatec [yua], [11](#)

## Language Code Index

This index gives an alphabetical listing of all 11 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/>.

<b>ase</b>	American Sign Language, <a href="#">10</a>	<b>mop</b>	Maya, Mopán, <a href="#">11</a>
<b>bjz</b>	Belize English Creole, <a href="#">10</a>	<b>pdt</b>	Plautdietsch, <a href="#">12</a>
<b>cab</b>	Garifuna, <a href="#">11</a>	<b>snd</b>	Sindhi, <a href="#">12</a>
<b>cmn</b>	Chinese, Mandarin, <a href="#">10</a>	<b>spa</b>	Spanish, <a href="#">12</a>
<b>eng</b>	English, <a href="#">10</a>	<b>yua</b>	Maya, Yucatec, <a href="#">11</a>
<b>kek</b>	Q'eqchi', <a href="#">11</a>		

## 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.

- American Sign Language** [ase], 0
- Belize English Creole** [bzj], 10, 14
- Belize Kriol English**, *alt.* Belize English Creole [bzj], 10
- Black Carib**, *pej. alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Cacché**, *alt.* Q’eqchi’ [kek], 11
- Caribe**, *alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Castellano**, *alt.* Spanish [spa], 12
- Castellano centroamericano**, *alt. dial.* Spanish [spa], 12
- Central American Carib**, *alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Central American Spanish**, *dial.* Spanish [spa], 12
- Mandarin Chinese**, *see* Chinese, Mandarin [cmn], 10
- English** [eng], 10
- Español**, *alt.* Spanish [spa], 12
- Español centroamericano**, *alt. dial.* Spanish [spa], 12
- Garifuna** [cab], 11, 14
- Garínagu**, *alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- German**, *alt.* Plautdietsch [pdt], 12
- Kekchí** [kek], 11, 14
- K’eqchi’**, *alt.* Q’eqchi’ [kek], 11
- Ketchi**, *alt.* Q’eqchi’ [kek], 11
- Kriol**, *alt.* Belize English Creole [bzj], 10
- Maaya**, *alt.* Maya, Yucatec [yua], 11
- Maaya t’aan**, *alt.* Maya, Yucatec [yua], 11
- Maayáa**, *alt.* Maya, Yucatec [yua], 11
- Maya**, *alt.* Maya, Yucatec [yua], 11
- Maya Mopán**, *alt.* Maya, Mopán [mop], 11
- Maya, Mopán** [mop], 11, 14  
*see* Maya, Mopán [mop], 11
- Maya, Yucatec** [yua], 11, 14  
*see* Maya, Yucatec [yua], 11
- Mennonite German**, *alt.* Plautdietsch [pdt], 12
- Miskito Coast English Creole**, *alt.* Belize English Creole [bzj], 10
- Mopan**, *alt.* Maya, Mopán [mop], 11
- Mopane**, *alt.* Maya, Mopán [mop], 11
- Moreno**, *pej. alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Plautdietsch** [pdt], 12, 14
- Q’eqchi’**, *alt.* Q’eqchi’ [kek], 11
- Quechí**, *alt.* Q’eqchi’ [kek], 11
- Spanish** [spa], 12, 14
- Western Caribbean Creole**, *alt.* Belize English Creole [bzj], 10
- Western Garifuna**, *dial.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Yucantán Maya**, *alt.* Maya, Yucatec [yua], 11
- Yucateco**, *alt.* Maya, Yucatec [yua], 11

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- Roser, M and E. Ortiz-Ospina (eds.). 2018. Literacy. *Our world in data*. Oxford: University of Oxford. <https://ourworldindata.org/literacy>. Accessed 16 January 2018.