

Ethnologue: Languages of Estonia

Twenty-sixth edition data

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Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
How to Use This Digest	4
Country Overview	6
Language Status Profile	7
Statistical Summaries	8
Alphabetical Listing of Languages	11
Language Map	16
Languages by Population	17
Languages by Status	19
Languages by Family	22
Language Code Index	23
Language Name Index	24
Bibliography	26

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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
<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)
<i>dial.</i>	primary dialect name for
EUD	European Union of the Deaf
FPCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1998)
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
IMB	International Mission Board
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
SVO	Subject-Verb-Object
<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

How to Use This Digest

This *Ethnologue* country digest provides an extract of the information about the language situation in Estonia 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 11) provides detailed information on the 14 languages listed in the *Ethnologue* for the country of Estonia. 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. Macrolanguage member languages. *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 16) 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 17) lists the languages in order of their first-language speaker populations. “Languages by Status” (page 19) 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 22) lists the languages by their linguistic classifications. “Language Code Index” (page 23) 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 24) lists every name that appears in the language listings as a primary or alternate name of a language or dialect. A total of 27 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 26). 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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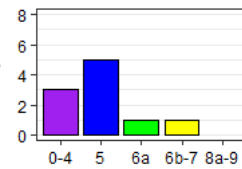
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Country Overview

Name of country	Estonia
Other names	Republic of Estonia
Population	1,325,000 (2021 UNDESA)
Principal language	Standard Estonian
Literacy rate	100% (2015 World Factbook)
Deaf population	1,600 (1998)
International conventions	CPPDCE (2006), CSICH (2006), FCPNM (1997), ICCPR (1991), UNCRPD (2012), UNDRIP (2007)
General references	Campbell and King 2011, Comrie 1987

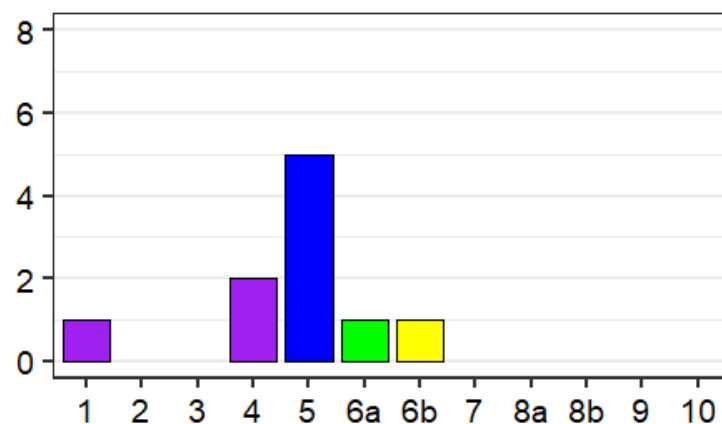
Language counts The number of established languages listed for Estonia is 10. All are living languages. Of these, 3 are indigenous and 7 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 3 are institutional, 5 are developing, 1 is vigorous, and 1 is in trouble. Also listed are 3 unestablished languages and 1 macrolanguage.



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 Estonia 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 11) 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 19) 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 11) provides a detailed listing of all the languages of Estonia. 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 Estonia 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 Estonia 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 17) 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	1	10.0	10.0%	1,050,000	68.77309	68.77309%
100,000 to 999,999	1	10.0	20.0%	383,000	25.08580	93.85889%
10,000 to 99,999	1	10.0	30.0%	87,000	5.69834	99.55723%
1,000 to 9,999	3	30.0	60.0%	5,520	0.36155	99.91878%
100 to 999	2	20.0	80.0%	1,240	0.08122	100.00000%
Unknown	2	20.0	100.0%			
<i>Totals</i>	10	100.0		1,526,760	100.00000	

Summary by language status

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of living established languages in Estonia 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 19) 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 Estonia. 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			Mean	Median
	Count	Percent	Cumulative	Total	Percent	Cumulative		
1	1	10.0	10.0%	1,050,000	68.7731	68.7731%	1,050,000	1,050,000
4	2	20.0	30.0%	383,880	25.1434	93.9165%	191,940	191,940
5	5	50.0	80.0%	5,880	0.3851	94.3017%	1,176	1,450
6a	1	10.0	90.0%	Unknown				
6b	1	10.0	100.0%	87,000	5.6983	100.0000%	87,000	87,000
<i>Totals</i>	10	100.0		1,526,760	100.0000			

Summary by language family

The genealogical classifications given in the language entries of the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 11) name 3 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			
	Count	Percent	Total	Percent	Mean	Median
Indo-European	5	50.0	385,640	25.3	77,128	1,140
Sign language	2	20.0	1,500	0.1	750	1,500

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>
Uralic	3	30.0	1,139,620	74.6	379,873	87,000
<i>Totals</i>	10	100.0	1,526,760	100.0		

Alphabetical Listing of Languages

Belarusian [bel]. *Users*: 1,660 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 12,400 (2011 census). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, Slavic, East. *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 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. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 3,766,550 (as L1: 1,376,550; as L2: 2,390,000). Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Indigenous in: Belarus. Also established in: Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine. Unestablished in: Argentina, Azerbaijan, Czechia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United States, Uzbekistan.

English [eng]. Autonym: English. *Users*: 660,880 in Estonia, all users. L1 users: 880 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). L2 users: 660,000 (European Commission 2012). *Location*: Widespread. *Status*: 4 (Educational). *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*: Used as L2 by Standard Estonian [ekk]. *Lg Dev*: Taught as subject in all 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.

Estonian [est]. A macrolanguage. Population total all languages (L1 only): 1,235,180. *DLS*: . *Other*: Includes: Standard Estonian [ekk], Võro [vro]. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,235,180.

Estonian Sign Language [eso] (EVK, Eesti viipekeel, Viipekeel). *Users*: 1,500 (Paales 2011). 1,500 signers (2014 Estonian Deaf Association), approximately 0.1% of the total population. Other estimates: 4,500 sign language users out of 1,600 deaf and 20,000 hearing impaired, 2,000 persons need regular help from interpreters (1998 U. Sutrop); 6,300 (2014 IMB). *Location*: Scattered, mostly in Pärnu county and Tallinn. *Status*: 5 (Developing). Recognized language (2011, No. RT1, 18.03.2011, 1, Language Act, Article 3(2)). *Class*: Sign language, Deaf community sign language. *Dialects*: Some local dialects. The dialect in Pärnu is most archaic. Influences from Finnish [fse] and Russian Sign Languages [rsl]. *Type*: One-handed fingerspelling. *Lg Use*: First deaf school 1866. Deaf associations. Used by all. Also use

Russian Sign Language [rsl]. *Lg Dev*: TV. Videos. Dictionary. Bible portions: 2021. Agency: Estonian Association of the Deaf. *DLS*: Emerging (0.01). *Other*: Fingerspelling system unlike other European countries. Sign language interpretation service started 1996. 25 working sign language interpreters (2019 EUD). Estonian Sign Language was first recognized in 2007. Systematic teaching and research since 1990 at Tartu University. (2014 Estonian Association of the Deaf). Sign language instruction for parents of deaf children in Tallinn.

Estonian, Standard [ekk] (Eesti, Eesti Kirjakeel). Autonym: Eesti Keel. *Users*: 1,050,000 in Estonia (European Commission 2012), including 1,290 speakers of Northeastern Coastal Estonian dialects, 26,800 speakers of North Estonian dialects (24,500 island dialects, 770 eastern dialects, 210 central dialects, and 1,280 western dialects), and 13,800 speakers of South Estonian dialects (9,700 Mulgi and 4,110 Tartu) (2011 census). *Status*: 1 (National). Statutory national language (1992, Constitution, Article 52(1)). *Class*: Uralic, Finnic. A member of macrolanguage Estonian [est]. *Dialects*: Tallinn (Northern Estonian, Reval), Tartu (Dorpat, Southern Estonian), Mulgi. Dialects are grouped into three groups: Northeastern Coastal Estonian (between Tallinn and Narva), North Estonian (island, western, central, and eastern dialects), and South Estonian (Mulgi, Tartu). All the other dialects are assimilated into Standard Estonian. Standard Estonian is based mostly on North Estonian dialects. Mulgi and Tartu are generally regarded as separate linguistic entities somewhere between Võro [vro] and Standard Estonian. Related to Vod [vot] and Finnish [fin]. *Type*: SVO; 14 cases: affixes indicate case of noun phrases; verb affixes mark person, number of subject, and agreement (obligatory); genitives, adjectives, numerals before noun heads; question word initial; word order distinguishes given and new information; active and passive voice; 4 moods in both voices: indicative, imperative, conditional, oblique; 2 infinitives for all verbs; 4 tenses in both voices and all moods: present, past, perfect, pluperfect; 3 degrees of comparison: positive, comparative, superlative; stress on first syllable; possible secondary stress on third syllable; non-tonal. *Lg Use*: Most also use Russian [rus] (European Commission 2006). Many also use English [eng] (European Commission 2006). Some also use Standard German [deu] (European Commission 2006). Also use Finnish [fin]. *Lg Dev*: Taught in primary and secondary schools, in about 87% of the schools; Russian [rus] is the language of instruction in the other 13%. Fully developed. Bible: 1739–1995. *DLS*: Vital (0.82). *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Some linguistic influences from Russian [rus], German [deu], Swedish [swe], Latvian [lav], Lithuanian [lit], and Finnish [fin]. Christian. *Map*: 16. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,149,010 (as L1: 1,148,690; as L2: 320). Also established in: Australia, Finland. Unestablished in: Canada, Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Norway, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States.

Finnish [fin]. Autonym: Suomi. *Users*: 158,620 in Estonia, all users. L1 users: 2,620 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). L2 users: 156,000 (2012 Eurobarometer). Ethnic population: 7,420 (2011 census). *Location*: Widespread. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). *Class*: Uralic, Finnic. *Type*: SVO; mostly postpositions, some prepositions; noun head final; no articles; case-marking (11 cases); verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense; comparatives; 17 consonants, 16 vowels, 16 diphthongs; non-tonal; stress on first syllable; vowel harmony. *Lg Use*: Used as L2 by

Standard Estonian [ekk]. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. Bible: 1642–1991. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 5,609,760 (as L1: 4,952,060; as L2: 657,700). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Finland, Russian Federation. Also established in: Aland Islands, Sweden. Unestablished in: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.

French [fra]. Autonym: français. *Users*: 19,200 in Estonia (Marcoux et al 2022), L2 users. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). *Class*: Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Gallo-Romance, Gallo-Rhaetian, Oïl, French. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head final for common adjectives, numbers, possessives, but most attributive adjectives come after the noun; gender (masculine/feminine); definite and indefinite articles; verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense; comparatives; 20 consonant and 14 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; syllable-timed stress. *Lg Dev*: Taught as subject in secondary schools. Fully developed. Bible: 1530–2000. *Writing*: Braille script. Duployan shorthand. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 309,804,220 (as L1: 80,770,190; as L2: 229,034,030). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: Andorra, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Monaco, Switzerland. Also established in 95 other countries and unestablished in 24 more.

German, Standard [deu] (Deutsch). Autonym: Deutsch. *Users*: 129,400 in Estonia, all users. L1 users: 1,400 in Estonia (2018). L2 users: 128,000 (2018 Eurostat). *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 Use*: Used as L2 by Standard Estonian [ekk]. *Lg Dev*: Taught as subject in some 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.

Latvian, Standard [lvs]. Autonym: Latviešu valoda, Latviski. *Users*: 1,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 1,720 (2011 census). *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, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Norway, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United

Kingdom, United States, Venezuela.

Romani, Baltic [rml] (Balt Romani, Balt Slavic Romani, Baltic Slavic Romani, Romani).

Autonym: Romani. *Users*: 360 in Estonia (2013 census). Ethnic population: 460 (2011 census). *Location*: Järva, Pärnu, and Rapla counties. *Status*: 5* (Developing). *Class*: Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Intermediate Divisions, Western, Romani, Northern. *Dialects*: Estonian Romani (Čuxny Romani), Lotfitko Romani. *Lg Use*: Also use Russian [rus]. Also use Standard Estonian [ekk]. *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. Ethnic groups: Lajenge Romá (eastern Estonia), Lotfitka Romá. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 33,570. Also established in: Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russian Federation.

Russian [rus]. *Users*: 1,118,000 in Estonia, all users. L1 users: 383,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD).

L2 users: 735,000 (European Commission 2012). Ethnic population: 321,000 (2011 census). *Location*: Widespread. *Status*: 4 (Educational). *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 Use*: Used as L2 by Baltic Romani [rml], Standard Estonian [ekk]. *Lg Dev*: Taught in primary and secondary schools, in about 14% of the schools. Fully developed. *Bible*: 1876–2011. *Writing*: Braille script. Cyrillic script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 254,997,130 (as L1: 146,954,150; as L2: 107,987,980). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine. Also established in 16 other countries and unestablished in 30 more.

Russian Sign Language [rsl]. *Location*: Harju county: Tallinn. *Status*: 6a* (Vigorous). *Class*:

Sign language, Deaf community sign language. *Type*: One-handed fingerspelling (Cyrillic script). *Lg Use*: Used in Tallinn by deaf Russians. In other regions Russians use some pidginized versions of Russian Sign Language mixed with Estonian Sign Language. Used as L2 by Estonian Sign Language [eso]. *Lg Dev*: TV. Videos. Dictionary. Agency: Estonian Association of the Deaf. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 909,000. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Indigenous in: Russian Federation. Also established in: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. Unestablished in: Israel.

Ukrainian [ukr]. *Users*: 8,010 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 22,300 (2011 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, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, 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.

Võro [vro] (Voro, Voru, Võro-Seto, Võru). Autonym: Võro kiil. *Users*: 87,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Seto speakers: 12,500 (2011 census). *Location*: Põlva, Tartu, Valga, and Võru counties. *Status*: 6b (Threatened). *Class*: Uralic, Finnic. A member of macrolanguage Estonian [est]. *Dialects*: Eastern Võro, Seto, Western Võro. Seto is very similar to Eastern Võro but many Setos consider Seto an independent language. *Lg Use*: Rapid shift to Standard Estonian [ekk]. Home, workplace. Some young people, all adults. Few children; most are elderly speakers living in rural areas. *Lg Dev*: Newspapers. Radio. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. NT: 1686–1905. Promotion and revival of Võro, which includes teachers, politicians, poets, geographers, and administrators, attempting to increase the usage (2008 S. Iva). *DLS*: Ascending (0.27). *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Seto has a practical contemporary written form (for using in newspaper and other texts) which is not standardized to the level of written standard nor considered to be a standard written language (2019 S. Iva). *Christian*. *Map*: 16. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 87,210. Also indigenous in: Latvia, Russian Federation (Seto).

Language Map



Languages by Population

In this section the languages of Estonia 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

Estonian, Standard [ekk] *Users:* 1,050,000 in Estonia (European Commission 2012), including 1,290 speakers of Northeastern Coastal Estonian dialects, 26,800 speakers of North Estonian dialects (24,500 island dialects, 770 eastern dialects, 210 central dialects, and 1,280 western dialects), and 13,800 speakers of South Estonian dialects (9,700 Mulgi and 4,110 Tartu) (2011 census). *Status:* 1 (National). Statutory national language (1992, Constitution, Article 52(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,149,010 (as L1: 1,148,690; as L2: 320).

100,000 to 999,999

Russian [rus] *Users:* 383,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). 1,118,000 in Estonia, all users. L2 users: 735,000 (European Commission 2012). Ethnic population: 321,000 (2011 census). *Status:* 4 (Educational). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 254,997,130 (as L1: 146,954,150; as L2: 107,987,980).

10,000 to 99,999

Võro [vro] *Users:* 87,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Seto speakers: 12,500 (2011 census). *Status:* 6b (Threatened). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 87,210.

1,000 to 9,999

Ukrainian [ukr] *Users:* 8,010 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 22,300 (2011 census). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 33,026,920 (as L1: 26,862,920; as L2: 6,164,000).

Finnish [fin] *Users:* 2,620 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). 158,620 in Estonia, all users. L2 users: 156,000 (2012 Eurobarometer). Ethnic population: 7,420 (2011 census). *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 5,609,760 (as L1: 4,952,060; as L2: 657,700).

Belarusian [bel] *Users:* 1,660 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 12,400 (2011 census). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 3,766,550 (as L1: 1,376,550; as L2: 2,390,000).

Estonian Sign Language [eso] *Users:* 1,500 (Paales 2011). 1,500 signers (2014 Estonian Deaf Association), approximately 0.1% of the total population. Other estimates: 4,500 sign language

users out of 1,600 deaf and 20,000 hearing impaired, 2,000 persons need regular help from interpreters (1998 U. Sutrop); 6,300 (2014 IMB). *Status*: 5 (Developing). Recognized language (2011, No. RT1, 18.03.2011, 1, Language Act, Article 3(2)).

German, Standard [[deu](#)] *Users*: 1,400 in Estonia (2018). 129,400 in Estonia, all users. L2 users: 128,000 (2018 Eurostat). *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 133,245,880 (as L1: 75,282,080; as L2: 57,963,800).

Latvian, Standard [[lvs](#)] *Users*: 1,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 1,720 (2011 census). *Status*: Unestablished. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 2,005,550 (as L1: 1,554,520; as L2: 451,030).

100 to 999

English [[eng](#)] *Users*: 880 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). 660,880 in Estonia, all users. L2 users: 660,000 (European Commission 2012). *Status*: 4 (Educational). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120).

Romani, Baltic [[rml](#)] *Users*: 360 in Estonia (2013 census). Ethnic population: 460 (2011 census). *Status*: 5* (Developing). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 33,570.

Unknown

French [[fra](#)] *Users*: L2 users: 19,200 in Estonia (Marcoux et al 2022), L2 users. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 309,804,220 (as L1: 80,770,190; as L2: 229,034,030).

Russian Sign Language [[rsl](#)] *Status*: 6a* (Vigorous). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 909,000.

Languages by Status

In this section the languages of Estonia 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)

Estonian, Standard [ekk] *Users:* 1,050,000 in Estonia (European Commission 2012), including 1,290 speakers of Northeastern Coastal Estonian dialects, 26,800 speakers of North Estonian dialects (24,500 island dialects, 770 eastern dialects, 210 central dialects, and 1,280 western dialects), and 13,800 speakers of South Estonian dialects (9,700 Mulgi and 4,110 Tartu) (2011 census). *Status:* Statutory national language (1992, Constitution, Article 52(1)). *Lg Use:* Most also use Russian [rus] (European Commission 2006). Many also use English [eng] (European Commission 2006). Some also use Standard German [deu] (European Commission 2006). Also use Finnish [fin]. *Lg Dev:* Fully developed. Bible: 1739–1995. *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,149,010 (as L1: 1,148,690; as L2: 320).

4 (Educational)

English [eng] *Users:* 660,880 in Estonia, all users. L1 users: 880 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). L2 users: 660,000 (European Commission 2012). *Lg Use:* Used as L2 by Standard Estonian [ekk]. *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: 1,076,766,120).

Russian [rus] *Users:* 1,118,000 in Estonia, all users. L1 users: 383,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). L2 users: 735,000 (European Commission 2012). Ethnic population: 321,000 (2011 census). *Lg Use:* Used as L2 by Baltic Romani [rml], Standard Estonian [ekk]. *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)

Estonian Sign Language [eso] *Users:* 1,500 (Paales 2011). 1,500 signers (2014 Estonian Deaf Association), approximately 0.1% of the total population. Other estimates: 4,500 sign language users out of 1,600 deaf and 20,000 hearing impaired, 2,000 persons need regular help from interpreters (1998 U. Sutrop); 6,300 (2014 IMB). *Status:* Recognized language (2011, No. RT1, 18.03.2011, 1, Language Act, Article 3(2)). *Lg Use:* First deaf school 1866. Deaf associations. Used by all. Also use Russian Sign Language [rsl]. *Lg Dev:* TV. Videos.

Dictionary. Bible portions: 2021.

Romani, Baltic [rml] *Users*: 360 in Estonia (2013 census). Ethnic population: 460 (2011 census). *Lg Use*: Also use Russian [rus]. Also use Standard Estonian [ekk]. *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)

Finnish [fin] *Users*: 158,620 in Estonia, all users. L1 users: 2,620 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). L2 users: 156,000 (2012 Eurobarometer). Ethnic population: 7,420 (2011 census). *Lg Use*: Used as L2 by Standard Estonian [ekk]. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 5,609,760 (as L1: 4,952,060; as L2: 657,700).

French [fra] *Users*: 19,200 in Estonia (Marcoux et al 2022), L2 users. *Writing*: Braille script. Duployan shorthand. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 309,804,220 (as L1: 80,770,190; as L2: 229,034,030).

German, Standard [deu] *Users*: 129,400 in Estonia, all users. L1 users: 1,400 in Estonia (2018). L2 users: 128,000 (2018 Eurostat). *Lg Use*: Used as L2 by Standard Estonian [ekk]. *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] *Lg Use*: Used in Tallinn by deaf Russians. In other regions Russians use some pidginized versions of Russian Sign Language mixed with Estonian Sign Language. Used as L2 by Estonian Sign Language [eso]. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 909,000.

6b (Threatened)

Võro [vro] *Users*: 87,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Seto speakers: 12,500 (2011 census). *Lg Use*: Rapid shift to Standard Estonian [ekk]. Home, workplace. Some young people, all adults. Few children; most are elderly speakers living in rural areas. *Lg Dev*: Newspapers. Radio. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. NT: 1686–1905. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 87,210.

Unestablished

Belarusian [bel] *Users*: 1,660 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 12,400 (2011 census). *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).

Latvian, Standard [lvs] *Users:* 1,000 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 1,720 (2011 census). *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 2,005,550 (as L1: 1,554,520; as L2: 451,030).

Ukrainian [ukr] *Users:* 8,010 in Estonia (2013 UNSD). Ethnic population: 22,300 (2011 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 Estonia. 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, Slavic, East

Russian [rus], [14](#)

Indo-European, Germanic, West, English

English [eng], [11](#)

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

German, Standard [deu], [13](#)

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

Romani, Baltic [rml], [14](#)

Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Gallo-Romance, Gallo-Rhaetian, Oil, French

French [fra], [13](#)

Sign language, Deaf community sign language

Estonian Sign Language [eso], [11](#)

Russian Sign Language [rsl], [14](#)

Uralic, Finnic

Estonian, Standard [ekk], [12](#)

Finnish [fin], [12](#)

Võro [vro], [15](#)

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, 11	fra	French, 13
deu	German, Standard, 13	lvs	Latvian, Standard, 13
ekk	Estonian, Standard, 12	rml	Romani, Baltic, 14
eng	English, 11	rsl	Russian Sign Language, 14
eso	Estonian Sign Language, 11	rus	Russian, 14
est	Estonian, 11	ukr	Ukrainian, 14
fin	Finnish, 12	vro	Võro, 15

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], 14
- Balt Slavic Romani**, *alt.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 14
- Baltic Slavic Romani**, *alt.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 14
- Čuxny Romani**, *alt. dial.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 14
- Deutsch**, *alt.* German, Standard [deu], 13
- Dorpat**, *alt. dial.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Eastern Võro**, *dial.* Võro [vro], 15
- Eesti**, *alt.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Eesti Keel**, *alt.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Eesti Kirjakeel**, *alt.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Eesti viipekeel**, *alt.* Estonian Sign Language [eso], 11
- English** [eng], 11
- Estonian Romani**, *dial.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 14
- Estonian Sign Language** [eso], 11, 0
- Estonian, Standard** [ekk], 12, 16
see Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- EVK**, *alt.* Estonian Sign Language [eso], 11
- Finnish** [fin], 12
- French** [fra], 13
- German, Standard** [deu], 13
see German, Standard [deu], 13
- Standard Latvian**, *see* Latvian, Standard [lvs], 13
- Lotfitko Romani**, *dial.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 14
- Mulgi**, *dial.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Northern Estonian**, *alt. dial.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Reval**, *alt. dial.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Romani**, *alt.* Romani, Baltic [rml], 14
- Romani, Baltic** [rml], 14
see Romani, Baltic [rml], 14
- Russian** [rus], 14
- Russian Sign Language** [rsl], 14, 0
- Seto**, *dial.* Võro [vro], 15
- Southern Estonian**, *alt. dial.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Tallinn**, *dial.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Tartu**, *dial.* Estonian, Standard [ekk], 12
- Viipekeel**, *alt.* Estonian Sign Language [eso], 11
- Voro**, *alt.* Võro [vro], 15
- Võro** [vro], 15, 16
- Võro kiil**, *alt.* Võro [vro], 15
- Võro-Seto**, *alt.* Võro [vro], 15
- Voru**, *alt.* Võro [vro], 15
- Võru**, *alt.* Võro [vro], 15

Western Võro, *dial.* Võro [vro], [15](#)

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