

Ethnologue: Languages of Nicaragua

Twenty-sixth edition data

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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
ANSNIC	Asociación Nacional de Sordos de Nicaragua
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)
<i>dial.</i>	primary dialect name for
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
ILOCITP	ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal People no. 169 (1989)
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
SOV	Subject-Object-Verb
<i>Type</i>	Typological information
UNCRPD	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 Nicaragua 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 13 languages listed in the *Ethnologue* for the country of Nicaragua. 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 15) 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 16) lists the languages in order of their first-language speaker populations. “Languages by Status” (page 18) 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

Department” (page 21) lists the top-level administrative subdivisions of Nicaragua and the languages located within each. “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 37 unique names are associated with the 13 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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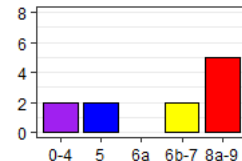
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Country Overview

Name of country	Nicaragua
Population	6,560,000 (2020 census)
Principal language	Spanish
Literacy rate	83% (2015 UNESCO)
Deaf population	3,000–600,000
International conventions	CDE (1981), CPPDCE (2009), CSICH (2006), ICCPR (1980), ILOCITP (2010), UNCRPD (2007), UNDRIP (2007)
General references	Campbell 1997

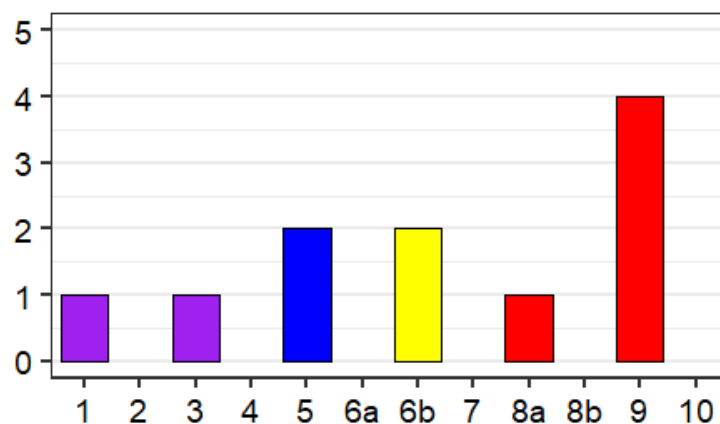
Language counts The number of established languages listed for Nicaragua is 11. All are living languages. Of these, 9 are indigenous and 2 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 2 are institutional, 2 are developing, 2 are in trouble, and 5 are dying. Also listed are 2 unestablished languages.



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 Nicaragua 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 18) 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 Nicaragua. 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 Nicaragua 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 Nicaragua 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 16) 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	9.1	9.1%	6,510,000	97.78166	97.78166%
100,000 to 999,999	1	9.1	18.2%	114,000	1.71231	99.49397%
10,000 to 99,999	1	9.1	27.3%	18,400	0.27637	99.77034%
1,000 to 9,999	2	18.2	45.5%	14,200	0.21329	99.98363%
100 to 999	2	18.2	63.6%	1,090	0.01637	100.00000%
0	4	36.4	100.0%		0.00000	100.00000%
<i>Totals</i>	11	100.0		6,657,690	100.00000	

Summary by language status

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of living established languages in Nicaragua 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 18) 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 Nicaragua. 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	9.1	9.1%	6,510,000	97.7817	97.7817%	6,510,000	6,510,000
3	1	9.1	18.2%	18,400	0.2764	98.0580%	18,400	18,400
5	2	18.2	36.4%	14,200	0.2133	98.2713%	7,100	7,100
6b	2	18.2	54.5%	114,350	1.7176	99.9889%	57,175	57,175
8a	1	9.1	63.6%	740	0.0111	100.0000%	740	740
9	4	36.4	100.0%		0.0000	100.0000%		
<i>Totals</i>	11	100.0		6,657,690	100.0000			

Summary by language family

The genealogical classifications given in the language entries of the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 11) name 8 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
Chibchan	1	9.1	740	0.0	740	740

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	9.1	18,400	0.3	18,400	18,400
Indo-European	1	9.1	6,510,000	97.8	6,510,000	6,510,000
Maipurean	1	9.1		0.0		
Misumalpan	4	36.4	122,350	1.8	30,588	4,175
Otomanguean	1	9.1		0.0		
Sign language	1	9.1	6,200	0.1	6,200	6,200
Unclassified	1	9.1		0.0		
<i>Totals</i>	11	100.0	6,657,690	100.0		

Alphabetical Listing of Languages

Chinese, Mandarin [cmn]. *Users*: 14,000 in Nicaragua (2021 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *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*: 7,000 in Nicaragua (2021 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status*: Unestablished. *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 Miskito [miq], Nicaragua English Creole [bzk]. *Lg Dev*: 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: 1076,766,120). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: Ireland, United Kingdom. Also established in 168 other countries and unestablished in 15 more.

Garifuna [cab] (Black Carib, Caribe, Central American Carib, Garífuna, “Moreno” *pej.*). Autonym: Garifuna. *Users*: No known L1 speakers in Nicaragua (2012 R. Reeck). Ethnic population: 3,270 (2005 census). *Location*: South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region: Orinoco village. *Status*: 9 (Dormant). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Class*: Maipurean, Northern, Maritime, Ta-Maipurean, Iñeri. *Type*: VSO. *Lg Use*: Shifted to Spanish [spa]. *Lg Dev*: Radio. Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. *Bible*: 2002. *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. 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. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 119,400. Global EGIDS level: 6b (Threatened). Indigenous in: Belize, Guatemala, Honduras. Unestablished in: United States.

Mangue [mom] (Chorotega, Monimbo). *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last fluent speaker either died or shifted to Spanish by the early 1870s; some rememberers survived into the late

1880s (Brinton 1886). Ethnic population: 46,000 (2005 census). *Location*: Scattered. North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region: highlands. *Status*: 9 (Dormant). *Class*: Unclassified. *Lg Use*: Shifted to Spanish [spa]. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. *DLS*: Still. *Other*: Few traits of their pre-conquest American Indian culture remain.

Matagalpa [mtn] (Pantasma). *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last speaker died in 1997. Ethnic population: 15,000 (2005 census). *Location*: Jinotega and Matagalpa departments; Central highlands. *Status*: 9 (Dormant). *Class*: Misumalpan, Sumu-Cacaopera-Matagalpa, Cacaopera-Matagalpa. *Lg Use*: Shifted to Spanish [spa]. *DLS*: Still.

Mayangna [yan]. *Users*: 8,000 in Nicaragua (Adelaar 2007). 8,540 (2005 census). Ethnic population: 9,760 (2005 census). *Location*: Jinotega department; North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region: Bambana and Tungi along Waspuk river; Santo Tomás de Umbra on the upper Wawa; Panamahka dialect along Wanki river; Tuahka dialect: Wasakin area near Rosita. *Status*: 5* (Developing). *Class*: Misumalpan. *Dialects*: Panamahka (Panamaca), Tuahka (Taguasca). Reportedly similar to Ulwa [ulw]. *Type*: SOV. *Lg Use*: Also use Mískito [miq]. Also use Spanish [spa]. *Lg Dev*: Literary development in Tawahka dialect. Dictionary. Bible: 1999. *DLS*: Emerging (0.02). *Writing*: Latin script. *Map*: 15. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 8,700. Also indigenous in: Honduras.

Mískito [miq] (Marquito, Miskuto, Mosquito, Mískito). Autonym: Mískitu. *Users*: 114,000 in Nicaragua (2009 UNSD). Ethnic population: 121,000 (2005 census). *Location*: Jinotega department; North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region and South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region; Bihmuna, Bocana de Paiwas, Bonanza, Karawala, Leimus, Prinzapolka, Puerto Cabeza city, Rosita, San Carlos (Río Coco), Sangnilaya, Sisin, Siuna, Tronquera, Wasla, Waspam; Río Coco area and Pearl lagoon to Black river coast and lowlands. *Status*: 6b (Threatened). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Class*: Misumalpan. *Dialects*: Honduran Mískito (Mam), Tawira (Tauira), Baymuna (Baldam, Baymunana), Wanki (Wangki), Cabo (Kabo). Reportedly most similar to Mayangna [yan]. Wanki dialect spoken in Puerto Cabeza area; other dialects in settlements southwest. *Type*: SOV; articles, relatives after noun heads, word order distinguishes subject and object; verb affixes mark person and number; ergative; passive; CVC; nontonal. *Lg Use*: Some young people, all adults. Also use English [eng]. Also use Nicaragua English Creole [bzk]. Also use Spanish [spa]. Used as L2 by Mayangna [yan], Spanish [spa], Ulwa [ulw]. *Lg Dev*: Literacy rate in L1: 52%–58%. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1999. *DLS*: Ascending (0.14). *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Educational materials in Wanki. Christian. *Map*: 15. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 143,000. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Also indigenous in: Honduras.

Nicaragua English Creole [bzk] (Mískito Coast English Creole). Autonym: Creole. *Users*: 18,400 (2009 UNSD). 630 Rama Cay Creole speakers (Holm 1989). *Location*: Scattered. North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region and South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region: Bluefields region, Corn islands, Pearl lagoon, Prinzapolka, Puerto Cabezas, Rama Cay island. *Status*: 3 (Wider communication). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use,

Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Class*: Creole, English based, Atlantic, Western. *Dialects*: Rama Cay English Creole, Bluefields English Creole. *Lg Use*: Positive attitudes. Also use English [eng]. Also use Spanish [spa]. Used as L2 by Mískito [miq], Rama [rma], Spanish [spa], Ulwa [ulw]. *Lg Dev*: Grammar. *DLS*: Emerging (0.02). *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: There is a continuum of variation from basilectal Creole to acrolectal English of the educated. There have been efforts to develop a writing system but nothing has been standardized (2002 SIL). *Map*: 15 (as Nicaragua Creole English).

Nicaraguan Sign Language [ncs] (ISN, Idioma de Señas de Nicaragua, Lengua de Signos Nicaragüense, Lenguaje de Signos Nicaragüense, NSL). *Users*: 6,200 (2019 ANSNIC). Estimated assuming 0.1% of the general population. *Location*: Scattered, especially Managua. *Status*: 5 (Developing). *Class*: Sign language, Deaf community sign language. *Dialects*: None known. Isolate, unrelated to other sign languages. *Lg Use*: Vigorous. Increasing use among hearing people. Used by all. Also use Spanish [spa]. *Lg Dev*: Literature. Videos. Dictionary. *Agency*: Asociación Nacional de Sordos de Nicaragua (ANSNIC). *DLS*: Emerging (0.01). *Other*: Emerged around 1980 among deaf children at newly-established schools in Managua (Senghas and Coppola 2011), with gradually increasing complexity since then. One school has taught literacy using SignWriting, but this is not in widespread use.

Rama [rma]. *Users*: 740 (2009 UNSD). Ethnic population: 4,190 (2005 census). *Location*: South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region: Rama Cay, 30-mile radius. *Status*: 8a (Moribund). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Class*: Chibchan, Chibchan B, Votic. *Lg Use*: Shifted to Nicaragua English Creole [bzk]. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. *DLS*: Still. *Writing*: Unwritten. *Map*: 15.

Spanish [spa] (Castellano, Español). Autonym: Castellano, Español. *Users*: 6,704,000 in Nicaragua, all users. L1 users: 6,510,000 in Nicaragua (Instituto Cervantes 2021). L2 users: 194,000 (Instituto Cervantes 2021). *Status*: 1 (National). Statutory national language (1987, Constitution, Article 11). *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*: Also use Mískito [miq], especially Mestizo speakers. Also use Nicaragua English Creole [bzk]. *Lg Dev*: Taught in all primary and secondary schools. Fully developed. Bible: 1553–2012. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *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.

Subtiaba [sut] (Subtiava). *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last speaker probably died in the

1920s (Bright 1990). Ethnic population: 20,000 (2005 census). *Location*: León department: Pacific slope. *Status*: 9 (Dormant). *Class*: Otomanguean, Western Otomanguean, Tlapanec-Manguean, Tlapanec-Subtiaba. *Lg Use*: Shifted to Spanish [spa]. *DLS*: Still. *Writing*: Unwritten. *Other*: Few traits of pre-conquest culture remain.

Ulwa [ulw] (Sumu, Ulúa, Woolwa). *Users*: 350 (2009 J. Mejia). 83 (2005 census). Ethnic population: 700 (2005 census). *Location*: South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region: Karawala village. *Status*: 6b (Threatened). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Class*: Misumalpan. *Dialects*: None known. Reportedly similar to Mayangna [yan]. *Lg Use*: Some young people, all adults. All also use Mískito [miq] (Salazar 2008). Most also use Spanish [spa] (Salazar 2008). Some also use Nicaragua English Creole [bzk] (Salazar 2008). *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. *DLS*: Still. *Writing*: Unwritten. *Map*: 15.

Language Map



Languages by Population

In this section the languages of Nicaragua 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

Spanish [[spa](#)] *Users*: 6,510,000 in Nicaragua (Instituto Cervantes 2021). 6,704,000 in Nicaragua, all users. L2 users: 194,000 (Instituto Cervantes 2021). *Status*: 1 (National). Statutory national language (1987, Constitution, Article 11). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 559,078,890 (as L1: 485,063,960; as L2: 74,014,930).

100,000 to 999,999

Mískito [[miq](#)] *Users*: 114,000 in Nicaragua (2009 UNSD). Ethnic population: 121,000 (2005 census). *Status*: 6b (Threatened). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 143,000.

10,000 to 99,999

Nicaragua English Creole [[bzk](#)] *Users*: 18,400 (2009 UNSD). 630 Rama Cay Creole speakers (Holm 1989). *Status*: 3 (Wider communication). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4).

Chinese, Mandarin [[cmn](#)] *Users*: 14,000 in Nicaragua (2021 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status*: Unestablished. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,138,222,350 (as L1: 939,237,350; as L2: 198,985,000).

1,000 to 9,999

Mayangna [[yan](#)] *Users*: 8,000 in Nicaragua (Adelaar 2007). 8,540 (2005 census). Ethnic population: 9,760 (2005 census). *Status*: 5* (Developing). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 8,700.

English [[eng](#)] *Users*: 7,000 in Nicaragua (2021 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status*: Unestablished. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120).

Nicaraguan Sign Language [[ncs](#)] *Users*: 6,200 (2019 ANSNIC). Estimated assuming 0.1% of the general population. *Status*: 5 (Developing).

100 to 999

Rama [[rma](#)] *Users*: 740 (2009 UNSD). Ethnic population: 4,190 (2005 census). *Status*: 8a (Moribund). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4).

Ulwa [[ulw](#)] *Users*: 350 (2009 J. Mejia). 83 (2005 census). Ethnic population: 700 (2005 census). *Status*: 6b (Threatened). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4).

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Garifuna [[cab](#)] *Users*: No known L1 speakers in Nicaragua (2012 R. Reeck). Ethnic population: 3,270 (2005 census). *Status*: 9 (Dormant). Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 119,400.

Mangue [[mom](#)] *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last fluent speaker either died or shifted to Spanish by the early 1870s; some rememberers survived into the late 1880s (Brinton 1886). Ethnic population: 46,000 (2005 census). *Status*: 9 (Dormant).

Matagalpa [[mtn](#)] *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last speaker died in 1997. Ethnic population: 15,000 (2005 census). *Status*: 9 (Dormant).

Subtiaba [[sut](#)] *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last speaker probably died in the 1920s (Bright 1990). Ethnic population: 20,000 (2005 census). *Status*: 9 (Dormant).

Languages by Status

In this section the languages of Nicaragua 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)

Spanish [[spa](#)] *Users:* 6,704,000 in Nicaragua, all users. L1 users: 6,510,000 in Nicaragua (Instituto Cervantes 2021). L2 users: 194,000 (Instituto Cervantes 2021). *Status:* Statutory national language (1987, Constitution, Article 11). *Lg Use:* Also use Mískito [[miq](#)], especially Mestizo speakers. Also use Nicaragua English Creole [[bzk](#)]. *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).

3 (Wider communication)

Nicaragua English Creole [[bzk](#)] *Users:* 18,400 (2009 UNSD). 630 Rama Cay Creole speakers (Holm 1989). *Status:* Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Lg Use:* Positive attitudes. Also use English [[eng](#)]. Also use Spanish [[spa](#)]. Used as L2 by Mískito [[miq](#)], Rama [[rma](#)], Spanish [[spa](#)], Ulwa [[ulw](#)]. *Lg Dev:* Grammar. *Writing:* Latin script.

5 (Developing)

Mayangna [[yan](#)] *Users:* 8,000 in Nicaragua (Adelaar 2007). 8,540 (2005 census). Ethnic population: 9,760 (2005 census). *Lg Use:* Also use Mískito [[miq](#)]. Also use Spanish [[spa](#)]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. Bible: 1999. *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 8,700.

Nicaraguan Sign Language [[ncs](#)] *Users:* 6,200 (2019 ANSNIC). Estimated assuming 0.1% of the general population. *Lg Use:* Vigorous. Increasing use among hearing people. Used by all. Also use Spanish [[spa](#)]. *Lg Dev:* Literature. Videos. Dictionary.

6b (Threatened)

Mískito [[miq](#)] *Users:* 114,000 in Nicaragua (2009 UNSD). Ethnic population: 121,000 (2005 census). *Status:* Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Lg Use:* Some young people, all adults. Also use English [[eng](#)]. Also use Nicaragua English Creole [[bzk](#)]. Also use Spanish [[spa](#)]. Used as L2 by Mayangna [[yan](#)], Spanish [[spa](#)], Ulwa [[ulw](#)]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1999.

Writing: Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 143,000.

Ulwa [ulw] *Users:* 350 (2009 J. Mejia). 83 (2005 census). Ethnic population: 700 (2005 census). *Status:* Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Lg Use:* Some young people, all adults. All also use Mískito [miq] (Salazar 2008). Most also use Spanish [spa] (Salazar 2008). Some also use Nicaragua English Creole [bzk] (Salazar 2008). *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. *Writing:* Unwritten.

8a (Moribund)

Rama [rma] *Users:* 740 (2009 UNSD). Ethnic population: 4,190 (2005 census). *Status:* Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Lg Use:* Shifted to Nicaragua English Creole [bzk]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. Grammar. *Writing:* Unwritten.

9 (Dormant)

Garifuna [cab] *Users:* No known L1 speakers in Nicaragua (2012 R. Reeck). Ethnic population: 3,270 (2005 census). *Status:* Recognized language (1993, Official Language Use, Atlantic Autonomous Regions, Law No. 162, Article 4). *Lg Use:* Shifted to Spanish [spa]. *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 119,400.

Mangue [mom] *Users:* No known L1 speakers. The last fluent speaker either died or shifted to Spanish by the early 1870s; some rememberers survived into the late 1880s (Brinton 1886). Ethnic population: 46,000 (2005 census). *Lg Use:* Shifted to Spanish [spa]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary.

Matagalpa [mnt] *Users:* No known L1 speakers. The last speaker died in 1997. Ethnic population: 15,000 (2005 census). *Lg Use:* Shifted to Spanish [spa].

Subtiaba [sut] *Users:* No known L1 speakers. The last speaker probably died in the 1920s (Bright 1990). Ethnic population: 20,000 (2005 census). *Lg Use:* Shifted to Spanish [spa]. *Writing:* Unwritten.

Unestablished

Chinese, Mandarin [cmn] *Users:* 14,000 in Nicaragua (2021 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *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).

English [eng] *Users:* 7,000 in Nicaragua (2021 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Lg Use:* Used as L2 by Mískito [miq], Nicaragua English Creole [bzk]. *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).

Languages by Department

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

Jinotega

Matagalpa [mtn], [12](#)

Mayangna [yan], [12](#)

Mískito [miq], [12](#)

León

Subtiaba [sut], [13](#)

Matagalpa

Matagalpa [mtn], [12](#)

North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region

Mangue [mom], [11](#)

Mayangna [yan], [12](#)

Mískito [miq], [12](#)

Nicaragua English Creole [bzk], [12](#)

South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region

Garifuna [cab], [11](#)

Mískito [miq], [12](#)

Nicaragua English Creole [bzk], [12](#)

Rama [rma], [13](#)

Ulwa [ulw], [14](#)

Languages by Family

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

Chibchan, Chibchan B, Votic

Rama [rma], [13](#)

Creole, English based, Atlantic, Western

Nicaragua English Creole [bzk], [12](#)

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

Spanish [spa], [13](#)

Maipurean, Northern, Maritime, Ta-Maipurean, Iñeri

Garifuna [cab], [11](#)

Misumalpan

Mayangna [yan], [12](#)

Mískito [miq], [12](#)

Ulwa [ulw], [14](#)

Misumalpan, Sumu-Cacaopera-Matagalpa, Cacaopera-Matagalpa

Matagalpa [mtn], [12](#)

Otomanguean, Western Otomanguean, Tlapanec-Manguean, Tlapanec-Subtiaba

Subtiaba [sut], [13](#)

Sign language, Deaf community sign language

Nicaraguan Sign Language [ncs], [13](#)

Unclassified

Mangue [mom], [11](#)

Language Code Index

This index gives an alphabetical listing of all 13 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/>.

bzk	Nicaragua English Creole, 12	ncs	Nicaraguan Sign Language, 13
cab	Garifuna, 11	rma	Rama, 13
cmn	Chinese, Mandarin, 11	spa	Spanish, 13
eng	English, 11	sut	Subtiaba, 13
miq	Mískito, 12	ulw	Ulwa (Nicaragua), 14
mom	Mangue, 11	yan	Mayangna, 12
mtn	Matagalpa, 12		

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.

- Baldam**, *alt. dial.* Miskito [miq], 12
- Baymuna**, *dial.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Baymunana**, *alt. dial.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Black Carib**, *alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Bluefields English Creole**, *dial.* Nicaragua English Creole [bzk], 12
- Cabo**, *dial.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Caribe**, *alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Castellano**, *alt.* Spanish [spa], 13
- Castellano centroamericano**, *alt. dial.* Spanish [spa], 13
- Central American Carib**, *alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Central American Spanish**, *dial.* Spanish [spa], 13
- Mandarin Chinese**, *see* Chinese, Mandarin [cmn], 11
- Chorotega**, *alt.* Mangue [mom], 11
- Creole**, *alt.* Nicaragua English Creole [bzk], 12
- Español**, *alt.* Spanish [spa], 13
- Español centroamericano**, *alt. dial.* Spanish [spa], 13
- Garifuna** [cab], 11
- Garífuna**, *alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Honduran Mískito**, *dial.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Idioma de Señas de Nicaragua**, *alt.* Nicaraguan Sign Language [ncs], 13
- ISN**, *alt.* Nicaraguan Sign Language [ncs], 13
- Kabo**, *alt. dial.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Lengua de Signos Nicaragüense**, *alt.* Nicaraguan Sign Language [ncs], 13
- Lenguaje de Signos Nicaragüense**, *alt.* Nicaraguan Sign Language [ncs], 13
- Mam**, *alt. dial.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Mangue** [mom], 11
- Marquito**, *alt.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Matagalpa** [mtn], 12
- Mayangna** [yan], 12, 15
- Mískito** [miq], 12, 15
- Mískito Coast English Creole**, *alt.* Nicaragua English Creole [bzk], 12
- Mískitu**, *alt.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Miskuto**, *alt.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Mísquito**, *alt.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Monimbo**, *alt.* Mangue [mom], 11
- Moreno**, *pej. alt.* Garifuna [cab], 11
- Mosquito**, *alt.* Mískito [miq], 12
- Nicaragua English Creole** [bzk], 12, 15
- Nicaraguan Sign Language** [ncs], 13, 0
- NSL**, *alt.* Nicaraguan Sign Language [ncs], 13
- Panamaca**, *alt. dial.* Mayangna [yan], 12
- Panamahka**, *dial.* Mayangna [yan], 12
- Pantasma**, *alt.* Matagalpa [mtn], 12

Rama [rma], 13, 15

Rama Cay English Creole, *dial.* Nicaragua
English Creole [bzk], 12

Spanish [spa], 13

Subtiaba [sut], 13

Subtiava, *alt.* Subtiaba [sut], 13

Sumu, *alt.* Ulwa [ulw], 14
pej. alt. Mayangna [yan], 12

Taguasca, *alt. dial.* Mayangna [yan], 12

Tauira, *alt. dial.* Mískito [miq], 12

Tawira, *dial.* Mískito [miq], 12

Tuahka, *dial.* Mayangna [yan], 12

Ulúa, *alt.* Ulwa [ulw], 14

Ulwa [ulw], 14, 15

Wangki, *alt. dial.* Mískito [miq], 12

Wanki, *dial.* Mískito [miq], 12

Woolwa, *alt.* Ulwa [ulw], 14

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