

Ethnologue: Languages of Somalia

Twenty-sixth edition data

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Based on information from the *Ethnologue*, 26th edition:

Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2023.
Ethnologue: Languages of the World. Twenty-sixth edition. Dallas, Texas:
SIL International. Online: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

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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	15
Languages by Population	16
Languages by Status	18
Languages by Region	20
Languages by Family	21
Language Code Index	22
Language Name Index	23
Bibliography	25

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List of Abbreviations

A	Agent in constituent word order
ACHPR	African Charter on Human Peoples' Rights (1987)
<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
<i>dial.</i>	primary dialect name for
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
SOV	Subject-Object-Verb
<i>Type</i>	Typological information
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
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 Somalia 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 Somalia. 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

Region” (page 20) lists the top-level administrative subdivisions of Somalia and the languages located within each. “Languages by Family” (page 21) lists the languages by their linguistic classifications. “Language Code Index” (page 22) 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 23) lists every name that appears in the language listings as a primary or alternate name of a language or dialect. A total of 44 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 25). 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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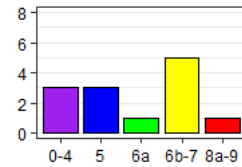
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Country Overview

Name of country	Somalia
Other names	Federal Republic of Somalia
Population	16,360,000 (2021 census)
Comments	Population figure unreliable, as many areas not open for census enumeration.
Principal language	Somali
Literacy rate	38% (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina 2018)
International conventions	ACHPR (1985), ICCPR (1990), UNCRC (2019)
General references	Campbell and King 2011, Lamberti 1986

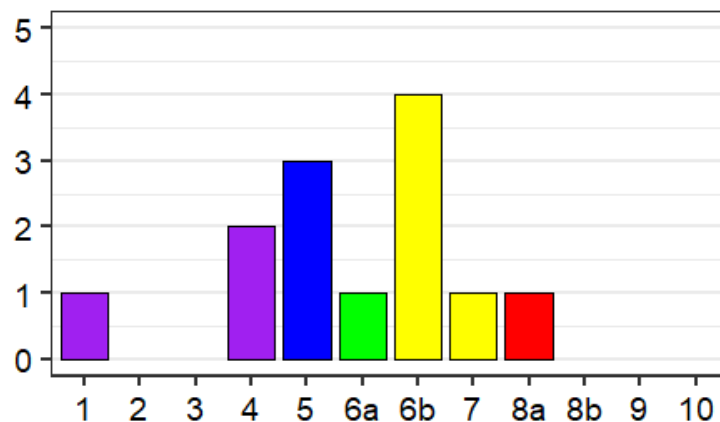
Language counts	<p>The number of established languages listed for Somalia is 13. All are living languages. Of these, 10 are indigenous and 3 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 3 are institutional, 3 are developing, 1 is vigorous, 5 are in trouble, and 1 is dying. Also listed is 1 unestablished language.</p>
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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 Somalia 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 Somalia. 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 Somalia 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 Somalia 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
10,000,000 to 99,999,999	1	7.7	7.7%	11,200,000	78.66407	78.66407%
1,000,000 to 9,999,999	1	7.7	15.4%	2,500,000	17.55894	96.22301%
100,000 to 999,999	1	7.7	23.1%	274,000	1.92446	98.14747%
10,000 to 99,999	6	46.2	69.2%	257,200	1.80646	99.95393%
1,000 to 9,999	1	7.7	76.9%	6,500	0.04565	99.99959%
10 to 99	1	7.7	84.6%	59	0.00041	100.00000%
Unknown	2	15.4	100.0%			
<i>Totals</i>	13	100.0		14,237,759	100.00000	

Summary by language status

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of living established languages in Somalia 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 Somalia. 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	7.7	7.7%	11,200,000	78.6641	78.6641%	11,200,000	11,200,000
4	2	15.4	23.1%	Unknown				
5	3	23.1	46.2%	2,815,600	19.7756	98.4396%	938,533	274,000
6a	1	7.7	53.8%	83,600	0.5872	99.0268%	83,600	83,600
6b	4	30.8	84.6%	132,000	0.9271	99.9539%	33,000	33,000
7	1	7.7	92.3%	6,500	0.0457	99.9996%	6,500	6,500
8a	1	7.7	100.0%	59	0.0004	100.0000%	59	59
<i>Totals</i>	13	100.0		14,237,759	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			
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>
Afro-Asiatic	9	69.2	13,924,259	97.8	1,547,140	37,300
Indo-European	2	15.4	6,500	0.0	3,250	6,500
Niger-Congo	2	15.4	307,000	2.2	153,500	153,500
<i>Totals</i>	13	100.0	14,237,759	100.0		

Alphabetical Listing of Languages

Arabic, Standard [arb]. *Users*: 2,050,000 in Somalia (2015 SIL), all users. *Status*: 4 (Educational). Statutory language of national identity (2012, Constitution, Article 5), designated as the ‘second language’ of Somalia. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic. *Type*: VSO; prepositions; noun head initial; gender (masculine/feminine); dual number; definite and indefinite affixes; case-marking (3 cases); verb affixes mark number, gender of subject; aspect; 28 consonant and 6 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; stress on first syllable; trilateral roots, few affixes. *Lg Use*: Most Somalis have very limited or no proficiency in Arabic. Used as L2 by Somali [som]. *Lg Dev*: Taught as subject in all primary and secondary schools. Fully developed. Bible: 1645–2008. *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant, primary usage. Braille script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 273,989,700. Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: Saudi Arabia. Also established in 30 other countries and unestablished in 1 more.

Arabic, Ta'izzi-Adeni Spoken [acq]. *Users*: 17,000 in Somalia (2019). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic. *Lg Dev*: Grammar. *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 11,856,700. Global EGIDS level: 3 (Wider communication). Indigenous in: Yemen. Also established in: Djibouti, Ethiopia. Unestablished in: Egypt, Kenya, Kuwait, Libya, Madagascar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States.

Boon [bnl] (Af-Boon). *Users*: 59 (2000). *Location*: Jubbada Dhexe region: Jilib district, bush settlements. *Status*: 8a (Moribund). *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East. *Dialects*: None known. Reportedly similar to Somali [som]. *Lg Use*: Older adults only. Shifted to Maay [ymm]. *DLS*: Still. *Other*: Distinct from Boni [bob]. ‘Boon’, low caste, including Yibir, Midgaan (Midgo, language Af-Midgood), Madiban, Tumal, Yahar, Yihir, and other clans.

Dabarre [dbr] (Af-Dabarre). *Users*: 33,000 (2019). *Location*: Bay region: Dhiinsoor district area, Dabaare; Jubbada Dhexe region: Bu'aale district; Shabeellaha Hoose region: Sablaade district. *Status*: 6b* (Threatened). *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Somali. *Dialects*: Dabarre, Iroole (Af-Iroole). A very distinctive language in the Digil clan family. Dialects are clan names. *Lg Use*: Also use Maay [ymm]. *DLS*: Still. *Other*: Muslim. *Map*: 15.

English [eng]. Autonym: English. *Location*: Scattered. *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 Dev*: Used as language of instruction in all secondary schools along with Standard Arabic [arb]. 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 167 other countries and unestablished in 16 more.

Garre [gex] (Af-Garre, Karre). *Users*: 83,600 in Somalia (2019). Ethnic population: 114,000 (2020 Joshua Project). *Location*: Bay region: southeast border area; Shabeellaha Hoose region: Qoryoley and Wanla Weyne districts. *Status*: 6a* (Vigorous). *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Somali. *Dialects*: None known. Reportedly linguistically similar to Boni [bob]. *Lg Use*: Also use Maay [ymm]. *Lg Dev*: Grammar. *Other*: Part of the Hawiye clan family. Consider themselves part of the Garreh people in Kenya, though they now speak different languages. Some ethnic Garre in Somalia speak Maay [ymm] as L1. Muslim. *Map*: 15. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 685,600. Also indigenous in: Kenya.

Italian [ita] (Italiano, Talyaaniga). Autonym: Italiano. *Users*: 6,500 in Somalia (2019). *Location*: Scattered. *Status*: 7 (Shifting). *Class*: Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Italo-Dalmatian. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; gender (masculine/feminine); definite and indefinite articles; verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense; comparatives; 23 consonant and 7 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; stress mostly on penultimate syllable. *Lg Use*: Lost official status in 2012. It is used mostly by the elderly, government officials, and in educated circles. Adults only. Shifting to Somali [som]. Used as L2 by Somali [som]. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. Bible: 1471–1985. *Writing*: Braille script, used since 1974. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 67,935,480 (as L1: 64,647,380; as L2: 3,288,100). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Croatia, Italy, San Marino, Slovenia, Switzerland. Also established in 11 other countries and unestablished in 35 more.

Jiiddu [jii] (Af-Jiiddu, Jiddu). *Users*: 33,000 (2019). *Location*: Shabeellaha Hoose region: west of Moqdisho. *Status*: 6b* (Threatened). *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Somali. *Dialects*: Distinct from Somali [som] and Tunni [tqq], usually grouped under Digil dialects or languages. Different sentence structure and phonology from Somali. More similar to Somali than to Baiso [bsw]. Reportedly some similarities to Konsoid languages and to Gedeo [drs], Alaba-Kabeena [alw], Hadiyya [hdy], and Kambaata [ktb]. *Lg Use*: Spoken by the Jiiddu clan. Ethnic Jiiddu in Bale Province, Ethiopia speak Oromo as L1. Also use Maay [ymm]. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. *DLS*: Still. *Other*: Muslim. *Map*: 15.

Maay [ymm] (Af-Maay, Af-Maay Tiri, Af-May, Af-Maymay, Maay Maay, Mai Mai, Rahanween, Rahanweyn). Autonym: Af-maay. *Users*: 2,500,000 in Somalia (2019). *Location*: Bakool, Bay, Gedo, Hiiraan, Jubbada Dhexe, Jubbada Hoose, and Shabeellaha Hoose regions. Bakool and Bay regions (Maay Erte dialect); Jubbada Dhexe and Jubbada Hoose (Maay Dhete dialect). *Status*: 5* (Developing). *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Somali. *Dialects*: Maay Erte (Central Somali), Maay Dhete (Af-Goshe, Af-Shambarro, Lower Juba Maay, Mahaway), Af-Helledi. May be more than 1 language; dialects form a continuum. Within the Maay dialect continuum, at least two dialect groupings may be discerned, largely between the Digil clans (e.g. Wenle Weyn) and the Mirifle clans (based on Bay Bakool). The Digil consider

themselves the ‘royal clan class’ of the Maay-speaking Rahanweyn. Somali [som] is difficult or unintelligible to Maay speakers, except when learned through mass communications, urbanization, and internal movement. Different sentence structure and phonology from Somali. Af-Helledi is a Maay secret language used by hunters. The Maay Erte dialect is more developed, with an orthography and a dictionary (2020 D. Rossbach). *Lg Use*: Used as L2 by Boon [bnl], Dabarre [dbr], Garre [gex], Jiiddu [jii], Mushungulu [xma], Tunni [tqq]. *Lg Dev*: Radio. Videos. Dictionary. Bible portions: 2006–2007. *DLS*: Emerging (0.05). *Writing*: Latin script, used by Maay Erte dialect. *Other*: Muslim. *Map*: 15. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 2,608,000. Unestablished in: Ethiopia, Kenya.

Mushungulu [xma] (Chizigula, Kimushungulu, Mushunguli). *Users*: 33,000 (2019). *Location*: Jubbada Hoose region: Jamaame district; urban areas Kismaayo and Muqdisho. *Status*: 6b* (Threatened). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, G, Zigula-Zaramo (G.311). *Dialects*: None known. May be the same as, or intelligible of, Zigula [ziw] or Shambala [ksb]. *Lg Use*: Also use Maay [ymm]. Also use Somali [som]. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. *DLS*: Still. *Other*: Descended from fugitive slaves who escaped from Somali masters in Middle Shabeelle region around 1840. Muslim, traditional religion. *Map*: 15.

Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax] (Afaan Oromoo, Southern Oromo). Autonym: Afaan Oromoo. *Users*: 41,600 in Somalia (2000). *Location*: Gedo region. *Status*: 5* (Developing). *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Oromo. *Dialect*: Borana (Booran, Boran). *Type*: SOV; postpositions; gender (masculine/feminine); case-marking (7 cases); verb affixes mark person, number, gender of subject; passives (active, middle, passive); tense and aspect; 25 consonant and 10 vowel phonemes; pitch accent. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. Bible: 1967. *Writing*: Ethiopic script, no longer in use. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: The Oromo variety in Gedo is probably Borana; that in the Lower Jubba region is probably Orma [orc]. The Oromo spoken in the Lower Jubba region may actually be Orma. The Orma controlled that area until the mid or late 19th century. They move from lower Tana River inland toward Kitui District during rainy season. Muslim. *Map*: 15. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 8,448,600. Also indigenous in: Ethiopia, Kenya (Borana).

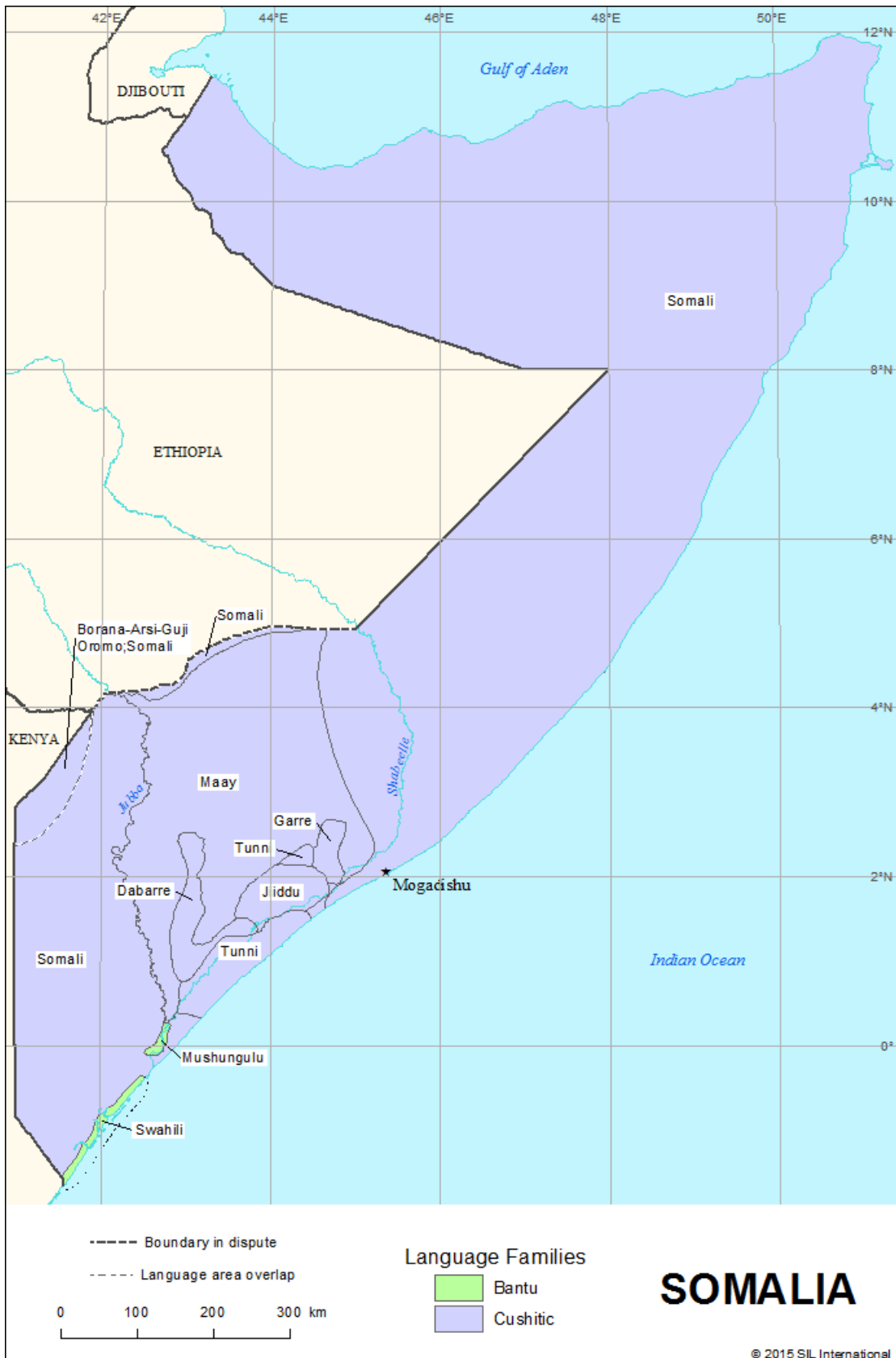
Somali [som] (Af-Maxaad Tiri, Common Somali, Soomaaliga, Standard Somali). Autonym: Af-Soomaali, Afka Soomaaliga. *Users*: 11,200,000 in Somalia (2019). *Location*: Widespread. *Status*: 1 (National). Statutory national language (2012, Constitution, Article 5). *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Somali. *Dialects*: Northern Somali, Benaadir, Af-Ashraaf (Ashraaf). Northern Somali is basis for standard Somali. Readily intelligible to Benaadir Somali speakers, but difficult or unintelligible to most Maay [ymm]. Those in Merka and Muqdisho speak Af-Ashraaf, a distinct variety which may have limited inherent intelligibility of standard Somali. *Type*: SOV; prepositions; noun head initial; gender (masculine/feminine); enclitic definite article; verb affixes mark number, person, gender of subject; tense; comparatives; 22 consonant and 10 vowel phonemes; tonal (3 grammatical tones: high, low, falling); inclusive/exclusive pronouns. *Lg Use*: Language of most of the people of the country. Also use Italian [ita]. Also use Standard Arabic [arb]. *Lg Dev*: Literacy rate in L2: 25% in cities, 10% rural.

Taught in all primary schools. Literature. Radio. Videos. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1979. *DLS*: Vital (0.61). *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant, no longer in use. Latin script, used since 1972. Osmanya script, no longer in use. *Other*: Muslim. *Map*: 15. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 22,044,840 (as L1: 21,937,940; as L2: 106,900). Also indigenous in: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya. Unestablished in: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Yemen.

Swahili [swh] (Kiswahili). Autonym: Kiswahili. *Users*: 274,000 in Somalia (2019). *Location*: Jubbada Hoose region: Kismayuu south to Kenya border (Bajuni dialect); Baraawe and dispersed in southern towns (Mwini dialect). *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, G, Swahili (G.42). *Dialects*: Mwini (Af-Chimwiini, Barawa, Barwaani, Bravanese, Chimbilazi, Chimiini, Chimwiini, Mbalazi, Miini, Mwiini), Bajuni (Af-Bajuun, al-Jaziira, Bajun, Gunya, Kibajuni, Tikuu). *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head initial; 18 noun classes; no articles; verb affixes mark person, number, object; passives; causatives; comparatives; 22 consonant and 5 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; stress on penultimate syllable. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. Bible: 1891–2017. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script. *Other*: May have come centuries ago from Zanzibar. *Map*: 15. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 71,558,080 (as L1: 16,164,680; as L2: 55,393,400). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Also indigenous in: Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania. Also established in: Burundi, Oman, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda. Unestablished in: Australia, Canada, Comoros, Finland, Madagascar, Mayotte, New Zealand, Réunion, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States.

Tunni [tqq] (Af-Tunni). *Users*: 33,000 (2019). *Location*: Jubbada Dhexe and Shabeellaha Hoose regions: Baraawe, Dhiinsoor, and Jilib districts; Bay and Jubbada Hoose regions. *Status*: 6b* (Threatened). *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Somali. *Dialects*: Distinct from Somali [som] or Jiiddu [jii], usually grouped under the Digil dialects or languages. Different sentence structure and phonology from Somali [som]. *Lg Use*: Also use Maay [ymm]. *DLS*: Still. *Other*: Maay [ymm] language influences. Nomadic. Muslim. *Map*: 15.

Language Map



Languages by Population

In this section the languages of Somalia 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.

10,000,000 to 99,999,999

Somali [[som](#)] *Users:* 11,200,000 in Somalia (2019). *Status:* 1 (National). Statutory national language (2012, Constitution, Article 5). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 22,044,840 (as L1: 21,937,940; as L2: 106,900).

1,000,000 to 9,999,999

Maay [[ymm](#)] *Users:* 2,500,000 in Somalia (2019). *Status:* 5* (Developing). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 2,608,000.

100,000 to 999,999

Swahili [[swh](#)] *Users:* 274,000 in Somalia (2019). *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 71,558,080 (as L1: 16,164,680; as L2: 55,393,400).

10,000 to 99,999

Garre [[gex](#)] *Users:* 83,600 in Somalia (2019). Ethnic population: 114,000 (2020 Joshua Project). *Status:* 6a* (Vigorous). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 685,600.

Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [[gax](#)] *Users:* 41,600 in Somalia (2000). *Status:* 5* (Developing). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 8,448,600.

Dabarre [[dbr](#)] *Users:* 33,000 (2019). *Status:* 6b* (Threatened).

Jiiddle [[jii](#)] *Users:* 33,000 (2019). *Status:* 6b* (Threatened).

Mushungulu [[xma](#)] *Users:* 33,000 (2019). *Status:* 6b* (Threatened).

Tunni [[tqq](#)] *Users:* 33,000 (2019). *Status:* 6b* (Threatened).

Arabic, Ta'izzi-Adeni Spoken [[acq](#)] *Users:* 17,000 in Somalia (2019). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 11,856,700.

1,000 to 9,999

Italian [[ita](#)] *Users:* 6,500 in Somalia (2019). *Status:* 7 (Shifting). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 67,935,480 (as L1: 64,647,380; as L2: 3,288,100).

10 to 99

Boon [[bnl](#)] *Users:* 59 (2000). *Status:* 8a (Moribund).

Unknown

Arabic, Standard [[arb](#)] *Users:* 2,050,000 in Somalia (2015 SIL), all users. *Status:* 4 (Educational). Statutory language of national identity (2012, Constitution, Article 5), designated as the ‘second language’ of Somalia. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 273,989,700.

English [[eng](#)] *Status:* 4 (Educational). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120).

Languages by Status

In this section the languages of Somalia 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)

Somali [som] *Users:* 11,200,000 in Somalia (2019). *Status:* Statutory national language (2012, Constitution, Article 5). *Lg Use:* Language of most of the people of the country. Also use Italian [ita]. Also use Standard Arabic [arb]. *Lg Dev:* Literature. Radio. Videos. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1979. *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant, no longer in use. Latin script, used since 1972. Osmanya script, no longer in use. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 22,044,840 (as L1: 21,937,940; as L2: 106,900).

4 (Educational)

Arabic, Standard [arb] *Users:* 2,050,000 in Somalia (2015 SIL), all users. *Status:* Statutory language of national identity (2012, Constitution, Article 5), designated as the ‘second language’ of Somalia. *Lg Use:* Most Somalis have very limited or no proficiency in Arabic. Used as L2 by Somali [som]. *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant, primary usage. Braille script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 273,989,700.

English [eng] *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).

5 (Developing)

Maay [ymm] *Users:* 2,500,000 in Somalia (2019). *Lg Use:* Used as L2 by Boon [bnl], Dabarre [dbr], Garre [gex], Jiiddu [jii], Mushungulu [xma], Tunni [tqq]. *Lg Dev:* Radio. Videos. Dictionary. Bible portions: 2006–2007. *Writing:* Latin script, used by Maay Erte dialect. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 2,608,000.

Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax] *Users:* 41,600 in Somalia (2000). *Writing:* Ethiopic script, no longer in use. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 8,448,600.

5 (Dispersed)

Swahili [swh] *Users:* 274,000 in Somalia (2019). *Writing:* Braille script. Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 71,558,080 (as L1: 16,164,680; as L2: 55,393,400).

6a (Vigorous)

Garre [gex] *Users:* 83,600 in Somalia (2019). Ethnic population: 114,000 (2020 Joshua Project).
Lg Use: Also use Maay [ymm]. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 685,600.

6b (Threatened)

Dabarre [dbr] *Users:* 33,000 (2019). *Lg Use:* Also use Maay [ymm].

Jiiddle [jii] *Users:* 33,000 (2019). *Lg Use:* Spoken by the Jiiddle clan. Ethnic Jiiddle in Bale Province, Ethiopia speak Oromo as L1. Also use Maay [ymm]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary.

Mushungulu [xma] *Users:* 33,000 (2019). *Lg Use:* Also use Maay [ymm]. Also use Somali [som]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary.

Tunni [tqq] *Users:* 33,000 (2019). *Lg Use:* Also use Maay [ymm].

7 (Shifting)

Italian [ita] *Users:* 6,500 in Somalia (2019). *Lg Use:* Lost official status in 2012. It is used mostly by the elderly, government officials, and in educated circles. Adults only. Shifting to Somali [som]. Used as L2 by Somali [som]. *Writing:* Braille script, used since 1974. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 67,935,480 (as L1: 64,647,380; as L2: 3,288,100).

8a (Moribund)

Boon [bnl] *Users:* 59 (2000). *Lg Use:* Older adults only. Shifted to Maay [ymm].

Unestablished

Arabic, Ta'izzi-Adeni Spoken [acq] *Users:* 17,000 in Somalia (2019). *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 11,856,700.

Languages by Region

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

Bakool

Maay [ymm], [12](#)

Bay

Dabarre [dbr], [11](#)

Garre [gex], [12](#)

Maay [ymm], [12](#)

Tunni [tqq], [14](#)

Gedo

Maay [ymm], [12](#)

Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax], [13](#)

Hiiraan

Maay [ymm], [12](#)

Jubbada Dhexe

Boon [bnl], [11](#)

Dabarre [dbr], [11](#)

Maay [ymm], [12](#)

Tunni [tqq], [14](#)

Jubbada Hoose

Maay [ymm], [12](#)

Mushungulu [xma], [13](#)

Swahili [swh], [14](#)

Tunni [tqq], [14](#)

Shabeellaha Hoose

Dabarre [dbr], [11](#)

Garre [gex], [12](#)

Jiiddle [jii], [12](#)

Maay [ymm], [12](#)

Tunni [tqq], [14](#)

Languages by Family

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

Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East

Boon [bnl], [11](#)

Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Oromo

Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax], [13](#)

Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Somali

Dabarre [dbr], [11](#)

Garre [gex], [12](#)

Jiiddu [jii], [12](#)

Maay [ymm], [12](#)

Somali [som], [13](#)

Tunni [tqq], [14](#)

Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic

Arabic, Standard [arb], [11](#)

Indo-European, Germanic, West, English

English [eng], [11](#)

Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Italo-Dalmatian

Italian [ita], [12](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, G, Swahili (G.42)

Swahili [swh], [14](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, G, Zigula-Zaramo (G.311)

Mushungulu [xma], [13](#)

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/>.

acq	Arabic, Ta'izzi-Adeni Spoken, 11	ita	Italian, 12
arb	Arabic, Standard, 11	jii	Jiiddu, 12
bnl	Boon, 11	som	Somali, 13
dbr	Dabarre, 11	swh	Swahili, 14
eng	English, 11	tqq	Tunni, 14
gax	Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji, 13	xma	Mushungulu, 13
gex	Garre, 12	ymm	Maay, 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.

- Afaan Oromoo**, *alt.* Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax], 13
- Af-Ashraaf**, *dial.* Somali [som], 13
- Af-Bajuun**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Af-Boon**, *alt.* Boon [bnl], 11
- Af-Chimwiini**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Af-Dabarre**, *alt.* Dabarre [dbr], 11
- Af-Garre**, *alt.* Garre [gex], 12
- Af-Goshe**, *alt. dial.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Af-Helledi**, *dial.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Af-Iroole**, *alt. dial.* Dabarre [dbr], 11
- Af-Jiiddu**, *alt.* Jiiddu [jii], 12
- Afka Soomaaliga**, *alt.* Somali [som], 13
- Af-Maay**, *alt.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Af-Maay Tiri**, *alt.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Af-Maxaad Tiri**, *alt.* Somali [som], 13
- Af-May**, *alt.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Af-Maymay**, *alt.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Af-Shambarro**, *alt. dial.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Af-Soomaali**, *alt.* Somali [som], 13
- Af-Tunni**, *alt.* Tunni [tqq], 14
- al-Jaziira**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Arabic, Standard** [arb], 11
see Arabic, Standard [arb], 11
- Ta'izzi-Adeni Spoken Arabic**, *see* Arabic, Ta'izzi-Adeni Spoken [acq], 11
- Ashraaf**, *alt. dial.* Somali [som], 13
- Bajun**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Bajuni**, *dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Barawa**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Barwaani**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Benaadir**, *dial.* Somali [som], 13
- Boon** [bnl], 11
- Booran**, *alt. dial.* Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax], 13
- Boran**, *alt. dial.* Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax], 13
- Borana**, *dial.* Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax], 13
- Bravanese**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Central Somali**, *alt. dial.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Chimbalazi**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Chimiini**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Chimwiini**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Chizigula**, *alt.* Mushungulu [xma], 13
- Common Somali**, *alt.* Somali [som], 13
- Dabarre** [dbr], 11, 15
dial. Dabarre [dbr], 11
- English** [eng], 11
- Garre** [gex], 12, 15
- Gunya**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Iroole**, *dial.* Dabarre [dbr], 11

- Italian** [ita], 12
- Italiano**, *alt.* Italian [ita], 12
- Jiddu**, *alt.* Jiiddu [jii], 12
- Jiiddu** [jii], 12, 15
- Karre**, *alt.* Garre [gex], 12
- Kibajuni**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Kimushungulu**, *alt.* Mushungulu [xma], 13
- Kiswahili**, *alt.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Lower Juba Maay**, *alt. dial.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Maay** [ymm], 12, 15
- Maay Dhete**, *dial.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Maay Erte**, *dial.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Maay Maay**, *alt.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Mahaway**, *alt. dial.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Mai Mai**, *alt.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Mbalazi**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Miini**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Mushunguli**, *alt.* Mushungulu [xma], 13
- Mushungulu** [xma], 13, 15
- Mwiini**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Mwini**, *dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Northern Somali**, *dial.* Somali [som], 13
- Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji** [gax], 13, 15
see Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax], 13
- Rahanween**, *alt.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Rahanweyn**, *alt.* Maay [ymm], 12
- Somali** [som], 13, 15
- Soomaaliga**, *alt.* Somali [som], 13
- Southern Oromo**, *alt.* Oromo, Borana-Arsi-Guji [gax], 13
- Standard Somali**, *alt.* Somali [som], 13
- Swahili** [swh], 14, 15
- Talyaaniga**, *alt.* Italian [ita], 12
- Tikuu**, *alt. dial.* Swahili [swh], 14
- Tunni** [tqq], 14, 15

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