

Ethnologue: Languages of Tunisia

Twenty-sixth edition data

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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
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)
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
SIL	SIL International
<i>Type</i>	Typological information
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)
V	Vowel in canonical syllable patterns
WFD	World Federation of the Deaf

How to Use This Digest

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

The “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) provides detailed information on the 15 languages listed in the *Ethnologue* for the country of Tunisia. This includes languages that are indigenous to the country, languages that have developed well-established multigenerational speaker communities after immigrating in the past, and languages that have a significant presence in the country but are not established (that is, not being transmitted to the next generation within the country). A complete language entry has the following form and content:

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

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

Many ways of finding languages are provided. “Languages by Population” (page 15) lists the languages in order of their first-language speaker populations. “Languages by Status” (page 17) lists the languages by their level of development or endangerment as measured on EGIDS, the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Lewis and Simons 2010). “Languages by Family” (page 19) lists the languages by their linguistic classifications. “Language Code Index” (page 20) 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 21) lists every name that appears in the language listings as a primary or alternate name of a language or dialect. A total of 25 unique names are associated with the 15 languages described in this digest.

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

(page 23). The published sources are cited using standard in-text citations enclosed in parentheses, consisting of the author's or editor's surname followed by the year of publication. Unpublished sources including personal communications and unpublished reports are also acknowledged when specific statements or facts are attributed to them. They are identified using in-text citations enclosed in parentheses in which the year of the communication is given first, followed by the source's first initial and surname. In such a case, there is no corresponding entry in the bibliography.

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

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

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Country Overview

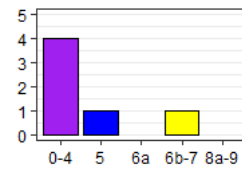
Name of country	Tunisia
Other names	Republic of Tunisia
Population	11,936,000 (2021 UNDESA)
Principal languages	Standard Arabic, Tunisian Spoken Arabic
Literacy rate	82% (2015 World Factbook)
Deaf population	21,240
International conventions	ACHPR (1983), CDE (1969), CPPDCE (2007), CSICH (2006), ICCPR (1969), UNCRPD (2008), UNDRIP (2007)
General references	Applegate 1970, Cohen 1985, S'hiri 1994

Language counts

The number of established languages listed for Tunisia is 8. Of these, 6 are living and 2 are extinct. Of the living languages, 2 are indigenous and 4 are non-indigenous.

Furthermore, 4 are institutional, 1 is developing,

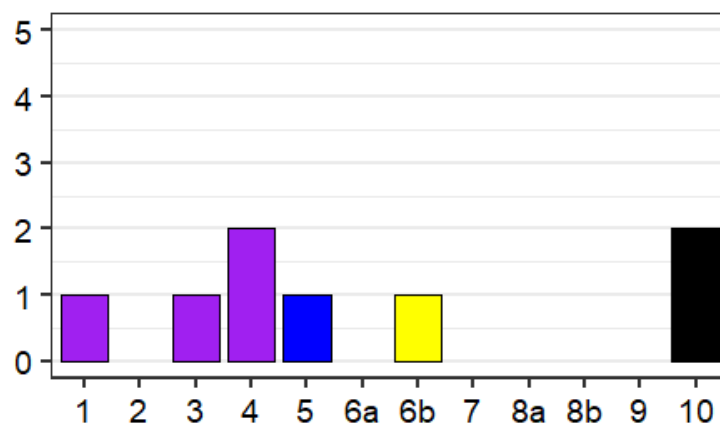
and 1 is in trouble. Also listed are 7 unestablished languages.



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 Tunisia with respect to their status of language development versus language endangerment. This includes all of the languages appearing in the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) that report an EGIDS level after *Status*; macrolanguages and unestablished languages are not included in the profile. The horizontal axis plots the estimated level of development or endangerment as measured on the EGIDS scale (Lewis and Simons 2010). The height of each bar indicates the number of languages that are estimated to be at the given level. Consult “Languages by Status” (page 17) in order to see the specific languages for each level.



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

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

Statistical Summaries

The “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) provides a detailed listing of all the languages of Tunisia. 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 Tunisia 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 Tunisia by number of L1 speakers. The *Population range* column categorizes the sizes of the languages by order of magnitude (in terms of the number of digits in the population of first-language speakers). Consult “Languages by Population” (page 15) for a listing of the specific languages in each range category.

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

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

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

Population range	Living languages			Number of speakers		
	Count	Percent	Cumulative	Total	Percent	Cumulative
10,000,000 to 99,999,999	1	16.7	16.7%	10,800,000	99.32039	99.32039%
10,000 to 99,999	2	33.3	50.0%	71,200	0.65478	99.97517%
1,000 to 9,999	2	33.3	83.3%	2,700	0.02483	100.00000%
Unknown	1	16.7	100.0%			
<i>Totals</i>	6	100.0		10,873,900	100.00000	

Summary by language status

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of living established languages in Tunisia by their status in terms of language development or language endangerment. The *EGIDS* column categorizes the languages by their level on the EGIDS scale. Consult “Languages by Status” (page 17) for a

listing of the specific languages that have been assigned to each level. Note that the EGIDS level reported here is for the status of the language in Tunisia. 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	16.7	16.7%	Unknown				
3	1	16.7	33.3%	10,800,000	99.3204	99.3204%	10,800,000	10,800,000
4	2	33.3	66.7%	2,700	0.0248	99.3452%	1,350	1,350
5	1	16.7	83.3%	21,200	0.1950	99.5402%	21,200	21,200
6b	1	16.7	100.0%	50,000	0.4598	100.0000%	50,000	50,000
<i>Totals</i>	6	100.0		10,873,900	100.0000			

Summary by language family

The genealogical classifications given in the language entries of the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 10) 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
Afro-Asiatic	3	50.0	10,850,000	99.8	3,616,667	5,425,000
Indo-European	2	33.3	2,700	0.0	1,350	1,350
Sign language	1	16.7	21,200	0.2	21,200	21,200
<i>Totals</i>	6	100.0	10,873,900	100.0		

Alphabetical Listing of Languages

Arabic, Algerian Saharan Spoken [aao]. *Users*: 68,000 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic. *Lg Dev*: Grammar. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 249,400. Global EGIDS level: 6a (Vigorous). Indigenous in: Algeria. Also established in: Egypt, Niger.

Arabic, Algerian Spoken [arq]. *Users*: 268,000 in Tunisia (2016). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. NT: 1965. *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 41,433,600 (as L1: 35,693,600; as L2: 5,740,000). Global EGIDS level: 3 (Wider communication). Indigenous in: Algeria. Also established in: Egypt. Unestablished in: Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sudan, United States.

Arabic, Levantine [apc]. *Users*: 23,000 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic. *Lg Dev*: Radio. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible portions: 1940–1973. *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 47,595,360 (as L1: 47,236,360; as L2: 359,000). Global EGIDS level: 3 (Wider communication). Indigenous in: Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Turkey. Also established in: Mexico. Unestablished in: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Côte d’Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, France, French Guiana, Gambia, Germany, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Kuwait, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Martinique, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Portugal, Qatar (North Levantine Spoken Arabic), Saudi Arabia (North Levantine Spoken Arabic), Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Yemen.

Arabic, Libyan Spoken [ayl]. *Users*: 293,000 in Tunisia (2016). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic. *Type*: VSO. *Lg Dev*: Literature. Radio. TV. Videos. Dictionary. Grammar. *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 5,420,530. Global EGIDS level: 3 (Wider communication). Indigenous in: Egypt (Western Egyptian Bedawi Spoken Arabic), Libya, Niger. Unestablished in: Canada, Germany, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States.

Arabic, Standard [arb]. *Users*: 8,790,000 in Tunisia (2014 SIL), all users. *Status*: 1 (National). Statutory national language (1959, Constitution, Article 1). *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*: Not an L1. Written materials and formal speeches. *Lg Dev*: Taught in all primary and secondary schools as a language of instruction together with English [eng]. Taught in tertiary 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, Tunisian Spoken [aeb] (Tunisian, Tunisian Arabic, Tunisian Darija). *Users*: 10,800,000 in Tunisia (2014 census). *Location*: Widespread. *Status*: 3 (Wider communication). De facto national working language. Gained vitality in the 17th century with the use of Arabic script in literature. Used in everyday communications in Tunisia and Libya. Widely used in education after Tunisian independence in 1956. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic. A member of macrolanguage Arabic [ara] (Saudi Arabia). *Dialects*: Tunis, Sahil, Sfax, North-Western Tunisian, South-Western Tunisian, South-Eastern Tunisian, Judeo-Tunisian Arabic (Djerbian Arabic). Reportedly similar to Eastern Algerian Arabic [arq], but clearly distinct. Tunis dialect used in media and language textbooks for foreigners. Southern dialects structurally similar to those in Libya. Only older adults still use Judeo-Tunisian Arabic. Lexical similarity (based on percentage of common words): 38% with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) [arb] (Harrat et al 2015). *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. NT: 1847–2011. *DLS*: Ascending (0.17). *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant. Latin script, informal use on social media (Akin 2014). *Other*: Muslim. *Map*: 14. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 11,709,890. Also established in: Israel. Unestablished in: Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Libya, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, United States.

English [eng]. Autonym: English. *Users*: 1,721,500 in Tunisia, all users. L1 users: 1,500 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). L2 users: 1,720,000 (Ramaswami et al 2012). *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*: Taught as subject in secondary schools. Fully developed. Bible: 1382–2002. *Writing*: Braille script. Deseret Alphabet, developed in 1854 with limited usage until 1877. Duployan shorthand. Latin script, primary usage. Shavian (Shaw) script, no longer in use. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: Ireland, United Kingdom. Also established in 167 other countries and unestablished in 16 more.

French [fra] (Français). Autonym: français. *Users*: 6,321,200 in Tunisia, all users. L1 users: 1,200 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). L2 users: 6,320,000 (Marcoux et al 2022). *Location*: Widespread. *Status*: 4 (Educational). *Class*: Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Gallo-Romance, Gallo-Rhaetian, Oil, 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 in all primary and secondary schools from grade 3 as a language of instruction together with Arabic [arb]. Taught in tertiary schools primarily in technical and scientific studies. 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.

Ghadamès [gha]. *Users*: 3,100 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Berber, Northern, Zenati, East. *Lg Dev*: Grammar. Texts. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 16,500. Global EGIDS level: 6b (Threatened). Indigenous in: Libya.

Italian [ita]. Autonym: Italiano. *Users*: 1,100 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status*: Unestablished. *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 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 12 other countries and unestablished in 34 more.

Lingua Franca [pml] (ʿAjnabi, Aljamia, Ferenghi, Petit Mauresque, Sabir). *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last speakers probably survived into the 1850s (Holm 1989). *Location*: Tunis governorate; other major Mediterranean ports. *Status*: 10 (Extinct). *Class*: Pidgin, Romance based. *Dialects*: None known. Lexicon from Italian [ita] and Occitan [oci]. Reportedly a present-day variety on Aegean Islands, used as pidgin in southeast Mediterranean region, has mainly Arabic syntax and vocabulary which is 65%–70% Italian [ita], 10% Spanish [spa], and other Catalan [cat], French [fra], Ladino [lad], and Turkish [tur] words. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. *DLS*: Emerging (0.01). *Other*: Documented in Jerba, Tunisia in 1353.

Maltese [mlt]. Autonym: Malti. *Users*: 3,400 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; noun head initial; gender (masculine/feminine); definite article; verb affixes mark person, number; 23 consonants, 10 vowels, 8 diphthongs; non-tonal. *Lg Dev*: Grammar. Bible: 1932–1984. *Writing*: Arabic script, Naskh variant, no longer in use, attempts at using Arabic script have failed. Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 572,540 (as L1: 571,460; as L2: 1,080). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Malta. Unestablished in: Australia, Canada, Italy, Libya, United Kingdom.

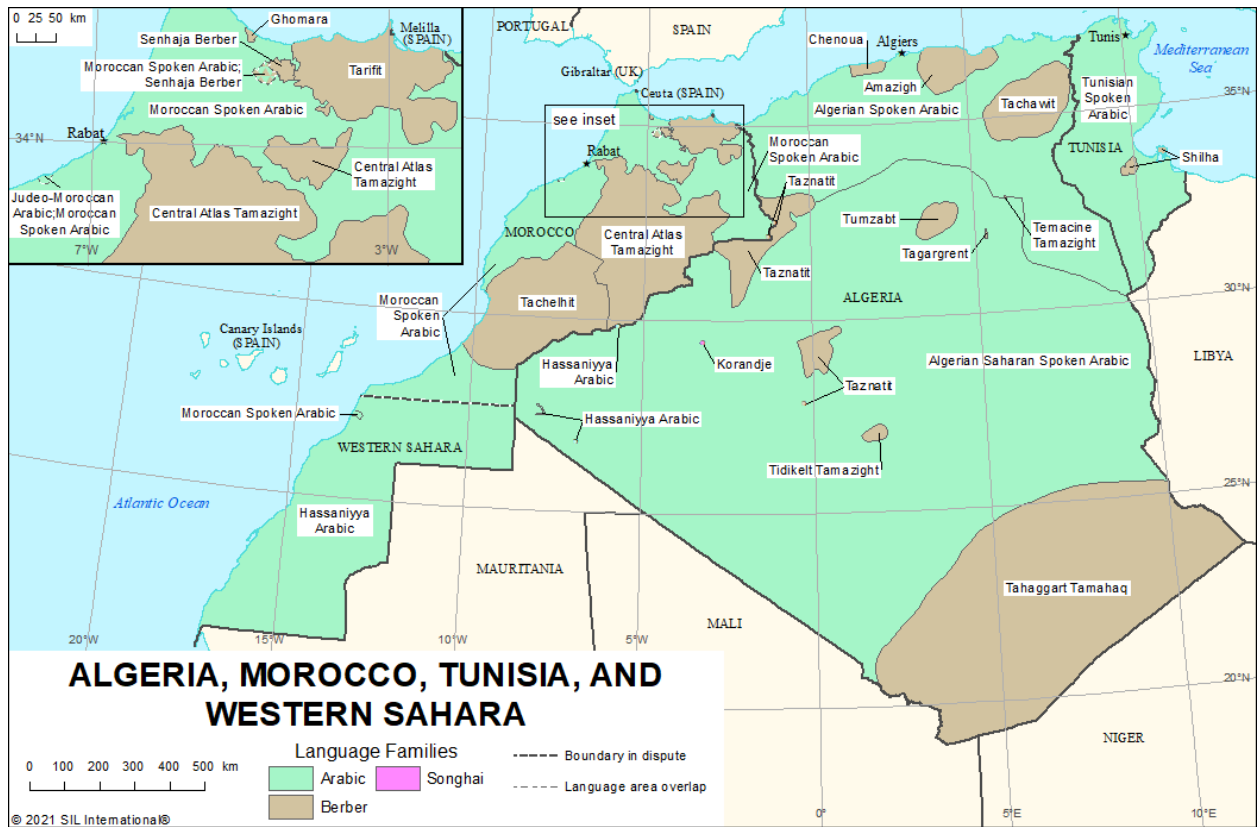
Sened [sds]. *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last speakers probably survived into the 1970s.

Location: Qafsah governorate: Sened and Tmagourt villages, northwest of Gabès. *Status:* 10 (Extinct). *Class:* Afro-Asiatic, Berber, Northern, Zenati, East. *Dialects:* Tmagourt (Tmagurt), Sened. *DLS:* Emerging (0.01).

Shilha [jbn] (Djerbi, Jabal Nafusi, Nafusi, Tunisian Berber). *Users:* 50,000 in Tunisia (2004 S. Chaker). *Location:* Madanin governorate: Ajim, Djerba island, Guellala, and Sedouikech; Qabis governorate: Matmata, Tamezret, Taoujjout, and Zraoua; Qibili governorate: Douiret, Chenini, and Tataouine; Tunis city. *Status:* 6b* (Threatened). *Class:* Afro-Asiatic, Berber, Northern, Zenati, East. *Dialects:* Jbali-Tamezret (Duwinna), Jerba (Djerbi, Guelili). *Lg Use:* Only in the home. *Lg Dev:* Radio. TV. Grammar. Texts. *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Other:* Non-indigenous. ‘Shilha’ also a cover term for Berber languages in Morocco and Tunisia. Muslim. *Map:* 14. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 297,000. Global EGIDS level: 6a (Vigorous). Indigenous in: Libya (Nafusi).

Tunisian Sign Language [tse]. *Users:* 21,200 (2008 WFD). Approximately 0.2% of total population. Another estimate: 53,000 deaf (2014 IMB). *Location:* Scattered, especially Tunis and Sfax. *Status:* 5 (Developing). *Class:* Sign language, Deaf community sign language. *Dialects:* None known. Not the same as Unified Arabic Sign Language, an artificial system promoted by representatives of 18 Arabic-speaking countries (Rashdan 2016). Loans from French Sign Language [fsl] and Italian Sign Language [ise]. *Lg Use:* Approximately 70 deaf schools (Total Communication, 2008 WFD). Used by all. *Lg Dev:* Literacy rate in L2: Low (2008 WFD). Dictionary. Agencies: Voice of the Deaf Association of Tunisia (WFD); ICHARA; Tunisian Association for Assistance to the Deaf. *DLS:* Still. *Other:* Interpretation of television news (20 min. daily, but not well-understood), no interpreters in government institutions or at university, all interpreting services are voluntary (2008 WFD). Muslim.

Language Map



Languages by Population

In this section the languages of Tunisia 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

Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [[aeb](#)] *Users:* 10,800,000 in Tunisia (2014 census). *Status:* 3 (Wider communication). De facto national working language. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 11,709,890.

100,000 to 999,999

Arabic, Libyan Spoken [[ayl](#)] *Users:* 293,000 in Tunisia (2016). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 5,420,530.

Arabic, Algerian Spoken [[arq](#)] *Users:* 268,000 in Tunisia (2016). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 41,433,600 (as L1: 35,693,600; as L2: 5,740,000).

10,000 to 99,999

Arabic, Algerian Saharan Spoken [[aao](#)] *Users:* 68,000 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 249,400.

Shilha [[jbn](#)] *Users:* 50,000 in Tunisia (2004 S. Chaker). *Status:* 6b* (Threatened). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 297,000.

Arabic, Levantine [[apc](#)] *Users:* 23,000 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 47,595,360 (as L1: 47,236,360; as L2: 359,000).

Tunisian Sign Language [[tse](#)] *Users:* 21,200 (2008 WFD). Approximately 0.2% of total population. Another estimate: 53,000 deaf (2014 IMB). *Status:* 5 (Developing).

1,000 to 9,999

Maltese [[mlt](#)] *Users:* 3,400 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 572,540 (as L1: 571,460; as L2: 1,080).

Ghadamès [[gha](#)] *Users:* 3,100 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 16,500.

English [[eng](#)] *Users:* 1,500 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). 1,721,500 in Tunisia, all users. L2 users: 1,720,000 (Ramaswami et al 2012). *Status:* 4 (Educational). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120).

French [[fra](#)] *Users*: 1,200 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). 6,321,200 in Tunisia, all users. L2 users: 6,320,000 (Marcoux et al 2022). *Status*: 4 (Educational). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 309,804,220 (as L1: 80,770,190; as L2: 229,034,030).

Italian [[ita](#)] *Users*: 1,100 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Status*: Unestablished. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 67,935,480 (as L1: 64,647,380; as L2: 3,288,100).

0

Lingua Franca [[pml](#)] *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last speakers probably survived into the 1850s (Holm 1989). *Status*: 10 (Extinct).

Sened [[sds](#)] *Users*: No known L1 speakers. The last speakers probably survived into the 1970s. *Status*: 10 (Extinct).

Unknown

Arabic, Standard [[arb](#)] *Users*: 8,790,000 in Tunisia (2014 SIL), all users. *Status*: 1 (National). Statutory national language (1959, Constitution, Article 1). *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 273,989,700.

Languages by Status

In this section the languages of Tunisia 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)

Arabic, Standard [arb] *Users:* 8,790,000 in Tunisia (2014 SIL), all users. *Status:* Statutory national language (1959, Constitution, Article 1). *Lg Use:* Not an L1. Written materials and formal speeches. *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant, primary usage. Braille script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 273,989,700.

3 (Wider communication)

Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb] *Users:* 10,800,000 in Tunisia (2014 census). *Status:* De facto national working language. Gained vitality in the 17th century with the use of Arabic script in literature. Used in everyday communications in Tunisia and Libya. Widely used in education after Tunisian independence in 1956. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. NT: 1847–2011. *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant. Latin script, informal use on social media (Akin 2014). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 11,709,890.

4 (Educational)

English [eng] *Users:* 1,721,500 in Tunisia, all users. L1 users: 1,500 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). L2 users: 1,720,000 (Ramaswami et al 2012). *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).

French [fra] *Users:* 6,321,200 in Tunisia, all users. L1 users: 1,200 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). L2 users: 6,320,000 (Marcoux et al 2022). *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).

5 (Developing)

Tunisian Sign Language [tse] *Users:* 21,200 (2008 WFD). Approximately 0.2% of total population. Another estimate: 53,000 deaf (2014 IMB). *Lg Use:* Approximately 70 deaf schools (Total Communication, 2008 WFD). Used by all. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary.

6b (Threatened)

Shilha [jbn] *Users:* 50,000 in Tunisia (2004 S. Chaker). *Lg Use:* Only in the home. *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 297,000.

10 (Extinct)

Lingua Franca [pml] *Users:* No known L1 speakers. The last speakers probably survived into the 1850s (Holm 1989). *Lg Dev:* Dictionary.

Sened [sds] *Users:* No known L1 speakers. The last speakers probably survived into the 1970s.

Unestablished

Arabic, Algerian Saharan Spoken [aao] *Users:* 68,000 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 249,400.

Arabic, Algerian Spoken [arq] *Users:* 268,000 in Tunisia (2016). *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 41,433,600 (as L1: 35,693,600; as L2: 5,740,000).

Arabic, Levantine [apc] *Users:* 23,000 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 47,595,360 (as L1: 47,236,360; as L2: 359,000).

Arabic, Libyan Spoken [ayl] *Users:* 293,000 in Tunisia (2016). *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 5,420,530.

Ghadamès [gha] *Users:* 3,100 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 16,500.

Italian [ita] *Users:* 1,100 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *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).

Maltese [mlt] *Users:* 3,400 in Tunisia (2015 J. Leclerc). *Writing:* Arabic script, Naskh variant, no longer in use, attempts at using Arabic script have failed. Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 572,540 (as L1: 571,460; as L2: 1,080).

Languages by Family

This index gives an alphabetical listing of the linguistic classifications used for the established languages of Tunisia. 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, Berber, Northern, Zenati, East

Nafusi [jbn], [13](#)

Sened [sds], [12](#)

Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Arabic

Arabic, Standard [arb], [10](#)

Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], [11](#)

Indo-European, Germanic, West, English

English [eng], [11](#)

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

French [fra], [11](#)

Pidgin, Romance based

Lingua Franca [pml], [12](#)

Sign language, Deaf community sign language

Tunisian Sign Language [tse], [13](#)

Language Code Index

This index gives an alphabetical listing of all 15 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/>.

ao	Arabic, Algerian Saharan Spoken, 10	gha	Ghadamès, 12
aeb	Arabic, Tunisian Spoken, 11	ita	Italian, 12
apc	Arabic, Levantine, 10	jbn	Nafusi, 13
arb	Arabic, Standard, 10	mlt	Maltese, 12
arq	Arabic, Algerian Spoken, 10	pml	Lingua Franca, 12
ayl	Arabic, Libyan Spoken, 10	sds	Sened, 12
eng	English, 11	tse	Tunisian Sign Language, 13
fra	French, 11		

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.

- 'Ajnabi**, *alt.* Lingua Franca [pml], 12
- Aljamia**, *alt.* Lingua Franca [pml], 12
- Algerian Saharan Spoken Arabic**, *see* Arabic, Algerian Saharan Spoken [aao], 10
- Algerian Spoken Arabic**, *see* Arabic, Algerian Spoken [arq], 10
- Levantine Arabic**, *see* Arabic, Levantine [apc], 10
- Libyan Spoken Arabic**, *see* Arabic, Libyan Spoken [ayl], 10
- Arabic, Standard** [arb], 10
see Arabic, Standard [arb], 10
- Arabic, Tunisian Spoken** [aeb], 11, 14
see Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Derja**, *alt.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Djerbi**, *alt. dial.* Nafusi [jbn], 13
alt. Nafusi [jbn], 13
- Djerbian Arabic**, *alt. dial.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Duwinna**, *alt. dial.* Nafusi [jbn], 13
- English** [eng], 11
- Ferenghi**, *alt.* Lingua Franca [pml], 12
- Français**, *alt.* French [fra], 11
- French** [fra], 11
- Guelili**, *alt. dial.* Nafusi [jbn], 13
- Jabal Nafusi**, *alt.* Nafusi [jbn], 13
- Jbali-Tamezret**, *dial.* Nafusi [jbn], 13
- Jerba**, *dial.* Nafusi [jbn], 13
- Judeo-Tunisian Arabic**, *dial.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Lingua Franca** [pml], 12
- Nafusi**, *alt.* Nafusi [jbn], 13
- North-Western Tunisian**, *dial.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Petit Mauresque**, *alt.* Lingua Franca [pml], 12
- Sabir**, *alt.* Lingua Franca [pml], 12
- Sahil**, *dial.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Sened** [sds], 12
dial. Sened [sds], 12
- Sfax**, *dial.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Shilha** [jbn], 13, 14
- South-Eastern Tunisian**, *dial.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- South-Western Tunisian**, *dial.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Tmagourt**, *dial.* Sened [sds], 12
- Tmagurt**, *alt. dial.* Sened [sds], 12
- Tunis**, *dial.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Tunisian**, *alt.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Tunisian Arabic**, *alt.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken [aeb], 11
- Tunisian Berber**, *alt.* Nafusi [jbn], 13
- Tunisian Darija**, *alt.* Arabic, Tunisian Spoken

[aeb], 11

Tunisian Sign Language [tse], 13, 0

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