

Ethnologue: Languages of Zimbabwe

Twenty-sixth edition data

David M. Eberhard, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, Editors

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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	19
Languages by Population	20
Languages by Status	23
Languages by Province	27
Languages by Family	28
Language Code Index	30
Language Name Index	31
Bibliography	35

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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
CPPDCE	Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)
CSICH	Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)
DBS	Deaf Bible Society
<i>dial.</i>	primary dialect name for
DOOR	Deaf Opportunity Outreach
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
km	kilometer(s)
L1 / L2	first language / second (or other additional) language
<i>Lg Dev</i>	Language development
<i>Lg Use</i>	Language use
m	meter(s)
P	Patient in constituent word order
PARADISEC	Pacific And Regional Archive for Digital Sources In Endangered Cultures
<i>pej.</i>	pejorative
pl.	plural
S	Subject in constituent word order
sg.	singular
SIL	SIL International
SVO	Subject-Verb-Object
<i>Type</i>	Typological information
UNCPRD	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)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
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 Zimbabwe 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 27 languages listed in the *Ethnologue* for the country of Zimbabwe. 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 19) 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 20) lists the languages in order of their first-language speaker populations. “Languages by Status” (page 23) 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

Province” (page 27) lists the top-level administrative subdivisions of Zimbabwe and the languages located within each. “Languages by Family” (page 28) lists the languages by their linguistic classifications. “Language Code Index” (page 30) 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 31) lists every name that appears in the language listings as a primary or alternate name of a language or dialect. A total of 129 unique names are associated with the 27 languages described in this digest.

Finally, a listing of all the published sources cited within this digest is found in “Bibliography” (page 35). 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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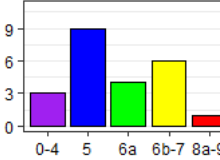
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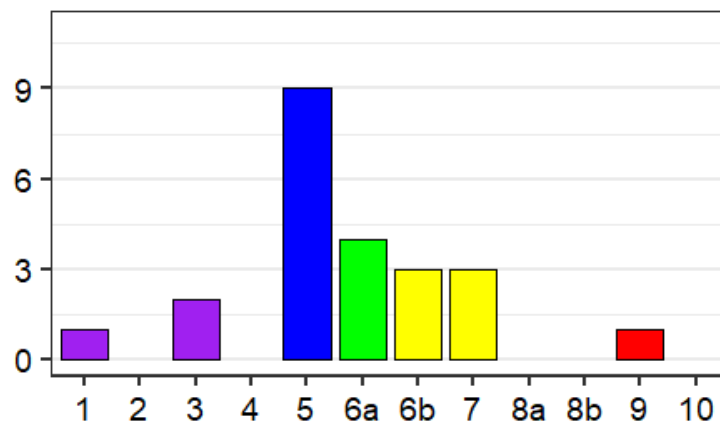
Country Overview

Name of country	Zimbabwe												
Other names	Republic of Zimbabwe												
Population	15,331,000 (2022 UNDESA)												
Principal language	English												
Literacy rate	89% (2014 UNESCO)												
International conventions	ACHPR (1986), CPPDCE (2008), CSICH (2006), ICCPR (1991), UNCRPD (2013), UNDRIP (2007)												
General references	Bendor-Samuel and Hartell 1989, Campbell and King 2011												
Language counts	<p>The number of established languages listed for Zimbabwe is 23. All are living languages. Of these, 16 are indigenous and 7 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 3 are institutional, 9 are developing, 4 are vigorous, 6 are in trouble, and 1 is dying. Also listed are 4 unestablished languages.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Language Vitality Counts for Zimbabwe</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Vitality Category</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0-4</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6a</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6b-7</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8a-9</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Vitality Category	Count	0-4	3	5	9	6a	4	6b-7	6	8a-9	1
Vitality Category	Count												
0-4	3												
5	9												
6a	4												
6b-7	6												
8a-9	1												

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 Zimbabwe 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 23) 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 Zimbabwe. 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 Zimbabwe 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 Zimbabwe 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 20) 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	2	8.7	8.7%	8,770,000	73.27605	73.27605%
100,000 to 999,999	8	34.8	43.5%	2,736,000	22.86012	96.13617%
10,000 to 99,999	8	34.8	78.3%	458,900	3.83425	99.97042%
1,000 to 9,999	1	4.3	82.6%	3,540	0.02958	100.00000%
0	1	4.3	87.0%		0.00000	100.00000%
Unknown	3	13.0	100.0%			
<i>Totals</i>	23	100.0		11,968,440	100.00000	

Summary by language status

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of living established languages in Zimbabwe 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 23) 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 Zimbabwe. 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	4.3	4.3%	485,000	4.0523	4.0523%	485,000	485,000
3	2	8.7	13.0%	8,770,000	73.2760	77.3284%	4,385,000	4,385,000
5	9	39.1	52.2%	1,612,800	13.4754	90.8038%	179,200	91,400
6a	4	17.4	69.6%	810,000	6.7678	97.5716%	202,500	405,000
6b	3	13.0	82.6%	201,000	1.6794	99.2510%	67,000	100,500
7	3	13.0	95.7%	89,640	0.7490	100.0000%	29,880	16,100
9	1	4.3	100.0%		0.0000	100.0000%		
<i>Totals</i>	23	100.0		11,968,440	100.0000			

Summary by language family

The genealogical classifications given in the language entries of the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 11) name 5 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>
Indo-European	1	4.3	485,000	4.1	485,000	485,000
Khoe-Kwadi	1	4.3	3,540	0.0	3,540	3,540
Niger-Congo	19	82.6	11,406,900	95.3	600,363	122,500
Pidgin	1	4.3		0.0		
Sign language	1	4.3	73,000	0.6	73,000	73,000
<i>Totals</i>	23	100.0	11,968,440	100.0		

Alphabetical Listing of Languages

Afrikaans [afr]. Autonym: Afrikaans. *Users*: 93,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Indo-European, Germanic, West, Low Saxon-Low Franconian, Low Franconian. *Type*: SVO (SOV in subordinate clauses); prepositions; noun head final; definite and indefinite articles; passives; tense; 20 consonants, 16 vowels, 9 diphthongs; non-tonal; free stress. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. *Bible*: 1933–2000. *Writing*: Braille script, used since 1953. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. Spoken by immigrants from South Africa. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 17,674,200 (as L1: 7,359,600; as L2: 10,314,600). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Botswana, South Africa. Also established in: Eswatini, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia. Unestablished in: Australia, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States.

Barwe [bwg] (ChiBarwe). *Location*: Manicaland province: Nyanga district, Nyamaropa area, Mashumba, Mbiriya, Mukatsa, Mukwewa, and Sangoma wards; possibly Mashonaland East province: Mudzi district. *Status*: 6b* (Threatened). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Senga-Sena (N.44). *Lg Use*: All also use Manyika [mxc] (Hachipola 1998). *Writing*: Latin script. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 34,000. Also indigenous in: Mozambique.

Birwa [brl] (Sotho). *Users*: 56,000 in Zimbabwe (1982 census). *Location*: Matabeleland South province: Beitbridge, Bulilimangwe, Gwanda and Matobo districts. *Status*: 6b* (Threatened). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Sotho-Tswana (S.32). *Dialects*: None known. Related to Northern Sotho [nso], Southern Sotho [sot], and Setswana [tsn]. *Lg Use*: Home. Also use Ndebele [nde], with many shifting. *Writing*: Unwritten. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 71,000. Global EGIDS level: 6a (Vigorous). Also indigenous in: Botswana. Also established in: South Africa.

Chichewa [nya] (Chicheŵa, Chinyanja, Nyanja). Autonym: Chicheŵa. *Users*: 405,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Location*: Mashonaland Central province; possible communities in Harare and other urban areas. *Status*: 6a* (Vigorous). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Chewa-Nyanja (N.31). *Type*: SVO. *Lg Use*: Also use Ndebele [nde] (Hachipola 1998). Also use Shona [sna] (Hachipola 1998). *Lg Dev*: Newspapers. Radio. Dictionary. Grammar. *Bible*: 1905–1998. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 14,380,700. Global EGIDS level: 3 (Wider communication). Indigenous in: Malawi, Mozambique (Nyanja), Zambia. Unestablished in: Eswatini.

Dombe [dov] (Toka-Leya-Dombe). *Location*: Matabeleland North province: Hwange district, Lukosi area; southwest of confluence of Shangani and Zambezi rivers. *Status*: 6a* (Vigorous).

Class: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, M, Lenje-Tonga (M.64). *Dialects:* None known. Reportedly has Nambya [nmq] influences. *Lg Use:* Also use Nambya [nmq]. Used as L2 by Nambya [nmq]. *DLS:* Still. *Map:* 19.

English [eng]. Autonym: English. *Users:* 5,585,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L1 users: 485,000 in Zimbabwe (2019). L2 users: 5,100,000 (2019). *Status:* 1 (National). De facto national language. *Class:* Indo-European, Germanic, West, English. *Type:* SVO; prepositions; genitives after noun heads; articles, adjectives, numerals before noun heads; question word initial; word order distinguishes subject, object, indirect objects, given and new information, topic and comment; active and passive; causative; comparative; consonant and vowel clusters; 24 consonants, 13 vowels, 8 diphthongs; non-tonal; free stress; phrasal verbs. *Lg Use:* Most Europeans and an increasing number of Africans. *Lg Dev:* Taught in all primary and secondary schools from grade 4 in the rural areas. Taught in all tertiary 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.

Greek [ell]. *Users:* 7,800 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status:* Unestablished. *Class:* Indo-European, Greek, Attic. *Type:* SVO; prepositions; noun head final; gender (masculine/feminine/neuter); definite and indefinite articles; case-marking (3 cases); verb affixes mark person, number; passives (active, medio-passive, passive); tense and aspect; comparatives; 18 consonant and 5 vowel phonemes; non-tonal; free stress. *Lg Dev:* Fully developed. Bible: 1840–1994. *Writing:* Braille script. Cyrillic script, used in Ukraine. Greek script, primary usage. *Other:* Non-indigenous. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 13,088,220 (as L1: 12,992,220; as L2: 96,000). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Albania, Greece. Also established in: Australia, Cyprus, Egypt, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine. Unestablished in: Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Finland, Germany, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Luxembourg, Malawi, Mexico, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia.

Gujarati [guj]. *Users:* 30,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status:* Unestablished. *Class:* Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Intermediate Divisions, Western, Gujarati. *Type:* SOV; postpositions; noun head final; gender (masculine/feminine/neuter); no articles; case-marking (6 cases); verb affixes mark person, number, gender of subject; split ergativity; passives; tense and aspect; comparatives; 31 consonants, 8 vowels, 2 diphthongs; non-tonal; stress on penultimate syllable. *Lg Dev:* Fully developed. Bible: 1823–2005. *Writing:* Braille script. Gujarati script, primary usage. Khojki script. *Other:* Non-

indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 62,116,220 (as L1: 57,076,220; as L2: 5,040,000). Global EGIDS level: 2 (Provincial). Indigenous in: India. Also established in: Bahrain, Fiji, Kenya, Pakistan, Singapore, Tanzania, Zambia. Unestablished in: Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Burundi, Canada, Iran, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, New Zealand, Oman, Réunion, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, United States.

Kalanga [kck] (Bakaa, Chikalanga, Ikalanga, Kalana, Kanana, Makalaka, Sekalaña, Wakalanga, Western Shona). Autonym: Tjikalanga. *Users*: 196,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Location*: Matabeleland South province: Bulilimangwe and Matobo districts; Matabeleland North province: Tsholotsho district. *Status*: 5* (Developing). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.16). *Dialects*: Lilima (Humbe, Limima, Peri), Rozvi (Abanyai, Banyai, Nyai, Wanyai), Talahundra, Romwe, Lemba (Remba), Lembethu (Rembethu), Twamamba (Xwamamba), Pfumbi, Jawunda. Talahundra has no remaining speakers. Peri are an ethnic group of Birwa and Tswapong assimilated into Kalanga and speak the Lilima dialect. Humbe are ethnically different from the Lilima but now share the same language. Similar to Nambya [nmq] and the Karanga, Zezuru, and Shangwe dialects of Shona [sna]. *Lg Use*: Rapidly being absorbed by Ndebele [nde], though most rural members speak Kalanga. All also use Ndebele [nde] (Hachipola 1998). Also use Shona [sna]. Used as L2 by Setswana [tsn], Tsoa [hio]. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. Bible: 2018. *DLS*: Emerging (0.11). *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Most Kalanga are in Zimbabwe; most Lilima are in Botswana. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 367,000. Also indigenous in: Botswana.

Kunda [kdn] (Achikunda, Chikunda, Cikunda). Autonym: Mu Chikunda. *Users*: 145,000 in Zimbabwe (2000). *Location*: Mashonaland Central province: Guruve district. *Status*: 6b* (Threatened). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Senga-Sena (N.42). *Dialects*: None known. Reportedly more similar to Nyungwe [nyu] than to Sena [seh]. *Lg Use*: Most also use Shona [sna] (Hachipola 1998). *Lg Dev*: NT: 2009. *DLS*: Emerging (0.02). *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Different from Kunda which is a dialect of Chichewa [nya]. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 162,760. Global EGIDS level: 6a (Vigorous). Also indigenous in: Mozambique, Zambia.

Lozi [loz] (Kololo, Rotse, Rotvi, Rozi, Rutse, Silozi, Tozvi). Autonym: siLozi. *Users*: 70,000 in Zimbabwe (1982). *Location*: Matabeleland North province: Zambia border west of Victoria Falls. *Status*: 7 (Shifting). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, K, Lozi (K.21). *Lg Use*: Shifting to Ndebele [nde]. *Lg Dev*: Newspapers. Radio. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1951–2009. *Writing*: Latin script. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 734,000. Global EGIDS level: 3 (Wider communication). Also indigenous in: Botswana, Zambia. Also established in: Namibia.

Manyika [mxc] (Bamanyeka, Chimanyika, Manika, Manyika Shona, Wamanyika, Wanyika).

Users: 405,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Location:* Manicaland province: Makoni, Mutasa, Mutare, and Nyanga districts, northwest of Umtali. *Status:* 6a* (Vigorous). *Class:* Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.13). *Dialects:* Bocha (Boka), Bunji, Bvumba, Domba, Guta, Here, Hungwe, Jindwi, Karombe, Nyamuka, Nyatwe, Unyama. A bit more divergent from Shona [sna] than the Karanga, Zezuru, and Korekore dialects. Partially intelligible with Shona. *Lexical similarity:* 74%–81% with Ndau [ndc]. *Lg Use:* Used as L2 by Barwe [bwg]. *Lg Dev:* NT: 1908. *DLS:* Still. *Writing:* Latin script. *Map:* 19. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 551,000. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Also indigenous in: Mozambique.

Nambya [nmq] (Banyai, Chinambya, Nambzya, Nanzva). Autonym: chiNambya. *Users:* 90,000 in Zimbabwe (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). *Location:* Matabeleland North province: primarily Hwange district; Binga and Lupane districts; Bulawayo. *Status:* 5* (Developing). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class:* Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.16). *Dialects:* None known. Slight pronunciation difference in Jambezi area. Reportedly most similar to Kalanga [kck]. *Lg Use:* All also use Ndebele [nde] (Hachipola 1998). Also use Dombe [dov]. Also use English [eng]. Also use Shona [sna]. Also use Tonga [toi]. Used as L2 by Dombe [dov]. *Lg Dev:* NT: 1993. *DLS:* Emerging (0.01). *Writing:* Latin script. *Other:* Christian. *Map:* 19. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 105,000. Also indigenous in: Botswana.

Ndau [ndc] (Chindau, Ndzawu, Njao, Sofala, Southeast Shona). Autonym: Chindau. *Users:* 800,000 in Zimbabwe (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). *Location:* Manicaland province: Melsetter area south of Umtali; Masvingo province: Bikita district. *Status:* 5* (Developing). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class:* Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.15). *Dialects:* Changa (Chichanga, Chixanga, Shanga), Garwe, Tonga (Abatonga, Atonga, Batoka, Batonga, Watonga). *Lg Dev:* Bible: 1985–2009. *Writing:* Latin script. *Other:* Traditional religion, Christian. *Map:* 19. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,530,000. Also indigenous in: Mozambique.

Ndebele [nde] (Isinde'bele, Ndebele of Zimbabwe, Northern Ndebele, Sindebele, Tabele, Tebele). Autonym: isiNdebele. *Users:* 3,010,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L1 users: 1,610,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). L2 users: 1,400,000 (2019). *Location:* Bulawayo, Matabeleland North, and Matabeleland South provinces; Midlands province: Gokwe South, Gueru, Kwekwe, Mberengwa, and Shurugwi districts. *Status:* 3 (Wider communication). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). Offshoot of the Nguni language, Ndebele tribe broke away from the Zulu empire in the early 19th century. Gained vitality under the powerful indigenous kingdom of Mzilikazi in the 19th century. Used in daily life. *Class:* Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Nguni (S.44). *Dialects:* None known. Reportedly similar to Zulu [zul]. *Lg Use:* Also use English [eng]. Used as L2 by Birwa [brl], Chichewa [nya], Kalanga [kck], Lozi [loz], Nambya [nmq], Setswana [tsn], Tsoa [hio], Venda [ven]. *Lg Dev:* Literacy rate in L2: 55%. Taught in some

primary schools in grades 1–3 in areas where Ndebele is spoken. Dictionary. Bible: 1978. *DLS*: Ascending (0.31). *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Different from Ndebele [nbl] of Transvaal, South Africa. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 3,050,310 (as L1: 1,649,200; as L2: 1,401,110). Also indigenous in: Botswana. Unestablished in: Australia, Canada, Zambia.

Nsenga [nse] (Chinsenga, Cinsenga, Senga). Autonym: Chinsenga. *Users*: 16,100 in Zimbabwe (1969 census). *Location*: Mashonaland Central province: Mozambique border; Mount Darwin, Muzarabani, and Rushinga districts. *Status*: 7 (Shifting). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Senga-Sena (N.41). *Lg Use*: Shifting to Shona [sna]. *Lg Dev*: Grammar. NT: 1923–2016. *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Different from Senga dialect of Tumbuka [tum] of Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 627,100. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Also indigenous in: Mozambique, Zambia.

Pidgin Bantu [fng] (Isilololo, Isipiki, Lololo, Piki, “Fanagalo” *pej.*, “Fanakalo” *pej.*, “Fanekolo” *pej.*, “Isikula” *pej.*). *Users*: No known L1 speakers in Zimbabwe. No ethnic community. *Location*: Mashonaland Central province; widespread in Shona speaking areas, mining camps, and urban centers. *Status*: 9 (Second language only). *Class*: Pidgin, Zulu based. *Dialect*: Chilapalapa. *Lg Use*: Used widely in towns and mining areas. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 5,100 (as L1: ; as L2: 5,100). Indigenous in: South Africa. Also established in: Zambia. Unestablished in: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia.

Portuguese [por]. Autonym: Português. *Users*: 17,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status*: Unestablished. *Class*: Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Ibero-Romance, West Iberian, Portuguese-Galician. *Type*: SVO; prepositions; gender (masculine/feminine); definite and indefinite articles; verb affixes mark person, number; passives; tense; comparatives; 21 consonants, 13 vowels, 11 diphthongs; non-tonal. *Lg Dev*: Fully developed. Bible: 1751–2017. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 263,638,850 (as L1: 236,266,650; as L2: 27,372,200). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Portugal, Spain. Also established in 14 other countries and unestablished in 38 more.

Setswana [tsn] (Beetjuans, Chuana, Chwana, Coana, Cuana, Sechuana, Tshwana, Tswana). Autonym: Setswana. *Users*: 29,400 in Zimbabwe (1969 census). *Location*: Matabeleland South province: Bulilimangwe district, between Ramoquabane and Simukwe rivers. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Sotho-Tswana (S.31). *Dialects*: Ngwatu (Mangwato), Tlhaping. *Lg Use*: Most also use Kalanga [kck] (Hachipola 1998). Most also use Ndebele [nde] (Hachipola 1998). *Lg Dev*: Newspapers. Periodicals. Radio. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1857–1993. *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 13,745,730 (as L1: 5,895,730; as L2: 7,850,000). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in:

Botswana, Namibia, South Africa.

Shona [sna] (chiShona, “Swina” *pej.*). Autonym: Chishona. *Users*: 10,660,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L1 users: 7,160,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). L2 users: 3,500,000 (2019). *Location*: Harare, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, and Midlands provinces. Manicaland province, Nyanga district (Hwesa dialect); Mashonaland East, Mudzi and Mutoko districts (Budja dialect). *Status*: 3 (Wider communication). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). Migrated to what is today’s Zimbabwe during the great Bantu expansion in the first half of the first millennium; became widespread in the 11th century. Gained vitality during British control at the end of the 19th century. Used in trade, literary tradition, and education. *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.10). *Dialects*: Karanga (Chikaranga), Zezuru (Bazezuru, Bazuzura, Chizezuru, Harava, Hera, Mazizuru, Shawasha, Vazezuru, Wazezuru), Korekore (Goba, Gova, Northern Shona, Shangwe), Hwesa (Chihwesa), Budja. *Subdialects*: Karanga: Duma, Jena, Mhari (Mari), Ngova, Nyubi, Govera; Korekore: Budya, Gova, Tande, Tavara, Nyongwe, Pfunde, Shan Gwe; Zezuru: Shawasha, Gova, Mbire, Tsunga, Kachikwakwa, Harava, Nohwe, Njanja, Nobvu, Kwazwimba (Zimba); Shona: Toko, Hwesa. Rozvi (Rozwi, Ruzwi, Chirozwi) speak Karanga dialect. Ndaou [ndc] and Manyika [mxc] are partially intelligible of Shona. *Type*: SVO; noun head initial; 13 noun classes; no articles; verb affixes mark person, number, object; passives; causatives; 31 consonants, 5 vowels, 2 diphthongs; tonal (2 tones: high, low). *Lg Use*: Dominant African language understood by a considerable number. Primarily a written language apparently based on Karanga and Zezuru with lexical items also from Manyika and Korekore. Urban populations tend to speak school or standard Shona. Also use English [eng]. Used as L2 by Chichewa [nya], Kalanga [kck], Kunda [kdn], Nambya [nmq], Nsenga [nse], Tonga [toi], Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib]. *Lg Dev*: Literacy rate in L2: 86% in English [eng] and Shona [sna]. Taught in some primary schools in grades 1–3 in areas where Shona is spoken. *Dictionary*. *Grammar*. *Bible*: 1949–1980. *DLS*: Vital (0.61). *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Traditional religion, Christian. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 10,873,630 (as L1: 7,371,360; as L2: 3,502,270). Also indigenous in: Zambia. Also established in: Botswana (Zezuru). Unestablished in: Australia, Canada, Malawi, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States.

Tonga [toi] (Batonga, Chitonga, Zambezi). Autonym: Chitonga. *Users*: 200,000 in Zimbabwe (Hachipola 1998). *Location*: Mashonaland Central: Mount Darwin district; Mashonaland West province: Kariba district; Matabeleland North province: Binga district; Midlands province: Gokwe North and Gokwe South districts. South shore of Lake Kariba and inland. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, M, Lenje-Tonga (M.64). *Dialects*: Chitonga, Leya, Toka, We. *Lg Use*: Many also use Shona [sna], mostly the Korekore and Shangwe dialects (Hachipola 1998). Used as L2 by Nambya [nmq]. *Lg Dev*: Literature. Newspapers. Radio. TV. *Grammar*. *Bible*: 1963–1996. *Writing*: Latin script. *Other*: Different from Tonga [tog] of Malawi, Tonga [toh] of Mozambique, or Tsonga (Tonga) [tso] of Mozambique. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,530,000.

Global EGIDS level: 4 (Educational). Also indigenous in: Zambia.

Tsoa [hio] (Amasili, Bakhwa, Basarwa, Chware, Haitshuwau, Hiechware, Hietsware, Khoisan, Koi-san, Koisan, Tjwao, Tshikwa, Tshuwau, Tshwa, Tshwao, Tshwawo). *Users*: 3,540 in Zimbabwe (2000). *Location*: Matabeleland North province: Hwange and Tsholotsho districts; Matabeleland South province: Bulilimamangwe district; Botswana border. *Status*: 7 (Shifting). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)), listed as ‘Koisan’. *Class*: Khoe-Kwadi, Khoe, Kalahari Khoe, Northeast. *Lg Use*: Shifting to Kalanga [kck]. Also use Ndebele [nde] (Hachipola 1998). *Writing*: Unwritten. *Other*: Non-indigenous. Nomadic. Traditional religion, Christian. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 5,540. Indigenous in: Botswana (Tshuwau).

Tsonga [tso] (Gwamba, Shangani, Shitsonga, Thonga, Tonga, Vatsonga, Xitsonga). Autonym: Xitsonga. *Users*: 100,000 in Zimbabwe (Hachipola 1998). *Location*: Masvingo province, Chiredzi, Mwenezi, and Zaka districts; near Mozambique border. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Tswa-Rhonga (S.53). *Dialects*: Bila (Vila), Changana (Changa, Hanganu, Hlanganu, Langanu, Shangaan, Shangana, Shilanganu, Xichangana), Jonga (Djonga, Dzonga), Ngwalungu (Shingwalungu). *Lg Dev*: Radio. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1907–1989. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 10,003,500 (as L1: 6,603,500; as L2: 3,400,000). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Mozambique, South Africa. Also established in: Eswatini.

Tswa [tsc] (Kitshwa, Sheetshwa, Shitshwa, Tshwa, Xitshwa). Autonym: Xitshwa. *Location*: Manicaland province: southern area; Masvingo province; Matabeleland South province: Beitbridge; Midlands province: Mberengwa. *Status*: 6a* (Vigorous). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Tswa-Rhonga (S.51). *Dialects*: Hlengwe (Makakwe-Khambana), Tshwa (Dzibi-Dzonga). *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1910–1955. *Writing*: Latin script. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,020,000. Global EGIDS level: 5 (Developing). Also indigenous in: Mozambique. Also established in: South Africa.

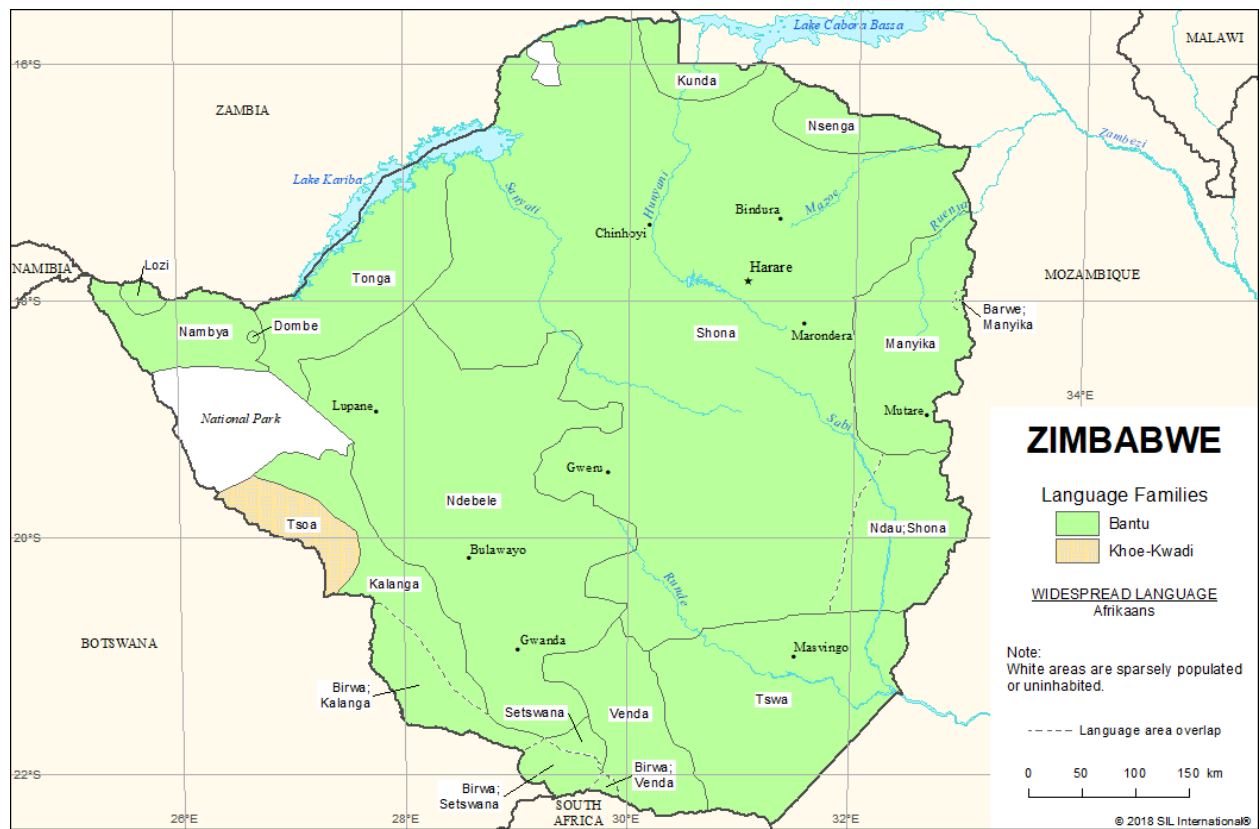
Venda [ven] (Cevenda, Chivenda, Luvenda, Tshivenda). *Users*: 91,400 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Location*: Matabeleland South province: Beitbridge, Bulilimamangwe, and Gwanda districts; Midlands province: Mberengwa district. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Venda (S.21). *Dialects*: Phani, Tavhatsindi. *Lg Use*: Offered at the university level in a Bachelors degree program (2017 I. Mumpande). All also use Ndebele [nde] (Hachipola 1998). *Lg Dev*: Radio. Bible: 1936. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Traditional religion, Christian. *Map*: 19. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 3,001,400 (as L1: 1,301,400; as L2: 1,700,000). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Also indigenous in: South Africa.

Xhosa [xho]. Autonym: isiXhosa. *Users*: 33,000 in Zimbabwe (2021 Joshua Project), based on

ethnicity. Ethnic population: 200,000 (Kunju 2017). *Location*: Matabeleland North: Bubi district, Kenilworth and Motapa areas; Matabeleland South: Insiza and Umzingwane districts, Bembesi, Filabusi, and Fort Rixon areas. *Status*: 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Nguni (S.41). *Type*: SVO; noun head initial; 17 noun classes; no articles; verb affixes mark person, number, object; causatives; 58 consonant and 10 vowel phonemes; tonal (2 tones: high, low); clicks. *Lg Dev*: Newspapers. Periodicals. Radio. TV. Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1859. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Other*: Non-indigenous. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 19,216,300 (as L1: 8,216,300; as L2: 11,000,000). Global EGIDS level: 1 (National). Indigenous in: Lesotho, South Africa. Unestablished in: Botswana.

Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib] (Zimsign). *Users*: 73,000 (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). Estimated 44,000–88,000, assuming 0.3%–0.6% of the total population. However, there are 280,000 deaf members reported for the Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf (2008 WFD), which is almost 2%. *Location*: Mashonaland Central province: Muzarabani district, Centenary area. *Status*: 5 (Developing). Recognized language (2010, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Class*: Sign language, Deaf community sign language. *Dialects*: Zimbabwe School Sign, Masvingo School Sign, Zimbabwe Community Sign. Signing varies significantly in different schools. Masvingo sign language is different from that used in other schools. School languages differ from those used by adults outside. Inherent intelligibility unclear. Dictionary publication intended to bring standardization. Possible influence from several European sign languages. Fingerspelling system similar to French Sign Language [fsl]. *Type*: One-handed fingerspelling. *Lg Use*: Primary schools for deaf children since 1940s. Also secondary schools (2008 WFD). Deaf associations. Used by all. Also use English [eng], in written form, but literacy in it is generally limited. Also use Shona [sna], especially those from Masvingo, but with limited literacy. *Lg Dev*: TV. Dictionary. Agencies: Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf (ZIMNAD); Association of the Deaf (ASSOD); King George VI School and Centre, Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). *DLS*: Emerging (0.01). *Other*: 15 interpreters, trained by Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf (2008 WFD).

Language Map



Languages by Population

In this section the languages of Zimbabwe 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

Shona [sna] *Users:* 7,160,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). 10,660,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L2 users: 3,500,000 (2019). *Status:* 3 (Wider communication). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 10,873,630 (as L1: 7,371,360; as L2: 3,502,270).

Ndebele [nde] *Users:* 1,610,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). 3,010,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L2 users: 1,400,000 (2019). *Status:* 3 (Wider communication). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 3,050,310 (as L1: 1,649,200; as L2: 1,401,110).

100,000 to 999,999

Ndau [ndc] *Users:* 800,000 in Zimbabwe (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). *Status:* 5* (Developing). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,530,000.

English [eng] *Users:* 485,000 in Zimbabwe (2019). 5,585,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L2 users: 5,100,000 (2019). *Status:* 1 (National). De facto national language. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120).

Chichewa [nya] *Users:* 405,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Status:* 6a* (Vigorous). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 14,380,700.

Manyika [mxc] *Users:* 405,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Status:* 6a* (Vigorous). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 551,000.

Tonga [toi] *Users:* 200,000 in Zimbabwe (Hachipola 1998). *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,530,000.

Kalanga [kck] *Users:* 196,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Status:* 5* (Developing). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 367,000.

Kunda [kdn] *Users:* 145,000 in Zimbabwe (2000). *Status:* 6b* (Threatened). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 162,760.

Tsonga [tso] *Users:* 100,000 in Zimbabwe (Hachipola 1998). *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries:

10,003,500 (as L1: 6,603,500; as L2: 3,400,000).

10,000 to 99,999

Afrikaans [afr] *Users:* 93,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 17,674,200 (as L1: 7,359,600; as L2: 10,314,600).

Venda [ven] *Users:* 91,400 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 3,001,400 (as L1: 1,301,400; as L2: 1,700,000).

Nambya [nmq] *Users:* 90,000 in Zimbabwe (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). *Status:* 5* (Developing). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 105,000.

Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib] *Users:* 73,000 (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). Estimated 44,000–88,000, assuming 0.3%–0.6% of the total population. However, there are 280,000 deaf members reported for the Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf (2008 WFD), which is almost 2%. *Status:* 5 (Developing). Recognized language (2010, Constitution, Article 6(1)).

Lozi [loz] *Users:* 70,000 in Zimbabwe (1982). *Status:* 7 (Shifting). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 734,000.

Birwa [brl] *Users:* 56,000 in Zimbabwe (1982 census). *Status:* 6b* (Threatened). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 71,000.

Xhosa [xho] *Users:* 33,000 in Zimbabwe (2021 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. Ethnic population: 200,000 (Kunju 2017). *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 19,216,300 (as L1: 8,216,300; as L2: 11,000,000).

Gujarati [guj] *Users:* 30,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 62,116,220 (as L1: 57,076,220; as L2: 5,040,000).

Setswana [tsn] *Users:* 29,400 in Zimbabwe (1969 census). *Status:* 5* (Dispersed). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 13,745,730 (as L1: 5,895,730; as L2: 7,850,000).

Portuguese [por] *Users:* 17,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 263,638,850 (as L1: 236,266,650; as L2: 27,372,200).

Nsenga [nse] *Users:* 16,100 in Zimbabwe (1969 census). *Status:* 7 (Shifting). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 627,100.

1,000 to 9,999

Greek [ell] *Users:* 7,800 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Status:* Unestablished. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 13,088,220 (as L1: 12,992,220; as L2: 96,000).

Tsoa [hio] *Users:* 3,540 in Zimbabwe (2000). *Status:* 7 (Shifting). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)), listed as 'Koisian'. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 5,540.

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Pidgin Bantu [fng] *Users:* No known L1 speakers in Zimbabwe. Ethnic population: No ethnic community. *Status:* 9 (Second language only). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 5,100 (as L1: ; as L2: 5,100).

Unknown

Barwe [bwg] *Status:* 6b* (Threatened). Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 34,000.

Dombe [dov] *Status:* 6a* (Vigorous).

Tswa [tsc] *Status:* 6a* (Vigorous). *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,020,000.

Languages by Status

In this section the languages of Zimbabwe are listed in order of their status within the country as represented by their level on the EGIDs scale (Lewis and Simons 2010). The language entries are reduced to just the information elements that are relevant to assessing the EGIDS level: population, status, language use, language development, and writing.

1 (National)

English [[eng](#)] *Users:* 5,585,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L1 users: 485,000 in Zimbabwe (2019). L2 users: 5,100,000 (2019). *Status:* De facto national language. *Lg Use:* Most Europeans and an increasing number of Africans. *Writing:* Braille script. Deseret Alphabet, developed in 1854 with limited usage until 1877. Duployan shorthand. Latin script, primary usage. Shavian (Shaw) script, no longer in use. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 1,456,448,320 (as L1: 379,682,200; as L2: 1076,766,120).

3 (Wider communication)

Ndebele [[nde](#)] *Users:* 3,010,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L1 users: 1,610,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). L2 users: 1,400,000 (2019). *Status:* Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). Offshoot of the Nguni language, Ndebele tribe broke away from the Zulu empire in the early 19th century. Gained vitality under the powerful indigenous kingdom of Mzilikazi in the 19th century. Used in daily life. *Lg Use:* Also use English [[eng](#)]. Used as L2 by Birwa [[brl](#)], Chichewa [[nya](#)], Kalanga [[kck](#)], Lozi [[loz](#)], Nambya [[nmq](#)], Setswana [[tsn](#)], Tsoa [[hio](#)], Venda [[ven](#)]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. Bible: 1978. *Writing:* Latin script. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 3,050,310 (as L1: 1,649,200; as L2: 1,401,110).

Shona [[sna](#)] *Users:* 10,660,000 in Zimbabwe, all users. L1 users: 7,160,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). L2 users: 3,500,000 (2019). *Status:* Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). Migrated to what is today's Zimbabwe during the great Bantu expansion in the first half of the first millennium; became widespread in the 11th century. Gained vitality during British control at the end of the 19th century. Used in trade, literary tradition, and education. *Lg Use:* Dominant African language understood by a considerable number. Primarily a written language apparently based on Karanga and Zezuru with lexical items also from Manyika and Korekore. Urban populations tend to speak school or standard Shona. Also use English [[eng](#)]. Used as L2 by Chichewa [[nya](#)], Kalanga [[kck](#)], Kunda [[kdn](#)], Nambya [[nmq](#)], Nsenga [[nse](#)], Tonga [[toi](#)], Zimbabwe Sign Language [[zib](#)]. *Lg Dev:* Dictionary. Grammar. Bible: 1949–1980. *Writing:* Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide:* Total users in all countries: 10,873,630 (as L1: 7,371,360; as L2: 3,502,270).

5 (Developing)

Kalanga [[kck](#)] *Users*: 196,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: Rapidly being absorbed by Ndebele [[nde](#)], though most rural members speak Kalanga. All also use Ndebele [[nde](#)] (Hachipola 1998). Also use Shona [[sna](#)]. Used as L2 by Setswana [[tsn](#)], Tsoa [[hio](#)]. *Lg Dev*: Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. Bible: 2018. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 367,000.

Nambya [[nmq](#)] *Users*: 90,000 in Zimbabwe (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: All also use Ndebele [[nde](#)] (Hachipola 1998). Also use Dombé [[dov](#)]. Also use English [[eng](#)]. Also use Shona [[sna](#)]. Also use Tonga [[toi](#)]. Used as L2 by Dombé [[dov](#)]. *Lg Dev*: NT: 1993. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 105,000.

Ndau [[ndc](#)] *Users*: 800,000 in Zimbabwe (Chebanne and Nthapelelang 2000). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,530,000.

Zimbabwe Sign Language [[zib](#)] *Users*: 73,000 (2021 DBS/DOOR/SIL). Estimated 44,000–88,000, assuming 0.3%–0.6% of the total population. However, there are 280,000 deaf members reported for the Zimbabwe National Association of the Deaf (2008 WFD), which is almost 2%. *Status*: Recognized language (2010, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: Primary schools for deaf children since 1940s. Also secondary schools (2008 WFD). Deaf associations. Used by all. Also use English [[eng](#)], in written form, but literacy in it is generally limited. Also use Shona [[sna](#)], especially those from Masvingo, but with limited literacy. *Lg Dev*: TV. Dictionary.

5 (Dispersed)

Setswana [[tsn](#)] *Users*: 29,400 in Zimbabwe (1969 census). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: Most also use Kalanga [[kck](#)] (Hachipola 1998). Most also use Ndebele [[nde](#)] (Hachipola 1998). *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 13,745,730 (as L1: 5,895,730; as L2: 7,850,000).

Tonga [[toi](#)] *Users*: 200,000 in Zimbabwe (Hachipola 1998). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: Many also use Shona [[sna](#)], mostly the Korekore and Shangwe dialects (Hachipola 1998). Used as L2 by Nambya [[nmq](#)]. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,530,000.

Tsonga [[tso](#)] *Users*: 100,000 in Zimbabwe (Hachipola 1998). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 10,003,500 (as L1: 6,603,500; as L2: 3,400,000).

Venda [[ven](#)] *Users*: 91,400 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: Offered at the university level in a Bachelors degree program (2017 I. Mumpande). All also use Ndebele [[nde](#)] (Hachipola 1998). *Writing*: Braille

script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 3,001,400 (as L1: 1,301,400; as L2: 1,700,000).

Xhosa [xho] *Users*: 33,000 in Zimbabwe (2021 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. Ethnic population: 200,000 (Kunju 2017). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 19,216,300 (as L1: 8,216,300; as L2: 11,000,000).

6a (Vigorous)

Chichewa [nya] *Users*: 405,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: Also use Ndebele [nde] (Hachipola 1998). Also use Shona [sna] (Hachipola 1998). *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 14,380,700.

Dombe [dov] *Lg Use*: Also use Nambya [nmq]. Used as L2 by Nambya [nmq].

Manyika [mxc] *Users*: 405,000 in Zimbabwe (2012). *Lg Use*: Used as L2 by Barwe [bwg]. *Lg Dev*: NT: 1908. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 551,000.

Tswa [tsc] *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 1,020,000.

6b (Threatened)

Barwe [bwg] *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: All also use Manyika [mxc] (Hachipola 1998). *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 34,000.

Birwa [brl] *Users*: 56,000 in Zimbabwe (1982 census). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: Home. Also use Ndebele [nde], with many shifting. *Writing*: Unwritten. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 71,000.

Kunda [kdn] *Users*: 145,000 in Zimbabwe (2000). *Lg Use*: Most also use Shona [sna] (Hachipola 1998). *Lg Dev*: NT: 2009. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 162,760.

7 (Shifting)

Lozi [loz] *Users*: 70,000 in Zimbabwe (1982). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)). *Lg Use*: Shifting to Ndebele [nde]. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 734,000.

Nsenga [nse] *Users*: 16,100 in Zimbabwe (1969 census). *Lg Use*: Shifting to Shona [sna]. *Writing*: Latin script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 627,100.

Tsoa [hio] *Users*: 3,540 in Zimbabwe (2000). *Status*: Recognized language (2013, Constitution, Article 6(1)), listed as ‘Koisan’. *Lg Use*: Shifting to Kalanga [kck]. Also use Ndebele [nde]

(Hachipola 1998). *Writing*: Unwritten. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 5,540.

9 (Second language only)

Pidgin Bantu [fng] *Users*: No known L1 speakers in Zimbabwe. Ethnic population: No ethnic community. *Lg Use*: Used widely in towns and mining areas. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 5,100 (as L1: ; as L2: 5,100).

Unestablished

Afrikaans [afr] *Users*: 93,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Writing*: Braille script, used since 1953. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 17,674,200 (as L1: 7,359,600; as L2: 10,314,600).

Greek [ell] *Users*: 7,800 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Writing*: Braille script. Cyrillic script, used in Ukraine. Greek script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 13,088,220 (as L1: 12,992,220; as L2: 96,000).

Gujarati [guj] *Users*: 30,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Writing*: Braille script. Gujarati script, primary usage. Khojki script. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 62,116,220 (as L1: 57,076,220; as L2: 5,040,000).

Portuguese [por] *Users*: 17,000 in Zimbabwe (2020 Joshua Project), based on ethnicity. *Writing*: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. *Worldwide*: Total users in all countries: 263,638,850 (as L1: 236,266,650; as L2: 27,372,200).

Languages by Province

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

Bulawayo

Ndebele [nde], 14

Harare

Shona [sna], 16

Manicaland

Barwe [bwg], 11

Manyika [mxc], 13

Ndau [ndc], 14

Shona [sna], 16

Tswa [tsc], 17

Mashonaland Central

Chichewa [nya], 11

Kunda [kdn], 13

Nsenga [nse], 15

Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15

Shona [sna], 16

Tonga [toi], 16

Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib], 18

Mashonaland East

Shona [sna], 16

Mashonaland West

Shona [sna], 16

Tonga [toi], 16

Masvingo

Ndau [ndc], 14

Tsonga [tso], 17

Tswa [tsc], 17

Matabeleland North

Dombe [dov], 11

Kalanga [kck], 13

Lozi [loz], 13

Nambya [nmq], 14

Ndebele [nde], 14

Tonga [toi], 16

Tsoa [hio], 17

Xhosa [xho], 17

Matabeleland South

Birwa [brl], 11

Kalanga [kck], 13

Ndebele [nde], 14

Setswana [tsn], 15

Tsoa [hio], 17

Tswa [tsc], 17

Venda [ven], 17

Xhosa [xho], 17

Midlands

Ndebele [nde], 14

Shona [sna], 16

Tonga [toi], 16

Tswa [tsc], 17

Venda [ven], 17

Languages by Family

This index gives an alphabetical listing of the linguistic classifications used for the established languages of Zimbabwe. The entries in this index represent the full path in the linguistic family tree from the highest level grouping down to the lowest. All the languages listed in the same entry are members of the same lowest-level subgroup. The referenced page contains the main entry that describes the language.

Indo-European, Germanic, West, English

English [eng], [12](#)

Khoe-Kwadi, Khoe, Kalahari Khoe, Northeast

Tshuwau [hio], [17](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, K, Lozi (K.21)

Lozi [loz], [13](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, M, Lenje-Tonga (M.64)

Dombe [dov], [11](#)

Tonga [toi], [16](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Chewa-Nyanja (N.31)

Chichewa [nya], [11](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Senga-Sena (N.41)

Nsenga [nse], [15](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Senga-Sena (N.42)

Kunda [kdn], [13](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, N, Senga-Sena (N.44)

Barwe [bwg], [11](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Nguni (S.41)

Xhosa [xho], [17](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Nguni (S.44)

Ndebele [nde], [14](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.10)

Shona [sna], [16](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.13)

Manyika [mxc], [13](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.15)

Ndau [ndc], [14](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Shona (S.16)

Kalanga [kck], [13](#)

Nambya [nmq], [14](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Sotho-Tswana (S.31)

Setswana [tsn], [15](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Sotho-Tswana (S.32)

Birwa [brl], [11](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Tswa-Rhonga (S.51)

Tswa [tsc], [17](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Tswa-Rhonga (S.53)

Tsonga [tso], [17](#)

Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central, S, Venda (S.21)

Venda [ven], [17](#)

Pidgin, Zulu based

Pidgin Bantu [fng], [15](#)

Sign language, Deaf community sign language

Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib], [18](#)

Language Code Index

This index gives an alphabetical listing of all 27 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/>.

afr	Afrikaans, 11	nde	Ndebele (Zimbabwe), 14
brl	Birwa, 11	nmq	Nambya, 14
bwg	Barwe, 11	nse	Nsenga, 15
dov	Dombe, 11	nya	Chichewa, 11
ell	Greek, 12	por	Portuguese, 15
eng	English, 12	sna	Shona, 16
fng	Pidgin Bantu, 15	toi	Tonga (Zambia), 16
guj	Gujarati, 12	tsc	Tswa, 17
hio	Tshuwau, 17	tsn	Setswana, 15
kck	Kalanga, 13	tso	Tsonga, 17
kdn	Kunda, 13	ven	Venda, 17
loz	Lozi, 13	xho	Xhosa, 17
mxo	Manyika, 13	zib	Zimbabwe Sign Language, 18
ndc	Ndau, 14		

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.

- Abanyai**, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Abatonga, *alt. dial.* Ndaou [ndc], 14
Achikunda, *alt.* Kunda [kdn], 13
Amasili, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Atonga, *alt. dial.* Ndaou [ndc], 14
Bakaa, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Bakhwa, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Bamanyeka, *alt.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Banyai, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
alt. Nambya [nmq], 14
Barwe [bwg], 11, 19
Basarwa, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Batoka, *alt. dial.* Ndaou [ndc], 14
Batonga, *alt. dial.* Ndaou [ndc], 14
alt. Tonga [toi], 16
Bazezuru, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Bazuzura, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Beetjuans, *alt.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Bila, *dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Birwa [brl], 11, 19
Bocha, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Boka, *alt. dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Budja, *dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Bunji, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Bvumba, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Cevenda, *alt.* Venda [ven], 17
Changa, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
dial. Ndaou [ndc], 14
Changana, *dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
ChiBarwe, *alt.* Barwe [bwg], 11
Chichanga, *alt. dial.* Ndaou [ndc], 14
Chichewa [nya], 11
Chicheŵa, *alt.* Chichewa [nya], 11
Chihwesa, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Chikalanga, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Chikaranga, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Chikunda, *alt.* Kunda [kdn], 13
Chilapalapa, *dial.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Chimanyika, *alt.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Chinambya, *alt.* Nambya [nmq], 14
Chindau, *alt.* Ndaou [ndc], 14
Chinsenga, *alt.* Nsenga [nse], 15
Chinyanja, *alt.* Chichewa [nya], 11
Chishona, *alt.* Shona [sna], 16
Chitonga, *alt.* Tonga [toi], 16
dial. Tonga [toi], 16
Chivenda, *alt.* Venda [ven], 17
Chixanga, *alt. dial.* Ndaou [ndc], 14
Chizezuru, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Chuana, *alt.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Chwana, *alt.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Chware, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17

- Cikunda**, *alt.* Kunda [kdn], 13
Cinsenga, *alt.* Nsenga [nse], 15
Coana, *alt.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Cuana, *alt.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Djonga, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Domba, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Dombe [dov], 11, 19
Dzibi-Dzonga, *alt. dial.* Tswa [tsc], 17
Dzonga, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
English [eng], 12
Fanagalo, *pej. alt.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Fanakalo, *pej. alt.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Fanekolo, *pej. alt.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Garwe, *dial.* Ndaу [ndc], 14
Goba, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Gova, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Guta, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Gwamba, *alt.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Haitshuwau, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Hanganu, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Harava, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Hera, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Here, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Hiechware, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Hietshware, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Hlanganu, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Hlengwe, *dial.* Tswa [tsc], 17
Humbe, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Hungwe, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Hwesa, *dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Ikalanga, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Isikula, *pej. alt.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Isilololo, *alt.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
isiNdebele, *alt.* Ndebele [nde], 14
Isinde'bele, *alt.* Ndebele [nde], 14
Isipiki, *alt.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Jawunda, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Jindwi, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Jonga, *dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Kalana, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Kalanga [kck], 13, 19
Kanana, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Karanga, *dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Karombe, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Khoisan, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Kitshwa, *alt.* Tswa [tsc], 17
Koisan, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Koi-san, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Kololo, *alt.* Lozi [loz], 13
Korekore, *dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Kunda [kdn], 13, 19
Langanu, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Lemba, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Lembethu, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Leya, *dial.* Tonga [toi], 16
Lilima, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Limima, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Lololo, *alt.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Lozi [loz], 13, 19
Luvenda, *alt.* Venda [ven], 17
Makakwe-Khambana, *alt. dial.* Tswa [tsc], 17
Makalaka, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Mangwato, *alt. dial.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Manika, *alt.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Manyika [mxc], 13, 19
Manyika Shona, *alt.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Masvingo School Sign, *dial.* Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib], 18
Mazizuru, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Mu Chikunda, *alt.* Kunda [kdn], 13
Nambya [nmq], 14, 19
Nambzya, *alt.* Nambya [nmq], 14
Nanzva, *alt.* Nambya [nmq], 14
Ndaу [ndc], 14, 19

- Ndebele** [nde], 14, 19
Ndebele of Zimbabwe, *alt.* Ndebele [nde], 14
Ndzawu, *alt.* Ndaue [ndc], 14
Ngwalungu, *dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Ngwatu, *dial.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Njao, *alt.* Ndaue [ndc], 14
Northern Ndebele, *alt.* Ndebele [nde], 14
Northern Shona, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Nsenga [nse], 15, 19
Nyai, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Nyamuka, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Nyanja, *alt.* Chichewa [nya], 11
Nyatwe, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Peri, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Pfumbi, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Phani, *dial.* Venda [ven], 17
Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Piki, *alt.* Pidgin Bantu [fng], 15
Remba, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Rembethu, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Romwe, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Rotse, *alt.* Lozi [loz], 13
Rotvi, *alt.* Lozi [loz], 13
Rozi, *alt.* Lozi [loz], 13
Rozvi, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Rutse, *alt.* Lozi [loz], 13
Sechuana, *alt.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Sekalaña, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Senga, *alt.* Nsenga [nse], 15
Setswana [tsn], 15, 19
Shanga, *alt. dial.* Ndaue [ndc], 14
Shangaan, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Shangana, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Shangani, *alt.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Shangwe, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Shawasha, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Sheetshwa, *alt.* Tswa [tsc], 17
Shilanganu, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Shingwalungu, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Shitshwa, *alt.* Tswa [tsc], 17
Shitsonga, *alt.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Shona [sna], 16, 19
Silozi, *alt.* Lozi [loz], 13
Sindebele, *alt.* Ndebele [nde], 14
Sofala, *alt.* Ndaue [ndc], 14
Sotho, *alt.* Birwa [brl], 11
Southeast Shona, *alt.* Ndaue [ndc], 14
Swina, *pej. alt.* Shona [sna], 16
Tabele, *alt.* Ndebele [nde], 14
Talahundra, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Tavhatsindi, *dial.* Venda [ven], 17
Tebele, *alt.* Ndebele [nde], 14
Thonga, *alt.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Tjikalanga, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Tjwao, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Tihaping, *dial.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Toka, *dial.* Tonga [toi], 16
Toka-Leya-Dombe, *alt.* Dombe [dov], 11
Tonga [toi], 16, 19
alt. Tsonga [tso], 17
dial. Ndaue [ndc], 14
Tozvi, *alt.* Lozi [loz], 13
Tshikwa, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Tshivenda, *alt.* Venda [ven], 17
Tshuwau, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Tshwa, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
alt. Tswa [tsc], 17
dial. Tswa [tsc], 17
Tshwana, *alt.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Tshwao, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Tshwawo, *alt.* Tshuwau [hio], 17
Tsoa [hio], 17, 19
Tsonga [tso], 17
Tswa [tsc], 17, 19

Tswana, *alt.* Setswana [tsn], 15
Twamamba, *dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Unyama, *dial.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Vatsonga, *alt.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Vazezuru, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Venda [ven], 17, 19
Vila, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Wakalanga, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Wamanyika, *alt.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Wanyai, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Wanyika, *alt.* Manyika [mxc], 13
Watonga, *alt. dial.* Ndau [ndc], 14
Wazezuru, *alt. dial.* Shona [sna], 16
We, *dial.* Tonga [toi], 16
Western Shona, *alt.* Kalanga [kck], 13

Xhosa [xho], 17
Xichangana, *alt. dial.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Xitshwa, *alt.* Tswa [tsc], 17
Xitsonga, *alt.* Tsonga [tso], 17
Xwamamba, *alt. dial.* Kalanga [kck], 13
Zambezi, *alt.* Tonga [toi], 16
Zezeru, *dial.* Shona [sna], 16
Zimbabwe Community Sign, *dial.* Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib], 18
Zimbabwe School Sign, *dial.* Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib], 18
Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib], 18, 0
Zimsign, *alt.* Zimbabwe Sign Language [zib], 18

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