Ethnologue: Languages of Honduras

Twentieth edition data

Gary F. Simons and Charles D. Fennig, Editors

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List of Abbreviations

A  Agent in constituent word order
alt. alternate name for
alt. dial. alternate dialect name for
C Consonant in canonical syllable patterns
CDE Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)
Class Language classification
dial. primary dialect name for
ICCPPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
km kilometer(s)
L1 / L2 first language / second (or other additional) language
Lg Dev Language development
Lg Use Language use
m meter(s)
P Patient in constituent word order
pej. pejorative
pl. plural
S Subject in constituent word order
sg. singular
SIL SIL International
SOV Subject-Object-Verb
Type Typological information
UNSD United Nations Statistics Division
USCB United States Census Bureau
V Vowel in canonical syllable patterns
VSO Verb-Subject-Object
How to Use This Digest

This *Ethnologue* country digest provides an extract of the information about the language situation in Honduras that is published in the 20th edition of *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (see [http://www.ethnologue.com](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 10 languages listed in the *Ethnologue* for the country of Honduras. This includes languages that are either indigenous to the country or which immigrated in the past resulting in well-established multigenerational speaker communities. A complete language entry has the following form and content:


See [http://www.ethnologue.com/about/language-info](http://www.ethnologue.com/about/language-info) 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 16) lists the languages by their level of development or endangerment as measured on EGIDS, the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Lewis and Simons 2010). “Languages by Department” (page 18) lists the top-level administrative subdivisions of Honduras and the languages located within each. “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 30 unique names are associated with the 10 languages described in this digest.

Finally, a listing of all the published sources cited within this digest is found in “Bibliography” (page 22). 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.

The preferred means of submitting corrections and additions is to create an account at http://www.ethnologue.com and use the Feedback tab on the page for the relevant language or country. The advantage of giving feedback in this way is that it becomes part of the public record on the web site and everyone who is following the language or region will be notified of your comments.

Alternatively, you may submit corrections and additions by means of the online contact form at:

http://www.ethnologue.com/about/contact-us

Or send corrections by e-mail to:

Ethnologue_Editor@sil.org

Or by post to:

Editor, Ethnologue
SIL International
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road
Dallas, TX 75236, U.S.A.
## Country Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of country</th>
<th>Honduras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other names</td>
<td>Republic of Honduras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>8,215,000 (2012 UNSD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal language</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate</td>
<td>87% (2014 USCB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant languages</td>
<td>Arabic (42,000), Armenian (1,300), Yue Chinese (1,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf population</td>
<td>18,000–70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General references</td>
<td>Campbell 1997, Campbell and Oltrogge 1980, Oltrogge 1977, Rivas 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language counts</td>
<td>The number of individual languages listed for Honduras is 10. All are living languages. Of these, 8 are indigenous and 2 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 1 is institutional, 6 are developing, and 3 are dying.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 languages in Honduras with respect to their status of language development versus language endangerment. Each individual language that appears in the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 11) is included in the profile. The horizontal axis represents 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 16) 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 Honduras. This section steps back from the detail to offer a summary view of the language situation in the country. Specifically, it offers numerical tabulations of living languages and number of speakers by language size, by language status, and by language family.

Summary by language size

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of living languages in Honduras 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 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 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population range</th>
<th>Living languages</th>
<th>Number of speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000 to 9,999,999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 to 99,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 to 999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary by language status

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of living languages in Honduras 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 16) 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 Honduras. 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 population of all the languages with the given EGIDS level and the *Median* column gives the median 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EGIDS</th>
<th>Living languages</th>
<th>Number of speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8b</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary by language family

The genetic classifications given in the language entries of the “Alphabetical Listing of Languages” (page 11) name 8 different top-level genetic groups. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of living languages and their 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language family</th>
<th>Living languages</th>
<th>Number of speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chibchan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo-European</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language family</td>
<td>Living languages</td>
<td>Number of speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jicaquean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lencan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maipurean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misumalpan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Alphabetical Listing of Languages**


Honduras Sign Language [hds] (Honduran Sign Language, LESHO, Lengua de Señas Hondureñas). Scattered. Status: 5 (Developing). Class: Sign language. Dialects: None known. Regional variations: deaf people along the North coast have some distinct signs from deaf people in the southern part of the country. Lg Dev: At least 12 institutions offer primary education for deaf Hondurans with Honduran Sign Language as their communication philosophy.


Miskito [miq] (Marquito, Mosquito, Miskitu, Misquito). Autonym: Miskitu. 29,000 (Rivas 1993). Colón department; Gracias a Dios and Olancho departments, south, Coco river watershed; coastal area, and northwest from Puerto Lempira. Status: 5 (Dispersed). Class: Misumalpan. Type: SOV; articles, relatives after noun heads, word order distinguishes subject and object; verb affixes mark person and number; ergative; passive; CVC; nontonal. Lg Use: All ages. Also use Spanish [spa]. Lg Dev: Literacy rate in L1: 1%–10%. Literacy rate in L2: 5%–25%.


**Spanish** [spa] (Castellano, Español). Autonym: Castellano, Español. 8,128,000 in Honduras, all users. L1 users: 7,980,000 (2011). L2 users: 148,000 (2011). Status: 1 (National). Statutory national language (1982, Constitution, Article 6). Class: Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Ibero-Romance, West Iberian, Castilian. Type: SVO; prepositions; genitives, relatives after noun heads; articles, numerals before noun heads; adjectives before or after noun heads depending on whether it is evaluative or descriptive; question word initial; gender (masculine/feminine); definite and indefinite articles; verb affixes mark number, person; passives; tense; comparatives; 20 consonants, 5 vowels, 5 diphthongs; non-tonal; stress on penultimate syllable. Silbo Gomero whistled variety of Spanish used in Canary Islands. Lg Dev: Fully developed. Bible: 1553–2012. Writing: Braille script. Latin script, primary usage. Other: Non-indigenous. Worldwide: Total users in all countries: 527,976,150 (as L1: 436,667,750; as L2: 91,308,400). Global EGIDS level: 0 (International). Indigenous in: Andorra, Gibraltar, Spain. Also established in: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Caribbean Netherlands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, France, Guatemala, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela. Immigrant language in: Algeria, Aruba, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cayman Islands, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Guam, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Sint Maarten, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, U.S. Virgin Islands, United Kingdom, Western Sahara.

Languages by Population

In this section the languages of Honduras 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


10,000 to 99,999

**Garifuna** [cab] 98,000 (Rivas 1993). Population total all countries: 175,000. 100 monolinguals. _Status_: 5 (Developing).


**Miskito** [miq] 29,000 (Rivas 1993). _Status_: 5 (Dispersed).

100 to 999


10 to 99


0

**Lenca** [len] No known L1 speakers. Some semi-speakers (Adelaar 2007). Ethnic population: 100,000. _Status_: 9 (Dormant).

Unknown

**Honduras Sign Language** [hds] _Status_: 5 (Developing).
Languages by Status

In this section the languages of Honduras 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)


5 (Developing)

**Garifuna** [cab] 98,000 (Rivas 1993). Population total all countries: 175,000. 100 monolinguals. **Lg Use:** Shifting to Spanish [spa] in some villages. All domains. Positive attitudes. Also use English [eng], Spanish [spa]. **Lg Dev:** Literacy rate in L1: 1%–5%. Literacy rate in L2: 5%–15%. Radio. Dictionary. Grammar. Texts. Bible: 2002. **Writing:** Latin script.

**Honduras Sign Language** [hds] **Lg Dev:** At least 12 institutions offer primary education for deaf Hondurans with Honduran Sign Language as their communication philosophy.


5 (Dispersed)

**English** [eng] 31,500 (2001). 22,500 Bay Islands English speakers on the north coast. **Lg Use:** Used as L2 by Garifuna [cab]. **Writing:** Braille script. Deseret Alphabet, developed in 1854 with limited usage until 1877. Latin script, primary usage. Shavian (Shaw) script, no longer in use.

**Mayangna** [yan] 700 (1997 SIL). Ethnic population: 1,030 (McSweeney 2002). **Lg Use:** All ages. **Lg Dev:** Literacy rate in L1: 10%–30%. **Writing:** Latin script.

**Miskito** [miq] 29,000 (Rivas 1993). **Lg Use:** All ages. Also use Spanish [spa]. **Lg Dev:** Literacy rate in L1: 1%–10%. Literacy rate in L2: 5%–25%. **Writing:** Latin script.
8a (Moribund)


8b (Nearly extinct)


9 (Dormant)

Languages by Department

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

Atlántida
   Garifuna [cab], 12
   Mayangna [yan], 12
   Mískito [miq], 12

Colón
   Garifuna [cab], 12
   Mayangna [yan], 12
   Mískito [miq], 12
   Pech [pay], 13

Comayagua
   Lenca [len], 12

Copán
   Ch’orti’ [caa], 11

Cortés
   Garifuna [cab], 12

Francisco Morazán
   Lenca [len], 12
   Tol [jic], 13

Gracias a Dios
   Garifuna [cab], 12
   Mayangna [yan], 12
   Mískito [miq], 12

Intibucá
   Lenca [len], 12

Islas de la Bahía
   English [eng], 11
   Garifuna [cab], 12

La Paz
   Lenca [len], 12

Lempira
   Lenca [len], 12

Olancho
   Mayangna [yan], 12
   Mískito [miq], 12
   Pech [pay], 13

Valle
   Lenca [len], 12
Languages by Family

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

Chibchan, Chibchan B
   Pech [pay], 13

Indo-European, Germanic, West, English
   English [eng], 11

Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Ibero-Romance,
   West Iberian, Castilian
   Spanish [spa], 13

Jicaquean
   Tol [jic], 13

Lencan
   Lenca [len], 12

Maipurean, Northern, Maritime, Ta-Maipurean, Iñeri
   Garifuna [cab], 12

Mayan, Yucatecan-Core Mayan, Core Mayan, Cholan-Tzeltalan, Cholan, Chorti-Cholti
   Ch’orti’ [caa], 11

Misumalpan
   Mayangna [yan], 12
   Miskito [miq], 12

Sign language
   Honduras Sign Language [hds], 12
## Language Code Index

This index gives an alphabetical listing of all 10 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/](http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caa</td>
<td>Ch’orti’,</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cab</td>
<td>Garifuna,</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eng</td>
<td>English,</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hds</td>
<td>Honduras Sign Language,</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>jic</td>
<td>Tol,</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>len</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Miskito,</td>
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<td>Spanish,</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yan</td>
<td>Mayangna,</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

Bay Islands English, dial. English [eng], 11
Black Carib, alt. Garifuna [cab], 12
Caribe, alt. Garifuna [cab], 12
Castellano, alt. Spanish [spa], 13
Central American Carib, alt. Garifuna [cab], 12
Ch’orti’ [caa], 11, 14
Eastern Garifuna, dial. Garifuna [cab], 12
English [eng], 11, 14
Español, alt. Spanish [spa], 13
Garifuna [cab], 12, 14
Honduran Sign Language, alt. Honduras Sign Language [hds], 12
Honduras Sign Language [hds], 12
Inglés, alt. English [eng], 11
Island Carib, alt. Garifuna [cab], 12
Jicaque, alt. Tol [jic], 13
Lenca [len], 12
Lengua de Señas Hondureñas, alt. Honduras Sign Language [hds], 12

LESHO, alt. Honduras Sign Language [hds], 12
Marquito, alt. Miskito [miq], 12
Mayangna [yan], 12, 14
Miskito [miq], 12, 14
Miskitu, alt. Miskito [miq], 12
Misquito, alt. Miskito [miq], 12
Mosquito, alt. Miskito [miq], 12
Paya, alt. Pech [pay], 13
Pech [pay], 13, 14
Seco, alt. Pech [pay], 13
Spanish [spa], 13
Sumu, alt. Mayangna [yan], 12
Tol [jic], 13, 14
Tolpan, alt. Tol [jic], 13
Tawahka, dial. Mayangna [yan], 12
Western Garifuna, dial. Garifuna [cab], 12
Xicaque, alt. Tol [jic], 13
Bibliography


