

GENERAL NOTE

Language is an important attribute of a population, and has great relevance and significance in a pluri-lingual and pluri-ethnic land like India. The Census of India has been the richest source of language data collected and published at the successive decennial censuses for more than a century. The language data is particularly useful in the country having diverse people since no separate question is asked on their ethnicity except in respect of the scheduled tribes. The language data having the ethnic and linguistic characteristics of the population has thus been an indiscreet source of information. The presentation of the language tables has been progressively improved in terms of lucidity, detail to make it more comprehensible besides being user-friendly.

2. In the 2011 census, as in the previous censuses, the mother tongue as returned by each individual was collected through question number 10 of Household Schedule, which was canvassed for the entire population of the country.

3. The question on mother-tongue and the relevant instructions to enumerators were as follows: -

Q. 10: Mother tongue

3.1 Mother tongue is the language spoken in childhood by the person's mother to the person. If the mother died in infancy, the language mainly spoken in the person's home in childhood will be the mother tongue. In the case of infants and deaf mutes, the language usually spoken by the mother should be recorded. In case of doubt, the language mainly spoken in the household may be recorded.

3.2 Record mother tongue in full, whatever is the name of the language returned by the respondent and do not use abbreviations. Please note the following:

- (a) You are not expected to determine if the language returned by a person is a dialect of another language.
- (b) You should not try to establish any relationship between religion and mother tongue.
- (c) You are bound to record the language as returned by the person as her/his mother tongue and you should not enter into any argument with her/him and try to record any language other than what is returned, and
- (d) If you have reasons to suspect that in any area due to any organised movement, the mother tongue is not being truthfully returned, you should record the mother tongue as actually returned by the respondent and make a report to your supervisory officers for verification. ***You are not authorised to make any correction on your own.***

3.3 The mother tongue as returned by the respondent should be recorded in full under this question.

3.4 Since a household may consist of persons related by blood or of unrelated persons or a mix of both, it is absolutely necessary to ask of every person about her/his mother tongue because the mother tongue of each member of a household need not necessarily be the same - these may be different for different members in the household.

4. As the above instructions to the enumerator would show, the respondent was made to feel free to return the name of his mother tongue and the same was recorded faithfully by the enumerator. This has led to the recording of a very large number of mother- tongue names from all over the country. At the 2011 census, the number of such raw returns of mother tongues has totaled 19569. Since mother- tongues as returned in the census are basically the designations provided by the respondents of the linguistic mediums in which the respondents think they communicate, they need not be identical with the actual linguistic mediums. For assessing the correlation between the mother tongue and designations of the census and for presenting the numerous raw returns in terms of their linguistic affiliation to actual languages and dialects, 19569 raw returns were subjected to thorough linguistic scrutiny, edit and rationalization. This resulted in 1369 rationalized mother tongues and 1474 names which were treated as 'unclassified' and relegated to 'other' mother tongue category. The 1369 rationalized mother tongues were further classified following the usual linguistic methods for rational grouping based on available linguistic information. Thus, an inventory of classified mother tongues returned by 10,000 or more speakers are grouped under appropriate languages at the all India level, wherever possible, has been prepared for final presentation of the 2011 mother tongue data. The total number of languages arrived at is 121.

5. The 121 languages are presented in two parts viz.

Part A: Languages included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India (Scheduled Languages) comprising of 22 languages; and

Part B: Languages not included in the Eighth Schedule (Non-Scheduled Languages) comprising of 99 languages plus the category "Total of other languages" which includes all other languages and mother tongues falling under Part B and which returned less than 10,000 speakers each at the all India level or were not identifiable on the basis of the linguistic information available.

6. The number of Scheduled languages was 22 at the time of presentation of the 2001. The same 22 languages are maintained in 2011 Census also.

7. The Non Scheduled languages are 99 in Part B in 2011 against 100 in 2001. The decrease in number is due to exclusion of Simte and Persian (which were not returned in sufficient number as 2011) and inclusion of Mao (who has returned more than 10,000 speakers at the all India level at 2011 Census).

8. Of the total population of India, 96.71 percent have one of the Scheduled languages as their mother tongue, the remaining 3.29 per cent is accounted for by other languages.

9. There are total 270 identifiable mother tongues which have returned 10,000 or more speakers each at the all-India level, comprising 123 mother tongues grouped under the Scheduled Languages (Part A) and 147 mother tongues grouped under the Non-Scheduled languages (Part B). Those mother tongues which have returned less than 10,000 speakers each and which have been classified under a particular language, are included in "Others" under that language.

10. The presentation of the 2011 language data is based on the same principles as those adopted for the 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 censuses. In addition, the speaker strength of all individual mother tongues returned by 10,000 or more speakers have also been given on the lines of 1991 and 2001 censuses. The main table presented in this volume is Table C-16 divided into Part A–Scheduled Languages and Part B–Non Scheduled languages. This is preceded by the following 9 statements which present summarized data at a glance for the convenience of data users.

Statement 1: Abstract of speakers' strength of languages and mother tongues - 2011

Statement 2: Distribution of population by Scheduled and Other languages – India, States and Union Territories - 2011.

Statement 3: Distribution of 10,000 persons by language - India, States and Union Territories - 2011.

Statement 4: Scheduled languages in descending order of speakers' strength - 2011

Statement 5: Comparative speakers' strengths of Scheduled languages - 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Statement 6: Comparative rankings of the Scheduled languages in descending order of speakers' strength - 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Statement 7: Growth of the Scheduled languages -1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Statement 8: Growth of the Non-Scheduled languages – 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Statement 9: Family-wise grouping of the 121 Scheduled and Non- Scheduled languages - 2011.