

IRELAND

GAEILGE (Irish Gaelic)

Republic of Ireland (26 counties)

The 1991 census showed that 1,095,830 people, or 32.5% of the population can speak Irish with varying degrees of ability. These figures are of a self-report nature. There are no reliable figures for the number of people who speak Irish as their everyday home language, but it is estimated that 4 to 5% use the language regularly. The Irish-speaking heartland areas (the Gaeltacht) are widely dispersed along the western seaboard and are not densely populated. They contain about 79,000 people of the total population of the republic

Northern Ireland (6 counties)

The 1991 census revealed that there are 142,003 people in Northern Ireland claiming knowledge of the language (including people who understand but do not speak it). A 1987 survey indicated that 11% of the population (about 100,000 people between 16 and 69) had some knowledge of Irish. Of this group 6% claimed to have full fluency, 84% never used Irish at home, 15% used the language occasionally, and 1% used Irish on a daily basis.

SCOTLAND

GAIDHLIG (Scottish Gaelic)

The 1991 census indicated that there were about 79,000 speakers of Gaelic in Scotland. Gaelic speakers are found in all parts of the country but the main concentrations are in the Western Isles, Skye and Lochalsh, Lochabar, Sutherland, Argyll and Bute, Ross and Cromarty, and Inverness. There are also speakers in the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

A Clarification of Names

"'Great Britain' is a geographic term describing the main island of the British Isles which comprises England, Scotland and Wales (so called to distinguish it from "Little Britain" or Brittany). By the Act of Union, 1801, Great Britain and Ireland formed a legislative union as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom does not include the Channel Islands, or the Isle of Man, which are direct dependencies of the Crown with their own legislative and taxation systems." (from the Statesman's handbook, 1984-85)

THE ISLE OF MAN

GAELG (Manx)

In the 1991 census, 643 people said that they can speak Manx with some degree of fluency, 343 reported that they can write it and 479 said they can read it. The census of 1901 showed around 4,657 speakers of Manx.

WALES

CYMRAEG (Welsh)

The 1991 census indicated that there are over 530,000 Welsh speakers in Wales (19% of the population). The traditional Welsh heartland areas are the North and West where high percentages of Welsh speakers are found (two-third of the total speakers). A significant number of Welsh speakers are also found in the industrial valleys and coastal cities of South Wales where most of the population is concentrated.

GALICIA, Spain

GALEGO (Galician)

Galician is not a Celtic language, but a Roman language.

According to the 1991 census, 91% of the 2,753,000 inhabitants of the autonomous community of Galicia understand Galician and 84% also speak it. However, the same census indicated that only 48% uses the language on an everyday basis.

ASTURIAS, Spain

BABLE (Asturian)

Bable (bob-lay) is not a Celtic language, but like Galician has been influenced by earlier Celtic speakers inhabiting this area of Spain. It is a mix of Iberian (Spanish), Celtic and some Euzkader (Basque). Bable is spoken by some 450,000 people in Asturias (44.4% of the population) according to a 1991 government survey. The Keltiberian strain in the language is strongest in the rural and mountain areas.

CORNWALL

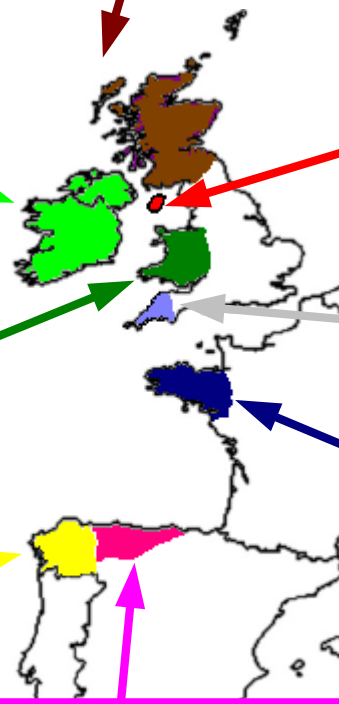
KERNEWEK (Cornish)

According to estimates, Cornish is spoken fluently by about 200 people, and with varying degrees of fluency by a few thousand people. Cornish ceased to be spoken in Cornwall by the end of the 18th century with the loss of its last native-speakers, but is today being revived.

BRITTANY, France

BREZHONEG (Breton)

No census of France has ever included questions on languages, but several recent surveys have been conducted in Brittany and an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 people use Breton as an everyday language today. Surveys estimate that 689,000 people in Brittany understand Breton, 518,000 speak it, and 237,000 can read it. Most Breton speakers are concentrated in rural western Brittany (Breizh-Izel, Lower Brittany). In eastern Brittany (Breizh-Uhel, Upper Brittany) a unique Franco-Romain dialect called Gallo is spoken in rural areas.



The information about each language has been pulled primarily from the Mini-Guide to the Lesser Used Languages of the European Community (European Bureau for the Lesser Used Languages, 1993) and from various issues of Cam (newsletter of the Celtic league). Thank you to Ben Pecson for information on Bable.

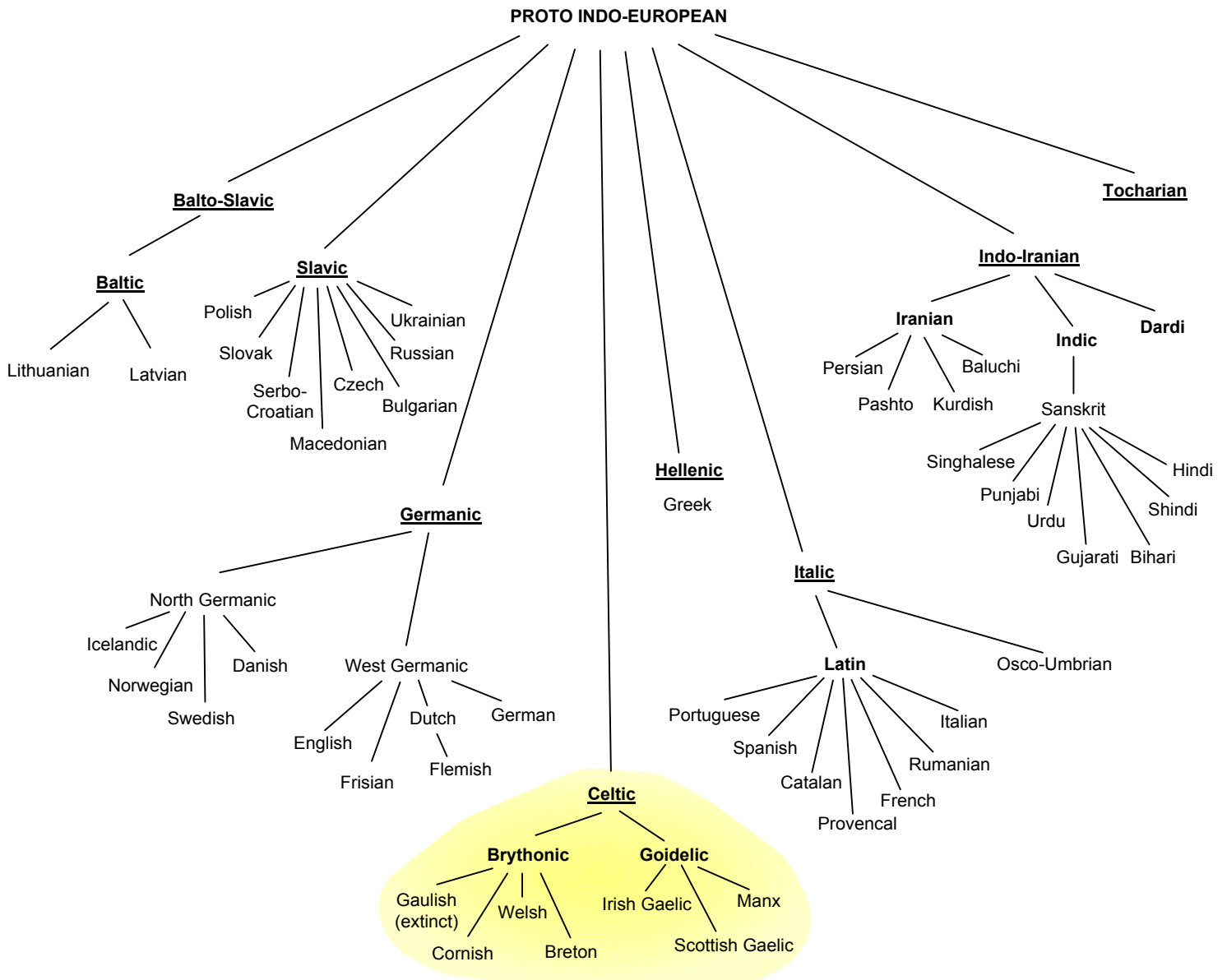
More on
other side



THE CELTIC LANGUAGES

INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

The following chart (found in a dictionary) shows how different language branches in the indo-european family are related. Note that the Celtic languages are in a totally different branch from English and French. Note also that there are two different branches within the Celtic languages.



Some comparisons

English	Gaelic	Manx	Welsh	Cornish	Breton	French
I hear	cluinin	cluinyim	clywaf	clewaf	klevan	J'entends
to go	dhul	goll	mynd	mones	mont	aller
dog	cu	co	ci	kt	ki	chien
sea	muir	muir	more	more	mor	mer
language	teanga	cheugey	iaith	yeth	yezth	langue
house	teach	thie	ty	chy	ti	maison
bread	aran	arran	bara	bara	bara	pain
black	dubh	doo	du	du	du	noir
white	ban	bane	gwyn	gwyn	gwenn	blanche
young	og	aeg	ieuanc	yowynk	yaouank	jeune
old	sean	shenn	hen	hen	hen	vieux
without	gan	gyn	heb	hep	hep	sans

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Note: Differences between the Celtic languages may "look" greater than they sound due to the particular orthography adopted.