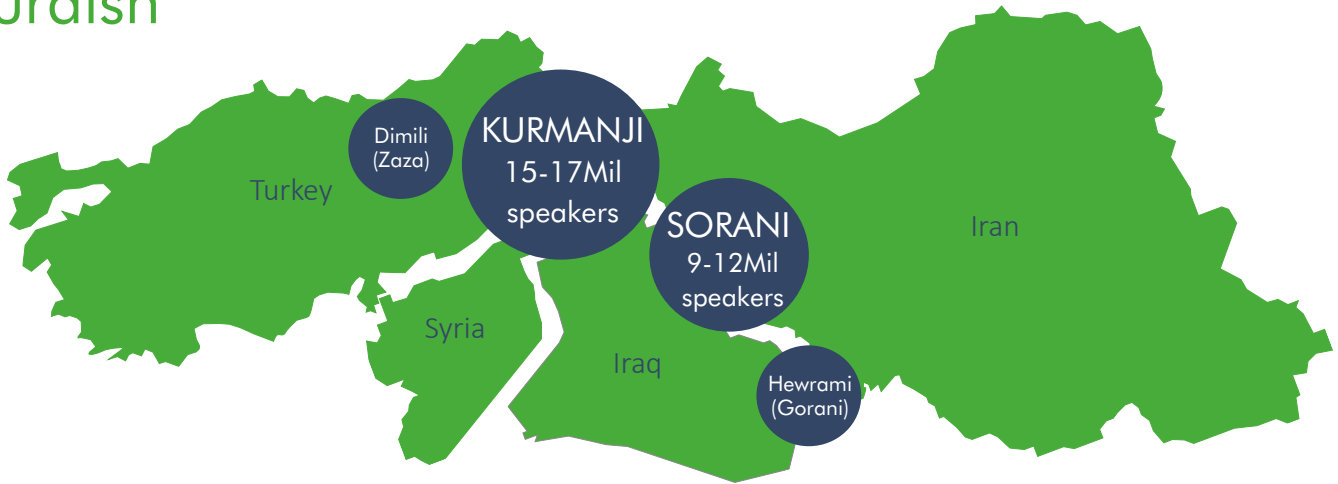


Kurdish



75% of native Kurdish speakers speak Kurmanji or Sorani.

Other dialects include: Pehlewani, Dimili/Zaza, and Hewrami/Gorani.



Many Kurdish speakers were not educated in their mother tongue and might prefer to read or write in Arabic, Turkish, or Farsi.



Kurmanji and Sorani speakers often have difficulties in understanding each other.



Kurmanji uses a Latin-based script (Kurmancî) and Sorani uses Arabic-based script (سۆرانی).

Tips



Make sure your interpreter speaks the appropriate dialect.



Consider using pictures, graphics, and simple text to help break down language barriers.



Ask Kurdish speakers if they would be more comfortable receiving written information in another language.

Digging deeper into Kurdish...

Where are the Kurdish dialects spoken?

The Kurds are a minority group whose language has been fractured into several dialects and alphabets across four countries; Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. There are two main Kurdish dialects (Kurmanji and Sorani), as well as some peripheral ones (e.g. Pahlewani, Zazaki and Hewrami /Gorani).

Kurmanji is the language of the vast majority of Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and of a few in Iraq and Iran, with an estimated 15-17 million speakers in total.

Sorani is the language of most Kurds in Iraq (4-6 million speakers) and Iran (5-6 million speakers).

Differences between dialects

Sorani and Kurmanji account for more than 75 percent of native Kurdish speakers. Sorani is written in Arabic-based script and Kurmanji in a Latin-based script. Although the two languages are closely related, Kurmanji and Sorani are not mutually intelligible in either written or spoken form.

When you ask a Kurd 'What is your mother tongue?', usually the first thing they will say is 'I speak *Kurdi*.' It is very important to ask which dialect they speak as the alphabet, vocabulary and grammar vary significantly from one dialect to another.

Official acceptance of the Kurdish dialects

Iraq: official status since 2003

Turkey: banned until 1992 and recently somewhat tolerated

Iran: tolerated since the 1979 revolution

Syria: repressed, especially since 1955

Differences in the status of their language mean that many Kurds are more comfortable with written communication in other languages which they may have studied at school.

How TWB can help

- Translations in both Kurmanji and Sorani through teams of professionally trained translators (working remotely).
- Online testing of Kurdish language skills to aid the recruitment of staff.
- Open-access and tailor-made training for interpreters, translators and cultural mediators.
- Practical tools, online glossaries and good practice guides for interpreters and translators available at www.translatorswithoutborders.org.