

“Irish Sign Language [isg] (A language of Ireland)

- **Alternate Names:** Teanga Chomharthaíochta na hÉireann
- **Population:** 21,000 (2014 IMB). 5,000 Deaf and estimated 45,000 hearing L1 and L2 users (2014 DeafVillageIreland).
- **Location:** Scattered, possibly also in Northern Ireland.
- **Language Status:** 5 (Developing).
- **Dialects:** Separate schools for boys and girls resulted in strong gender-based dialectal differences, but these have diminished with time. British Sign Language (BSL)[bfi] was formally introduced to Ireland in 1816, but references to signing go back much further in Irish history. In 1846, the Catholic nuns who established St. Mary’s School for Deaf Girls went to France, so contemporary Irish Sign Language includes aspects of nineteenth-century French Sign Language [fsl] as well as BSL, with influence from signed French, signed English, and gestural systems like cued speech. (Leeson 2012).
- **Typology:** One-handed fingerspelling.
- **Language Use:** Several deaf schools. Government policy recommends bilingual education (National Council for Special Education 2011). Deaf associations. Committee on national sign language, and organization for sign language teachers. All domains. All ages.
- **Language Development:** Films. TV. Dictionary.
- **Other Comments:** Support for parents to learn Irish Sign Language (2014 National Council for Special Education). The name ‘Irish Sign Language’ (ISL) came into common use following the publication of a dictionary of ISL in 1979 and establishment of the Irish Deaf Society in the mid 1980s. (Leeson 2012). The Irish Deaf Society is currently working to have Irish Sign Language legally recognized. (2014 Irish Deaf). Fingerspelling system similar to French Sign Language [fsl]. Christian (Roman Catholic).”

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Related Readings

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