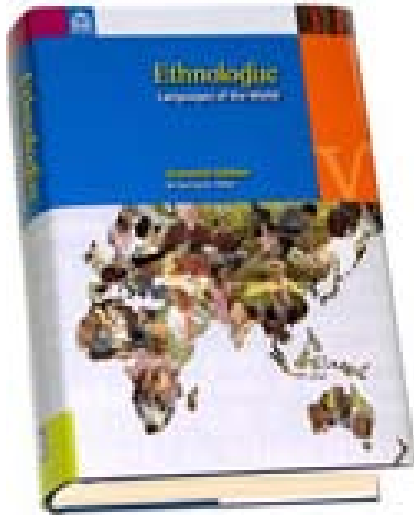


Endangered languages and endangered language families: A global assessment

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Ethnologue



- *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 16th edition.* M. Paul Lewis, ed. 2009.
- Online: <http://www.ethnologue.com>
- Lists 6,909 living languages + 421 that have become extinct since 1950
- 17th edition in preparation: 2013

Overview of presentation

- Report on findings of two recent studies that have been based on the *Ethnologue* database:
 - “Endangered language families” with Doug Whalen. To appear in *Language*, March 2012.
 - “The world’s languages in crisis: A 20-year update” with Paul Lewis. To be presented at the *26th Linguistics Symposium*, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, October 2011.

1. Linguistic diversity at risk

- What proportion of the world's linguistic diversity is at risk in the current endangerment crisis?
- Previous studies have approached this by looking at how many individual languages are at risk.
- The study with Whalen takes a deeper view of linguistic diversity by asking what proportion of language families are at risk.
 - The diversity that distinguishes families from each other has taken much longer to develop than that which distinguishes languages in the same family.

Methodology

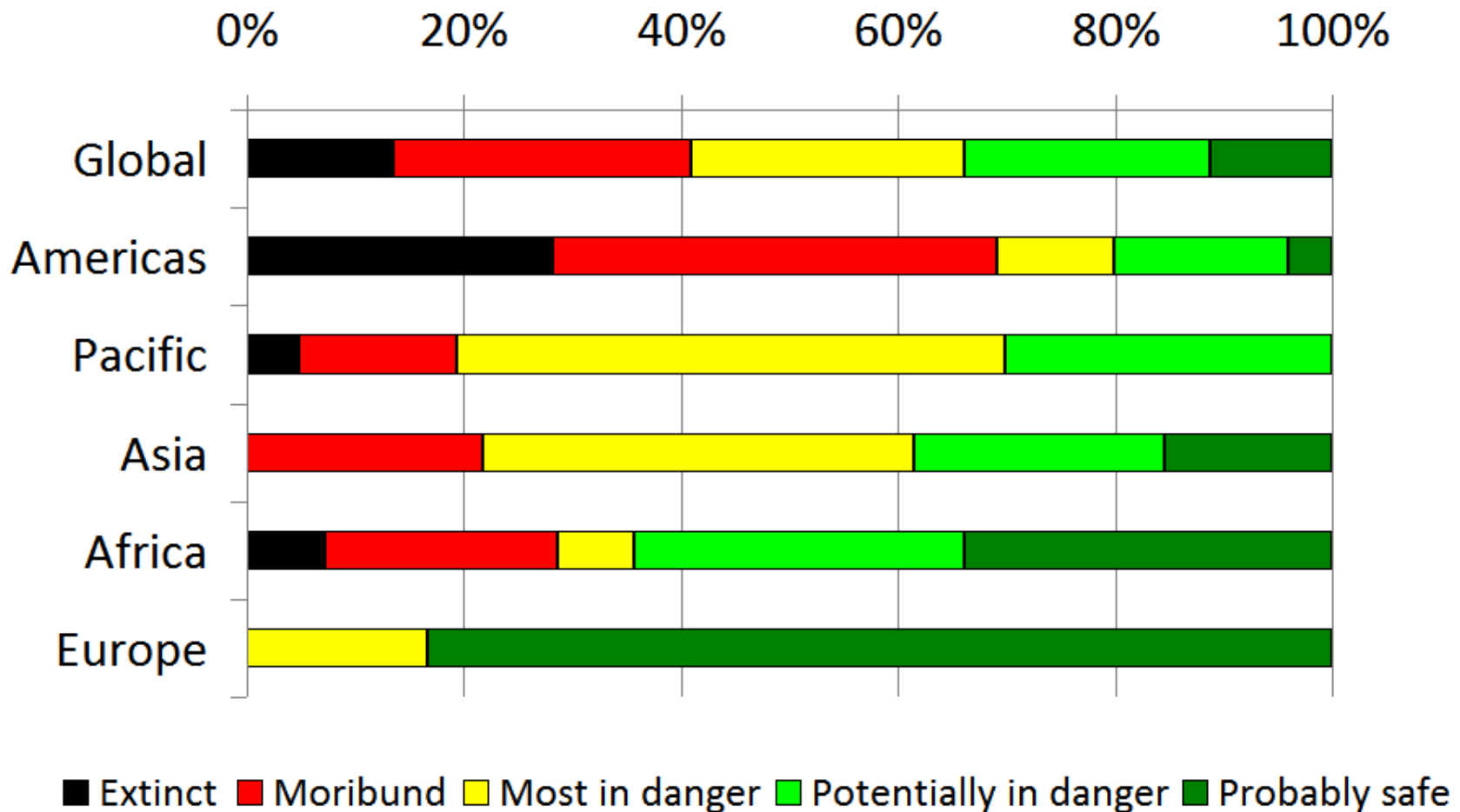
- We began with the classification of the world's languages into families as reported in *Ethnologue*
- Then compared this with the Autotyp database (Nichols and Bickel) to identify branches that correspond to reconstructable linguistic stocks
 - Result: 250 groupings + 122 language isolates
- Used ISO 639-3 codes to compare the *Ethnologue* records with the corresponding records from the UNESCO *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*
- In the absence of any indication of endangerment in either source, used language population as a proxy indicator for likely level of endangerment

Resulting categorization

- Each stock was then assigned to a category:
 - **Extinct** — No language in the stock survives
 - **Moribund** — All remaining languages are judged by at least one of our sources as not being passed to children
 - **Most in danger** — At least one language is thought to be currently viable, but all remaining languages are below the global median of 7,500 speakers
 - **Potentially in danger** — Has languages above the median size, but none is in the top 10% with over 340,000 speakers
 - **Probably safe** — At least one language is in the largest 10% of languages



Endangerment level of linguistic stocks

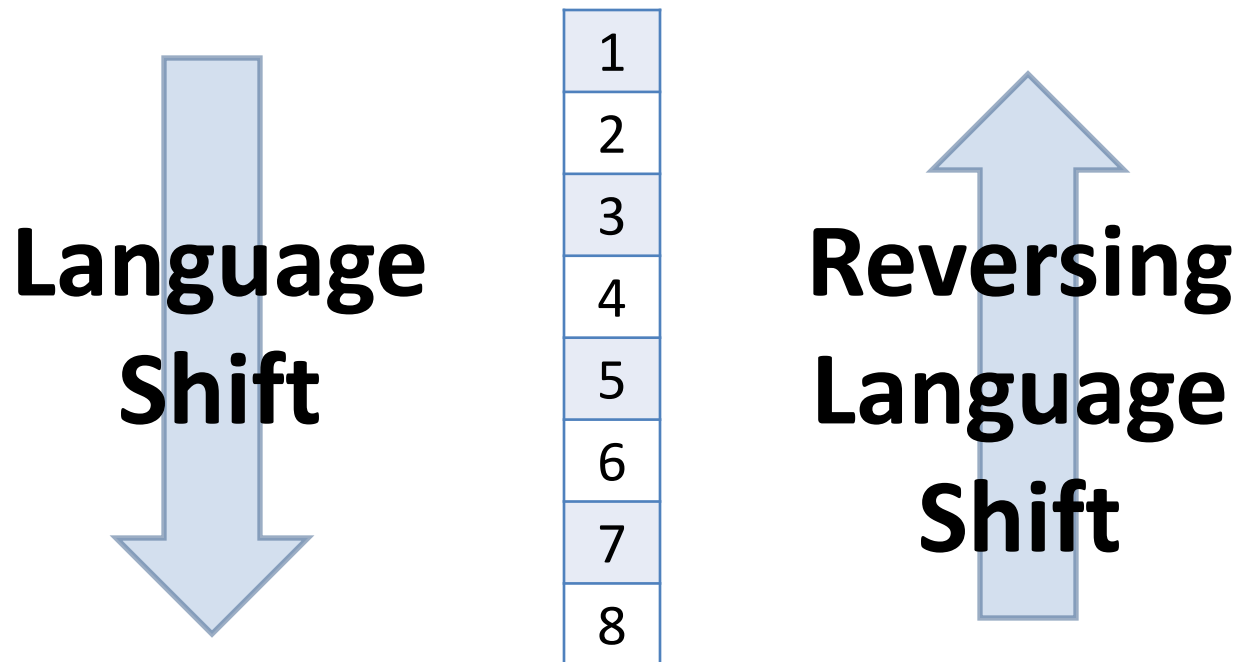


2. A global survey of language status

- We began with GIDS — the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale from Fishman's (1991) seminal book on *Reversing Language Shift*
- He developed GIDS as a measuring rod for language shift:
 - Level 1 is highest: an official national language
 - Level 8 is lowest: a dying language
 - Going up the 6 levels between represent successively more functions for language in society
 - The scale measures disruption so higher numbers represent greater levels of disruption

The basic premise of GIDS

- Language shift (ending in extinction) happens as a language loses functions in society
- To reverse language shift, the community must work to bring those functions back



EGIDS: an Expanded GIDS

- In the next edition of *Ethnologue*, we plan to provide an estimate for all languages as to where they stand on this scale. Problems:
 - Needed to add extinct languages at bottom of scale, while keeping the *Ethnologue* distinction between dormant and extinct
 - Wanted to add international languages at the top
 - GIDS gave only two levels of endangerment; but we wanted to harmonize with UNESCO's 4 levels
 - Wanted to add names for the levels
- This resulted in EGIDS as a 13 level scale

The 13 levels of EGIDS

- Lewis, M. Paul and Gary F. Simons. 2010. Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 55:103-120.
http://www.lingv.ro/resources/scm_images/RRL-02-2010-Lewis.pdf

0	International
1	National
2	Regional
3	Trade
4	Educational
5	Written
6a	Vigorous
6b	Threatened
7	Shifting
8a	Moribund
8b	Nearly Extinct
9	Dormant
10	Extinct

EGIDS: Safe levels

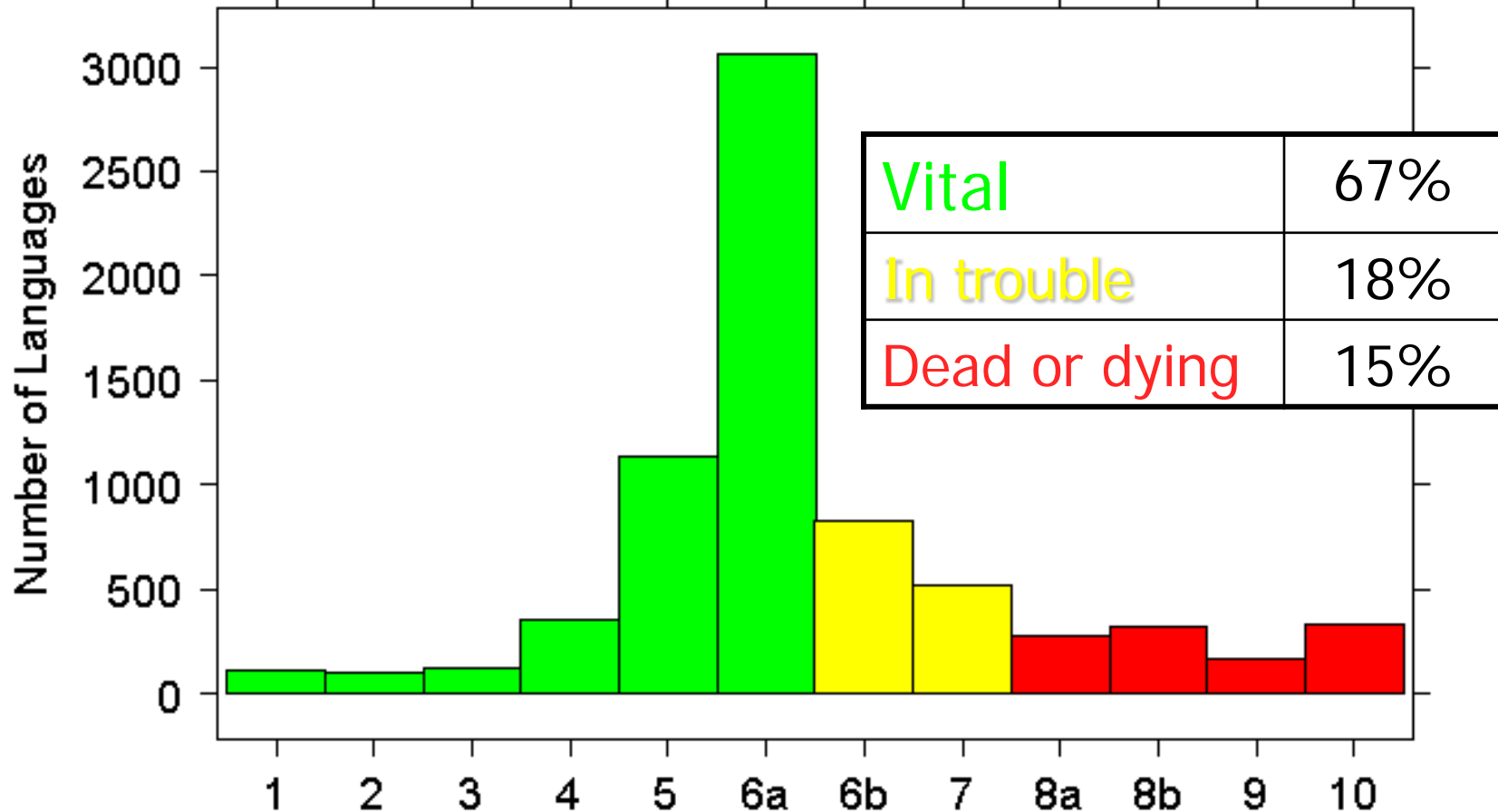
LEVEL	LABEL	DESCRIPTION
0	Inter-national	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, government at the nationwide level.
2	Regional	The language is used for local and regional mass media, education, and governmental services.
3	Trade	The language is widely used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences.
4	Educational	The language is vigorous and literacy in it is being transmitted sustainably through a system of public education.
5	Written	The language is vigorous and is used in written form in parts of the community but literacy is not yet sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language.

EGIDS: Endangered levels

LEVEL	LABEL	DESCRIPTION
6b	Threatened	The language is used orally by all generations but only some parents are transmitting it to children.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves but do not normally transmit it to their children .
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active speakers of the language are in the grandparent generation.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community. No one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	No one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

A global profile of language status

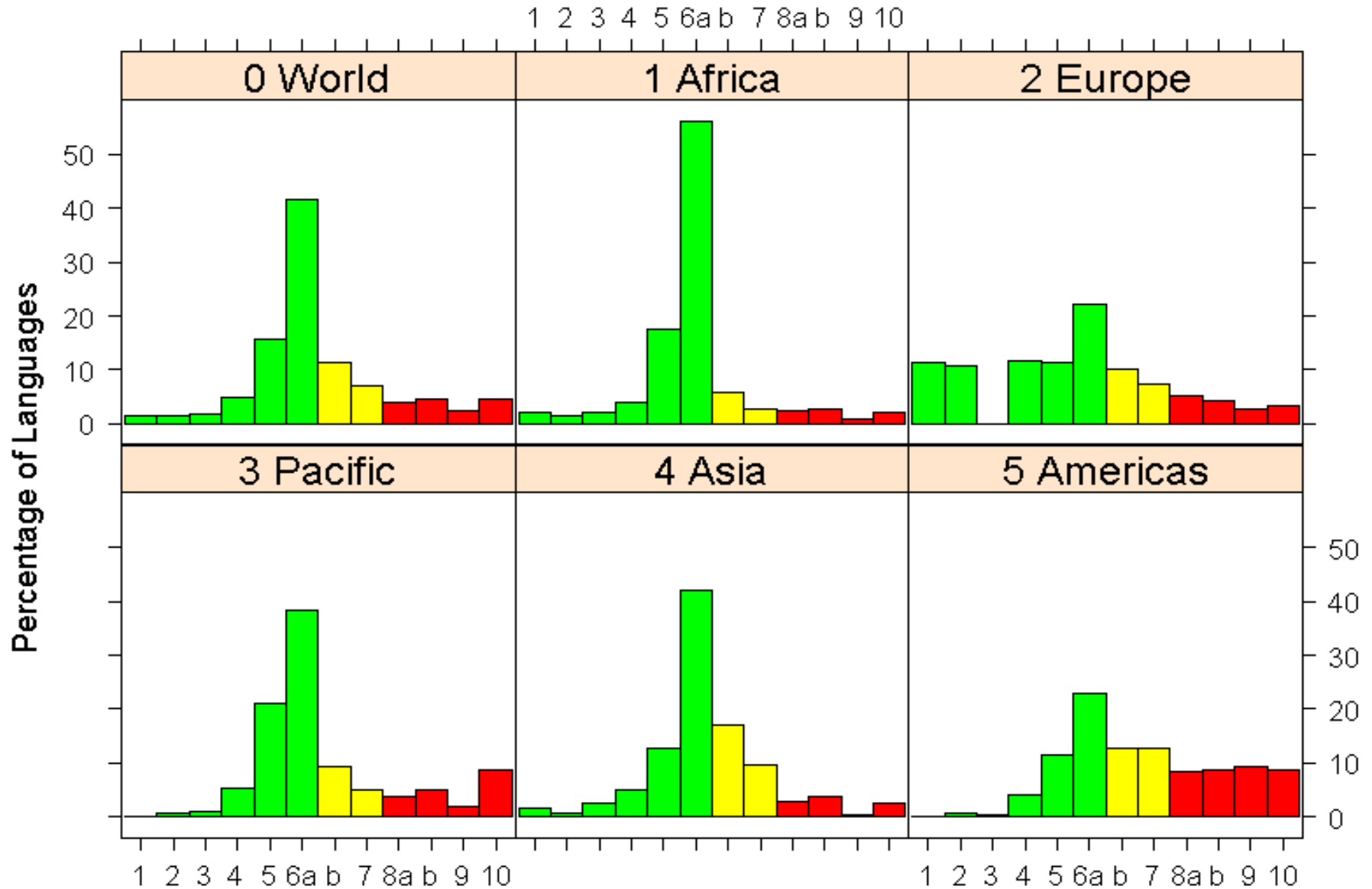
- We used available data to make EGIDS estimates for all languages
- Field correspondents have so far reviewed and updated 79% of them



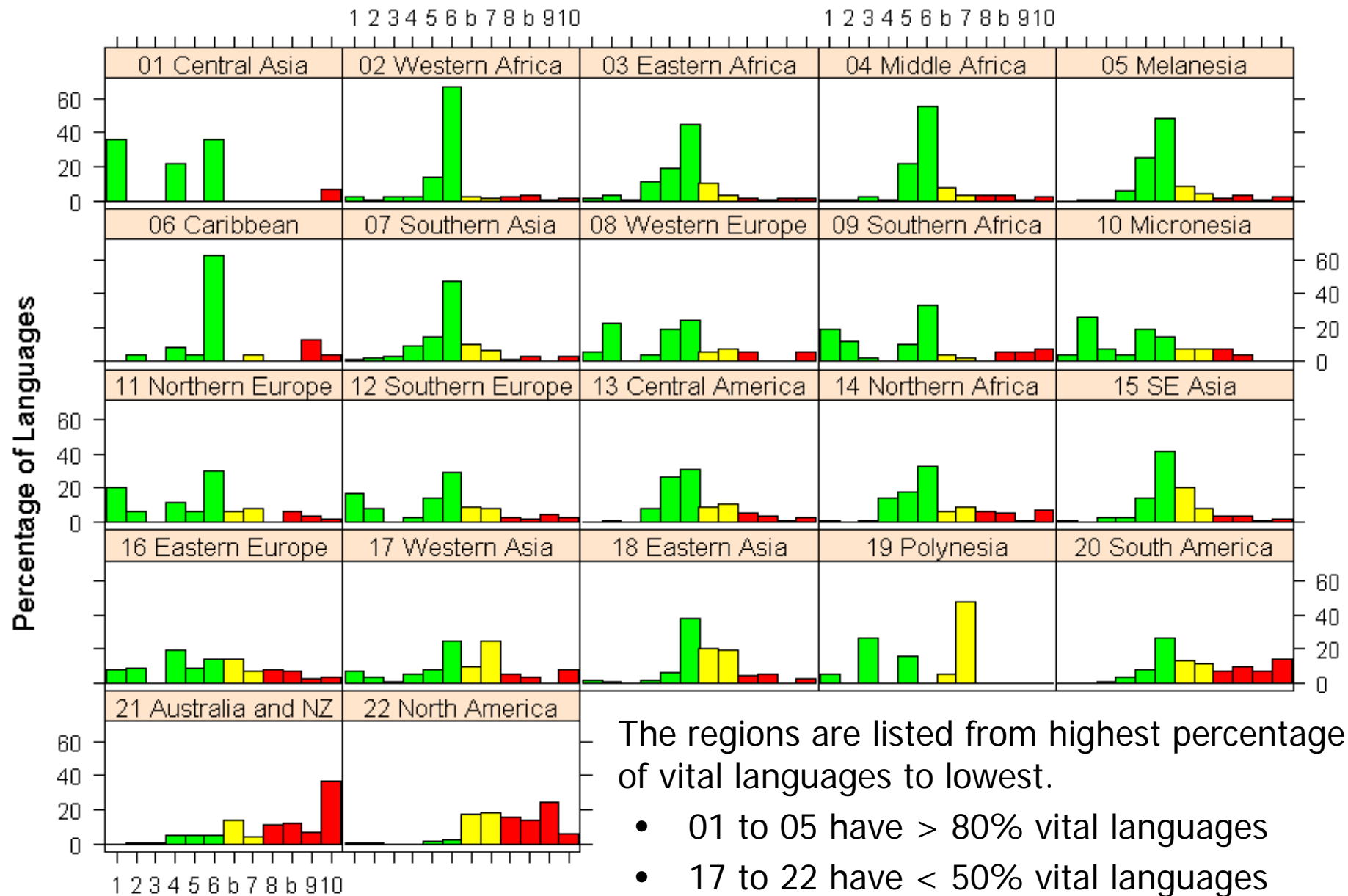
Significance of color coding

- Green (*"Vital"*) — It is still the norm that the language is being passed on to children in the home.
- Yellow (*"In trouble"*) — Intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken, but the child-bearing generation still speaks the language so successful revitalization efforts could restore transmission of the language in the home.
- Red (*"Dead or dying"*) — It is too late to restore natural intergenerational transmission in the home.

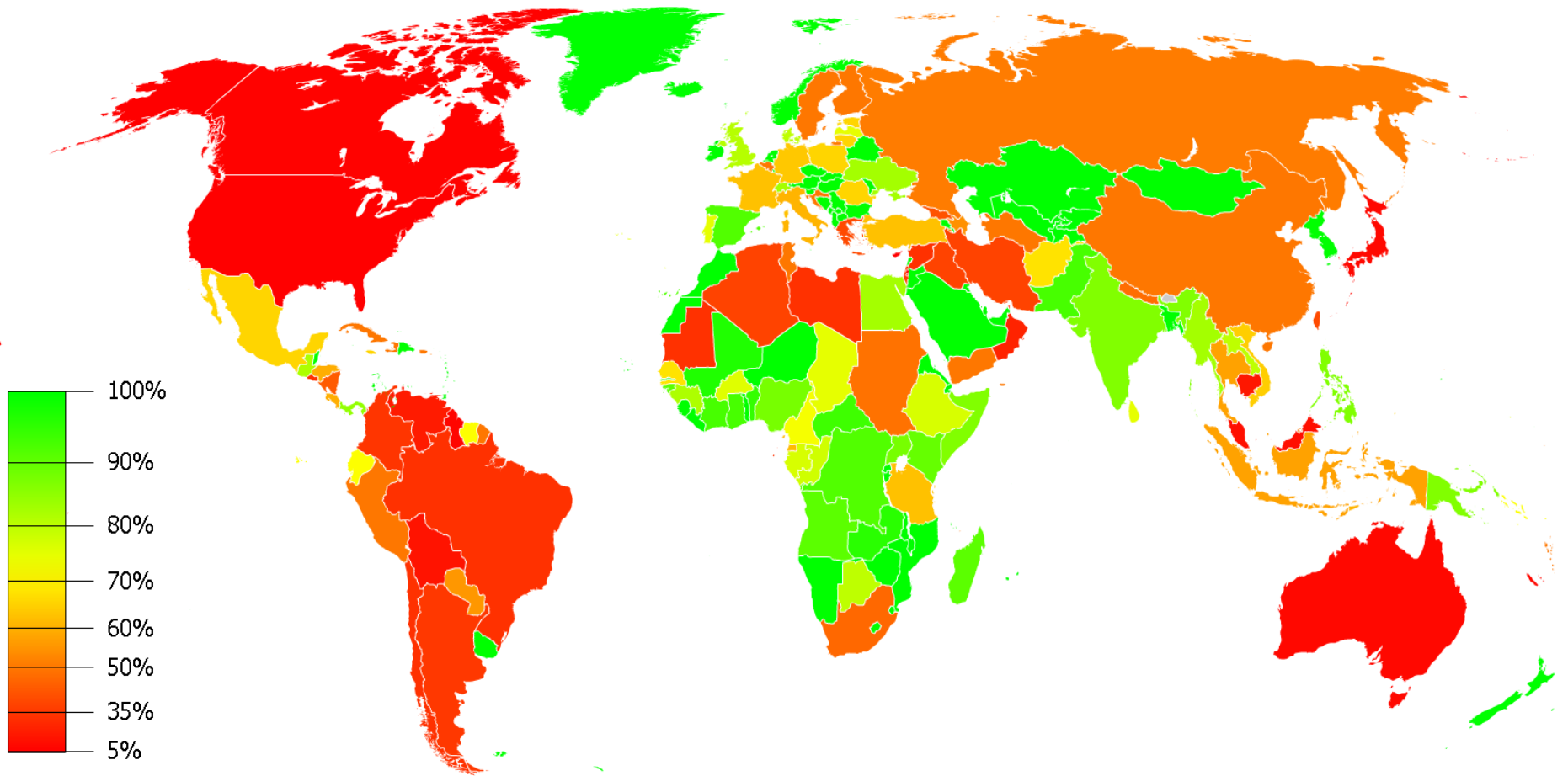
Language status by world areas



Language status by UN regions



Percentage of vital languages by country



Conclusions

- Linguistic diversity lost and at risk:
 - Since 1950, 15% of stocks have become extinct
 - 27% have no member language being passed down
- At the level of individual languages:
 - 15% are dead or dying
 - 18% are clearly in trouble, but are still spoken by the child-bearing generation so could be turned around
- The level of crisis varies by region:
 - In 6 of 22 UN regions, less than 50% of lgs are vital
 - While in 5 of the regions, over 80% are vital