Small Consonant Inventory

The size of the consonant inventory of each language was investigated. The categories labelled “small” (6-14 consonants) and “moderately small” (15-18 consonants) in WALS, were collapsed and any inventory size comprising 18 or less consonants were considered small. In order to operationalize the analysis, only the 40-item list was used as a basis. The resulting value for an individual language should therefore be regarded as relative in relation to the sample in general (see Large Consonant Inventory), and not as an absolute statement about inventory size. Taking more lexical data into account may very well render a different result. An inventory, using the above-mentioned method, representative of the value small is that of Kyrgyz, as displayed in the table, with its 17 consonants.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Kyrgyz [kir] (Turkic)** | **Labial** | **Dental/alveolar** | **Post-alveolar** | **Velar/uvular** |
| Plosive | p, b | t, d |  | k, ɡ, q |
| Affricate |  |  | tɕ, dʑ |  |
| Fricative |  | s, z | ɕ |  |
| Nasal | m | n |  |  |
| Lateral/flap |  | l, r |  |  |
| Approximant |  |  | j |  |

Only two of the sample languages were recorded as using 18 or less consonants in the 40-item list, Turkic Kyrgyz and Nuristani Eastern Kati.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature value | # of varieties displaying it | % |
| Present | 2 | 3 |
| Absent | 57 | 97 |
| Indeterminate | 0 | 0 |