
Table 5.
Distribution of Speakers of Non-English Languages for Selected Metropolitan

SUMMARY

This report provides illustrative evidence of the continuing and growing role of non-English languages as part of the national fabric. Fueled by both long-term historic immigration patterns and more recent ones, the language diversity of the country has increased over the past few decades. As the nation continues to be a destination for people from other lands, this pattern of language diversity will also likely continue. Given the patterns of location and relocation over time, local areas may see specific or diverse changes in the languages spoken in any given locality.

SOURCE OF THE DATA

Estimates in this report are from the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS). The population represented (the population universe) in the 2011 ACS includes both the household and the group quarters populations (that is, the resident population). The group quarters population consists of the institutionalized population (such as people in correctional institutions or nursing homes) and the non-institutionalized population (most of whom are in college dormitories).

ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling error and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level.¹⁸ This means the 90 percent confidence interval for the difference between estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling error in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. To minimize these errors, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures in sample selection, the wording of questions, interviewing, coding, data processing, and data analysis.

The final ACS population estimates are adjusted in the weighting procedure for coverage error by controlling specific survey estimates to independent population controls by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for

¹⁸ The tables reporting the margins of error for all the tables in this report can be accessed at <www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/acs/2011/appendix.html>.

bias due to over- or undercoverage, but biases may still be present, for example, when people who were missed differ from those interviewed in ways other than sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the "2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data" document located at <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf>.

MORE INFORMATION

Detailed tabulations, related information, and historic data are available on the Internet at the Language Use page on the Census Bureau's Web site at <www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/index.html>. For additional questions or comments, contact the Education and Social Stratification Branch at 301-763-2464 or e-mail Camille L. Ryan at <Camille.L.Ryan@census.gov>.

APPENDIX A.

LANGUAGE QUESTIONS USED IN DECENNIAL CENSUSES

2000: (Collected for all ages; retained for persons 5 years old and over)
Does this person speak a language other than English at home?
What is this language?
How well does this person speak English (very well, well, not well, not at all)?

1990: (Persons 5 years old and over)
Does this person speak a language other than English at home?
What is this language?
How well does this person speak English (very well, well, not well, not at all)?

1980: (Persons 3 years old and over; tabulated for 5 years old and over)
Does this person speak a language other than English at home?
What is this language?
How well does this person speak English (very well, well, not well, not at all)?

1970: (No age for question, tabulations limited)
What language, other than English, was spoken in this person's home when he was a child?
(Spanish, French, German, Other (specify)_____, None, English only)

1960: (Foreign-born)
What language was spoken in his home before he came to the United States?

1950: (Not asked)

1940: (For persons of all ages; asked under the category of "Mother Tongue [or Native Language] of Foreign Born")
Language spoken at home in earliest childhood.

1930: (Foreign born; asked under the category of "Mother Tongue [or Native Language] of Foreign Born")
Language spoken in home before coming to the United States.

1920: (Foreign born)
Place of birth and mother tongue of person and each parent.
Whether able to speak English.

1910:
Mother tongue was collected for all foreign-born persons, to be written in with place of birth; also collected for foreign-born parents. Specific instructions on correct languages to write in and a list of appropriate European languages were provided to the enumerator. Similar instructions may have carried over to 1920.
Whether able to speak English; or, if not, give language spoken.

1900: (All persons 10 years old and over)
"Can speak English" was asked after the two questions "Can read" and "Can write."

1890: (All persons 10 years old and over)
"Able to speak English. If not, the language or dialect spoken" was asked after the questions "Able to Read" and "Able to Write."

1790 1880:
No evidence of language questions or English-ability questions.

N e: The e edf da a c . ec a be he a e a qb . a l e ca e , da a e e
ab a edf f eg -b Wh e f eg -b C . b . ca
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