

Language Use



How does the Census Bureau determine language use or language spoken at home?

It is either the language currently spoken by respondents in their home such as "English only" or a non-English language, which may be used in addition to English or in place of English.

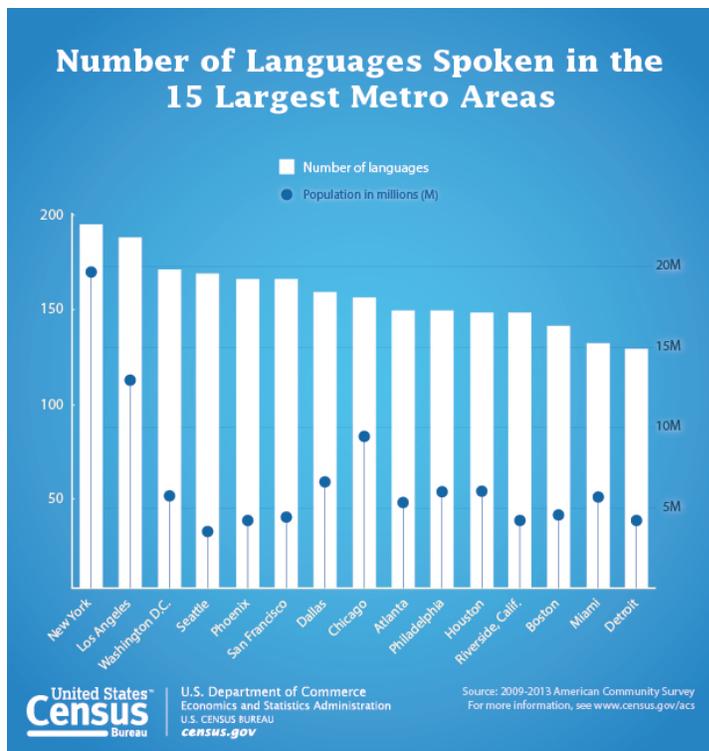
Why is it important to collect this information?

It is important to collect this information for Voting Rights determination. Information about languages spoken at home and English-speaking ability is used to determine bilingual election requirements under the Voting Rights Act. For more information about the Voting Rights Act, go to the United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division web site at [Introduction to Federal Voting Rights Laws](#). The Census Bureau creates the [Voting Rights Determination File](#) after every census.

Other major uses of data language use include allocation of educational funds to states for helping schools teach students with lower levels of English proficiency. In 2000, President Clinton signed an executive order requiring federal agencies to identify the need for services to those with limited [English proficiency \(LEP\)](#) and to implement a system to provide meaningful access to language assistance services. Agencies rely on these data to determine how and where to provide language assistance service. Many other institutions, organizations, local governments, and private enterprises make use of these data in similar ways.

Did you know...

The Census uses about 382 language categories that represent the most commonly spoken languages at home other than English. Linguists recognize several thousand languages in the world and as respondents report new languages, they are coded and added to the language list. You can access the document to all [382 language codes](#) [PDF 1.0 MB].



Does the Census Bureau present data for all language categories?

Presenting data for all 382 languages is not always sensible due to sample size and confidentiality concerns. Therefore, we often collapse the languages into about 40 more-manageable categories, or 4 broad language groups. These categories were originally developed following the 1970 Census and are grouped linguistically and geographically. The language categories and language groups can be found here.

Four Language Groups and Languages:

Spanish	Spanish
Other Indo-European languages	French, German, Hindi
Asian & Pacific Island languages	Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog
Other Languages	Arabic, Hebrew

About the Data

Where would I find data on Language Use or Language Spoken at Home?

- American Community Survey
- Census 2000 and earlier

How do I access the data?

You can access data on language use using our data tools. To access the tools follow this link www.census.gov/data/data-tools.html. The primary tools to use are the *American FactFinder* and the *Language Use mapper*.

Are there other resources?

Yes. Here are just a few of those resources.

www.census.gov/topics/population/language-use/news.html

www.census.gov/topics/population/language-use/publications.html

www.census.gov/topics/population/language-use/related-sites.html

www.census.gov/topics/population/language-use/working-papers.html

Here are some of the tables you would access for Language Use.

Table, File or Document Title	ID	Dataset
★ LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	S1601	2014 ACS 5-year estimates
★ CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	S1603	2014 ACS 5-year estimates
★ SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES	DP02	2014 ACS 5-year estimates
★ LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME BY ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH FOR THE POPULATION 5 YEARS AND OVER	B16001	2014 ACS 5-year estimates
★ NATIVITY BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME BY ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH FOR THE POPULATION 5 YEARS AND OVER	B16005	2014 ACS 5-year estimates
★ AGE BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME FOR THE POPULATION 5 YEARS AND OVER	B16007	2014 ACS 5-year estimates
LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	S1601	2015 ACS 1-year estimates

For more information about education and training go to: www.census.gov/data/training-workshops.html.