

the condition of education 2008



INDICATOR 7

Language Minority School-Age Children

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2008*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2008*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008031>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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Elementary/Secondary Education

Language Minority School-Age Children

In 2006, about 20 percent of children ages 5–17 spoke a language other than English at home, and 5 percent spoke English with difficulty.

Between 1979 and 2006, the number of school-age children (children ages 5–17) who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 3.8 to 10.8 million, or from 9 to 20 percent of the population in this age range (see supplemental table 7-1). An increase was also evident during the more recent period of 2000 to 2006 (from 18 to 20 percent). The percentage of 5- to 17-year-old children who spoke English with difficulty increased from 3 to 6 percent between 1979 and 2000, but this percentage did not change measurably between 2000 and 2006 (it remained between 5 and 6 percent). The number of children who spoke English with difficulty as a proportion of children who spoke another language at home has continued to decrease over time. For example, of the children who spoke a language other than English at home, 34 percent spoke English with difficulty in 1979, compared with 31 percent in 2000 and 25 percent in 2006.

In 2006, about 72 percent (7.8 million) of the school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home spoke Spanish (see supplemental table 7-2). The next largest number of children who spoke a non-English

language at home spoke other Indo-European¹ languages, followed by those who spoke Asian/Pacific Islander² languages, and then by those who spoke other languages. Higher percentages of children who spoke Spanish or an Asian/Pacific Islander language at home spoke English with difficulty (27 and 28 percent, respectively) than did those who spoke other Indo-European languages (19 percent) or other languages (18 percent) at home.

The percentages of school-age children speaking a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty varied by race/ethnicity and poverty status in 2006. Among school-age children, 18 percent of Hispanics and 17 percent of Asians spoke a language other than English at home and spoke English with difficulty, compared with 6 percent of Pacific Islanders, 3 percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives, and 1 percent each of Whites, Blacks, and children of more than one race. In terms of poverty status, higher percentages of poor (10 percent) and near-poor (8 percent) 5- to 17-year-olds spoke a non-English language at home and spoke English with difficulty than did nonpoor 5- to 17-year-olds (3 percent).

¹ An Indo-European language other than Spanish (e.g., French, German, Portuguese, etc.).

² Any native language spoken by Asians or Pacific Islanders, which linguists classify variously as Sino-Tibetan, Austroasiatic, or Austronesian languages.

NOTE: Data on language spoken at home and difficulty speaking English were obtained from household respondents. Respondents were asked if each child in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered “yes,” they were asked how well each child could speak English. Categories used for reporting were “very well,” “well,” “not well,” and “not at all.” All those who reported speaking English less than “very well” were considered to have difficulty speaking English. Since the American Community Survey (ACS) does not ask whether household children speak English at home, these data cannot be used to determine whether English or another language is the primary language spoken at home. In 1994, the survey methodology for the Current Population Survey (CPS) was changed and weights were adjusted. Spanish-language versions of both the CPS and the ACS were available to respondents. *Poor* is defined to include families below the poverty threshold, *near-poor* is defined to include families at 100–199 percent of the poverty threshold, and *nonpoor* is defined to include families at 200 percent or more than the poverty threshold. See supplemental note 1 for more information. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

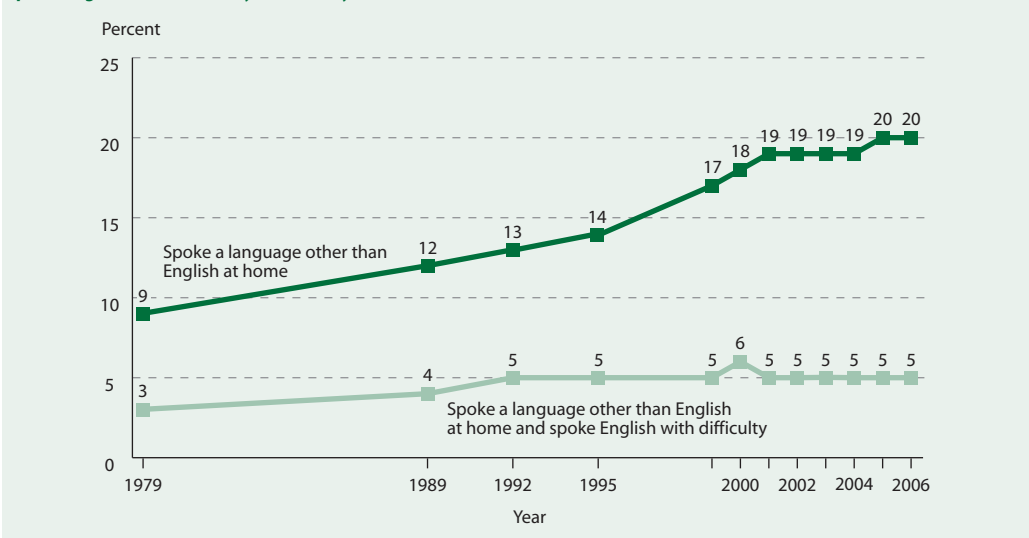
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), 1979 and 1989 November Supplement and 1992, 1995, and 1999 October Supplement, and American Community Survey (ACS), 2000–06.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Supplemental Notes 1, 2, 3
- Supplemental Tables 7-1, 7-2
- Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2007



LANGUAGE MINORITY: Percentage of 5- to 17-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty: Selected years, 1979–2006



Language Minority School-Age Children

Table 7-1. Number and percentage of children ages 5–17 who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty: Selected years, 1979–2006

Year	Spoke a language other than English at home						Percent of those who spoke a language other than English at home
	Total population (in millions)	Number (in millions)	Percent of total population	Spoke English with difficulty ¹			
				Number (in millions)	Percent of total population		
1979	44.7	3.8	8.5	1.3	2.8	34.2	
1989	42.3	5.2	12.3	1.8	4.3	34.6	
1992	47.7	6.3	13.2	2.2	4.6	34.9	
1995	47.5	6.7	14.1	2.4	5.2	35.8	
1999	52.7	8.8	16.7	2.6	5.0	29.5	
2000	52.5	9.5	18.1	2.9	5.5	30.5	
2001	53.0	9.8	18.5	2.8	5.4	28.6	
2002	53.0	9.8	18.5	2.8	5.3	28.6	
2003	53.0	9.9	18.7	2.9	5.5	29.4	
2004	52.9	9.9	18.8	2.8	5.3	27.9	
2005	52.8	10.6	20.0	2.8	5.4	26.8	
2006	53.4	10.8	20.3	2.8	5.2	25.4	
Percentage change compared with 1979							
2006	19.5	185.4	138.9	112.2	84.4	-25.7	
Percentage change compared with 2000							
2006	1.8	14.2	12.2	-4.9	-6.1	-16.7	

¹ Data on language spoken at home and difficulty speaking English were obtained from household respondents. Respondents were asked if each child in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered "yes," they were asked how well each child could speak English. Categories used for reporting were "very well," "well," "not well," and "not at all." All those who reported speaking English less than "very well" were considered to have difficulty speaking English. Since the American Community Survey (ACS) does not ask whether household children speak English at home, these data cannot be used to determine whether English or another language is the primary language spoken at home.

NOTE: Spanish-language versions of both the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the American Community Survey (ACS) were available to respondents. Due to differences between the CPS and the ACS, use caution when comparing data before 2000 (CPS) with data from 2000 onward (ACS). See *supplemental notes 2 and 3* for more information.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), 1979 and 1989 November Supplement and 1992, 1995, and 1999 October Supplement, and American Community Survey (ACS), 2000–06.

Language Minority School-Age Children

Table 7-2. Number and percentage of children ages 5–17 who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty, by selected characteristics: 2006

Characteristic	[Numbers in thousands]								
	Spoke a language other than English at home								
	Spoke English with difficulty ¹								
	Total population	Number	Percent of total population	Total	Percent of total population	Ages 5–9	Percent of population ²	Ages 10–17	Percent of population ²
			Number		Number		Number		
Total	53,406	10,845	20.3	2,758	5.2	1,372	6.9	1,386	4.1
Language spoken at home									
Spanish	7,787	7,787	100.0	2,071	26.6	1,054	35.4	1,018	21.1
Other Indo-European ³	1,434	1,434	100.0	277	19.3	121	23.6	156	16.9
Asian/Pacific Islander ⁴	1,200	1,200	100.0	333	27.8	161	36.2	172	22.9
Other	424	424	100.0	77	18.1	36	21.3	40	15.9
Race/ethnicity ⁵									
White	31,154	1,762	5.7	378	1.2	134	1.2	245	1.2
Black	7,870	429	5.5	99	1.3	34	1.2	65	1.3
Hispanic	10,250	7,038	68.7	1,882	18.4	1,011	24.6	870	14.2
Mexican	6,986	4,998	71.5	1,463	20.9	821	28.5	641	15.6
Puerto Rican	936	465	49.7	78	8.3	32	8.9	46	7.9
Cuban	218	149	68.4	24	11.0	11	13.7	13	9.4
Dominican	274	243	88.6	49	17.9	17	18.0	32	17.9
Central American	614	510	83.2	137	22.3	69	29.1	68	18.0
South American	398	314	78.9	58	14.6	25	16.9	33	13.2
Other Hispanic	823	358	43.5	73	8.9	36	11.2	38	7.5
Asian	2,042	1,321	64.7	350	17.1	172	21.7	178	14.2
Pacific Islander	84	25	30.0	5	6.1	2	7.5	3	5.2
American Indian/Alaska Native	436	85	19.6	12	2.8	5	3.4	7	2.5
More than one race	1,383	116	8.4	18	1.3	7	1.2	11	1.4
Citizenship									
U.S.-born	50,701	8,571	16.9	1,831	3.6	1,044	5.5	787	2.5
Naturalized U.S. citizen	544	331	60.9	66	12.1	18	13.3	48	11.7
Non-U.S. citizen	2,161	1,942	89.9	861	39.9	310	50.5	551	35.6
Poverty status ⁶									
Poor	9,083	2,742	30.2	881	9.7	464	12.7	417	7.7
Near-poor	11,002	3,276	29.8	885	8.0	468	10.9	417	6.2
Nonpoor	32,348	4,661	14.4	937	2.9	411	3.6	526	2.5
Region									
Northeast	9,321	1,869	20.1	409	4.4	180	5.3	229	3.8
Midwest	11,859	1,338	11.3	363	3.1	179	4.1	184	2.5
South	19,401	3,339	17.2	886	4.6	445	6.1	440	3.6
West	12,825	4,299	33.5	1,101	8.6	568	11.9	533	6.6

¹ Data on language spoken at home and difficulty speaking English were obtained from household respondents. Respondents were asked if each child in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered “yes,” they were asked how well each child could speak English. Categories used for reporting were “very well,” “well,” “not well,” and “not at all.” All those who reported speaking English less than “very well” were considered to have difficulty speaking English. Since the American Community Survey (ACS) does not ask whether household children speak English at home, these data cannot be used to determine whether English or another language is the primary language spoken at home.

² Percentage of the total subgroup population for that particular subgroup. For example, 3.4 percent of all American Indians/Alaska Natives ages 5–9 spoke a language other than English at home and spoke English with difficulty.

³ An Indo-European language other than Spanish (e.g., French, German, Portuguese, etc.).

⁴ Any native language spoken by Asians or Pacific Islanders, which linguists classify variously as Sino-Tibetan, Austroasiatic, or Austronesian languages.

⁵ Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

⁶ *Poor* is defined to include families below the poverty threshold, *near-poor* is defined to include families at 100–199 percent of the poverty threshold, and *nonpoor* is defined to include families at 200 percent or more than the poverty threshold. See *supplemental note 1* for more information. Detail may not sum to totals because of missing values for poverty.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. A Spanish-language version of the American Community Survey (ACS) was available to respondents. For the states in each region, see *supplemental note 1*.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2006.

Language Minority School-Age Children

Table S7-1. Standard errors for the number and percentage of children ages 5–17 who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty: Selected years, 1979–2006

Year	Spoke a language other than English at home						Percent of those who spoke a language other than English at home
	Total population (in millions)	Spoke English with difficulty			Number (in millions)	Percent of total population	
		Number (in millions)	Percent of total population	Percent of total population			
1979	—	0.06	0.53	0.04	0.53	1.21	
1989	—	0.09	0.58	0.05	0.61	1.18	
1992	—	0.10	0.55	0.06	0.57	1.08	
1995	—	0.10	0.52	0.06	0.55	1.02	
1999	—	0.12	0.53	0.07	0.57	0.87	
2000	—	0.12	0.21	0.07	0.13	0.60	
2001	—	0.08	0.14	0.04	0.08	0.37	
2002	—	0.08	0.14	0.04	0.08	0.37	
2003	—	0.08	0.14	0.04	0.08	0.37	
2004	0.17	0.08	0.14	0.04	0.08	0.37	
2005	0.12	0.12	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.25	
2006	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.02	0.04	0.20	
Percentage change compared with 1979							
2006	—	3.70	10.67	4.97	25.02	3.69	
Percentage change compared with 2000							
2006	—	1.38	1.26	2.48	2.42	2.11	

— Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), 1979 and 1989 November Supplement and 1992, 1995, and 1999 October Supplement, and American Community Survey (ACS), 2000–06.

Language Minority School-Age Children

Table S7-2. Standard errors for the number and percentage of children ages 5–17 who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty, by selected characteristics: 2006

[Numbers in thousands]										
Characteristic	Spoke a language other than English at home									
	Total population	Number	Percent of total population	Spoke English with difficulty						
				Total		Ages 5–9		Ages 10–17		
				Number	Percent of total population	Number	Percent of population	Number	Percent of population	
Total	63.5	45.3	0.07	22.0	0.04	16.1	0.08	13.1	0.04	
Language spoken at home										
Spanish	35.0	35.0	†	19.5	0.25	14.2	0.40	12.1	0.25	
Other Indo-European	16.3	16.3	†	6.5	0.43	3.9	0.66	4.9	0.51	
Asian/Pacific Islander	13.7	13.7	†	8.1	0.55	4.8	0.79	5.8	0.66	
Other	11.3	11.3	†	4.7	1.01	2.8	1.49	3.3	1.21	
Race/ethnicity										
White	39.4	19.0	0.06	8.1	0.03	4.4	0.04	6.5	0.03	
Black	27.4	11.0	0.14	4.1	0.05	2.6	0.09	3.0	0.06	
Hispanic	26.9	34.3	0.25	20.3	0.19	14.4	0.30	12.6	0.20	
Mexican	27.5	30.6	0.28	19.2	0.25	12.6	0.38	11.9	0.27	
Puerto Rican	14.9	10.7	0.80	4.9	0.49	2.7	0.69	3.7	0.61	
Cuban	6.3	5.4	1.51	1.9	0.80	1.2	1.36	1.4	0.91	
Dominican	9.9	9.6	0.93	3.8	1.23	1.8	1.68	2.8	1.43	
Central American	13.1	12.5	0.72	5.6	0.77	4.1	1.36	3.3	0.83	
South American	10.3	9.1	1.03	3.6	0.84	2.0	1.22	2.8	1.03	
Other Hispanic	13.0	8.6	0.81	3.5	0.44	2.2	0.67	2.4	0.47	
Asian	17.4	13.9	0.44	8.3	0.39	5.1	0.59	6.1	0.46	
Pacific Islander	4.0	2.1	2.19	1.0	1.16	0.7	2.11	0.7	1.22	
American Indian/Alaska Native	7.9	4.2	0.86	1.4	0.31	0.8	0.52	1.0	0.36	
More than one race	16.6	4.5	0.30	1.6	0.11	1.0	0.16	1.2	0.15	
Citizenship										
U.S.-born	63.4	41.9	0.07	17.7	0.03	14.3	0.07	9.0	0.03	
Naturalized U.S. citizen	11.3	9.9	1.04	3.5	0.63	1.9	1.33	2.8	0.68	
Non-U.S. citizen	22.7	22.9	0.28	16.1	0.59	8.0	0.85	11.6	0.63	
Poverty status										
Poor	63.1	30.3	0.27	15.0	0.16	10.0	0.27	10.1	0.18	
Near-poor	59.5	32.3	0.24	13.6	0.12	9.2	0.21	8.8	0.13	
Nonpoor	69.9	29.4	0.08	12.6	0.04	8.3	0.07	9.0	0.04	
Region										
Northeast	24.0	18.4	0.18	8.6	0.09	6.6	0.19	6.6	0.11	
Midwest	28.2	17.9	0.14	9.5	0.08	6.5	0.15	6.5	0.09	
South	34.8	21.5	0.10	15.2	0.08	10.0	0.13	8.2	0.07	
West	22.8	28.9	0.21	15.8	0.12	10.9	0.22	8.9	0.11	

† Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2006.