

the condition of education 2003



INDICATOR 4

Language Minority Students

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Suggested Citation:

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2003*, NCES 2003-067, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003.



Elementary/Secondary Education

Language Minority Students

The number of 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home more than doubled between 1979 and 1999.

Among significant population changes in the past 20 years has been the growth in the number of 5- to 24-year-olds who were reported speaking a language other than English at home, from 6.3 million in 1979 to 13.7 million in 1999. In 1979, 8 percent of all 5- to 24-year-olds spoke a language other than English at home, compared with 17 percent in 1999. Of those who spoke a language other than English at home in 1979, 2.2 million spoke English with difficulty (i.e., spoke English less than “very well”), compared with 4.5 million in 1999. Three percent of all 5- to 24-year-olds spoke a language other than English at home and spoke English with difficulty in 1979, compared with 6 percent in 1999 (see supplemental table 4-1).

From 1979 to 1999, the population of 5- to 24-year-olds increased by 6 percent. In contrast, the percentage who spoke a language other than English at home increased by 118 percent during this period, and the percentage who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty increased by 110 percent.

Of those who spoke a language other than English at home in 1999, one-third spoke English with difficulty. Spanish was most frequently spoken by 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home (72 percent) and by those who spoke English with difficulty (78 percent) (see supplemental table 4-2).

Native-born children who spoke a language other than English at home were more likely than their foreign-born peers to speak English “very well” (78 vs. 49 percent) in 1999. Among native-born children who spoke a language other than English at home, those with native-born parents were more likely than those with foreign-born parents to speak English “very well.” Among foreign-born children who spoke a language other than English at home in 1999, the more recently the child came to the United States, the more likely that child was to report having difficulty speaking English: 74 percent of those who came between 1995 and 1999 spoke English with difficulty, compared with 49 percent of those who came between 1990 and 1994.

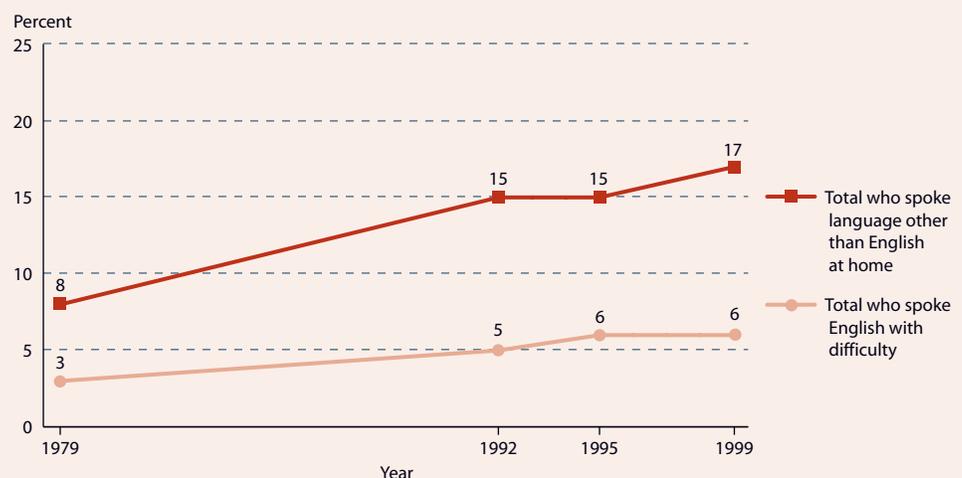
NOTE: Respondents were asked if the children in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered “yes,” they were asked how well they could speak English. Categories used for reporting were “very well,” “well,” “not well,” and “not at all.” All those who reported speaking English less than “very well” were considered to have difficulty speaking English.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), November 1979 and October 1992, 1995, and 1999, previously unpublished tabulation (December 2002).



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Supplemental Note 2
Supplemental Tables 4-1,
4-2
NCES 2003-032

LANGUAGE MINORITY: Percentage of 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty: Selected years 1979–99



Language Minority Students

Table 4-1. Number (in thousands) and percentage of 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty: Selected years 1979–99

| Year | Total population | Total who spoke language other than English at home | | Total who spoke English with difficulty ¹ | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| | | Number (in thousands) | Percent of total population | Number (in thousands) | Percent of total population | Percent of those who spoke a language other than English at home |
| 1979 | 74,333 | 6,308 | 8.5 | 2,163 | 2.9 | 34.3 |
| 1992 | 71,391 | 10,503 | 14.7 | 3,699 | 5.2 | 35.2 |
| 1995 | 75,647 | 11,427 | 15.1 | 4,216 | 5.6 | 36.9 |
| 1999 | 78,743 | 13,729 | 17.4 | 4,534 | 5.8 | 33.0 |
| Percentage change compared with 1979 | | | | | | |
| 1979 | † | † | † | † | † | † |
| 1992 | -4.0 | 66.5 | 73.4 | 71.0 | 78.1 | 2.7 |
| 1995 | 1.8 | 81.2 | 78.0 | 94.9 | 91.5 | 7.6 |
| 1999 | 5.9 | 117.6 | 105.5 | 109.6 | 97.9 | -3.7 |

†Not applicable.

¹Respondents were asked if the children in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered "yes," they were asked how well they 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.

NOTE: For more information on the Current Population Survey, see *supplemental note 2*.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), November 1979 and October 1992, 1995, and 1999, previously unpublished tabulation (December 2002).

Language Minority Students

Table 4-2. Among 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home, number (in thousands) who spoke English “very well” and who spoke English with difficulty,¹ and number who spoke English with difficulty within each age group, by language spoken at home and nativity: 1999

| Language spoken at home and nativity | Total population | Spoke English “very well” | Spoke English with difficulty | Spoke English with difficulty | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | 5- to 9-year-olds | 10- to 17-year-olds | 18- to 24-year-olds |
| Total | 13,729 | 9,195 | 4,534 | 1,408 | 1,222 | 1,904 |
| Language spoken at home | | | | | | |
| Spanish | 9,849 | 6,336 | 3,514 | 1,118 | 896 | 1,500 |
| All Asian languages | 1,724 | 1,311 | 411 | 140 | 143 | 128 |
| All other European | 792 | 573 | 219 | 46 | 59 | 114 |
| All other | 1,364 | 974 | 390 | 103 | 125 | 162 |
| Native-born children ² | | | | | | |
| Native-born children | 8,611 | 6,695 | 1,916 | 1,047 | 602 | 266 |
| With native-born parents | 5,626 | 4,287 | 1,340 | 812 | 412 | 116 |
| With foreign-born parents | 1,005 | 856 | 149 | 74 | 59 | 16 |
| Year parents came to U.S. | | | | | | |
| 1990–99 | 470 | 310 | 160 | 142 | 18 | # |
| 1980–89 | 1,992 | 1,383 | 609 | 407 | 186 | 16 |
| 1970–79 | 1,573 | 1,241 | 332 | 148 | 128 | 56 |
| Prior to 1970 | 586 | 497 | 89 | 41 | 21 | 28 |
| Foreign-born children | | | | | | |
| Foreign-born children | 5,119 | 2,500 | 2,619 | 361 | 620 | 1,638 |
| Year came to U.S. | | | | | | |
| 1995–99 | 1,623 | 422 | 1,201 | 205 | 242 | 754 |
| 1990–94 | 2,054 | 1,038 | 1,015 | 156 | 231 | 628 |
| 1980–89 | 1,326 | 932 | 394 | † | 148 | 246 |
| Prior to 1980 | 115 | 106 | 9 | † | † | 9 |

†Not applicable.

#Rounds to zero.

¹Respondents were asked if the children in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered “yes,” they were asked how well they 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.

²This category includes the 34.7 percent of native-born 5- to 24-year-olds for whom data on their parents were missing. Youths aged 18–24 whose parents entered the United States in 1990 or later may reflect parents who were illegally in the country when the youth was born and later received legal residence.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. For more information on the Current Population Survey, see *supplemental note 2*.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), October 1999, previously unpublished tabulation (December 2002).

Language Minority Students

Table 4-3. Among 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home, percentage distribution who spoke English "very well" and who spoke English with difficulty,¹ and percentage distribution who spoke English with difficulty within each age group, by language spoken at home and nativity: 1999

| Language spoken at home and nativity | Total population | Spoke English "very well" | Spoke English with difficulty | Spoke English with difficulty | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | 5- to 9-year-olds | 10- to 17-year-olds | 18- to 24-year-olds |
| Total | 100.0 | 67.0 | 33.0 | 39.9 | 23.1 | 38.7 |
| Language spoken at home | | | | | | |
| Spanish | 100.0 | 64.3 | 35.6 | 43.0 | 24.0 | 42.7 |
| All Asian languages | 100.0 | 76.1 | 23.8 | 29.0 | 20.6 | 23.4 |
| All other European | 100.0 | 72.4 | 27.6 | 35.4 | 19.5 | 31.8 |
| All other | 100.0 | 71.3 | 28.7 | 32.6 | 22.8 | 32.5 |
| Native-born children ² | | | | | | |
| Native-born children | 100.0 | 76.2 | 31.3 | 28.0 | 11.3 | 5.6 |
| With native-born parents | 100.0 | 85.1 | 14.9 | 28.7 | 11.1 | 7.6 |
| With foreign-born parents | 100.0 | 74.2 | 25.8 | 37.6 | 17.4 | 15.7 |
| Year parents came to U.S. | | | | | | |
| 1990–99 | 100.0 | 65.9 | 34.1 | 45.6 | 13.0 | # |
| 1980–89 | 100.0 | 69.4 | 30.6 | 38.2 | 21.6 | 23.9 |
| 1970–79 | 100.0 | 78.9 | 21.1 | 31.7 | 16.2 | 17.6 |
| Prior to 1970 | 100.0 | 84.8 | 15.2 | 35.0 | 8.8 | 12.0 |
| Foreign-born children | | | | | | |
| Year came to U.S. | 100.0 | 48.8 | 51.2 | 57.0 | 37.4 | 57.9 |
| 1995–99 | 100.0 | 26.0 | 74.0 | 70.9 | 62.7 | 79.5 |
| 1990–94 | 100.0 | 50.5 | 49.4 | 45.3 | 33.6 | 61.4 |
| 1980–89 | 100.0 | 70.3 | 29.7 | † | 25.3 | 33.2 |
| Prior to 1980 | 100.0 | 92.2 | 7.8 | † | † | 7.8 |

†Not applicable.

#Rounds to zero.

¹Respondents were asked if the children in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered "yes," they were asked how well they 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.

²This category includes the 34.7 percent of native-born 5- to 24-year-olds for whom data on their parents were missing. Youths aged 18–24 whose parents entered the United States in 1990 or later may reflect parents who were illegally in the country when the youth was born and later received legal residence.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. For more information on the Current Population Survey, see *supplemental note 2*.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), October 1999, previously unpublished tabulation (December 2002).

Language Minority Students

Table S4. Standard errors for the percentage of 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty: Selected years 1979–99

| Language ability | 1979 | 1992 | 1995 | 1999 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Total who spoke language other than English at home | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Total who spoke English with difficulty | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.3 |

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), November 1979 and October 1992, 1995, and 1999, previously unpublished tabulation (December 2002).

Language Minority Students

Table S4-1. Standard errors for the number (in thousands) and percentage of 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty: Selected years 1979–99

| Year | Total population | Total who spoke language other than English at home | | Total who spoke English with difficulty | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--|
| | | Number (in thousands) | Percent of total population | Number (in thousands) | Percent of total population | Percent of those who spoke a language other than English at home |
| 1979 | † | 150.7 | 0.20 | 74.8 | 0.42 | 2.02 |
| 1992 | † | 227.3 | 0.32 | 117.5 | 0.52 | 1.89 |
| 1995 | † | 165.0 | 0.22 | 86.4 | 0.36 | 1.25 |
| 1999 | † | 186.0 | 0.24 | 96.3 | 0.35 | 1.22 |
| Percentage change compared with 1979 | | | | | | |
| 1979 | † | † | † | † | † | † |
| 1992 | † | 0.75 | 0.78 | 0.96 | 16.02 | 1.13 |
| 1995 | † | 3.43 | 3.37 | 5.50 | 31.21 | 2.58 |
| 1999 | † | 4.51 | 4.26 | 5.60 | 33.94 | 4.27 |

†Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), November 1979 and October 1992, 1995, and 1999, previously unpublished tabulation (December 2002).

Language Minority Students

Table S4-2. Standard errors for the number who spoke English “very well” and who spoke English with difficulty, and number who spoke English with difficulty within each age group, among 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home, by language spoken at home and nativity: 1999

| Language spoken at home and nativity | Total population | Spoke English “very well” | Spoke English with difficulty | Spoke English with difficulty | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | 5- to 9-year-olds | 10- to 17-year-olds | 18- to 24-year-olds |
| Total | † | 96.3 | 96.3 | 54.4 | 52.2 | 58.0 |
| Language spoken at home | | | | | | |
| Spanish | 92.2 | 83.0 | 83.0 | 48.2 | 45.1 | 51.2 |
| All Asian languages | 67.8 | 31.0 | 30.9 | 16.8 | 16.9 | 16.4 |
| All other European | 47.7 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 10.5 | 11.5 | 12.9 |
| All other | 61.2 | 29.1 | 29.1 | 15.2 | 16.1 | 17.0 |
| Native-born children | | | | | | |
| Native-born children | 100.7 | 55.8 | 55.8 | 31.3 | 29.5 | 18.0 |
| With native-born parents | 53.3 | 19.7 | 19.7 | 10.7 | 10.4 | 6.7 |
| With foreign-born parents | 96.7 | 51.9 | 51.9 | 29.3 | 27.5 | 16.7 |
| Year parents came to U.S. | | | | | | |
| 1990–99 | 37.2 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 7.0 | 7.0 | † |
| 1980–89 | 72.1 | 35.9 | 35.9 | 20.3 | 19.8 | 6.9 |
| 1970–79 | 65.2 | 28.3 | 28.3 | 15.8 | 15.5 | 11.9 |
| Prior to 1970 | 41.4 | 15.2 | 15.2 | 8.2 | 7.0 | 7.6 |
| Foreign-born children | | | | | | |
| Foreign-born children | 99.0 | 62.5 | 62.5 | 30.8 | 38.0 | 43.3 |
| Year came to U.S. | | | | | | |
| 1995–99 | 66.1 | 30.9 | 30.9 | 22.8 | 24.3 | 29.3 |
| 1990–94 | 73.0 | 39.6 | 39.6 | 20.1 | 23.3 | 27.0 |
| 1980–89 | 60.5 | 29.1 | 29.1 | † | 16.8 | 16.8 |
| Prior to 1980 | 18.7 | 5.3 | 5.0 | † | † | † |

†Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), October 1999, previously unpublished tabulation (December 2002).

Language Minority Students

Table S4-3. Standard errors for the percentage distribution who spoke English “very well” and who spoke English with difficulty, and percentage distribution who spoke English with difficulty within each age group, among 5- to 24-year-olds who spoke a language other than English at home, by language spoken at home and nativity: 1999

| Language spoken at home and nativity | Total population | Spoke English “very well” | Spoke English with difficulty | Spoke English with difficulty | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | 5- to 9-year-olds | 10- to 17-year-olds | 18- to 24-year-olds |
| Total | † | 0.70 | 0.70 | 1.44 | 1.01 | 1.21 |
| Language spoken at home | | | | | | |
| Spanish | † | 0.84 | 0.84 | 1.70 | 1.22 | 1.46 |
| All Asian languages | † | 1.79 | 1.79 | 3.61 | 2.68 | 3.17 |
| All other European | † | 2.77 | 2.77 | 7.33 | 3.97 | 4.29 |
| All other | † | 2.14 | 2.14 | 4.61 | 3.13 | 3.66 |
| Native-born children | | | | | | |
| Native-born children | † | 0.78 | 0.85 | 1.56 | 1.08 | 1.28 |
| Native-born children | † | 0.99 | 1.08 | 1.46 | 0.92 | 0.88 |
| With native-born parents | † | 1.96 | 1.96 | 4.91 | 2.38 | 3.14 |
| With foreign-born parents | † | 1.12 | 1.12 | 1.91 | 1.83 | 2.52 |
| Year parents came to U.S. | | | | | | |
| 1990–99 | † | 3.82 | 3.82 | 3.69 | 2.13 | † |
| 1980–89 | † | 1.80 | 1.80 | 2.35 | 1.88 | 3.51 |
| 1970–79 | † | 1.80 | 1.80 | 3.03 | 1.79 | 2.75 |
| Prior to 1970 | † | 2.59 | 2.59 | 4.81 | 1.64 | 2.30 |
| Foreign-born children | | | | | | |
| Foreign-born children | † | 1.22 | 1.22 | 3.43 | 1.93 | 1.64 |
| Year came to U.S. | | | | | | |
| 1995–99 | † | 1.90 | 1.90 | 5.03 | 4.44 | 2.63 |
| 1990–94 | † | 1.93 | 1.93 | 4.32 | 2.98 | 2.71 |
| 1980–89 | † | 2.19 | 2.19 | † | 2.68 | 2.76 |
| Prior to 1980 | † | 4.55 | 4.34 | † | † | 3.05 |

†Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), October 1999, previously unpublished tabulation (December 2002).