

Language Diversity in Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG – Pennsylvania’s linguistic diversity continues to evolve, with over 12 percent of residents aged five and older reporting that they spoke a language other than English at home, according to the 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. Among this group, more than one-third were considered limited English proficient (LEP), meaning they spoke English "less than very well." This brief explores data on languages spoken at home across Pennsylvania.

Statewide Trends

Among Pennsylvanians aged five and older, English was the predominant language spoken at home, with over 10.8 million speakers. Statewide, at least 10,000 people spoke each of 29 different languages*. Approximately 5.4 percent of Pennsylvania’s population in this age group spoke Spanish, while no other individual language (aside from English) exceeded one percent. Table 1 presents the top 15 languages spoken in Pennsylvania based on the 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

Table 1: Top 15 Languages Spoken in Pennsylvania

Rank	Language	Speakers	LEP (#)	LEP (%)
--	Total, Population Age Five and Older	12,301,139	(X)	(X)
1	English only	10,819,066	(X)	(X)
--	Speak a language other than English	1,482,073	580,080	39.1%
2	Spanish	664,669	274,603	41.3%
3	Chinese ¹	96,237	51,032	53.0%
4	Other West Germanic languages ²	73,602	20,920	28.4%
5	Russian	47,112	22,537	47.8%
6	Arabic	42,882	14,472	33.7%
7	German	36,199	7,589	21.0%
8	Vietnamese	34,536	20,590	59.6%
9	French ³	34,013	9,037	26.6%
10	Italian	30,424	7,728	25.4%
11	Hindi	27,630	5,283	19.1%
12	Korean	26,460	13,213	49.9%
13	Other Indic languages ⁴	25,306	12,654	50.0%
14	Other West African languages ⁵	24,199	6,916	28.6%
15	Gujarati	22,798	8,565	37.6%

*The U.S. Census Bureau includes macrolanguage in their language classifications. A macrolanguage is a group of individual languages which are closely related to each other and are considered as a single language in certain contexts.

- 1. Includes Mandarin and Cantonese languages.
- 2. Includes Yiddish, Pennsylvania Dutch, and other West Germanic languages.
- 3. Includes Cajun language.
- 4. Includes Nepali, Marathi, or other Indic languages.
- 5. Includes Yoruba, Twi, Igbo, or other West African languages.

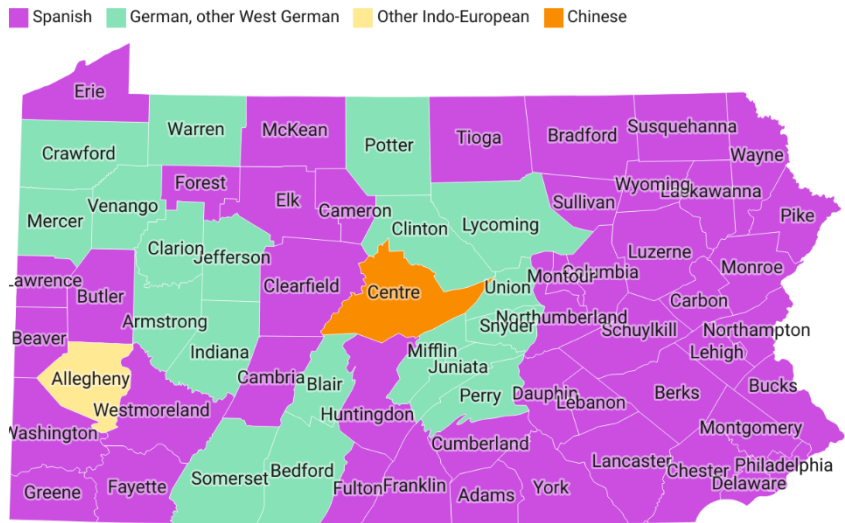
County Trends

Across Pennsylvania counties, the percent of residents who speak a language other than English at home ranges from 1.2 percent in Fulton County to 25.4 percent in Lehigh County. English-only speakers are the largest group of speakers in each county.

In 46 counties, the second most common language spoken at home is Spanish, followed by German or other West Germanic Languages (19), Chinese (1) and Other Indo-European languages (1).

Second most frequent language spoken at home

For PA counties according to the 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

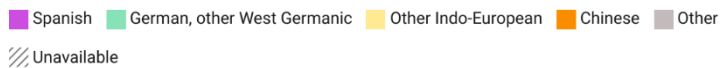


Map: PA State Data Center • Source: American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

Use [this link](#) to explore the interactive version of this graphic.

Second most frequent language spoken at home

For PA school districts according to the 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Some languages were not displayed due to margin of error exceeding the estimate. "Other" includes all other languages not included in list - hover for specific language.

Map: PA State Data Center • Source: American Community Survey • Created with Datawrapper

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School Districts

The percent of people who speak a language other than English at home ranges from less than 1.0% in 19 school districts to 54.9% in Reading School District.

In 25 school districts more than 20.0% of the population over age 5 speak a language other than English at home.

Notes:

Geographies labeled unavailable were excluded from this report because the Margin of Error (MOE) is too large to provide a reliable estimate. American Community Survey data includes estimates and their corresponding MOE. Larger MOEs indicate greater uncertainty in the estimate. For smaller populations or subgroups, the MOE may be relatively high. Use caution when interpreting and comparing these estimates.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023. Tables B16001 & C16001.

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's National State Data Center Program.

Questions? Contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center at pasdc.hbg.psu.edu.