2024 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Population Estimate Methodology

Overview

To meet the threshold for estimation, the language must meet one of the following criteria:

1. Have at least 250 students or represent at least 5 percent of the student population.

2. Have at least 500 DSHS clients request translation for the estimate year.

OSPI data details

To estimate the population using the first threshold, we used student data from the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System's (CEDARS) database that is maintained by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The data represented here is the primary language of those students enrolled in grades 1 through 12 as of March 15, 2024. Primary language refers to the first learned language spoken by the student.

OSPI students only represent children, not the entire population. To get from the student population to household population, we multiplied the student population by the most applicable household size. Rather than applying the average household size of 2.53 across all language groups, which is likely to underestimate most groups, we applied the total Washington State household size for American Sign Language speakers and Hispanic state-specific or county-specific household size for Spanish speakers. These were obtained from tables B25010 and B25010I from the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates. For all other languages, we paired languages to the country (or countries) where that language is spoken with the place of birth of the first person in the household to derive the household size for the language group.[1] We needed to use the full national sample from the United States ACS 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample, rather than Washington State, in order to have sufficient sample size for some of the smaller linguistic groups.

For county level estimates Chinese-Mandarin, Chinese-Taiwanes, and Chinese-Unspecified are combined into Chinese-Mandarin. Similarly, Chinese-Cantones, Chinese-Fukienes, and Toishanese are combined into Chinese-Cantones. Note: Chinese-Taiwanes, Chinese-Fukienes,

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[1] Languages are paired with the country or countries where the language is the official language or one of the official languages. For languages spoken in multiple countries, all the countries are included if the ACS had a code for the place of birth.

and Toishanese do not meet the threshold for estimation separately at the state level (see Reference Table 1). We also combine the P'urepecha and Tarasco languages and the Sarahule and Soninke languages.

DSHS data details

If not already meeting the criteria for estimates using the OSPI data, a language is also listed if at least 500 DSHS clients request translation for April of the estimate year. The count of clients for March 2024 is used for languages qualifying in this manner. The count of DSHS clients includes the entire benefit family, so we use the DSHS client count rather than create an estimate of the LEP population.

DSHS clients include: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); State Family Assistance (SFA); Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA); Additional Requirements Emergent Needs (AREN); Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA); Consolidated Emergency Assistance Program (CEAP); Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP); State Supplemental Program (SSP); Aged, Blind, or Disabled Cash Assistance (ABD); A Referral to the Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) program administered by the Department of Commerce; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Food Assistance Program (FAP) for Legal Immigrants; Working Family Support (WFS); Non-Immigrant Emergency Medicaid; SSI and SSDI Related Medicaid; Medicare Savings Program; Medical Care Services; Healthcare for Workers with Disabilities; Long Term Care; Refugee Medical; and both Federal and State Medical for Adults, Children, Pregnant Women, and Families. Clients are unduplicated across different programs. Primary language comes from the language indicated by the client during eligibility determination. It is used for letters, notices, and other written communications.

The Trukese language qualified using DSHS clients but is not listed separately after determining that Trukese is an alternative word used for the Chuuk language. The Chuuk language is already listed through the OSPI method.

Known Uncertainties

1. When the linguistic community has different household size characteristics from the country or countries where that language is spoken, the estimate may be under- or over-estimated. For example, the Hmong people originate from multiple countries: China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The household size using the place of birth for those five countries is 2.92 (2022 ACS PUMS 5-year). However, the household size for Hmong using detailed race was 4.24 (2022 ACS PUMS 5-year).

   Unfortunately, detailed race data is only available for Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native and are not available for White and

Black or African American. Since detailed race cannot be used for all linguistic groups, we opted to use place of birth instead. When the ACS begins reporting detailed race for White and Black or African American groups in the 2024 ACS release, we will revisit these decisions.

2. Factors that may lead to over-representing the need for language services: including the household of students with siblings more than once, varying language ability across family members, using a household size that is larger than the actual size, and uncertainty regarding what the language ability threshold is for listing a non-English language.

3. Factors that may lead to under-representing the need for language services include: school does not register a student's language need, the student speaks English but his/her parents do not, a sizable population speaking a language with no school age children and/or children attending public school, the household size applied to the language group is lower than the actual size, and/or a large language group does not have 500 people or more in the county/state receiving DSHS benefits.

Ongoing work

We are continuing to evaluate this language estimate methodology. We welcome and appreciate feedback on the methodology and the household size pairings used for the OSPI based language estimates (please contact: ofm.forecasting@ofm.wa.gov). We will incorporate your feedback into future estimates and/or revise the estimates as appropriate.