

Language Access and Inclusion in Massachusetts



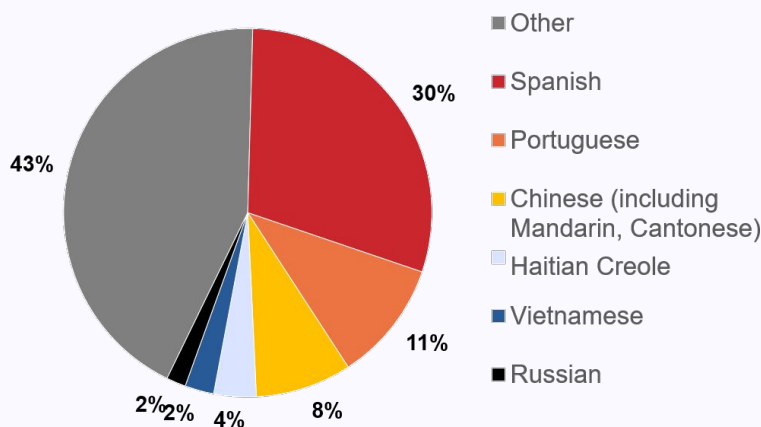
Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act

Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act requires services that receive federal funds to make provisions to ensure that limited English speakers can meaningfully access important services such as education, legal services, health and mental health care. Massachusetts has statutory and regulatory standards for language access which are meant to “provide the broadest possible protection for the rights of non-English speaking persons to understand and to be understood.”¹

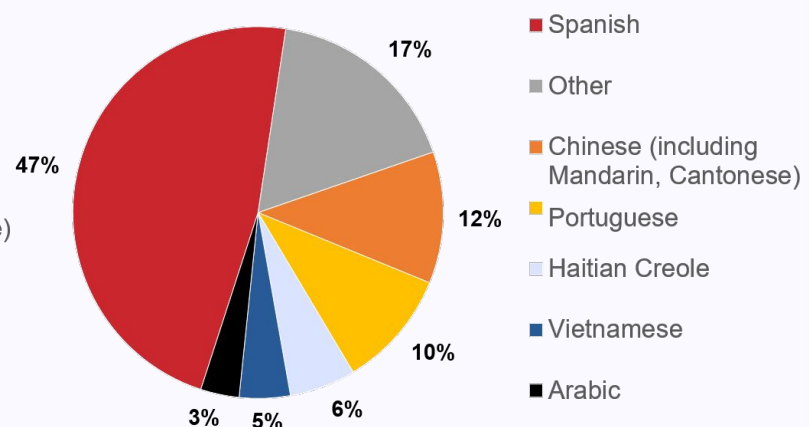
Limited English Proficient Speakers²

In Massachusetts, 1 in 10 foreign-born residents report speaking English “less than very well” and are defined as Limited English Proficient (LEP) speakers. There are an estimated 853,374 LEP speakers in Massachusetts over the age of 5. The top six languages spoken at home among LEP speakers in Massachusetts are Spanish (52.4%), Portuguese (18.7%), Chinese including Mandarin and Cantonese (14.9%), Haitian Creole (6.5%), Vietnamese (4.5%), and Russian (3.0%). The top six languages spoken at home by Low Income Limited English Proficient Speakers in Massachusetts are Spanish (57.3%), Chinese including Mandarin and Cantonese (13.8%), Portuguese (12.4%), Vietnamese (5.4%), and Arabic (4.1%).

Top Languages Spoken at Home among LEP speakers in Massachusetts



Top Languages Spoken at Home among Low-Income LEP speakers in Massachusetts



Foreign-Born Population in Massachusetts

Approximately 1.2 million Massachusetts residents are foreign-born, totaling over 17% of the state’s population, or about 1 in every 6 residents. Massachusetts’ foreign-born population includes 78,439 children and is incredibly diverse. In addition, an estimated 32.3% of children in Massachusetts have at least one foreign-born parent.

Join MIRA Coalition’s Work around Language Access

MIRA is working with MA Appleseed, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, and the Justice Center of Southeast Massachusetts as part of the Mass Speaks Coalition on [state legislation](#) which would create enforceable language access standards and protocols for public facing state agencies in Massachusetts. If you are interested in joining this effort, please contact Mariana Dutra mdutra@miracoalition.org.

Note: This fact sheet was last updated on February 1, 2023.

¹ Massachusetts regulation, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/regulatory-information-for-language-access>.

² Most data taken from the Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/language/US>, and Mass Legal Services data, <https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/maps-low-income-lep-speakers-massachusetts>.