

Social Determinants of Health

Linguistic isolation

A linguistically isolated household is one in which no member ≥ 14 years old speaks English proficiently. Parents and youth in immigrant families who do not speak English have greater difficulty accessing health care, securing employment and engaging with the larger community.

Since 2005, the percent of linguistically isolated households in Oregon and the U.S. has declined (Figure 1). Oregon has consistently had lower rates of linguistic isolation than the U.S. as a whole. In 2016, over 40,000 households in Oregon (2.7%) were linguistically isolated compared to 4.5% in the U.S.

FIGURE 1

Households in which no one over 14 years old speaks English very well, Oregon & U.S.



Source: American Community Survey (ACS)

In 2016, the three most common language groups spoken in linguistically isolated households were Spanish, Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese) and Slavic languages such as Russian, Polish and Ukrainian (Figure 2). Spanish is spoken by 55% of these households and 60% of the population age 5 and older in them.

FIGURE 2

Languages spoken by limited English speaking households, Oregon, 2016	
	% of limited English speaking households
Spanish	55%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	10%
Slavic languages	9%
Vietnamese	6%
Korean	2%
Arabic	1%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	1%
German or other West Germanic languages	1%

Source: American Community Survey (ACS)

Additional Resources: [U.S. Census Bureau](#)

About the Data: Data source is the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an ongoing Census Bureau survey that samples a percentage of the population every year. A linguistically isolated household is one in which no member 14 years old and over (1) speaks only English or (2) speaks a non-English language and speaks English “very well.” In other words, all members 14 years old and over have at least some difficulty with English.

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[Oregon State Health Profile](#)

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