



2023 HEALTHCARE WORLD LANGUAGE INDEX

A National and State-by-State Listing of the Most Frequently Spoken Languages Other Than English in Hospital, Medical Group, and Community Health Center-Based Patient Encounters





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About AMN Healthcare

AMN Healthcare is the nation's leader in total healthcare talent solutions and is the largest publicly traded healthcare staffing organization in the United States as rated by Staffing Industry Analysts. A comprehensive healthcare staffing provider, AMN Healthcare assists hospitals, medical groups, government entities, and other healthcare facilities in the staffing of nurses, physicians, executives, and academic leaders. AMN Healthcare also provides a suite of technical staffing solutions and support services, including medical language interpretation, predictive staffing analytics, telemedicine, revenue cycle solutions, and others.

Through our Center for Workforce Research, AMN Healthcare generates a wide range of surveys, reports, white papers, speaking presentations, podcasts, webinars, and other thought leadership resources providing insight into current healthcare workforce trends and delivery models.

In this white paper, AMN Healthcare's Language Services division (formerly Stratus video) examines the range of international languages spoken in healthcare encounters throughout the United States.

Overview: Tracking Medical Language Diversity

AMN Healthcare's Language Services division partners with thousands of hospitals, medical groups, community health centers, and other healthcare facilities nationwide to provide on-site and remote medical interpretation. These services help ensure patients and healthcare providers can fully and effectively communicate with one another regarding patient symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment plans.

Through the *Healthcare World Language Index*, AMN Healthcare reports on the world languages other than English most commonly spoken in patient/provider encounters nationally and by state. This is the second edition of the Index, which was first conducted in 2021 and is compiled and released biennially.

The intent of the Index is to track the extent to which world languages are spoken in healthcare encounters, as well as the specific languages being used, and how these usage patterns may vary over time. Data included in the Index may be of use to healthcare providers, administrators, and policy makers seeking to ensure that appropriate healthcare services are available to a linguistically and culturally diverse population. The Index may also be of interest to journalists, researchers, and members of the public who follow trends in cultural diversity, particularly as they apply to the delivery of healthcare services.



Methodology

The Healthcare World Language Index uses internal data compiled by AMN Healthcare to determine which languages other than spoken English are used in patient encounters with physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals at hospitals, medical groups, community health centers, and other settings nationwide.

The 2023 Healthcare World Language Index is based on



205 Million
Minutes



143K
Days
of interpretation services



3K
Healthcare Facilities
during the 12 months from September
of 2022 to August of 2023.



204 Million
Minutes
an on-site or remote AMN Healthcare
Language Services interpreter
provided interpretation services.

This is approximately twice the number of minutes
upon which data for the 2021 Index was based



111K
Minutes Over
70K Days



Key Findings

Following are key findings of the *2023 Healthcare World Language Index*:

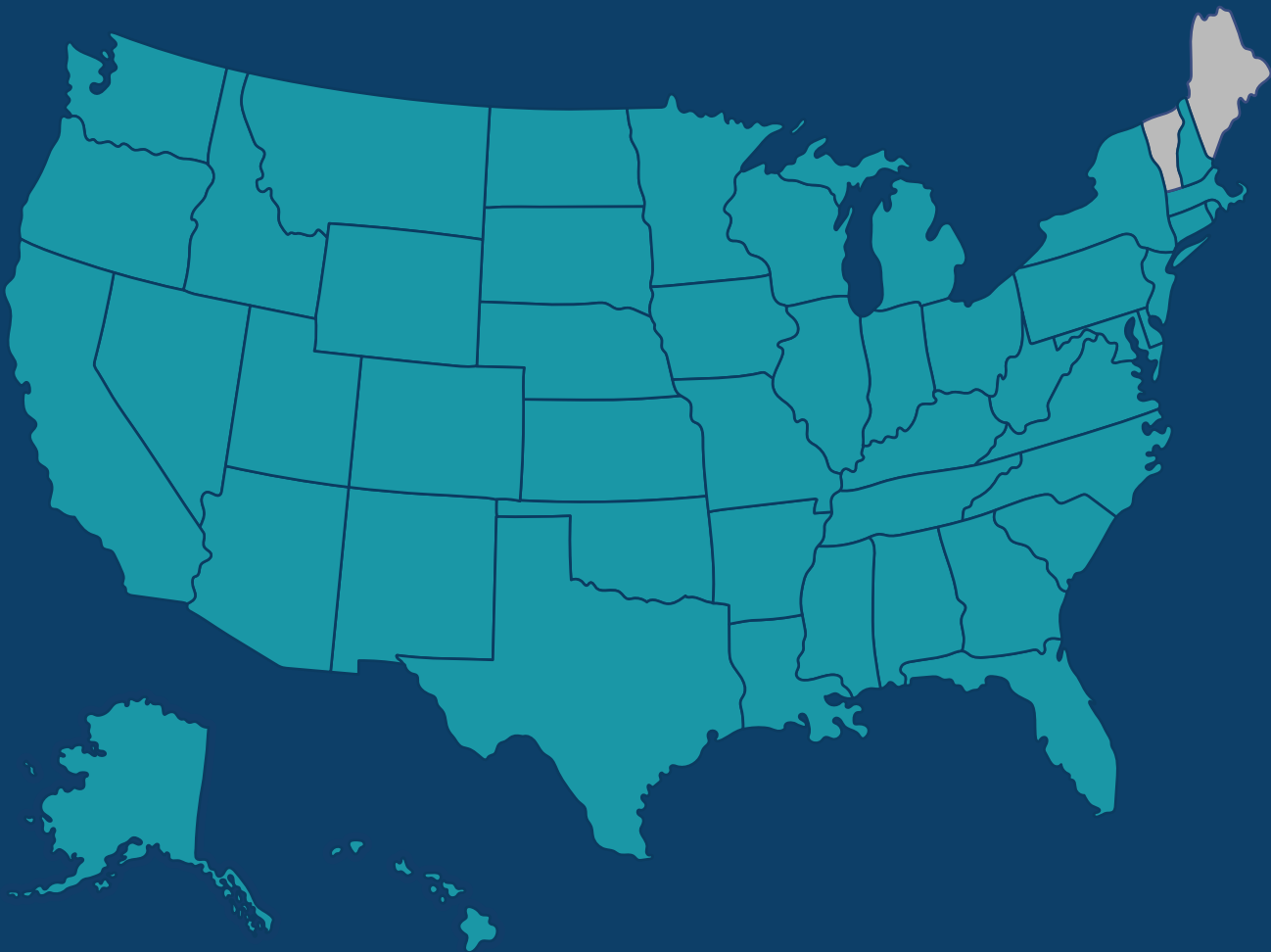
Spanish is by far the most frequently used language other than English in patient/healthcare provider encounters nationally. Spanish is spoken in 73% of such encounters nationwide, down from 74% in 2021, (As seen in the graphic to the right).

Spanish



The top 10 languages other than English used in healthcare encounters in 2023 were the same as those tracked in 2021, with only a few variations in order. **Haitian Creole, for example, moved to number four in 2023, up from number eight in 2021.**

Spanish is the most used world language other than English in patient encounters in 48 of 50 states. The exceptions are Maine, where Arabic is number one, and Vermont, where Nepali is number one, (as seen in the graphic below).



Key Findings Cont.

Vietnamese is tied with Arabic for the second most used language other than English in healthcare encounters nationally. Vietnamese also was number two in 2021, **while Arabic was tied with American Sign Language for number three in 2021.**

Combined, Mandarin and Cantonese would rank number two in 2023 and are used in **4.4% of non-English patient encounters, down slightly from a combined 4.7% in 2021,** (As seen in the graphic to the right).

Mandarin/Cantonese



American Sign Language ranks fourth in 2023 when considered as non-spoken English, used in **2.9% of encounters, down from 3.6% of encounters in 2021,** (As seen in the graphic to the right).

American Sign Language



Only five European languages (Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, French, and Ukrainian) are in the top 20 most used languages other than English. However, the majority of speakers of these languages are from Latin America and the Caribbean, not Europe.

Languages used in healthcare encounters reflect geographic migration patterns per state in the U.S. For example, 47 states include Arabic among their top ten most used non-English languages. Arabic is the second most used non-English language after Spanish in North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Portuguese is the second most used non-English language after Spanish in New Jersey, South Carolina, and Utah.

Hmong is the second most used non-English language after Spanish in Wisconsin.

Russian is the second most used non-English language after Spanish in Washington.

Japanese is among the top ten most used non-English languages after Spanish in only two states, Hawaii and Wyoming. It ranks second in Hawaii.

Following is a list of the top ten most used languages other than English in patient/healthcare provider encounters nationally as tracked in the 2023 Index, with comparisons to 2021.

Top 10 World Languages Used In Healthcare Encounters

The top ten languages other than English used in patient/healthcare provider encounters nationally as tracked by minutes of medical interpretation services:

2023		2021	
1.Spanish	73%	1.Spanish	74%
2.Vietnamese	3.3%	2.Vietnamese	3.8%
(tie)Arabic	3.3%	3.American Sign Language (ASL)	3.6%
4.Haitian Creole	3.1%	(tie)Arabic	3.6%
5.American Sign Language (ASL)	2.9%	5.Mandarin	3.0%
(tie) Mandarin	2.9%	6.Russian	1.8%
7.Russian	2.3%	7.Cantonese	1.7%
8.Portuguese	2.0%	8.Portuguese	1.2%
9.Cantonese	1.5%	9.Haitian Creole	1.0%
10.Korean	0.9%	10.Korean	0.9%

Percent of total of 204,991,375 minutes of interpretation

Percent of total of 110,540,751 minutes of interpretation



Other Languages Tracked in the 2023 Index in order of most minutes provided to least.

11. Dari	23. Karen	35. Albanian
12. French	24. Amharic	36. Hindi
13. Nepali	25. Rohingya	37. Cambodian
14. Swahili	26. Hmong	38. Khmer (Cambodian)
15. Ukrainian	27. Hakha Chin	39. Quiche
16. Pashto	28. Bosnian	40. Urdu
17. Burmese	29. Farsi	41. Chuj
18. Kinyarwanda	30. Lingala	42. Gujarati
19. Somali	31. Turkish	43. Navajo
20. Punjabi	32. Tagalog	44. Romanian
21. Polish	33. Japanese	45. Tigrinya
22. Bengali	34. Marshallese	

Top Ten World Languages

Other Than English Used in Provider/Patient Encounters By State
Based on Minutes of Medical Interpretation Services

Legend

Languages ordered as most commonly used to least; 1 being the most common, and descending from there to the least common.

State	Language									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
AK	Spanish	Korean	Russian	ASL	Tagalog	Hmong	Pashto	Mandarin	Ukrainian	Vietnamese
AL	Spanish	ASL	Arabic	Vietnamese	Swahili	Portuguese	Mandarin	Hindi	Korean	Quiche
AR	Spanish	ASL	Vietnamese	Arabic	Mandarin	Dari	Marshallese	Karen	Korean	Pashto
AZ	Spanish	ASL	Arabic	Mandarin	Vietnamese	Swahili	Kinyarwanda	Dari	Somali	Russian
CA	Spanish	Mandarin	Vietnamese	Cantonese	ASL	Russian	Arabic	Korean	Dari	Punjabi
CO	Spanish	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Russian	ASL	Rohingya	Dari	Cantonese	Arabic	Pashto
CT	Spanish	Portuguese (BRA)	ASL	Mandarin	Albanian	Arabic	Portuguese (EU)	Haitian Creole	Vietnamese	Pashto
DE	Spanish	Haitian Creole	Arabic	Mandarin	ASL	Korean	Vietnamese	Bengali	Turkish	Portuguese
FL	Spanish	Haitian Creole	Portuguese	ASL	Vietnamese	Russian	Mandarin	Arabic	Portuguese	Ukrainian
GA	Spanish	Vietnamese	Korean	ASL	Mandarin	Russian	Portuguese	Haitian Creole	French	Arabic
HI	Spanish	Mandarin	Vietnamese	Cantonese	Korean	Tagalog	Japanese	ASL	Russian	Arabic
IA	Spanish	Swahili	French	Burmese	Karen	Pashto	Arabic	Vietnamese	Dari	ASL
ID	Spanish	Swahili	Arabic	Kinyarwanda	Russian	Dari	ASL	Pashto	Ukrainian	Vietnamese
IL	Spanish	ASL	Arabic	Mandarin	Russian	Ukrainian	Polish	Cantonese	Vietnamese	French
IN	Spanish	Haitian Creole	Arabic	Burmese	ASL	French	Swahili	Hakha Chin	Kinyarwanda	Punjabi
KS	Spanish	ASL	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Russian	Korean	Swahili	Arabic	Kinyarwanda	French
KY	Spanish	Swahili	Burmese	Pashto	Haitian Creole	Karen	Arabic	Kinyarwanda	ASL	Bosnian
LA	Spanish	Vietnamese	Arabic	ASL	Portuguese (BRA)	Haitian Creole	Mandarin	Cantonese	Russian	French
MA	Spanish	Portuguese (BRA)	Haitian Creole	Arabic	Russian	Mandarin	Vietnamese	Spanish	ASL	Somali
MD	Spanish	ASL	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Dari	French	Korean	Arabic	Amharic	Nepali
ME	Arabic	Spanish	French	Lingala	Portuguese (BRA)	ASL	Portuguese (BRA)	Kinyarwanda	Vietnamese	Somali
MI	Spanish	Kinyarwanda	Swahili	Vietnamese	Arabic	Nepali	Haitian Creole	ASL	Burmese	Pashto
MN	Spanish	Somali	Hmong	Vietnamese	Dari	ASL	Russian	Arabic	Pashto	Mandarin
MO	Spanish	Vietnamese	ASL	Swahili	Mandarin	Somali	Burmese	Arabic	Bosnian	Haitian Creole

Language

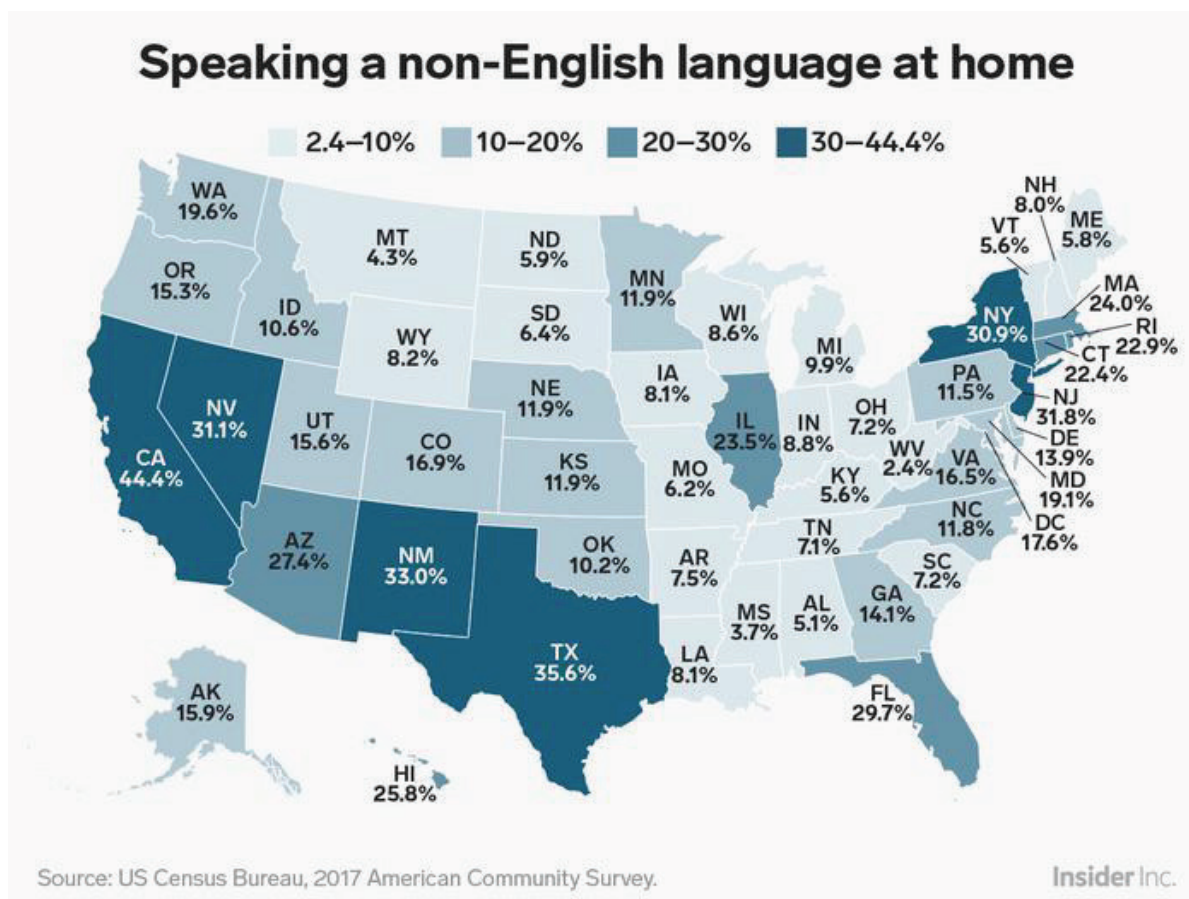
State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
MS	Spanish	Vietnamese	ASL	Arabic	Mandarin	Punjabi	Chuj	Russian	Gujarat	Hindi
MT	Spanish	ASL	Mandarin	Russian	Vietnamese	Arabic	Swahili	Pashto	Cantonese	Dari
NC	Spanish	Arabic	Vietnamese	ASL	Russian	French	Burmese	Mandarin	Portuguese (BRA)	Haitian Creole
ND	Spanish	ASL	Vietnamese	Haitian Creole	French	Mandarin	Korean	Ukrainian	Arabic	Russian
NE	Spanish	Arabic	Pashto	Karen	Vietnamese	ASL	Ukrainian	Dari	Russian	Mandarin
NH	Spanish	Swahili	Kinyarwanda	Vietnamese	Arabic	Nepali	Portuguese	ASL	Bosnian	Mandarin
NJ	Spanish	Portuguese	Haitian Creole	Arabic	ASL	Korean	Mandarin	Russian	Turkish	Polish
NM	Spanish	ASL	Mandarin	Dari	Vietnamese	Pashto	Arabic	Cantonese	Swahili	Navajo
NV	Spanish	Mandarin	ASL	Korean	Cantonese	Vietnamese	Russian	Amharic	Tagalog	Urdu
NY	Spanish	Arabic	Mandarin	Haitian Creole	Nepali	Russian	French	Bengali	ASL	Cantonese
OH	Spanish	Nepali	Haitian Creole	Somali	Arabic	ASL	French	Mandarin	Portuguese	Russian
OK	Spanish	Vietnamese	ASL	Mandarin	Pashto	Burmese	Arabic	Farsi	Korean	Marshallese
OR	Spanish	Vietnamese	Cantonese	Russian	Mandarin	ASL	Arabic	Korean	Ukrainian	Dari
PA	Spanish	Arabic	Haitian Creole	ASL	Mandarin	Nepali	Vietnamese	Russian	Swahili	Portuguese (BRA)
RI	Spanish	Portuguese (BRA)	ASL	Portuguese (EU)	Cambodian	Mandarin	Arabic	Khmer (Cambodian)	Cantonese	Turkish
SC	Spanish	Portuguese	Vietnamese	Russian	ASL	Arabic	Mandarin	Ukrainian	Dari	Karen
SD	Spanish	ASL	Burmese	Ukrainian	Russian	Amharic	Karen	Haitian Creole	Tigirinya	Khmer (Cambodian)
TN	Spanish	Arabic	ASL	Swahili	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Kinyarwanda	Burmese	Russian	Somali
TX	Spanish	Arabic	Vietnamese	ASL	Pashto	Mandarin	French	Dari	Swahili	Nepali
UT	Spanish	Portuguese	Vietnamese	ASL	Mandarin	Arabic	Russian	Dari	Cantonese	Haitian Creole
VA	Spanish	Arabic	Korean	Vietnamese	Dari	ASL	Mandarin	Pashto	Amharic	Farsi
VT	Nepali	Spanish	French	Somali	Swahili	Pashto	ASL	Vietnamese	Arabic	Mandarin
WA	Spanish	Russian	Vietnamese	Cantonese	Mandarin	Ukrainian	Arabic	Korean	Dari	ASL
WI	Spanish	Hmong	ASL	Mandarin	Vietnamese	Rohingya	Pashto	Swahili	Somali	Karen
WV	Spanish	ASL	Arabic	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Dari	Russian	Haitian Creole	Portuguese	French
WY	Spanish	ASL	Russian	Vietnamese	Burmese	Mandarin	Japanese	French	Romanian	Arabic

English As A Second Language

Though the United States is a nation of immigrants, the de facto language spoken in most settings in which formal business is transacted, including healthcare, is English. There is no official language at the federal level, but 30 U.S. states have made English the official language at the state level. Alaska, a notable exception, has 21 official state languages, English and 20 Native American languages.

Despite the expectation that English will be the language used in most transactions, many people residing in the United States do not speak English as a first language. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 22% of people in the U.S. (roughly 73 million) speak a language other than English at home.

The percent who speak a language other than English at home varies by state, as the graphic below illustrates.



Variations by state can be stark. In California, over four in ten people speak a language other than English at home. By contrast, in West Virginia, less than three in one hundred do.

Over 13% of people in the U.S. – close to 43 million -- speak Spanish at home, making Spanish the second most spoken language in the U.S. after English. There are now more people who speak Spanish at home in the U.S. than in any country in Latin America other than Mexico, Columbia and Argentina.

Some form of Chinese – either Mandarin or Cantonese -- is the second most spoken language other than English used at home by over three million people, according to the Census Bureau.

A Matter of Comprehension

While close to one-fourth of those residing in the U.S. speak a language other than English at home, not all of them are unable to speak or comprehend English. Thirty-eight percent of those who told the Census Bureau they speak a language other than English at home indicated that they do not speak English very well. This amounts to about 9% of the total population, or close to 28 million people.

The number of people in the U.S. who prefer to transact business, including healthcare, in a language other than English is difficult to quantify, but likely exceeds those who self-identify as not speaking English very well.

Language Diversity Increasing

Language diversity is on a track to accelerate in the U.S. Since 1980, the number of five-year-olds and above who speak a language other than English at home grew nearly seven times faster than the number who speak only English at home, according to the Census Bureau.

In an increasingly diverse country, access to healthcare is not just determined by economic factors, geographic location, or health insurance coverage, it may also be determined by the ability of patients to communicate with their care givers.

Language And Quality Of Care

Productive patient/provider encounters depend on how well providers and patients understand each other. Providers must follow patients closely enough to accurately diagnosis their complaints and communicate treatment plans. Patients must understand providers well enough to follow the care plans they are given.

Language barriers, particularly those facing Limited English Proficiency (LEP) patients, can significantly erode patient/provider communication. These barriers can include those often faced by the deaf and hard of hearing.

LEP is an increasingly widespread healthcare challenge nationwide. Eight percent of Medicare beneficiaries have LEP, according to a 2017 brief from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) Office of Minority Health (*Understanding National Patient Language Proficiency, Barriers. Patient Engagement HIT. May 4, 2017*).

Medicare beneficiaries in urban areas are four times as likely to face language barriers as beneficiaries living rural regions, with two percent of rural-dwelling patients having LEP compared to eight percent of urban beneficiaries.

LEP is also pervasive outside of the Medicare population. As was referenced above, close to one-fourth of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

Language barriers put about nine percent of the US population at risk for an adverse patient safety event, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) report *Improving Patient Safety Systems for Patients With Limited English Proficiency*.

Patients see language barriers as a significant hurdle to managing their health. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reports that half of Spanish-speaking patients cite language limitations as their biggest barrier to healthcare. Language barriers keep these patients from both engaging in seamless conversations with their doctors and interacting with the healthcare industry at large. (*Addressing Language Barriers in Patient/Provider Communication. Patient Engagement HIT. September 26, 2017*)

Health disparities such as unequal treatment related to language barriers are associated with unequal access to healthcare and unequal health outcomes. (*Hilfinger Messias DK, McDowell L, Estrada RD. Language interpreting as social justice work: perspectives of formal and informal healthcare interpreters. ANS Adv Nurs Sci 2009. Apr-Jun;32(2):128-143. 10.1097/ANS.0b013e3181a3af97*).

Similarly, several studies have shown that patients who face language barriers have poorer health outcomes compared with patients who speak the local language. (*Divi C, Koss RG, Schmaltz SP, Loeb JM. Language proficiency and adverse events in US hospitals: a pilot study. Int J Qual Health Care 2007. Apr;19(2):60-67. 10.1093/intqhc/mzl069*) [1]

(*Squires A. Evidence-based approaches to breaking down language barriers. Nursing2019 2017;47(9):34-40.*)

Culture And Quality Of Care

It is not just the ability to understand providers that can inhibit the healthcare experience for those who are not proficient in English. Patients who cannot understand billing forms may be inappropriately charged for services. In addition, patients given information about additional healthcare resources at their disposal may not use those resources if they do not understand the information.

Cultural misunderstanding regarding gender roles, generational roles, body etiquette and other factors that are caused by language barriers also can erode quality of care and the patient/provider experience.

Similarly, language barriers can adversely affect how providers deliver healthcare. Providers may abandon typical relationship building techniques they employ with English speakers and adopt a more paternalistic approach to those who are not proficient in English.

Family members sometimes act as interpreters but may carry with them an implicit bias, potentially to guard the patient's feelings or protect the patient from bad news. Family members, most notably children, also may not have a full understanding of the healthcare industry and healthcare terminology, leaving some concepts lost in translation. Indeed, using a family member or an unqualified interpreter may be a violation of the patient's civil rights (see next page).

Healthcare Language Mandates

For these reasons, the Joint Commission requires healthcare organizations to offer interpretive services at the point of care.

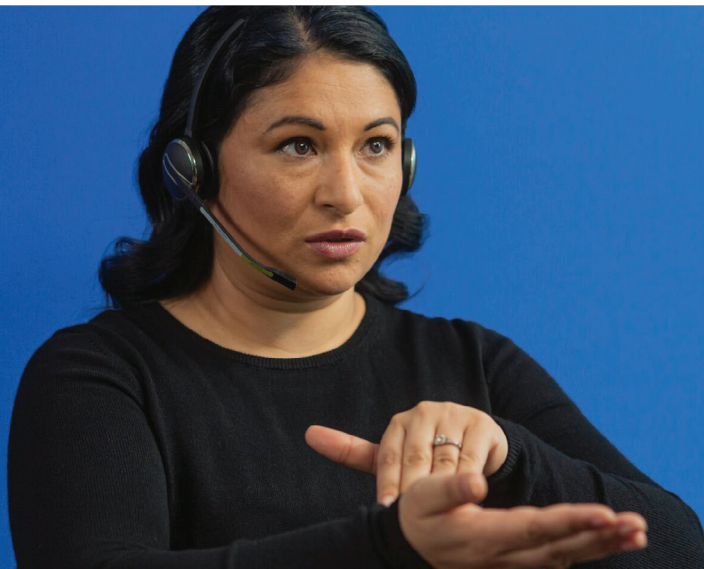
In addition, various federal laws and policies require that LEP patients have a means to address language barriers in healthcare settings.

These include:

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which establishes that language access be provided to those with LEP in organizations that benefit from federal funding and other resources.

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act provides for equal treatment for those with disabilities, including the Deaf community.

Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act which prohibits discrimination in certain health programs and requires qualified interpreters for LEP patients.





2023 INDEX TRENDS AND OBSERVATIONS

The 2023 Healthcare World Language Index offers a variety of insights into the use of languages other than English in patient/provider encounters within the context of an increasingly diverse society.

Not surprisingly, Spanish is the dominant non-English language spoken in patient/provider encounters nationwide, and is used in 73% of encounters tracked by the 2023 Index, down slightly from 74% in 2021.

People of Hispanic/Latinx origin now represent 18% of the total U.S. population (approximately 60 million people) and have accounted for more than 50 percent of total U.S. population growth since 2010 (*Hispanics Have Accounted for More Than Half of Total U.S. Population Growth since 2010. Pew Research Center. July 10, 2020*).

As of 2018, there were 45 million people in the U.S. who were born in another country, representing 14 percent of the population. Spanish-speaking Mexico is the country of origin of 25 percent of all U.S. immigrants (see chart below):

Country of Origin of U.S. Immigrants		
	In millions	% of All Immigrants
Mexico	11.2	25%
China	2.9	6%
India	2.6	6%
Philippines	2.0	5%
El Salvador	1.4	4%

Source: *Key Findings About U.S. Immigrants. Pew Research Center. August 20, 2020*

As the chart above indicates, China is second behind Mexico as the country of origin of the most U.S. immigrants, and Chinese languages (Mandarin and Cantonese) when combined, are ranked as the second most spoken in patient/provider encounters by the 2023 Index., down slightly from 4.7% in 2021

Though India ranks third as the country of origin of the most U.S. immigrants, languages commonly spoken in India are not ranked in the top ten nationally by the Index. This is in part because a wide variety of languages are spoken in India, including Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati and others, and also because English is widely spoken in India.

Similarly, though the Philippines ranks fourth as the country of origin of the most U.S. immigrants, no languages native to the Philippines are ranked in the top ten nationally by the 2023 Index.

Approximately 170 languages are spoken in the Philippines and English also is widely spoken, limiting the number Filipino immigrants likely to require interpretation services.

Major Languages

All the world languages ranked in the top ten nationally by the Index are spoken widely throughout the world, with the exception of Haitian Creole

The list of the most spoken languages in the world includes:

Most Spoken Language Worldwide	
Language	Number of Speakers
English	1.132 billion
Mandarin	1.117 billion
Hindi	635 million
Spanish	534 million
French	280 million
Arabic	280 million
Bengali	265 million
Russian	258 million
Portuguese	234 million
Indonesian	199 million

In contrast to the large numbers above, only 10 million people speak Haitian Creole.

Healthcare professionals can be particularly challenged when treating patients conversant with only one of a variety of niche languages that are included among the top ten used in patient encounters in various states as ranked by the Index.

Varying Migration Patterns by State

The 2023 Index illustrates how people from various countries have migrated to particular states. For example, Swahili is the second most used non-English language after Spanish in New Hampshire, while Kinyarwanda, another African language, is third (Kinyarwanda ranks second in Michigan).

Portuguese is the second most used non-English language after Spanish in New Jersey and South Carolina, while Russian is second in Washington and Japanese is second in Hawaii, one of only two states in which Japanese is listed in the top ten (Wyoming is the other).

By contrast, Arabic is more widespread and is among the top ten non-English languages other than Spanish in 48 out of 50 states, and is second in North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Similarly, Vietnamese ranks among the top ten non-English languages other than Spanish used in healthcare encounters in 40 states, and is second in Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Oregon.

In total, 45 different languages are cited by the Index as being among the top ten spoken in patient/provider encounters throughout the 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Refugees Driving Language Use

Several of the languages listed in the top ten in various states are spoken in countries which have experienced violence and other turmoil, triggering an exodus. These countries include Vietnam, Somali, Myanmar, Ukraine, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, and others. Some of the citizens of these countries have come to the U.S. seeking asylum and may require interpretation services when they seek healthcare. The chart below lists the regions of the world that generate the most asylee admissions to the U.S.

Origin of Asylee Admissions to the U.S./2023	
Africa	43%
Middle East/Central Asia	28%
East Asia	13%
Latin American/Caribbean	11%
Europe/Central Asia	4%

Source: *Refugees and Asylees in the U.S.* Immigration Policy Institute. June 15, 2023

Continued international unrest is likely to add to the number of immigrants in the U.S. who will require language services in healthcare settings.

Dwindling Use of European Languages

Only two European languages other than Spanish (Russian and Portuguese) are ranked in the top ten languages other than English spoken in patient/provider encounters nationally, representing 4.3% of all encounters, up from 3% in 2021. Though Spanish ranks number one overall and is a European language, the great majority of Spanish speakers in the U.S. come from Latin America and the Caribbean, not from Spain. Similarly, the majority of Portuguese speakers in the U.S. come from Brazil rather than Portugal.

Russian therefore is the only top ten language whose speakers come predominately from Europe. Their numbers are likely to increase in coming years as the war in Ukraine creates continued unrest in Russia and among Russian speaking Ukrainians

These numbers underscore the relative decline of immigrants to the U.S. from Europe. From 1960 to 2016, only 13% of immigrants to the U.S. came from Europe or Canada (see chart below).

Regions of Origin of U.S. Immigrants/1960-2016	
Mexico, Central and South America	40%
Asia	28%
Europe/Canada	13%
Caribbean	10%
Middle East and North Africa	4%
Sub-Saharan Africa	5%

Source: Key Findings About U.S. Immigrants. Pew Research Center. August 20, 2020

The fastest growing number of immigrants to the U.S. are from Asia. The number of immigrants from China, for example, has increased seven-fold since 1980. In 2018, China surpassed Mexico as the country sending the most immigrants to the U.S., though China was not in the top ten in 1980. (*Chinese Immigration to the U.S. Migration Policy Institute. January 15, 2020*). A growing number of patients requiring medical interpretation services in the future are likely to be from China and other Asian countries.

Signing as a Non-English Language

ASL ranked fourth in non-English languages other than Spanish used in healthcare encounters in the U.S. in the 2023 Index, down from third in 2021. ASL was used in 2.9% of all non-English healthcare encounters in 2023, down from 3.6% in 2021.

ASL is included in the top ten non-English languages other than Spanish in all 50 states in the 2023 Index, and ranks second in behind Spanish in 12 states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Illinois, Kansas, Mississippi, Maryland, Montana, North Dakota, New Mexico, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

According to the Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD), approximately one million people in the U.S. now use ASL as their main way to communicate. It is used by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as well as those with communications disorders.



CONCLUSION

Geographic, cultural, and linguistic diversity continue to expand in the United States.

The AMN Healthcare 2023 Healthcare World Language Index provides insights into how linguistic diversity manifests in patient/provider healthcare encounters both nationally and by state.

While Spanish is the primary language other than English spoken in the majority of such encounters, 45 other languages are among the most commonly spoken, depending on the state. These languages include those generally spoken in Asia by hundreds of millions of people, but also may include niche languages spoken by fewer than 50,000 people depending on international migration patterns to each state.

Because the quality of healthcare encounters depends on clear patient/provider communication, medical interpretation will be a continued key to healthcare access for a growing segment of the population.

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