



IECAM

Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map

Data Report No. 1



Revised February 2019

Census Bureau Data on Languages Spoken by Children

An increasing number of children and their families in Illinois speak a first language other than English. This raises a number of policy questions at the state and local level, such as:

- Where in the state are resources needed to develop bilingual or dual language classes?
- Are certain languages concentrated in one or more areas of the state?
- What are the most common languages spoken in the state?

This report explains three types of U.S. Census Bureau data on language diversity that may help answer these policy questions. These data types are:

1. Limited English-speaking households
2. Children ages 5 through 17 living in limited English-speaking households (for Spanish only)
3. Children birth through age 5 (for more than 60 languages)

The report identifies the geographic regions for which these data are available, explains the reasons for choosing each data type, and notes some limitations of each data type.

1. Data on Limited English-Speaking Households

Limited English-speaking household is a term used by the Census Bureau to describe a household 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. [1] Their members’ lack of English or limited English tends to isolate them from the mainstream population. The Census Bureau defines a household as one or more people living in a single housing unit, whether related or not. A household may include no families, one family, or several families.

Families with adults who have difficulty speaking English are more at risk for poverty, and their children may be more at risk for academic failure. The Census data can be used to identify concentrations of limited English-speaking households in the state. This information can help state and local agencies plan services, such as bilingual classes, for adults and children who are learning English.

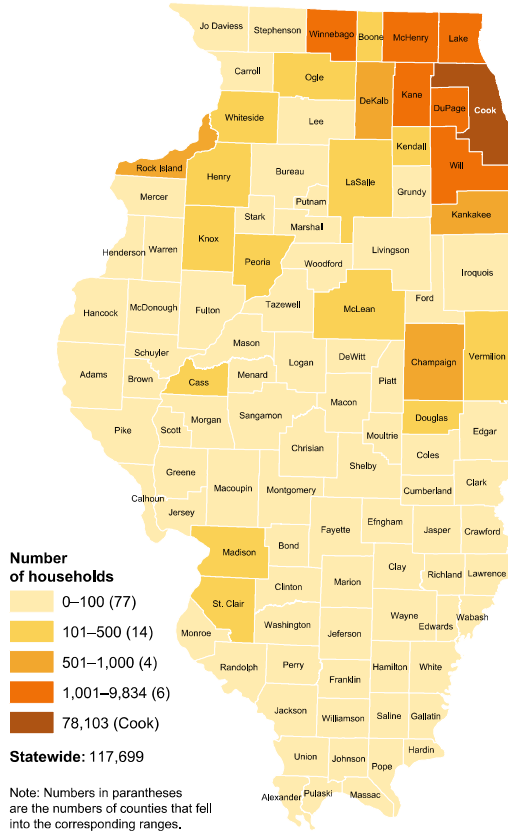
One reason to use limited English-speaking household data is they can be used to identify native speakers of Spanish, the most frequently spoken language after English. All other languages are collapsed into one category. **Another reason** is the data are available at various local levels, such as counties, municipalities, and school districts. The following table presents a sample for Illinois and for a county, township, and municipality.

Region	Number and percentage (in parentheses) of limited English-speaking households speaking ____, 2011-2015	
	Spanish	Other languages
Illinois State	117,699 (2.5%)	111,844 (2.3%)
Kane County	9,834 (5.7%)	1,755 (1.0%)
Elgin Township (Kane County)	2,882 (8.7%)	582 (1.8%)
Elgin City	3,751 (10.7%)	740 (2.1%)

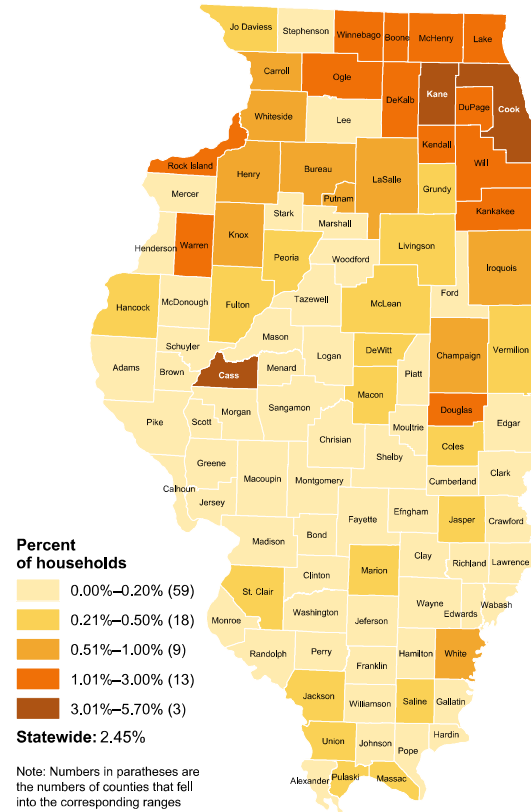
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011–2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B16002

The data can also be viewed in maps that allow users to look for concentrations of limited English-speaking households in the state and within counties. As seen in the first two maps, the data can be presented as an absolute number or as a percentage.

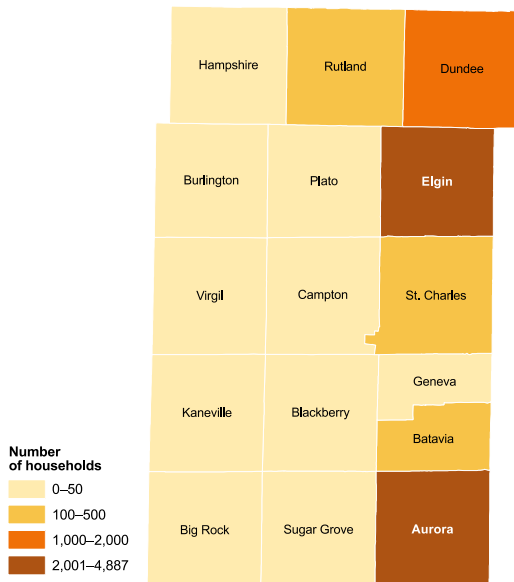
Number of limited English-speaking households speaking Spanish (2015)



Percent of limited English-speaking households speaking Spanish (2015)



Number of limited English-speaking households speaking Spanish by township in Kane County (2015)



The statewide maps show areas—in this case, counties—within the state where there’s more limited English-speaking households. The counties can then be examined to find smaller regions—in this case, townships—where limited English-speaking households are most concentrated (see map at left).

This information may be *helpful in answering questions* about where to direct resources.

However, there are *limitations of these data*:

- The Census Bureau provides data for only one specific language, Spanish.
- The data focus on households rather than individuals.

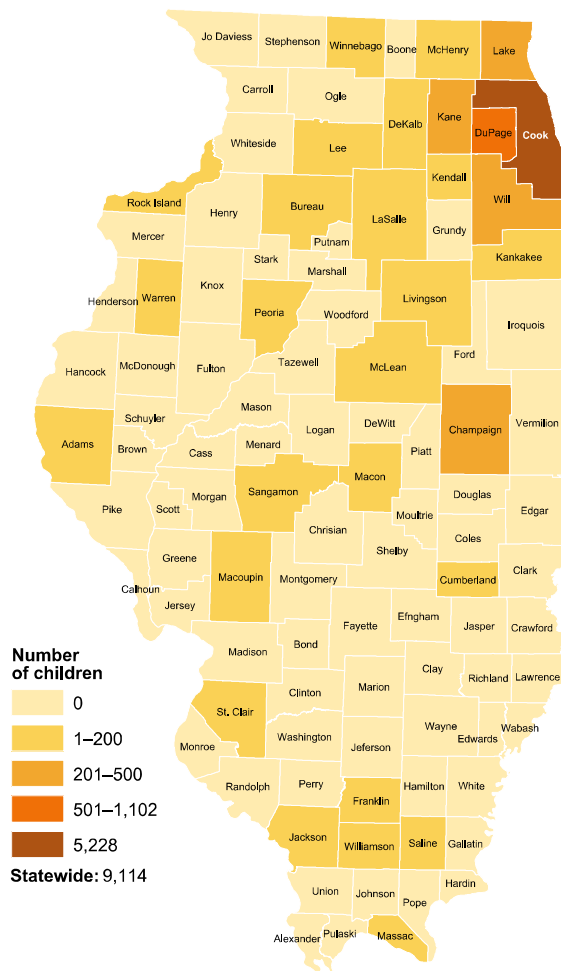
2. Data on Number of Children Ages 5 Through 17 Living in Limited English-Speaking Households

The Census Bureau provides data on the number of children ages 5 through 17 who are living in limited English-speaking households. These data are available for Spanish and for two language groups: “other Indo-European” and “Asian and Pacific Island” languages. The following table shows a sample of these data.

Region	Children ages 5 through 17 living in a limited English-speaking household who speak _____, 2011–2015	
	Spanish	Asian and Pacific Island languages
Illinois	85,668 (73.2%)	9,114 (7.8%)
Kane County	9,885 (89.6%)	353 (3.2%)
Elgin Township (Kane County)	2,872 (86.5%)	206 (6.2%)
Elgin City	3,606 (91.4%)	158 (4.0%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011–2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B16003

Number of children ages 5 through 17 who speak Asian and Pacific Island languages in limited English-speaking households (2015)



As with the data on limited English-speaking households, these data may be *helpful in answering questions* about where children might be at risk for poverty or learning difficulties because they have difficulty understanding English.

A *reason to use these data* is the population consists of children within a specified age range. Thus, the data may be *helpful in making decisions* about providing English language learners (ELLs) and similar services for children in this age range.

The data presented in the map—here concerning Asian and Pacific Island languages—can show pockets of language isolation in the state a little more quickly than data in the table.

There are *limitations of these data*:

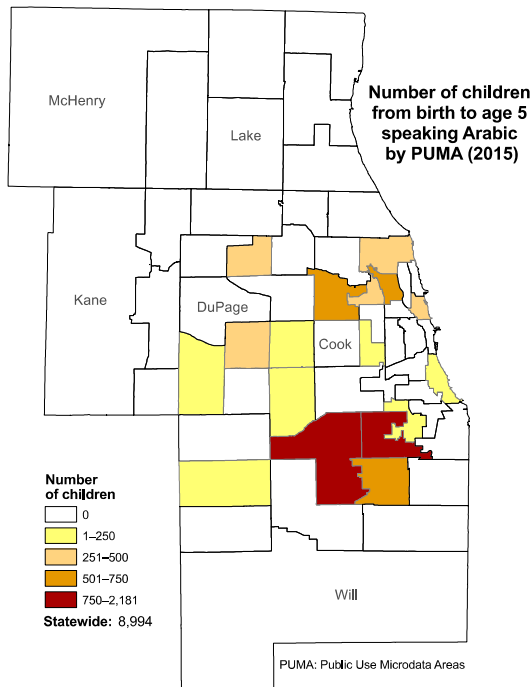
- They are not available for individual languages other than Spanish (and two broad language groups).
- They do not focus on children under 5, the age range of most interest for early childhood professionals.

3. Data on Children Speaking Individual Languages

Data on the number of children age 5 and under speaking individual languages can be obtained for PUMAs, geographic regions of about 100,000 people. [2] A *reason to use these data* is they are reported for more than 60 individual languages.

PUMA	Number of children from birth through age 5 (2015) who speak:				
	Polish	Arabic	Urdu	Filipino, Tagalog	Korean
Illinois	16,233	8,994	7,061	4,678	3,066
Maine, other Cook County townships	1,904	0	866	309	263
Evanston and other north suburbs in Cook County	176	288	540	231	116
Western part of DuPage County	826	69	627	404	0
Fulton, Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren counties	0	0	0	15	0
Peoria city	0	0	0	127	0
Northern part of Will County	766	165	594	0	510

Source: IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org



The data can identify the language diversity of an area because they reveal all the languages spoken in that area. Thus, these data, in tables or maps (as in the map to the left for Arabic), may be *helpful in guiding decision-making* by policy makers or programs regarding providing services and resources in specific languages.

There are *limitations of these data*:

- They are available only by PUMA.
- The languages are self-reported.

Summary

The three data sources discussed in this report do not provide all information on children’s language use (e.g., how many children ages 3 and 4 speak Arabic in a city), nor can they be logically combined with other data types (e.g., how many children speak Spanish in a county and live in families below the poverty level). However, they do provide much information that can be helpful in making a number of program- and policy-related decisions.

[1] Previous Census Bureau data products referred to these households as “linguistically isolated” and “household where no one age 14 and over speaks English only or speaks English ‘very well.’” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). See *Language Use, Census* at <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/language-use/about/faqs.html>

[2] These data by Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) are obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), which is a weighted sample of responses to the decennial census or to the American Community Survey (ACS). IPUMS is published and maintained by the Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota. The language of children age 5 is determined from the ACS. The language of children younger than age 5 (who are still learning a language) is derived from the language of the mother, father, or head of household.