

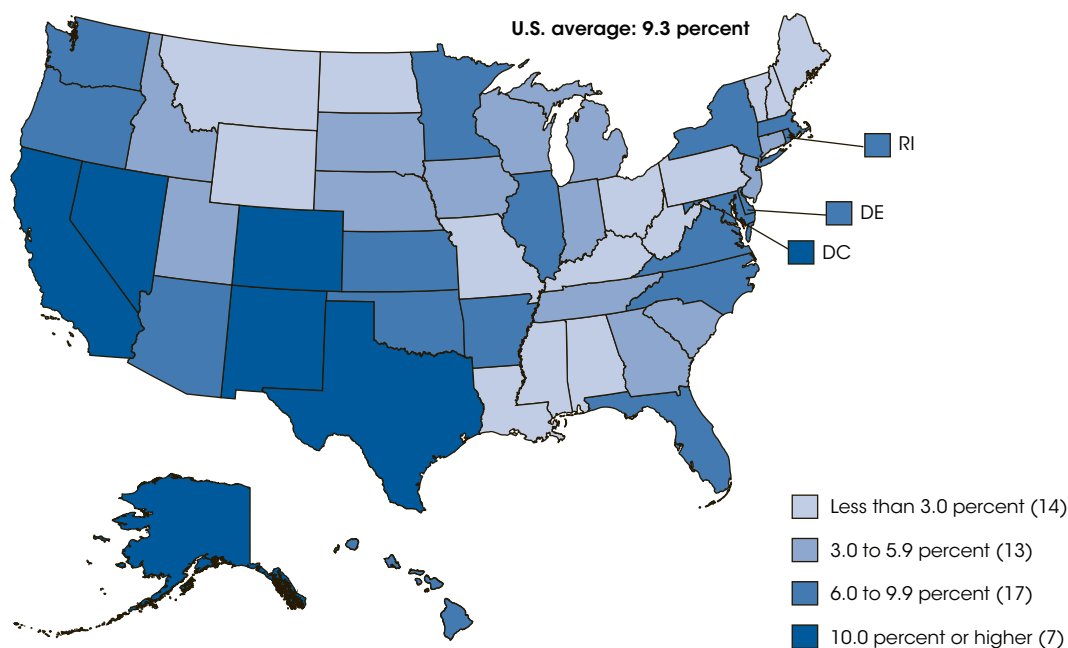
English Language Learners in Public Schools

The percentage of public school students in the United States who were English language learners (ELL) was higher in school year 2013–14 (9.3 percent) than in 2003–04 (8.8 percent) and 2012–13 (9.2 percent). In 2013–14, five of the six states with the highest percentages of ELL students in their public schools were located in the West.

Students who are English language learners (ELL) participate in appropriate programs of language assistance, such as English as a Second Language, High Intensity Language Training, and bilingual education, to help ensure that they attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same academic content and academic achievement standards that all students are expected to meet. Participation in these types of programs can improve

students' English language proficiency which, in turn, has been associated with improved educational outcomes.¹ The percentage of public school students in the United States who were English language learners was higher in school year 2013–14 (9.3 percent, or an estimated 4.5 million students) than in 2003–04 (8.8 percent, or an estimated 4.2 million students) and 2012–13 (9.2 percent, or an estimated 4.4 million students).

Figure 1. Percentage of public school students who were English language learners, by state: School year 2013–14



NOTE: Categorization based on unrounded percentages.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2013–14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 204.20.

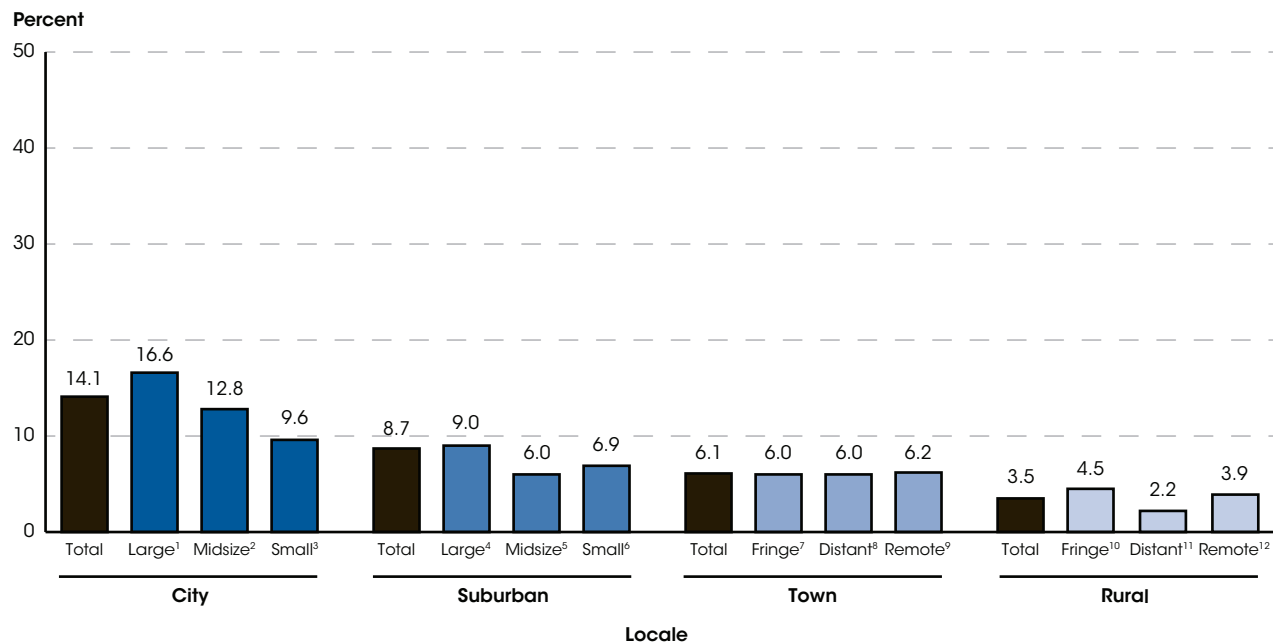
In 2013–14, five of the six states with the highest percentages of ELL students in their public schools were in the West. In the District of Columbia and six states—Alaska, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas—10.0 percent or more of public school students were English language learners, with California having the highest percentage, at 22.7 percent. Seventeen states had percentages of ELL public school enrollment between 6.0 and 9.9 percent. These states were Arizona, Arkansas,

Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Washington. In 13 states, the percentage of ELL students in public schools was between 3.0 and 5.9 percent; this percentage was less than 3.0 percent in 14 states, with West Virginia having the lowest percentage, at 0.7 percent.

The percentage of ELL students in public schools increased between 2003–04 and 2013–14 in all but 14 states, with the largest percentage-point increase occurring in Kansas (4.6 percentage points) and the largest percentage-point decrease occurring in Arizona (9.8 percentage points). Between 2012–13 and 2013–14,

the percentage of ELL students in public schools decreased in 20 states, with the largest decrease occurring in Idaho (1.4 percentage points). In contrast, 30 states and the District of Columbia experienced an increase in the percentage of ELL students, with the largest increase occurring in Kansas (0.6 percentage points).

Figure 2. Percentage of public school students who were English language learners, by locale: School year 2013–14



¹ Located inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population of at least 250,000.
² Located inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population of at least 100,000 but less than 250,000.
³ Located inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population less than 100,000.
⁴ Located inside an urbanized area and outside a principal city with a population of 250,000 or more.
⁵ Located inside an urbanized area and outside a principal city with a population of at least 100,000 but less than 250,000.
⁶ Located inside an urbanized area and outside a principal city with a population less than 100,000.
⁷ Located inside an urban cluster that is 10 miles or less from an urbanized area.
⁸ Located inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 but less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area.
⁹ Located inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area.
¹⁰ Located outside any urbanized area or urban cluster but 5 miles or less from an urbanized area or 2.5 miles or less from an urban cluster.
¹¹ Located outside any urbanized area or urban cluster and more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, or more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.
¹² Located outside any urbanized area or urban cluster, more than 25 miles from an urbanized area, and more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.
NOTE: Locales are based on an address's proximity to an urbanized area. Data in this figure are based on the locales of school districts rather than the locales of the schools themselves.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2013–14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 214.40.

In 2013–14, the percentage of students in ELL programs was generally higher for school districts in more urbanized areas than for those in less urbanized areas. For example, ELL students in cities made up an average of 14.1 percent of total public school enrollment, ranging from 9.6 percent in small cities to 16.6 percent in large cities. In suburban areas, ELL students constituted an average of 8.7 percent of public school enrollment, ranging from 6.0 percent in midsize suburban areas to 9.0 percent in large suburban areas. Towns and rural areas are subdivided into fringe,

distant, and remote areas according to their proximity to urban centers, with fringe being the closest to an urban center and remote being the farthest from one. In towns, ELL students made up an average of 6.1 percent of public school enrollment, ranging from 6.0 percent in fringe and distant areas to 6.2 percent in remote areas. In rural areas, ELL students made up an average of 3.5 percent of public student enrollment, ranging from 2.2 percent in distant areas to 4.5 percent in fringe areas.

Table 1. Ten most commonly reported home languages of English language learner (ELL) students: School year 2013–14

| Home language | Number of ELL students | Percentage distribution of ELL students ¹ | Number of ELL students as a percentage of total enrollment |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Spanish, Castilian | 3,770,816 | 76.5 | 7.7 |
| Arabic | 109,170 | 2.2 | 0.2 |
| Chinese | 107,825 | 2.2 | 0.2 |
| English ² | 91,669 | 1.9 | 0.2 |
| Vietnamese | 89,705 | 1.8 | 0.2 |
| Hmong | 39,860 | 0.8 | 0.1 |
| Haitian, Haitian Creole | 37,371 | 0.8 | 0.1 |
| Somali | 34,472 | 0.7 | 0.1 |
| Russian | 33,821 | 0.7 | 0.1 |
| Korean | 32,445 | 0.7 | 0.1 |

¹ Details do not sum to 100 because not all categories are reported.

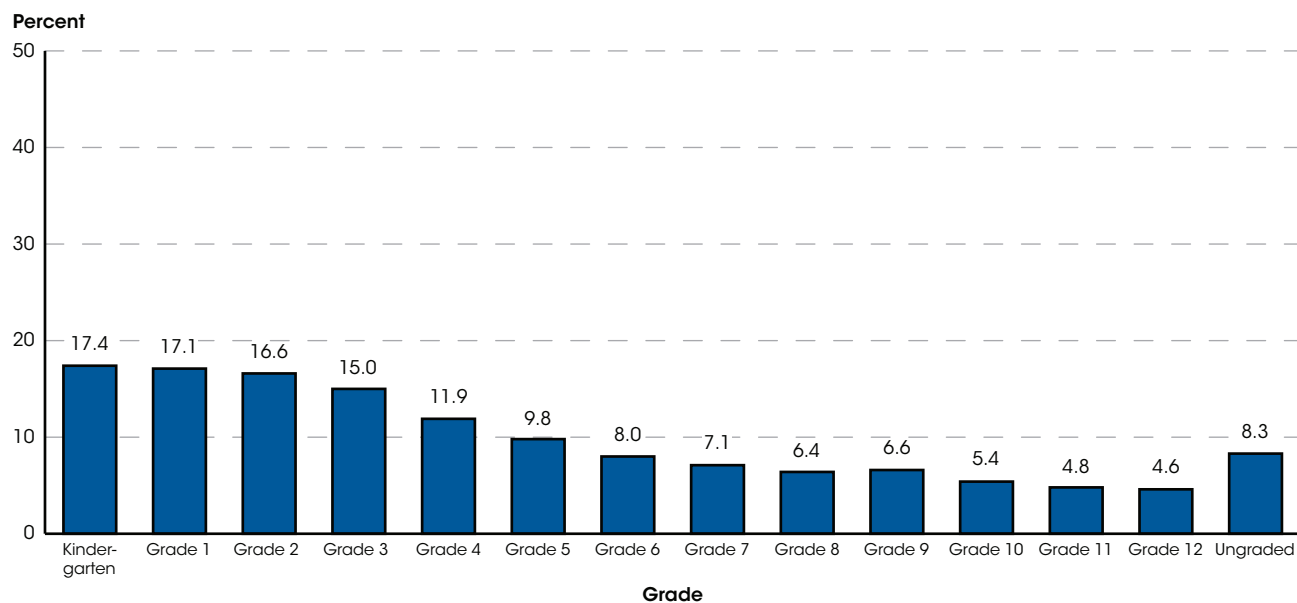
² Examples of situations in which English might be reported as an English learner's home language include students who live in multilingual households and students adopted from other countries who speak English at home but also have been raised speaking another language.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *EDFacts* file 141, Data Group 678, extracted November 3, 2015; Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education," 2013–14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 204.27.

Spanish was the home language of nearly 3.8 million ELL students in 2013–14, representing 76.5 percent of all ELL students and 7.7 percent of all public K–12 students. Arabic and Chinese were the next most common home languages, reported for approximately 109,000 and 108,000 students, respectively. English (91,700 students) was the fourth most commonly reported home language, which may reflect students who live in multilingual

households or students adopted from other countries who had been raised speaking another language but currently live in households where English is spoken. Vietnamese (89,700), Hmong (39,900), Haitian (37,400), Somali (34,500), Russian (33,800), and Korean (32,400) round out the top ten most commonly reported home languages for ELL students in 2013–14.

Figure 3. Percentage of public K-12 students identified as English language learners, by grade level: School year 2013-14



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 141, Data Group 678, extracted November 3, 2015; Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education," 2013-14. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 204.27.

In 2013-14, a greater percentage of public school students in lower grades than in upper grades were identified as ELL students. For example, 17.4 percent of kindergarteners were identified as ELL students,

compared to 8.0 percent of 6th-graders and 6.4 percent of 8th-graders. Among 12th-graders, only 4.6 percent of students were identified as ELL students.

Endnotes:

¹ Ross, T., Kena, G., Rathbun, A., KewalRamani, A., Zhang, J., Kristapovich, P., and Manning, E. (2012). *Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence Study* (NCES 2012-046). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 204.20, 204.27, and 214.40

Related indicators: Reading Performance, Mathematics Performance

Glossary: English language learner (ELL), Enrollment, Geographic region, Household, Locale codes, Public school or institution, School district