

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

A Focus on Language

December 2023

Introduction

The population profile for New Hampshire is often over-simplified, with a generalization that NH is a homogenous state. There is value in digging deeper and understanding the more complex story that emerges when describing the more than 1.3 million people who live here. This brief, which focuses on languages spoken as reported by the US Census American Community Survey¹, is part of a series that reviews some of the state’s characteristics in more detail.

What languages do people speak across New Hampshire?

While 92% of New Hampshire’s 1.3 million residents speak English only (Figure 1), there is linguistic diversity in the Granite State. Based on 2022 US Census data, roughly 103,500 people (8% of the population) speak a language other than English in homes across New Hampshire, with varying proportions across counties and shifting over time. Among those people whose primary language is not English, nearly 35% speak Spanish and 15% speak French (Figure 2). The remaining 50% - around 51,600 individuals – speak a variety of languages from around the world.

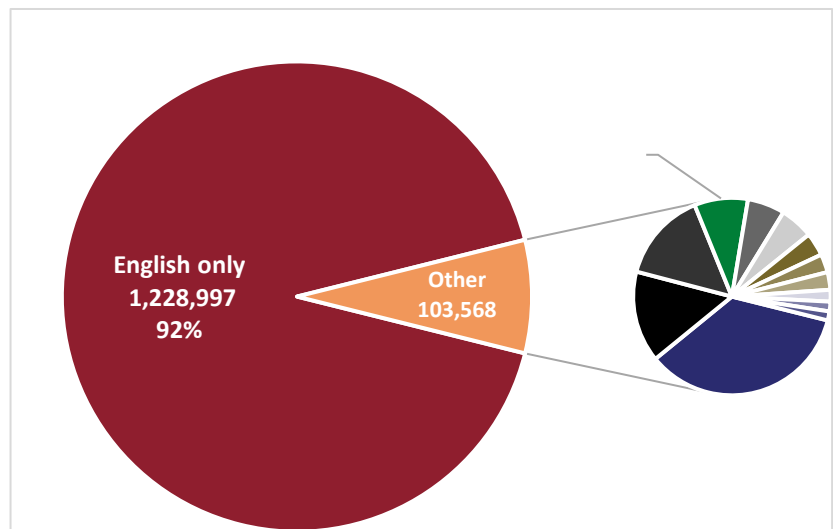


Figure 1. Number of People Who Speak Selected Languages At Home NH (2022 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, C16001)

¹ Data Source: United States Census American Community Survey (ACS): <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>; Specific source tables from the ACS are indicated in table and figure labels.

Figure 2 and Table 1 show the numbers of people who speak specific languages in NH. The broad “other” categories include many different languages; please see the Appendix Table for more detail on the many distinct languages captured in these groups.

Table 1. Number of People Who Speak Selected Languages At Home, NH, 2022 (2022 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, C16001)

Language	Number of People	Percent of Population
English only	1,228,997	92.2%
Spanish	36,485	2.7%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	15,493	1.2%
Other Indo-European languages	15,301	1.1%
Other Asian & Pacific Islander languages	9,094	0.7%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	6,334	0.5%
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	5,653	0.4%
Other and unspecified languages	3,956	0.3%
German or other West Germanic languages	3,099	0.2%
Arabic	2,990	0.2%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	1,993	0.1%
Vietnamese	1,647	0.1%
Korean	1,523	0.1%

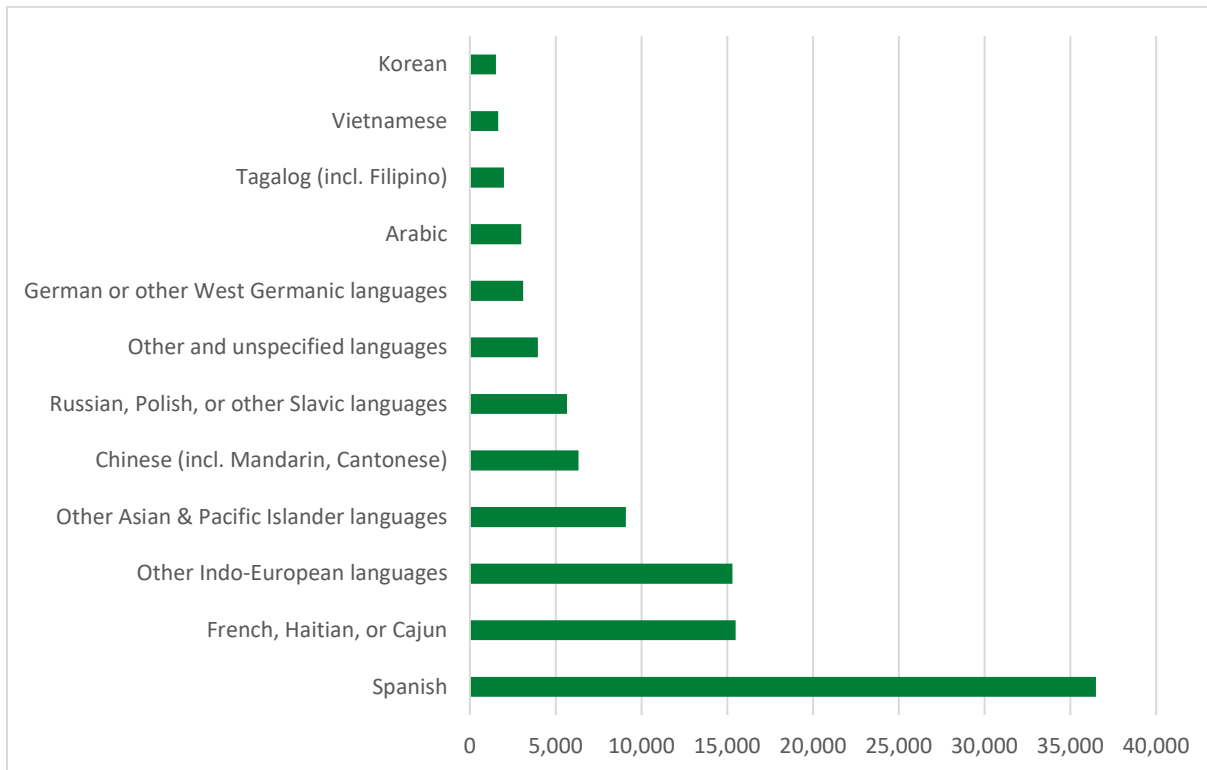


Figure 2. Number of People Who Speak Selected Languages Other than English At Home, NH, 2022 (2022 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, C16001)

Where do people who speak languages other than English live?

County-level data from 2021's 5-year estimates (Figure 3) show over 55,000, or nearly 53% of the state's non-English speakers, live in Hillsborough County. Additionally, 18,500 (17.6%) live in Rockingham; 8,500 (8.1%) in Merrimack; 6,800 (6.5%) in Strafford; 5,900 (5.6%) in Grafton; and the remaining 16,500 (9.2%) spread across the five other counties.

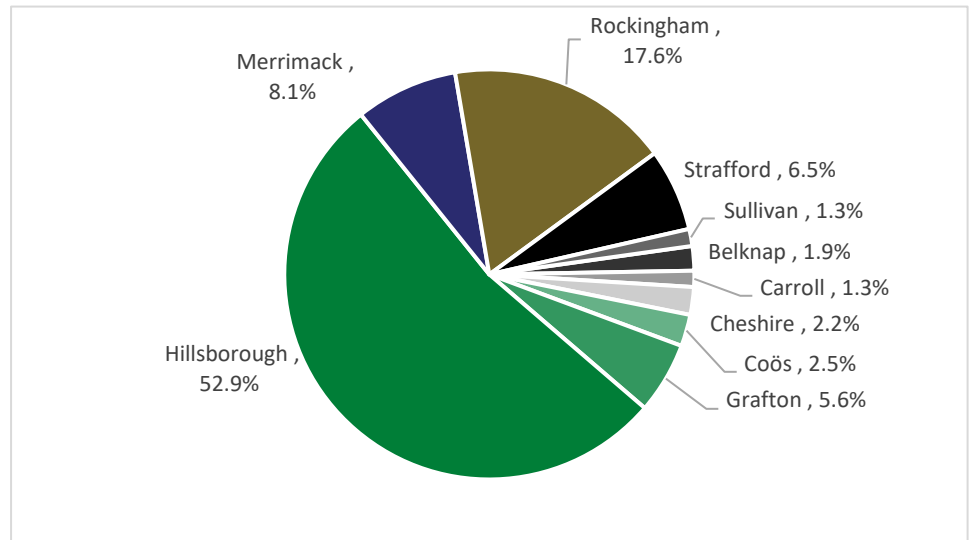


Figure 3. People Who Speak Languages Other than English At Home, by County, NH, 2016-2021 (2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, C16001)

How have the languages spoken changed over time?

Figure 4 shows how the numbers of individuals speaking various languages has changed in NH from 2016-2021. Among the largest changes to non-English groups are a decrease of French speakers (4,600 people, or -0.42% of the population) and an increase of Spanish speakers (6,000 people, or +0.39% of the population).

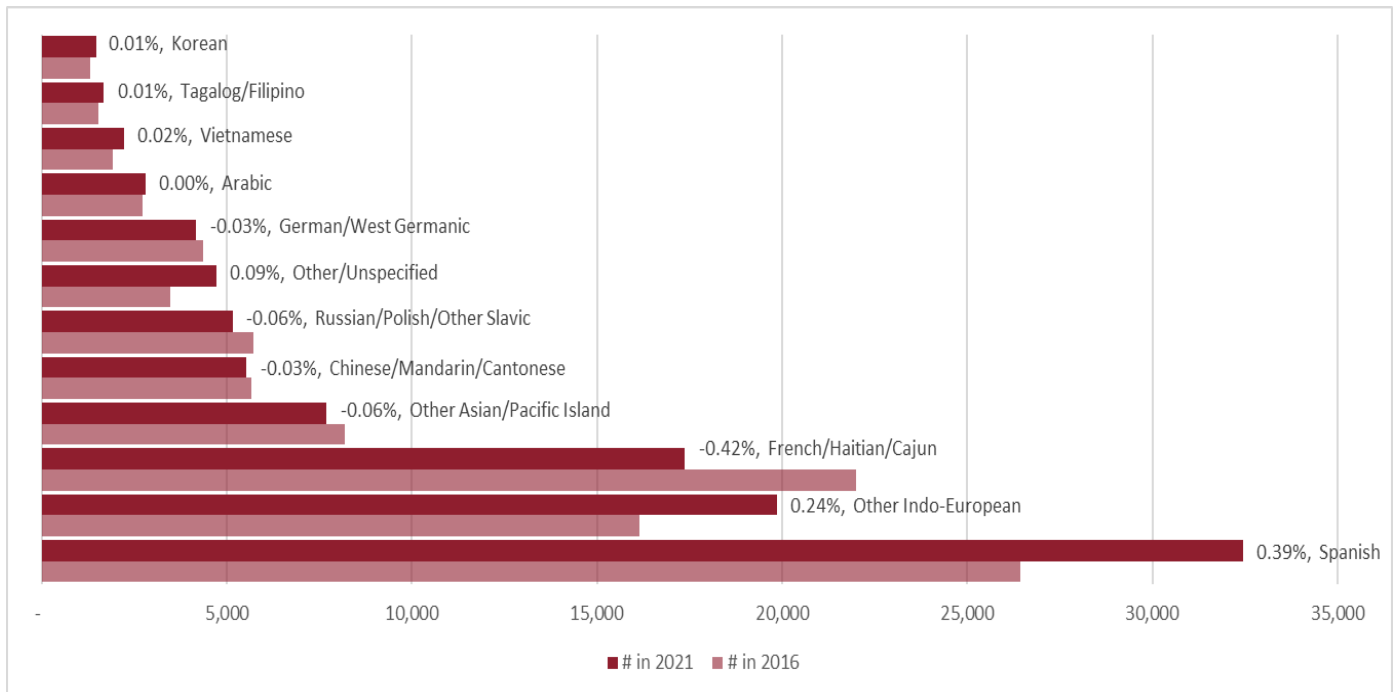


Figure 4. Change in the Number of People Speaking a Language Other than English At Home, NH, 2016-2021 (2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, C16001)

What do we know about speaking English and another language?

Data show that of the over 100,000 people in New Hampshire who speak a language other than English at home, more than 70% also speak English “very well.” Figure 5 displays English proficiency in four language groups. As the most commonly spoken language other than English spoken at home, Spanish is shown as a single language category in this data; other categories are broader groupings of languages (see the Appendix table). Figure 6 shows that twice as many Spanish speakers also speak English very well (67%) as compared to those who speak English less than very well (33%). Figure 6 shows the level of English proficiency among of people who speak a language other than English at home, by age group. For children ages 5-17, nearly 80% speak English very well. For those 18-64, 69% speak English very well; and those 65 and older, 67% speak English very well.

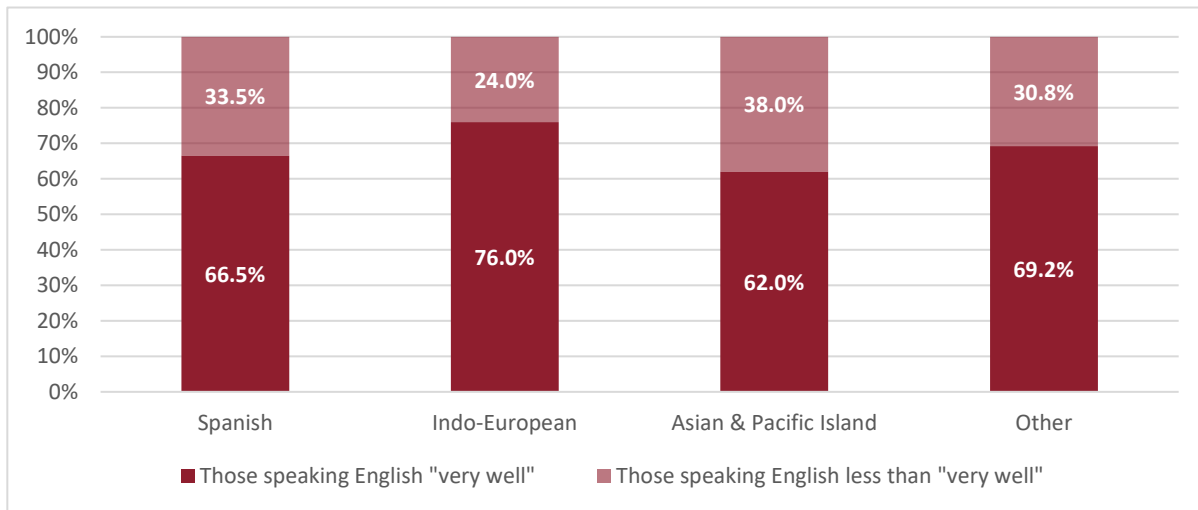


Figure 5. English Proficiency among People Who Speak a Language Other than English At Home, by Language, NH (2021 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, S1601)

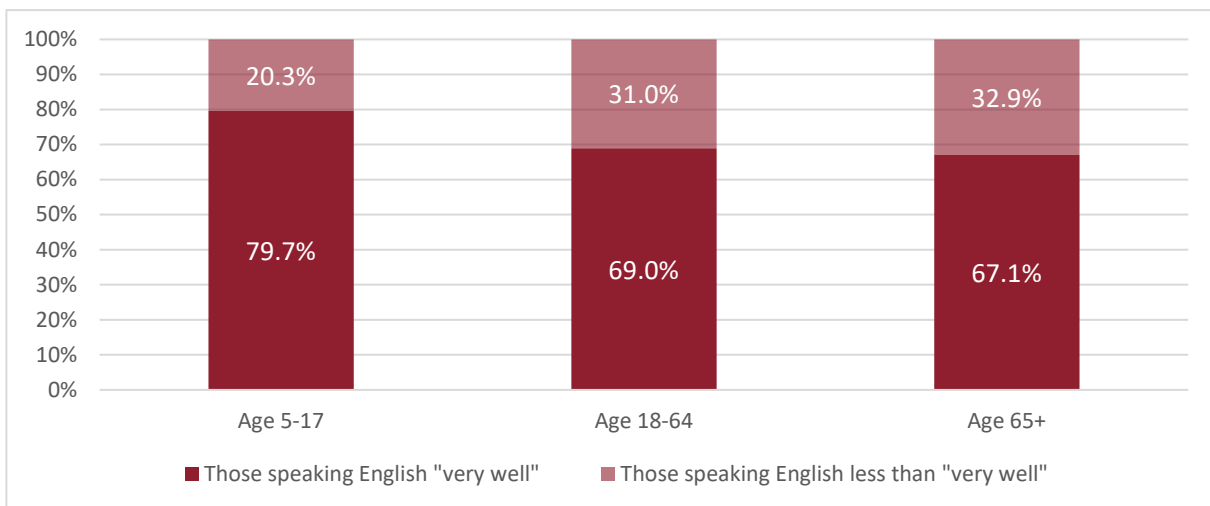


Figure 6. English Proficiency among People Who Speak a Language Other than English At Home, by Age, NH (2021 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, S1601)

What does this tell us about the future?

New Hampshire’s population is becoming more diverse in many ways, including in languages spoken. The information presented here provides an important starting point for those interested in understanding the languages spoken in New Hampshire.

Appendix Table: Language Groupings

Adapted from US Census’ Four and Forty-Two Group Classifications of Languages Spoken at Home, SOURCE: <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/language-use/about.html>

Four Group Classification	Examples
Spanish	Spanish, Ladino
Asian and Pacific Island languages	Mandarin Chinese, Min Nan Chinese (incl. Taiwanese), Cantonese
	Japanese
	Korean
	Hmong
	Vietnamese
	Central Khmer (Cambodian)
	Thai, Lao
	Burmese, Karen, Turkish, Uzbek
	Tagalog, Filipino
	Cebuano (Bisayan), Hawaiian, Iloko (Ilocano), Indonesian, Samoan
Other Indo-European languages	French, Cajun
	Haitian
	Italian, Sicilian
	Portuguese, Kabuverdianu
	German, Luxembourgish
	Dutch, Yiddish
	Greek
	Russian
	Polish
	Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian
	Bulgarian, Czech, Ukrainian
	Armenian
	Iranian Persian (Farsi), Dari
	Gujarati
	Hindi
	Urdu
	Punjabi (Panjabi)
	Bengali
	Nepali, Marathi, Konkani
	Albanian, Lithuanian, Pashto (Pushto), Romanian, Swedish
Telugu	
Tamil	
Malayalam, Kannada	
All other languages	Navajo
	Apache languages, Cherokee, Lakota, Tohono O'odham, Yupik
	Arabic languages
	Hebrew
	Amharic, Chaldean Neo-Aramaic, Somali, Tigrinya
	Akan (incl. Twi), Igbo (Ibo), Wolof, Yoruba
	Ganda, Kinyarwanda, Lingala, Swahili
	Hungarian, Jamaican Creole English, Unspecified