



Growing ND by the Numbers

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The Census Bureau's tabular reports categorize languages in four major groups other than English: Spanish or Spanish Creole, Other Indo-European, Asian and Pacific Islander and other languages based upon the household language spoken for individuals age 5 or older.

Source: Census Bureau's Language <http://www.census.gov/topics/population/language-use/about.html>

Languages North Dakota Residents Speak

Nearly 99 percent of the states households indicate that members of the household age 5 or older speak English "very well." Ninety-four percent of households in the state indicate they speak "only English" at home. The remaining 6 percent, approximately 34,000 to 39,000 residents age 5 or over, speak some other language in the home.

Of the population in the state who speak a different household language, 72 percent indicate they speak English "very well". Conversely 28 percent, roughly 9,800 individuals age 5 or older who speak a household language other

than English, speak English less than "very well."

There are likely about 4,400 residents in the state who meet the definition of linguistic isolation, meaning there is no one in the household age 14 or over who speak English "very well." The majority of these are from individuals born abroad rather than native born residents.

Among the state's average of approximately 20,000 foreign-born residents between 2010 and 2014, 50 percent indicate they spoke English well while 32 percent reported speaking "only English." Twenty percent indicate they do not

speak English well and only 3 percent indicate they do not speak English at all.

The incidence of English only speaking is more common in North Dakota than in much of the rest of the country. Of the United States' estimated 41 million foreign born residents, only 16 percent indicate they speak only English. The higher rate of English only speaking may be the result of foreign born residents first moving to another part of the country and then moving into the state.

Source: ACS 5-Yr 2010 -2014 Tables B16005 and S1601 and PUMS data

Languages Spoken in North Dakota by County

Every county in North Dakota has at least a few residents who speak a language "other than English" as their household language. This ranged from one percent in Towner and Nelson counties to 17 percent in McIntosh county and 14 percent in Logan County.

In Sioux County, 10 percent of the residents indicate they do not speak "English" as their household language. Divide County, is the only county where 100 percent of the population, including those whose household language was non-English, indicated they speak English "very well." Pockets of poor English

language skills among the state's foreign born population exist randomly across the state.

Source: ACS 5-Yr 2010 -2014 Tables S1601 and B16005

Other Languages

The two most common reported non-English languages spoken at home in North Dakota are German and Spanish, with approximately 5,100 of each. These two languages accounted for approximately 70 percent of the individuals who speak a household language other than English in the state, followed by Norwegian with roughly 850 individuals or six percent of the total non-English speaking population.

Source: ACS 5-Yr 2010 -2014 PUMS data

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Non-English Household Speakers

Only 1 percent of residents age 5 or older in North Dakota speak a language other than English in the home. Compared to other states, there are only six states (West Virginia, Mississippi, Montana, Kentucky, Alabama and Vermont) that have a lower percentage of residents whose household language is something other than English.

A far higher percentage of individuals who speak Spanish as their primary household language in North Dakota also speak "English well," more so than any other states. While the estimated number of individuals whose household language is Spanish, the number is small at 9,400 individuals, 79 percent of them speak English "very well." North Dakota is followed by Maine, Montana, Vermont and Alaska in this ranking.

An estimated 16,200 North Dakotas residents speak an Indo-European language other than English such as Russian, German, or French in the household. Of this group, 78 percent indicate

they speak English "very well." When compared to other states, North Dakota ranked 7th in the ability of this population to speak English well.

Of the estimated 4,400 Asian and Pacific Islander language household speakers in North Dakota, only 49 percent indicated they speak English "very well." This particular statistic is 7th lowest of the 50 states, indicating a higher proportion of this group may be "linguistic isolated" than other groups. Our neighboring state, South Dakota was estimated to

have the lowest percentage in this category with less than 40 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander speakers able to speak English "very well."

The catch all category not covered above is "Other Languages" including Hebrew, Arabic, Native American and African languages spoken by an estimated 8,700 North Dakotans.

Source: ACS 5-Yr 2010 -2014 Tables S1601 and B16005, 2014 ACS Subject Definitions, and PUMS data



Data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey taken between 2010 and 2014 shows 48 separate languages "other than English" spoken in the homes of North Dakota residents. English is by far the most common spoken language in the state. However, it is not the only one spoken in the home.

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