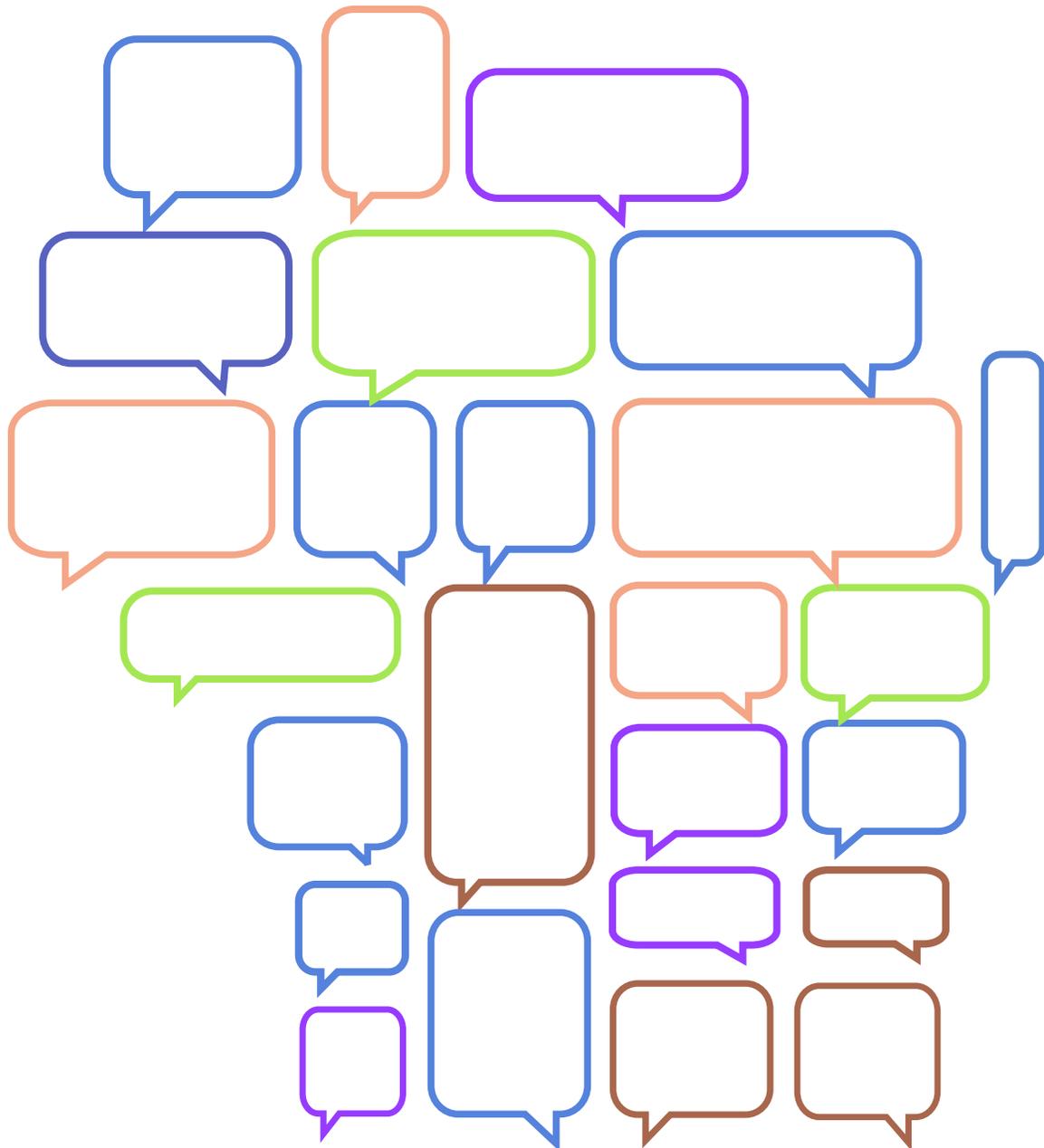


# Understanding the demographic composition of Wisconsin's largest linguistic communities of LEP individuals

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## Introduction

The demographic attributes of Wisconsin's second and third largest linguistic communities, Spanish and Hmong, are highlighted in this statistical and visual tool for understanding the composition of Wisconsin's linguistic diversity.

This publication geographically identifies the state's largest concentrations of speakers of languages other than English, provides estimated numbers of limited English proficient (LEP) members within the Spanish and Hmong linguistic communities, and establishes baseline comparisons to estimates for LEP populations elsewhere in the state and nation.

The data is from the American Community Survey (ACS), an annual survey administered by the U.S. Census Bureau to better understand statistical trends of its respective populations. This publication uses the Migration Policy Institute's (MPI)<sup>1</sup> tabulations from pooled ACS data collected from 2009 to 2013. While the ACS estimates the numbers of LEP individuals in all 50 states, this project focuses on Wisconsin and its 72 counties. The ACS data used for this report did not include statistics on languages spoken by Wisconsin's Native populations. However, it should be noted that these languages add significant variety and contribute meaningfully to the linguistic and cultural diversity across the state.

The data set used in this publication does not provide a total headcount of speakers within a given linguistic community, but rather the estimates of LEP individuals within Wisconsin's largest linguistic communities. The ACS methodology identifies individuals with limited English proficiency by the following criteria: survey respondents must be five years of age or older, speak a language other than English at home, and speak English "less than 'very well.'"<sup>2</sup>

It is hoped that information provided in this project contributes to UW-Extension's strategic planning for systematically addressing issues of language access on local and state levels.

<sup>1</sup> Migration Policy Institute: [migrationpolicy.org](http://migrationpolicy.org)

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the data set and methodology, visit the MPI's data hub: [migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/us-immigration-trends#lep](http://migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/us-immigration-trends#lep)

## Data Summary

The variety and geographic distribution of languages spoken in different parts of Wisconsin reflect a state that is both linguistically and culturally diverse. While speakers of English account for the largest linguistic community within the state's total population, a common level of language proficiency is not shared equally among all residents. Approximately 3.2% (n=174,100) of Wisconsin's population is estimated to have "limited English proficiency." Of this estimated number, there are four linguistic communities that account for the vast majority of speakers with limited English proficiency statewide. These linguistic communities are Spanish (n=104,700), Hmong (n=16,200), Chinese (n=7,700), and German (n=6,900). The tables and figures found in this report focus on statistical trends between the state's largest linguistic communities, Spanish and Hmong.

The data reveals stark differences between Wisconsin's Spanish-speaking and Hmong-speaking communities. LEP individuals within the Spanish-speaking community significantly outnumber LEP members of the Hmong-speaking community. Individuals who speak Spanish at home make up 60% of the state's total LEP population, whereas individuals who speak Hmong at home comprise 9.2% of the state's total LEP population.

Not only are there more LEP speakers of Spanish than Hmong, but there are also differences in the linguistic communities' geographical concentrations throughout the state. Twenty-five<sup>3</sup> of Wisconsin's 72 counties have an LEP population of Spanish speakers over 500, as compared with 11 counties<sup>4</sup> where concentrations of LEP Hmong speakers total 500 or more. In counties where totals of LEP individuals in each community are both greater than 500, Spanish speakers outnumber Hmong speakers in all but three counties.<sup>5</sup> There is only one county where LEP individuals who speak Hmong are outnumbered by LEP speakers of another language. In Dane County, LEP individuals who speak Chinese<sup>6</sup> account for 13% of the county's total LEP population as compared to those in the Hmong community who make up 5% of the total countywide LEP population.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, Calumet, Dane, Dodge, Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, Jefferson, Kenosha, La Crosse, Manitowoc, Marathon, Milwaukee, Monroe, Outagamie, Portage, Racine, Rock, Sauk, Sheboygan, Trempealeau, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha, Waupaca, Winnebago

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Dane, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Manitowoc, Marathon, Milwaukee, Outagamie, Portage, Sheboygan, Winnebago

<sup>5</sup> Eau Claire, La Crosse, Marathon

<sup>6</sup> Chinese is defined by the MPI as "Mandarin, Cantonese, and Chinese"

**Table 1.** Ten largest linguistic communities in Wisconsin by estimated LEP population.

Total population ..... 5,355,600  
 Total estimated LEP population ..... 174,100

Language	LEP population
Spanish	104,700
Hmong	16,200
Chinese	7,700
German	6,900
Other West Germanic	2,700
Other Asian	2,600
Russian	2,500
Korean	2,400
Arabic	2,400
Laotian	2,200

**Table 2.** Ten largest linguistic communities in the U.S. by estimated LEP population.

Total population ..... 291,484,500  
 Total estimated LEP population ..... 25,148,900

Language	LEP population
Spanish	16,344,500
Chinese	1,600,900
Vietnamese	839,200
Korean	617,900
Tagalog	516,500
Russian	416,500
Arabic	341,400
French Creole	323,700
Other Indic	315,200
African	284,100

**Notes**

The term LEP refers to any person age 5 and older who reported speaking English “less than very well,” as classified by the U.S. Census Bureau. Estimates for the United States overall do not include data from Puerto Rico.

Total estimated LEP population includes linguistic communities not shown on this table.

Population estimates are for individuals age 5 and older.

“Spanish” includes Spanish and Spanish Creole.

“French” includes Patois and Cajun.

“French Creole” includes Haitian Creole.

“Chinese” includes Mandarin, Cantonese, and Chinese.

“Other Asian languages” may include, but is not limited to Malayalam, Telugu, and Tamil.

“Other West Germanic languages” excludes German and Yiddish, which are shown separately.

“Other Indic languages” may include, but is not limited to Punjabi, Bengali, and Marathi.

“African languages” may include, but is not limited to Amharic, Ibo, Yoruba, and Swahili.

**Source:** Migration Policy Institute tabulations from the U.S. Census Bureau’s pooled 2009–2013 American Community Survey, Table B16001 “Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over,” available through the U.S. Census Bureau’s American FactFinder.

**Table 3.** Largest LEP populations in Wisconsin by county and the United States.

Location	Total population	Total LEP population	Largest linguistic community (after English)	LEP speakers	Second largest linguistic community (after English)	LEP speakers
United States	291,484,500	25,148,900	Spanish	16,344,500	Chinese	1,600,900
Wisconsin	5,355,600	174,100	Spanish	104,700	Hmong	16,200
Brown County	233,400	9,100	Spanish	6,500	Hmong	1,100
Calumet County	46,000	1,600	Spanish	900		
Dane County <sup>1</sup>	466,400	21,200	Spanish	10,700	Chinese	7,700
Dodge County	83,800	1,200	Spanish	1,000		
Eau Claire County	94,000	2,000	Hmong	600	Spanish	600
Fond du Lac County	95,800	2,100	Spanish	1,600		
Jefferson County	79,000	2,100	Spanish	1,600		
Kenosha County	156,300	5,900	Spanish	4,000		
La Crosse County	108,700	2,400	Hmong	1,400	Spanish	600
Manitowoc County	76,700	1,400	Spanish	600	Hmong	500
Marathon County	125,900	3,700	Hmong	1,900	Spanish	1,100
Milwaukee County	881,200	61,300	Spanish	41,000	Hmong	3,900
Monroe County	41,700	1,200	Spanish	700		
Outagamie County	166,400	4,700	Spanish	2,600	Hmong	1,300
Portage County	66,300	1,600	Spanish	600	Hmong	500
Racine County	182,500	6,600	Spanish	5,100		
Rock County	150,200	4,800	Spanish	4,100		
Sauk County	58,400	1,300	Spanish	800		
Sheboygan County	108,400	4,400	Spanish	2,100	Hmong	1,300
Trempealeau County	27,100	900	Spanish	800		
Walworth County	96,700	4,300	Spanish	3,700		
Washington County	124,500	1,900	Spanish	1,200		
Waukesha County	370,300	7,200	Spanish	3,500		
Waupaca County	49,500	800	Spanish	500		

1. Hmong is the third largest linguistic community in Dane County with 1,300 speakers (data not shown on this table).

Figure 1. LEP Spanish speakers by county.

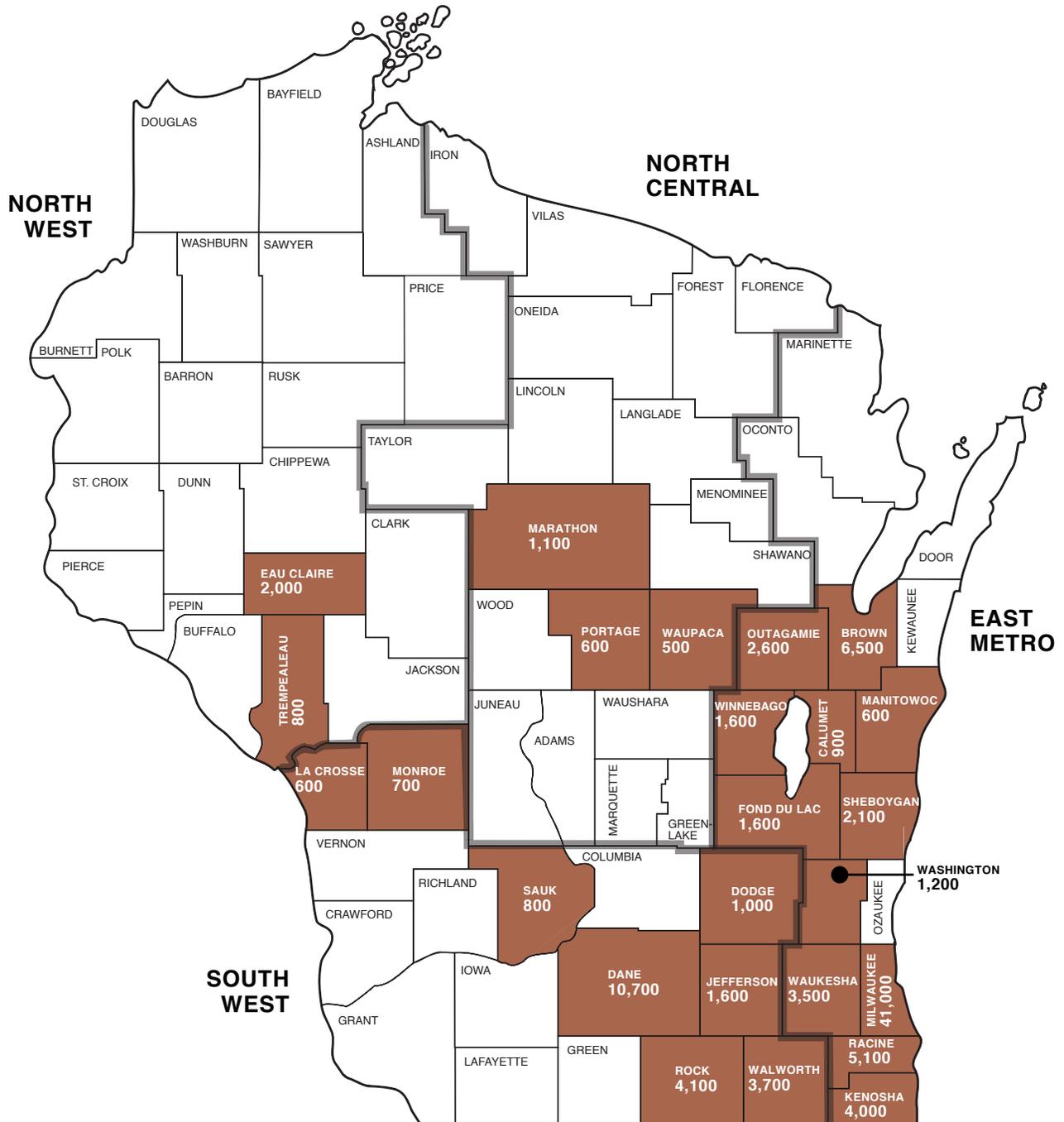
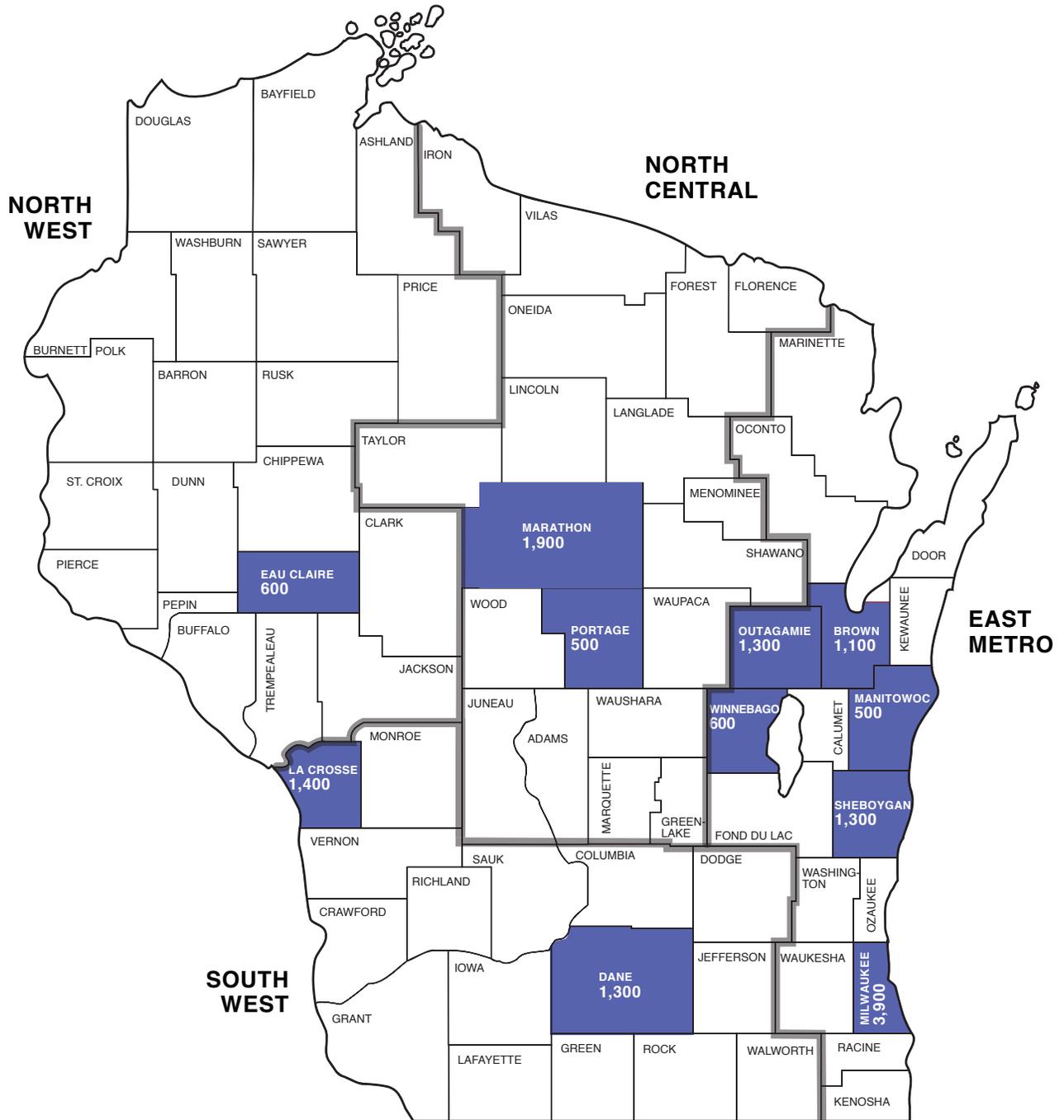


Figure 2. LEP Hmong speakers by county.





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