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455 Golden Gate Avenue
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Tel. 415-865-4200
Fax 415-865-4205
www.courts.ca.gov

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MS. MICHELLE CURRAN
Administrative Director
Judicial Council

June 18, 2025

Hon. Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study*, as required by Government Code section 68563

Dear Governor Newsom:

Under Government Code section 68563, the Judicial Council is submitting the *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* for the California trial courts. This study covers the period from fiscal year 2020–21 through fiscal year 2023–24.

If you have any questions related to this report, please contact Mr. Douglas G. Denton, principal manager, Language Access Services, at 415-865-7870 or douglas.denton@jud.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Michelle Curran
Administrative Director
Judicial Council

MC/DGD/el
Enclosures

cc: Eric Dang, Counsel, Office of Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire
Emelyn Rodriguez, General Counsel, Office of Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas
Shaun Naidu, Policy Consultant, Office of Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas
Anita Lee, Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office
Gabriel Petek, Legislative Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office
Mark Jimenez, Principal Program Budget Analyst, Department of Finance
Henry Ng, Budget Analyst, Department of Finance
Margie Estrada, Chief Counsel, Senate Judiciary Committee
Sandy Uribe, Chief Counsel, Senate Public Safety Committee
Eric Csizmar, Consultant, Senate Republican Policy Office
Morgan Branch, Consultant, Senate Republican Policy Office
Alison Merrilees, Chief Counsel, Assembly Judiciary Committee
Andrew Ironside, Chief Counsel, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Nora Brackbill, Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Jennifer Kim, Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
Lyndsay Mitchell, Consultant, Assembly Republican Office of Policy & Budget
Gary Olson, Consultant, Assembly Republican Office of Policy & Budget
Daryl Thomas, Consultant, Assembly Republican Office of Policy & Budget
Cory T. Jasperson, Director, Governmental Affairs, Judicial Council
Alona Daniliuk, Administrative Coordinator, Governmental Affairs, Judicial Council

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Mr. David H. Yamasaki

MS. MICHELLE CURRAN
Administrative Director
Judicial Council

June 18, 2025

Ms. Cara L. Jenkins
Legislative Counsel
1021 O Street, Suite 3210
Sacramento, California 95814

Ms. Erika Contreras
Secretary of the Senate
State Capitol, Room 305
Sacramento, California 95814

Ms. Sue Parker
Chief Clerk of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 319
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study*, as required under Government Code section 68563

Dear Ms. Jenkins, Ms. Contreras, and Ms. Parker:

Under Government Code section 68563, the Judicial Council is submitting the *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* for the California trial courts. This study covers the period from fiscal year 2020–21 through fiscal year 2023–24.

If you have any questions related to this report, please contact Mr. Douglas G. Denton, principal manager, Language Access Services, at 415-865-7870 or douglas.denton@jud.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Michelle Curran
Administrative Director
Judicial Council

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Hon. Lisa M. Rogan
Mr. David H. Yamasaki

MS. MICHELLE CURRAN
Administrative Director
Judicial Council

Report title: *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study*

Statutory citation: Government Code section 68563

Date of report: June 2025

The following summary of the report is provided under the requirements of Government Code section 9795.

The Judicial Council has submitted the *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* (*2025 Study*) to the Governor and the Legislature in accordance with Government Code section 68563. The *2025 Study* covers fiscal year 2020–21 through fiscal year 2023–24 and was prepared by the council's Language Access Services Program.

California's superior courts recorded over 2.5 million interpretations during the study period, with a statewide decline of 45 percent compared to the numbers in the *2020 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* due to the reduction in case filings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 12 most frequently interpreted languages for the *2025 Study* period reflect that the highest-demand languages have certified language status. These certified languages (listed in order of prevalence) are Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, American Sign Language, Punjabi, Cantonese, Arabic, Korean, Russian, Armenian (Eastern), Farsi, and Tagalog. Portuguese (ranked 19th for the study period) will require additional monitoring, but no changes to the council's list of languages designated for certification are needed at this time.

The study shows that emerging languages like Hindi and indigenous languages, including Mam and Mixteco de Guerrero, are on the rise and now on the list of the 30 most interpreted languages. These and other findings support the need for interpreter workforce development, expanded testing opportunities for credentialed interpreter status, and the creation of new training resources to address changing linguistic needs.

The full report can be accessed at *courts.ca.gov/news-reference/reports-publications/reports-legislature*. A printed copy of the report may be obtained by calling 415-865-7870.

June 2025

2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study

Judicial Council *of* California

Judicial Council of California
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California 94102-3688
courts.ca.gov

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The *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* was submitted to the Judicial Council on July 18, 2025. It was prepared under the direction of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel.

For electronic copies of this report and for more information, visit
https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/about/studies-and-reports.

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Michelle Curran
Administrative Director
Judicial Council

Robert Oyung
Chief Deputy Director

Salena Chow
Chief Operating Officer

CENTER FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN & THE COURTS

Don Will
Deputy Director

LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

Douglas G. Denton
Principal Manager

Eunice Lee
Supervising Analyst

Aggie Wong
Senior Data Analyst

Russell McGregor
Senior Analyst

Primary Authors
Eunice Lee, Aggie Wong, and Russell McGregor

Court Interpreters Advisory Panel
(March 2025)

Hon. Brian L. McCabe, Chair
Judge of the Superior Court of California,
County of Merced

Hon. Maurice Sanchez, Vice-Chair
Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal,
Fourth Appellate District, Division Three

Ms. Stephanie Cameron
Court Executive Officer, Superior Court of
California, County of Tulare

Mr. Hany Farag
Certified Arabic Court Interpreter
Independent Contractor

Mr. Bryan Kritzeck
Certified American Sign Language Court
Interpreter, Region 4
Superior Court of California,
County of Riverside

Ms. Mary Ma
Certified Mandarin Court Interpreter, Region 2
Superior Court of California,
County of Santa Clara

Ms. M. Luisa McEwen
Certified Portuguese Court Interpreter
Independent Contractor

Mr. José Navarrete
Certified Spanish Court Interpreter, Region 1
Superior Court of California,
County of Santa Barbara

Hon. Michael P. Pulos
Judge of the Superior Court of California,
County of San Diego

Ms. Anabel Z. Romero
Court Executive Officer, Superior Court of
California, County of San Bernardino

Advisors
Ms. Angie Birchfield
Certified Spanish Court Interpreter
Independent Contractor

Ms. Jennifer De La Cruz
Interpreter Services Manager
Superior Court of California,
County of San Bernardino

Ms. Shirley Luo
Program Manager
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based
Violence

Lead Staff
Mr. Ray Mata
Analyst, Court Interpreters Program
Language Access Services
Judicial Council of California

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Executive Summary

Purpose

As the policymaking body of the California judiciary, the Judicial Council of California is responsible for providing direction for the fair and impartial administration of justice in the state's courts. Government Code section 68563 requires the council to conduct a study of language and interpreter use every five years and to report its findings to the Governor and the Legislature. The *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* (*2025 Study*) examines court interpreter use in the superior courts (trial courts) from fiscal year (FY) 2020–21 through FY 2023–24, highlighting interpreter demand trends, changes in language needs, and efforts to ensure consistent access to justice for limited-English-proficient (LEP), deaf, and hard of hearing court users in California.

Overview

The Judicial Council has achieved all three recommendations from the *2020 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* (*2020 Study*), including (1) retaining the certification classification of the top 10 most frequently interpreted languages, (2) monitoring the usage of Hmong, and (3) developing a recommended credentialing process to become a certified American Sign Language (ASL) court interpreter. California's superior courts recorded over 2.5 million interpretations during the *2025 Study* period, with a statewide decline of 45 percent compared to the numbers in the *2020 Study* due to the reduction in case filings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Spanish and other certified languages remain the most-interpreted languages statewide, while usage of Mandarin, Hindi, and several indigenous languages has been growing. Through the dedicated efforts of the courts and the support and resources provided by the council, language access services and the provision of court interpreters were able to continue during the pandemic, with remote interpreting methods helping to meet demand. Maintaining the expansion of interpreter services to all case types, workforce recruitment initiatives (including targeted skills-building trainings and the California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program), and enhanced ASL credentialing are central to maintaining and improving language access across California's diverse population.

The three parts of the *2025 Study* are summarized below:

Part One: Resources for Language Access in the California Courts

- **Language Access Services Program**: The Judicial Council's Language Access Services Program (LASP) develops resources and provides funding to support the courts, court users, and interpreters, guided by the *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts*.[1] During the study period, LASP has focused efforts on increasing the number of court interpreters by offering free exam preparation trainings for those candidates who came close to passing the Bilingual Interpreting Examination (near passers), and these trainings have successfully increased the passage rate. Additionally, LASP has launched the legislatively mandated California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program, which aims to increase the number of employee interpreters by reimbursing training and exam costs for candidates. In 2024, over 1,000 candidates applied for the first cohort, and the program will have three more

[1] Available at *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2024-01/CLASP_report_060514.pdf*.

cohorts. Other important initiatives include signage and technology grants for courts, a redesigned Language Access Services website, multilingual resources on the Self-Help Guide to the California Courts site, data analytics on court interpreter usage and court needs, and statewide translation services for translation of court forms and web content.

- **Growth of court interpreter funding**: The annual statewide appropriation for interpreter services in the superior courts was on average about $133.2 million during the study period. The funding rose from $95.9 million in FY 2015–16 to $134.8 million in FY 2024–25. Expenditures were below the appropriation for several years because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in FY 2023–24, interpreter expenditures exceeded the appropriation and prompted a request to use previous years' surplus to cover the overage, which reflects wage increases, increases in contractor usage, and the expansion of interpreter services to all case types.
- **Court interpreter pool**: As of March 2025, 1,856 certified and registered court interpreters (representing 114 spoken languages and ASL) are on the Judicial Council's Master List of certified and registered court interpreters. Ongoing trainings, like the near-passer trainings to prepare for the Bilingual Interpreting Exam and the California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program, aim to increase this number and improve services in high-demand languages.
- **ASL credentialing**: Since January 1, 2024, California recognizes the Texas Board for Evaluation of Interpreters Court Interpreter Certification. This addition, along with further proposals to allow ASL generalist interpreters to work in defined court settings, is expanding the ASL interpreter pool.

Part Two: Statewide and Regional Interpreter Use

- **Overall volume**: From FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24, superior courts reported over 2.5 million interpretations.
- **Impact of COVID-19**: There was a significant statewide decline in case filings and interpretations during the FY 2020–21 period, and court workload was impacted by shelter-in-place restrictions, reflecting the challenges caused by the pandemic. Since then, interpreter services have steadily increased each year, signaling a gradual recovery. However, interpretation numbers remain well below pre-pandemic levels, with a statewide decline of 45 percent compared to the numbers in the *2020 Study*.
- **Most-interpreted languages**: Spanish accounted for about 88.0 percent of all interpretations statewide. Mandarin emerged as the second-most-frequently interpreted language, and several indigenous languages (including Mixteco Alto and Mam) are increasingly in demand.
- **Distribution by region and case type**: Region 4 recorded the highest total volume of interpretations, followed by Region 1.[2] Criminal proceedings represent the greatest share of interpreter use, with family, juvenile, and civil cases showing regional variation.

[2] The trial courts in California are divided into four regions. Region 1 includes Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara Counties. Region 2 includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey,

- **Employment status**: Statewide, an average of 69 percent of all assignments were handled by employee interpreters. Regional differences persist, with Regions 1 and 4 showing the highest employee use and Region 3 relying more heavily on independent contractors to meet specialized or fluctuating language needs.
- **Certification status**: Certified or registered interpreters continued to provide the vast majority of services for the study period FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24. Regions 1 and 4 have maintained their reliance on certified/registered interpreters, while there has been increased usage of noncertified/nonregistered interpreters in Regions 2 and 3.
- **In-person versus remote interpretations**: During the COVID-19 pandemic, the usage of remote/video remote interpreting (VRI) and telephonic methods increased substantially and were essential for delivering interpreter services in the courts. Remote/VRI and telephonic methods peaked in FY 2020–21 with 48,892 interpretations and 16,765 interpretations, respectively. Overall, courts relied primarily on in-person interpretations (93 percent). However, remote/VRI and telephonic methods were essential to providing flexibility in interpretation services for high-demand languages throughout the study period.

Part Three: Projecting Future Language Need

- **LEP population trends**: Nearly 6.4 million California residents speak English less than "very well," according to the U.S. Census Bureau. While Spanish speakers make up the largest percentage of this group, there has been notable growth in other non-English languages spoken at home, including Portuguese, Arabic, Hindi, and Persian (Farsi and Dari).
- **Indigenous language use**: Several indigenous languages from Mexico and Guatemala (Mixteco Alto, Mam, Triqui, and Kanjobal) now rank among the 30 most interpreted languages, reflecting evolving linguistic diversity and underscoring the need for specialized training or relay interpreting.
- **Challenges and opportunities**: Courts face rising costs, a limited and aging interpreter workforce, and a need to recruit or train for high-demand languages. Legislative mandates and new initiatives—such as the California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program, near-passer and targeted skills-building trainings, ASL credentialing, and a court interpreter workforce analysis due by January 1, 2026, under Assembly Bill 1032 (Stats. 2023, ch. 556)—offer significant opportunities to strengthen and expand language access in the coming years.

Considerations Based on Study Findings

The following considerations are for the council and courts to ensure continued language access, based on the study's findings. These align with current council policies and support ongoing program initiatives guided by the council. They may also inform the future development of language access policies, training, testing, and workforce development efforts.

Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Sonoma Counties. Region 3 includes Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. Region 4 includes Imperial, Inyo, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. Solano and Ventura Counties operate outside this regional structure under Government Code section 71828.

1. Maintain the designation of the 12 most frequently interpreted languages for this study period, reflecting current court usage and ensuring that the highest-demand languages remain in certified status. These certified languages (listed in order of prevalence) are Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, ASL, Punjabi, Cantonese, Arabic, Korean, Russian, Armenian (Eastern), Farsi, and Tagalog. Portuguese (ranked 19th for the study period) will require additional monitoring, but no changes to the council's list of languages designated for certification are needed at this time.

2. Monitor emerging and indigenous languages—such as Hindi, Mixteco Alto, Mixteco Bajo, and Mam—for the development of expanded testing and training resources to address changing linguistic needs.

3. Strengthen the credentialing process for ASL court interpreters by refining potential pathways for ASL generalist interpreters to gain courtroom experience and offering ongoing professional development.

4. Enhance court interpreter recruitment and training efforts by expanding near-passer and targeted skills-building trainings, examining the testing process, exploring alternative credentialing options, and partnering with local courts, colleges, and community organizations to build a robust pipeline of qualified interpreters.

5. Expand remote and telephonic interpretation solutions to address coverage gaps—particularly for less-common languages and rural courts—while maintaining robust in-person services for high-demand languages and proceedings.

Part One: Resources for Language Access in the California Courts

Introduction

Court interpreter services are a fundamental component of language access, and interpreter usage information from the 58 counties in California is critical to assessing language needs for the judicial branch and the development of services and resources. Additionally, the interpreter usage information assists the Judicial Council of California's Language Access Services Program with accurately assessing the usage and costs during the study period as well as projecting future costs and supporting requests for increased funding to expand court interpreter services in the state.

This report, the *2025 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* (*2025 Study*), evaluates interpretation services on the basis of the number of interpretations in the 58 California superior courts (trial courts) for all case types[3] for the period of fiscal year (FY) 2020–21 through FY 2023–24. The goals of the study include:

- Assessing the statewide and regional use of court interpreters;
- Estimating the level of use of certified and registered interpreters;
- Analyzing the use of interpreters for spoken languages, including dialects and indigenous languages as well as American Sign Language (ASL);
- Describing immigration patterns to California and trends in limited English proficiency;
- Describing English learners and projecting future language needs in California;
- Discussing challenges and opportunities in providing language access services in the courts; and
- Providing findings on the most-interpreted languages in the courts and monitoring changes in the usage of languages.

Language Access Services Program

California's judicial branch is committed to understanding and addressing the language needs of those who appear in the state's courts. The Judicial Council of California's Language Access Services Program (LASP) is composed of the Court Interpreters Program and the Language Access Implementation unit.

LASP's mission is to provide statewide resources for courts, interpreters, and justice partners promoting equitable access to language services in the courts. In 2015, the Judicial Council adopted the *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts* (Language Access Plan),[4] which recommends a consistent statewide approach to ensuring language access throughout the courts. The Language Access Plan is a landmark effort by the judicial branch to implement 75 recommendations that address and improve access to justice for California's residents who have limited English proficiency or are deaf or hard of hearing. To date, over 60 of the 75 recommendations have been completed, and several of the remaining recommendations are ongoing. In 2019, the Language Access Subcommittee was formed as part of the council's Advisory Committee on Providing Access and

[3] Effective January 1, 2015, Evidence Code section 756 expanded and prioritized interpreter services to cover all case types beyond the mandated case types of criminal, traffic, juvenile, and mental health. See *https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EVID&sectionNum=756*.

[4] Available at *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2024-01/CLASP_report_060514.pdf*.

Fairness (PAF). The advisory committee and the subcommittee are tasked with ensuring the full implementation of the Language Access Plan's recommendations to achieve access to justice for California's court users.

The Language Access Implementation unit supports the standing PAF Language Access Subcommittee, which makes policy recommendations to PAF and the Judicial Council to enhance language access services throughout the judicial branch. The Language Access Implementation unit also works on a variety of language access projects, including collaboration with the court Language Access Representatives—court staff designated to serve as the primary contact for language access—on development of tools for the courts; guides, infographics, and audio and video resources for court users; allocation of interpreter services funding; grants to support courts' language access signage and technology initiatives; best practices for video remote interpreting; interpreter usage data collection and analysis; and translation of court forms and web content.

The Court Interpreters Program (CIP) oversees the administration of court interpreter services to ensure that courts provide qualified interpreters to limited-English-proficient (LEP), deaf, or hard of hearing court users as broadly as possible. CIP is charged with managing the testing and credentialing of court interpreters statewide as well as monitoring the continuing education requirements and professional conduct of court interpreters. CIP staff work under the direction of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel, which makes policy recommendations to the Judicial Council on the advancement of interpreter services in the courts.

Court Staff Resources

Under California Rules of Court, rule 2.850, the court in each county designates a Language Access Representative (LAR).[5] The LAR serves as the court's language access resource for all court users, as well as court staff and judicial officers, and is familiar with all the language access services the court provides; accesses and disseminates the court's multilingual written information as requested; and helps court users and court staff locate language access resources. Each court also employs at least one court interpreter coordinator who arranges court interpreter services and completes the administrative work necessary to provide interpreters for all court proceedings and interpreter services provided outside the courtroom. In addition to employing court interpreters, courts also deploy bilingual clerks and other bilingual staff or volunteers who provide court users with, for example, assistance at counters and self-help centers. The staffing structure within the court is essential to support language access as a core service of the court.

Support for Courts and Court Users

The Language Access Services Program partners with courts to provide support for LEP, deaf, or hard of hearing court users through a multitude of initiatives and resource development projects. LASP hosts bimonthly meetings with the LARs to facilitate the exchange of updates and resources between LASP and California's 58 trial courts. Since its first cycle in FY 2019–20, the Language Access Signage and Technology Grant Program[6] has provided grants to courts to improve the courthouse

[5] Available at *https://courts.ca.gov/cms/rules/index/two/rule2_850*.

[6] "Signage and Technology Grants" webpage, *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/language-access-resources/signage-and-technology-grants*.

navigation experience for court users, including translation of signage and multilingual wayfinding strategies; court website translations; telephonic and video remote solutions to support language access; and interpreter equipment. In November 2024, 18 courts applied for and were awarded Signage and Technology grants. Additionally, best practice guides and trainings on video remote interpreting (VRI)[7] have been developed for court stakeholders, including judicial officers, court staff, interpreters, and court users.

Additional resources supporting court stakeholders with language access include:

- **Remote hearings**: In February 2023, LASP developed remote-hearing resources[8] on the Self-Help Guide to the California Courts. These resources, including guides, infographics, and explainer videos, are available in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language and are intended to assist court users with how to prepare for and attend their remote hearings and successfully access interpretation.
- **Language Access Services website**: In February 2024, LASP launched the redesigned Language Access Services website[9] with updated content and improved navigation. This site houses important announcements and valuable resources for court interpreters and candidates, language access tools for the courts and court users, and language access studies and reports, including releases of the *Language Need and Interpreter Use Study*, *Annual Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Report*, and *Language Access Metrics Report*.
- **Multilingual resources**: In March 2025, LASP launched pages of the Self-Help Guide to the California Courts, which is already translated into Spanish, in eight additional languages: Arabic, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Farsi, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.[10] A drop-down menu and tiles by language lead visitors to information about court processes, including how to ask for an interpreter, how to attend a remote hearing, fee waivers, and small claims.
- **Statewide translation services**: Vendors are available via master agreements to work on translation projects for LASP, the trial courts, and other judicial branch entities. Court stakeholders can reference the online Translation Project Guide[11] for assistance. LASP is also in the process of developing trainings and guides for court staff on the appropriate use of machine translation tools.
- **California Rules of Court, rule 1.300**: Guidance and resources are available for courts and service providers under California Rules of Court, rule 1.300 on providing language-accessible

[7] "Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)" webpage, *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/language-access-resources/video-remote-interpreting-vri*.

[8] Available at *https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/remote-court-hearings*.

[9] Language Access Services website, *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov*.

[10] Available at *https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/language-resources*.

[11] Translation Project Guide, *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/language-access-resources/explore-translation-project-guide*.

court-ordered programs and services for court users.[12] Courts are encouraged to enter service provider information into the LASP-managed directory and share this information with judicial officers and court users, as appropriate.

- **Interpreter usage data**: The Court Interpreter Data Collection System (CIDCS) tracks court interpreter usage, including number of interpretations, case types, languages, method of interpretation (in person, remote, telephonic), interpreter credential status, and interpreter employment status. As of the date of this report, 52 of the 58 California counties use CIDCS to report on court interpreting assignments and case-specific data. The remaining six counties provide interpreter usage data via the reporting template provided by LASP. Data collection and analysis aids LASP with better understanding, measuring, and projecting court needs around interpreter services and the development of language access resources.

Resources for credentialed court interpreters

To better support current court interpreters, the Language Access Services Program provides several resources, including:

- **Court Interpreter Learning Portal**: The portal is a centralized, free platform for credentialed interpreters to access educational resources that they can utilize for their continuing education credits. Current courses include "Ethics Refresher," "Building & Maintaining Glossaries," "Zoom Best Practices," and an American Sign Language training series.
- **Live ethics training**: This training is required for all newly certified and registered court interpreters to complete within their first two years of enrollment. The curriculum covers professional standards and ethics for court interpreters as outlined in California Rules of Court, rule 2.890.[13] The training is conducted virtually by live instructors and is free to participants.
- **Online completion of compliance requirements**: In September 2022, LASP launched features in the CIDCS Interpreter Portal for interpreters to pay their renewal fees online and attest to completion of their education and assignment requirements. For the 2024 compliance period, about 90 percent of interpreters paid their annual renewal online.

Resources for aspiring court interpreters

Since the release of the *2020 Language Need and Interpreter Use* (*2020 Study*),[14] CIP has expanded recruitment efforts and utilized email marketing to target interested court interpreter candidates. Other robust efforts are outlined below:

- **"Become a Court Interpreter" webpage**: This page, which is the most visited page on the Language Access Services website, clearly lists the steps to becoming a certified or registered

[12] "Court-Ordered Programs and Services" webpage, *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/language-access-resources/court-ordered-programs-and-services*.

[13] Available at *https://courts.ca.gov/cms/rules/index/two/rule2_890*.

[14] Available at *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2023-07/2020-language-need-and-interpreter-use-study-report-to-the-legislature.pdf*.

court interpreter.[15] Examination resources, including a six-part Bilingual Interpreting Examination (BIE) video series, can be found online.

- **Near-passer trainings**: Since 2021, LASP has continued to offer instructor-led, virtual skills-building trainings for interpreter candidates who came close to passing but did not pass the BIE.[16] Participation is by invitation only and free of charge. These near-passer trainings have proven successful in increasing the pass rate for the BIE (see Table 1 below).
- **California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program**: In May 2024, the Judicial Council approved the implementation of the California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program,[17] which is intended to increase the number of court interpreter employees in the courts by reimbursing participants for their training costs and examination fees. Over 1,000 applications were submitted for Cohort 1, and 140 participants were selected by 19 pilot courts.

Table 1. Exam Pass Rates for All Bilingual Interpreting Examination Takers Versus Near-Passer Training Participants

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total number of BIE takers	190	243	322	404
Pass rate	14% (27/190)	14% (34/243)	9% (30/322)	8% (33/404)
Total number of near-passer training participants who took the BIE	53	28	37	39
Pass rate	25% (13/53)	21% (6/28)	14% (5/37)	23% (9/39)

ASL court interpreters

Recommendation 3 from the *2020 Study* encouraged the exploration of a credentialing process for American Sign Language court interpreters in California. Effective January 1, 2024, the Judicial Council approved the recognition of the Texas Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Court Interpreter Certification (CIC), offered by the Texas Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. Since the new reciprocity option was announced, the total number of certified ASL court interpreters has slightly increased to 44.

Additionally, in February 2025, the council approved the revised *Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons*[18] and an accompanying

[15] "Become a Court Interpreter" webpage, *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/court-interpreters-resources/becoming-court-interpreter*.

[16] Near passers are candidates who scored 65 percent or above on at least one of the four required components of the BIE: (1) simultaneous interpretation, (2) consecutive interpretation, (3) sight translation from English to the non-English language, and (4) sight translation from the non-English language to English. California requires that candidates pass all four components in one sitting, with a passing score of 70 percent or higher on each section.

[17] "California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program" webpage, *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/court-interpreters-resources/become-court-interpreter/california-court-interpreter-workforce-pilot*.

[18] Available at *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2025-02/ASL%20Guidelines%20Revised%202-21-25.pdf*.

application form. The revisions are an effort to modernize the application process for program certification, support the recognition of additional ASL court interpreter testing entities as they become available, and maintain rigorous certification standards while expanding the pool of qualified interpreters.

LASP is also working with the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel on a recommended approach for ASL interpreters who hold a generalist certificate to interpret for the California courts. This proposal is based on research and a national review conducted by the National Center for State Courts on appropriate court events, training, and portfolio requirements to qualify ASL generalist interpreters. This pathway would provide ASL generalist interpreters with opportunities to gain courtroom experience, develop skills, and potentially become stronger candidates for certifications like the Texas BEI CIC in the future. This would create a dual benefit of improving short-term interpreter availability and fostering long-term professional growth within the ASL interpreter community.

Growth of court interpreter funding

California has the largest court interpreter workforce in the nation. The annual appropriation for court interpreter services grew from $95.9 million in FY 2015–16 to $134.8 million in FY 2024–25. Figure 1 shows how court interpreter expenditures were greater than the appropriation beginning in FY 2015–16 and through FY 2018–19. Beginning in FY 2019–20, expenditures for the CIP were below the appropriation for several years because of the COVID-19 pandemic causing a significant drop in case filings and interpretations. However, in FY 2023–24, program expenditures exceeded the appropriation by approximately $4.6 million owing to increased interpreter costs, which prompted a request to use previous years' surplus to cover the overage. Costs for court interpreter services continue to rise because of multiple factors, including wage increases, increases in contractor usage, and the expansion of interpreter services to all case types.

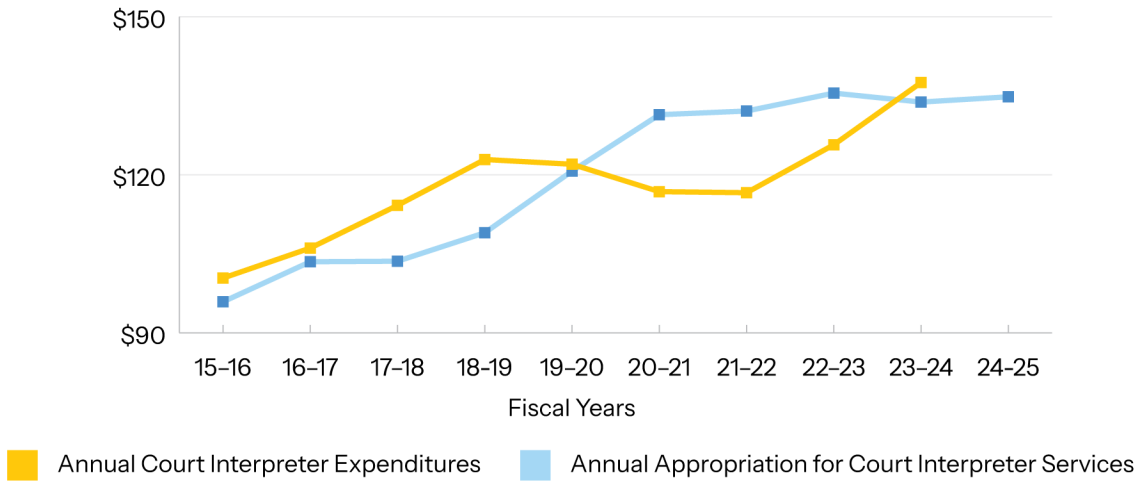


Figure 1. Court Interpreters Program appropriation versus expenditures for FY 2015–16 through FY 2023–24 (dollars in millions)

Court Interpreter Pool

As of March 2025:

- A total of 1,856 certified and registered court interpreters are included on the Judicial Council's Master List of certified and registered court interpreters, representing 114 spoken languages and American Sign Language.[19] Of those interpreters, 1,702 are certified court interpreters and 154 are registered court interpreters.[20]

As of March 2025, 32 percent of interpreters on the Master List are over the age of 65.

- The Master List allows courts, community organizations and other court stakeholders, and the public to search for certified and registered court interpreters who are in good standing with the Judicial Council.

- Interpreters in good standing have completed their compliance requirements, including continuing education and professional assignments and payment of their annual fees, and are abiding by the standards in California Rules of Court, rule 2.890 (Professional conduct for interpreters).

- Table 2 below shows the number of certified court interpreters from FY 2020–21 through calendar year 2024 in California's 10 most interpreted spoken languages as well as the most recent changes (+/−) in the number of interpreters for each language.

As of March 2025, 44 certified ASL court interpreters are on the Master List.

[19] Judicial Council Master List of certified and registered court interpreters, *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/court-interpreters-resources/search-interpreter*.

[20] The 12 certified spoken languages are Arabic, Armenian (Eastern), Cantonese, Farsi (Persian), Filipino (Tagalog), Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi (India), Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. To become a certified court interpreter, candidates must pass the written exam and the Bilingual Interpreting Exam. To become a certified ASL court interpreter, candidates must hold the Specialist Certificate: Legal, formerly offered by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, or the Texas BEI CIC. The other spoken languages are categorized as registered languages, and candidates must pass the written exam, the Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE) in English, and the OPE in their target language (if available). All court interpreter candidates must complete the enrollment requirements with the Judicial Council to be added to the Master List.

Table 2. Certified Court Interpreters for California's 10 Most Interpreted Spoken Languages

Language	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22	FY 2022–23	2024*	Change from FY 2022–23 to 2024
Spanish	1,336	1,324	1,320	1,354	34
Mandarin	79	82	84	92	8
Vietnamese	58	55	55	55	0
Cantonese	28	28	27	25	-2
Punjabi	3	3	3	3	0
Arabic	7	6	8	10	2
Korean	55	56	56	54	-2
Russian	43	43	43	49	6
Eastern Armenian**	NA	NA	NA	16	NA
Farsi	10	10	12	11	-1
Other***	243	207	138	122	-16
Total	**1,862**	**1,814**	**1,746**	**1,791**	

* 2024 covered the calendar year.
** Eastern Armenian was not a top 10 language in previous years.
*** This includes all other spoken-language certified or registered interpreters.

Part Two: Statewide and Regional Interpreter Use

Methodology for This Report

Overview

Interpreter usage reporting has continued to improve since the *2020 Study*, as 52 trial courts are now providing comprehensive interpreter assignment data through the Court Interpreter Data Collection System. While six remaining trial courts do not report via CIDCS, they are able to provide standardized metrics through a manual data reporting template. These six courts include the Superior Courts of Alameda, Modoc, Napa, Orange, San Francisco, and Sierra Counties.

This report relies on the compilation of a master data set by fiscal year, and this data set combines the interpreter assignment data of all 58 trial courts in California. The master data set was created through the following three main steps:

- Step 1: Collect, clean, and analyze court interpreter data from CIDCS;
- Step 2: Collect, clean, and analyze manually reported court interpreter data from courts that do not use CIDCS; and
- Step 3: Combine the CIDCS and manually reported data sets to create a uniform master data set of interpreter usage; this master data set includes details on interpreter status, languages, and case types by county for FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24.

Regular data collection and reporting: creating interpreter usage reports

Beginning in the first quarter of FY 2014–15, the Judicial Council began regular analysis of court interpreter data from both courts that report via CIDCS and those that do not. After completing this analysis, the council releases interpreter usage reports. The manual data reporting template was revised in 2022 to ensure that courts not using CIDCS submit data that closely aligns with CIDCS requirements. Because 2022 was the first year this template was used, some courts not using CIDCS may have missing data for fields in previous years. This change allows for greater consistency in interpreter usage data reporting and has streamlined the data cleaning process for staff.

With the revised manual data reporting template, data submitted outside of CIDCS now includes all key performance indicators of interpreter assignment data. Staff used statistical software programs (e.g., R, SQL, and Excel) to isolate relevant data variables, exclude or amend any erroneous data entries (such as misspelled languages or incorrect case types), and standardize the information in a unified format for the interpreter usage reports.

Additional data context

- **Civil case types expansion**: Effective January 1, 2015, Evidence Code section 756 expanded and prioritized the case types for courts' interpreter-services funding. The statute was changed to give courts the authority to provide interpreters to limited-English-proficient court users at the court's cost in all civil cases. Consistent with the direction of the Judicial Council, courts have been reporting interpreter usage data in previously mandated case types (criminal, traffic, juvenile, and mental health) and all civil case types.
- **Change to measuring interpreter activity**: Beginning July 1, 2020, the method for measuring interpreter activity has changed from counting the "number of cases" back to the "number of

interpretations." The main reason for this is to provide a more accurate count of interpretations, as FY 2018–19 data reporting revealed that "number of cases" was causing interpreter activity in certain languages to be underreported. In addition, the change aims to create consistency in metrics and data collection to track progress over time. The *2020 Study* counted the number of interpretations, and to compare current and past data, the *2025 Study* will do the same.

Specific examples of counting the number of interpretations are outlined below:

- Interpreting for more than one person during the same case: Count each person as one interpretation, even if they are parties to the same case.
- Interpreting for multiple events on a single case: If the events occurred on the same docket or during the same hearing, count them together as one interpretation. If the events happened on different days or on different court calendars or at different locations, count each event as one interpretation.
- Interpreting a case (such as a trial) that lasts for more than one day: Previously, each day was counted separately. This does not change; count one interpretation for each day.

- **Change the Method of Interpretation field from "VRI" to "Remote"**: After consultation with the courts and effective September 2022, the method of interpretation field for CIDCS daily activity logs was changed from "VRI" to "Remote." This change was implemented to avoid confusion and ensure that all remote assignments conducted by the interpreter are captured by CIDCS. Remote assignments entered into CIDCS should include any assignment in which the interpreter is outside of the courtroom and using an audio and video platform (such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Cisco Webex) to provide interpreter services. The other options for method of interpretation (in person or telephonic) remain the same.

Data Analysis of Statewide and Regional Interpreter Use

Overview

The California counties are grouped into four court interpreter collective bargaining regions under Government Code section 71807,[21] as shown in Figure 2. Solano and Ventura Counties operate outside this regional structure under Government Code section 71828.[22] The following figures provide data breakdowns by language, number of interpretations, session type, interpreter employment status, interpreter certification status, case type, and method of interpretation.

[21] See *https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=71807*.

[22] See *https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=71828*.

Figure 2. Map of court interpreter collective bargaining regions

Thirty most interpreted languages

The FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24 data highlights significant shifts in the state's language interpretation needs, revealing emerging trends and changing demands. While Spanish remains the most-interpreted language, accounting for 88.0 percent of all interpretations, its usage has declined by 45 percent compared to the FY 2014–15 through FY 2017–18 period, signaling a broader diversification of interpretation requirements. Interpretations of Mandarin, now the second-most-requested language, increased by 31 percent, while Hindi experienced the highest growth at 105 percent, reflecting increasing needs for East and South Asian languages. Several indigenous languages, including Mam, Mixteco de Guerrero, and Kanjobal, entered the list of the 30 most interpreted languages for the first time, illustrating the growing recognition of and support for indigenous communities. Certified languages such as Vietnamese, American Sign Language, and Korean saw notable declines in usage during the study period because of the COVID-19 pandemic but nonetheless remain among the top 10 languages. Table 3's blue highlights indicate significant growth (10 percent or more) in languages like Hindi, Mixteco Alto, and Portuguese, while yellow-orange highlights identify new languages in the top 30 list, like Armenian (Western) and Dari (Persian of Afghanistan), reflecting California's evolving linguistic landscape. Overall, the data underscores the importance of adapting interpreter resources to meet these changing demands.

Table 3. Thirty Most Interpreted Languages

Language	FY 2014–15 Through FY 2017–18	FY 2020–21 Through FY 2023–24	Percentage Change	Percentage of Total (FY 2014–15 Through FY 2017–18)	Percentage of Total (FY 2020–21 Through FY 2023–24)
Spanish	4,087,295	2,229,787	-45%	91.4%	88.0%
Mandarin	35,401	46,484	31%	0.8%	1.8%
Vietnamese	65,555	37,975	-42%	1.5%	1.5%
American Sign Language	38,460	20,133	-48%	0.9%	0.8%
Punjabi	19,982	17,455	-13%	0.5%	0.7%
Cantonese	28,471	17,401	-39%	0.6%	0.7%
Arabic	18,653	14,598	-22%	0.4%	0.6%
Korean	25,248	14,419	-43%	0.6%	0.6%
Russian	18,738	13,135	-30%	0.4%	0.5%
Armenian (Eastern)	10,804	10,782	0%*	0.2%	0.4%
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	18,031	9,464	-48%	0.4%	0.4%
Tagalog	14,534	8,581	-41%	0.3%	0.3%
Armenian (Western)	NA	8,111	NA	NA	0.3%
Hindi	2,295	4,715	105%	0.1%	0.2%
Mixteco Alto	3,389	4,684	38%	0.1%	0.2%
Hmong	12,059	4,673	-61%	0.3%	0.2%
Mixteco	4,179	4,570	9%	0.1%	0.2%
Romanian	3,506	4,326	23%	0.1%	0.2%
Portuguese	3,312	4,314	30%	0.1%	0.2%
Dari (Persian of Afghanistan)	NA	3,626	NA	NA	0.1%
Lao	8,068	3,324	-59%	0.2%	0.1%
Mixteco Bajo	1,791	2,979	66%	0.0%*	0.1%
Khmer (Cambodian)	5,286	2,775	-48%	0.1%	0.1%
Triqui	2,524	2,551	1%	0.1%	0.1%
Urdu	2,096	2,286	9%	0.1%	0.1%
Mam	NA	2,282	NA	NA	0.1%
Bengali	2,054	2,123	3%	0.1%	0.1%
Mixteco de Guerrero	NA	1,813	NA	NA	0.1%
Japanese	4,330	1,619	-63%	0.1%	0.1%
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al)	NA	1,552	NA	NA	0.1%
Statewide grand total	**4,473,725**	**2,534,207**			

* All percentages have been rounded, including these values showing as 0% and 0.0%.

Increased by 10% or More From *2020 Study* | New Language in Top 30

Regional interpreter usage

The regional breakdown of language interpretation shown in Table 4 highlights California's diverse and localized linguistic needs. Spanish is evenly in demand across Regions 1–4, with the highest demand in Region 4 (26.8 percent of all the Spanish interpretations). Mandarin and Vietnamese show strong concentrations, with Mandarin most needed in Regions 1 (45.0 percent) and 4 (27.7 percent),

and Vietnamese most needed in Regions 2 (46.8 percent) and 4 (41.9 percent). Indigenous languages have highly localized needs, with Triqui and Mam concentrated in Region 2 (95.6 percent and 71.3 percent, respectively) and Mixteco Alto and Mixteco de Guerrero in Region 1 (74.7 percent and 90.1 percent, respectively). Kanjobal interpretation need is the highest in Region 4 (78.0 percent). Armenian, including both Eastern and Western dialects, is heavily concentrated in Region 1 (89.6 percent and 99.0 percent, respectively). Punjabi and Korean also show regional focus, with the number of Punjabi interpretations the highest in Region 3 (70.4 percent) and the number of Korean interpretations the highest in Region 1 (70.8 percent). Hmong interpretations are primarily conducted in Region 3 (97.6 percent). These trends underscore the importance of tailoring interpreter resources to meet the distinct linguistic demands of California's regions and communities.

Table 4. Regional Breakdown of 30 Most Interpreted Languages

Language	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4
Spanish	23.7%	23.6%	23.2%	26.8%
Mandarin	45.0%	19.0%	7.6%	27.7%
Vietnamese	4.0%	46.8%	7.0%	41.9%
American Sign Language	22.9%	14.3%	29.4%	30.5%
Punjabi	7.1%	17.9%	**70.4%**	3.8%
Cantonese	29.8%	42.7%	20.1%	7.3%
Arabic	13.3%	19.6%	21.7%	44.6%
Korean	**70.8%**	5.9%	3.5%	19.5%
Russian	19.4%	15.5%	51.8%	12.4%
Armenian (Eastern)	**89.6%**	0.2%	6.2%	2.9%
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	42.8%	9.9%	20.5%	25.4%
Tagalog	5.5%	53.5%	17.8%	21.7%
Armenian (Western)*	**99.0%**	0.0%**	0.3%	0.7%
Hindi	25.4%	25.8%	40.6%	7.3%
Mixteco Alto	**74.7%**	5.1%	16.5%	0.4%
Hmong	0.2%	0.9%	**97.6%**	1.3%
Mixteco	38.8%	15.4%	9.5%	0.7%
Romanian	4.1%	17.6%	31.7%	43.6%
Portuguese	9.4%	55.7%	15.9%	17.2%
Dari (Persian of Afghanistan)*	5.4%	22.1%	60.6%	11.4%
Lao	1.1%	8.1%	**72.1%**	18.7%
Mixteco Bajo	10.1%	**72.6%**	11.7%	0.5%
Khmer (Cambodian)	19.3%	7.1%	53.7%	19.6%
Triqui	0.0%**	**95.6%**	2.3%	0.0%**
Urdu	31.8%	14.6%	42.0%	11.4%
Mam*	2.8%	**71.3%**	17.3%	6.5%
Bengali	**91.7%**	2.2%	4.1%	2.0%
Mixteco de Guerrero*	**90.1%**	0.0%**	9.9%	0.0%**
Japanese	39.8%	20.0%	4.3%	34.4%
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al)*	3.5%	0.7%	17.8%	**78.0%**

* New language in top 30.
** All numbers have been rounded to the nearest tenth. Instances of 0.0% are the result of rounding.

The distribution of interpretation services across California's regions has remained relatively stable from FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24, with nearly equal numbers among the regions (Figure 3). For this time period, the most interpretations overall occurred in Region 4, which encompasses Imperial, Inyo, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. Region 1, which includes Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara Counties, has had a slight decrease in interpretations from FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24, while having the second-highest overall share. The data reflects a balanced and stable distribution of interpretation needs across California's diverse regions, with no dramatic shifts over the study period.

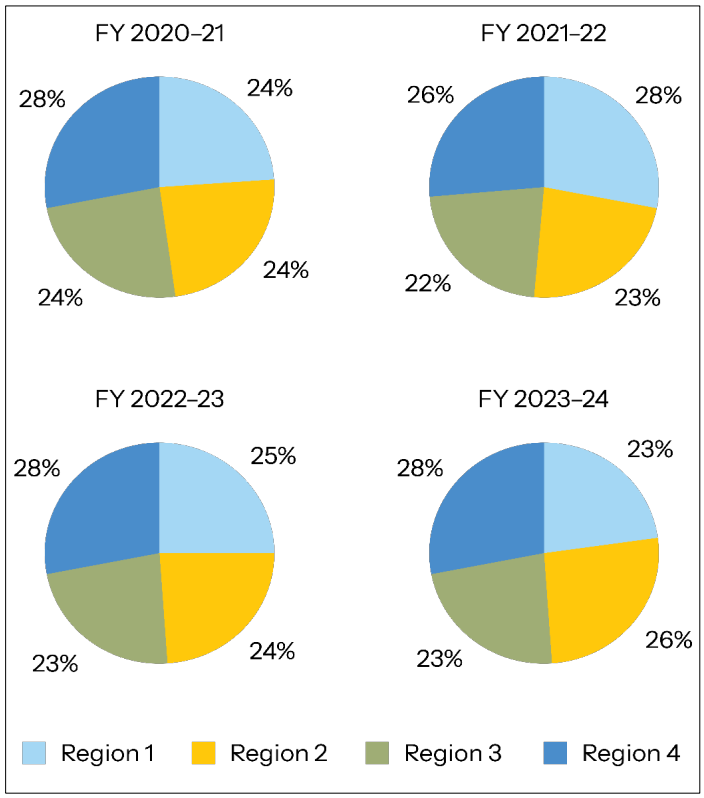


Figure 3. Percentage of interpretations by region

The number of interpretations across California's regions, listed in Table 5, illustrates the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on interpreter services. During the FY 2020–21 period, there was a significant statewide decline in interpretations, reflecting the challenges caused by the pandemic. Since then, interpreter services have steadily increased each year, signaling a gradual recovery. However, interpretation numbers remain well below pre-pandemic levels, with a statewide decline of 45 percent compared to the numbers in the *2020 Study*. Region 4, now accounting for the highest total interpretations at 662,991, has surpassed Region 1, which had the most during the *2020 Study* period. Region 2 has had consistent yearly increases in the number of interpretations and the smallest overall decline from the *2020 Study* period (−24 percent). Regions 1 and 3 have also shown some recovery but remain significantly below the *2020 Study* totals, with declines of 59 percent and 31 percent, respectively. These trends underscore the ongoing recovery process and shifting regional dynamics in interpretation needs since the pandemic.

Table 5. Number of Interpretations by Region

Region	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22	FY 2022–23	FY 2023–24	Total	*2020 Study* Total	Percentage Change
1	115,975	174,983	164,043	161,547	616,548	1,519,411	-59%
2	117,995	143,500	156,224	186,549	604,268	791,808	-24%
3	135,467	136,715	151,368	160,449	583,999	841,870	-31%
4	118,875	159,773	185,061	199,282	662,991	1,320,636	-50%
Grand total	**488,312**	**614,971**	**656,696**	**707,827**	**2,467,806**	**4,473,725**	**-45%**

Region 1	Number of Interpretations	Percent of Interpretations
Spanish	528,574	86.3%
Mandarin	20,929	3.4%
Korean	10,214	1.7%
Armenian (Eastern)	9,664	1.6%
Armenian (Western)	8,027	1.3%
Cantonese	5,186	0.9%
American Sign Language	4,618	0.8%
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	4,050	0.7%
Mixteco Alto	3,499	0.6%
Russian	2,548	0.4%

Region 2	Number of Interpretations	Percent of Interpretations
Spanish	526,157	89.0%
Vietnamese	17,781	3.0%
Mandarin	8,824	1.5%
Cantonese	7,431	1.3%
Tagalog	4,587	0.8%
Punjabi	3,129	0.5%
American Sign Language	2,886	0.5%
Arabic	2,861	0.5%
Triqui	2,440	0.4%
Portuguese	2,405	0.4%

Figure 4. Most-interpreted languages in Regions 1 and 2

The distribution of the most-interpreted languages reveals Spanish as the most-interpreted language across all regions, consistently accounting for over 86.3 percent of interpretations (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Other widely interpreted languages vary by region, reflecting the unique linguistic needs of local communities. In Region 1, Mandarin, Korean, and Armenian (Eastern and Western) feature prominently, while Region 2 sees significant demand for Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Cantonese. The data for Region 3 highlights the prevalence of Punjabi, Russian, and Hmong, while in Region 4, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Arabic alongside Spanish are commonly spoken languages. American Sign Language also appears among the most-interpreted languages in all regions, with its presence on the list demonstrating the continued need to serve the deaf and hard of hearing communities. The demand for interpretations for indigenous languages such as Mixteco Alto and Triqui, as well as other languages such as Hmong, further emphasizes the need for localized interpretation services to address California's diverse linguistic landscape. Interpretation for certified spoken languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Punjabi, and others, remains critical across all regions. Together, these trends underscore the importance of tailoring interpreter resources to meet both widespread and region-specific language needs.

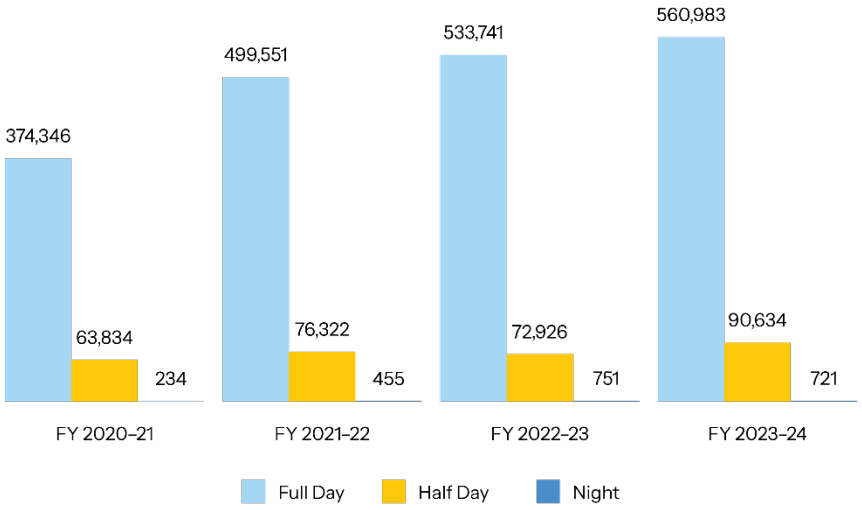
Region 3	Number of Interpretations	Percent of Interpretations
Spanish	516,201	89.5%
Punjabi	12,288	2.1%
Russian	6,810	1.2%
American Sign Language	5,927	1.0%
Hmong	4,560	0.8%
Mandarin	3,534	0.6%
Cantonese	3,490	0.6%
Arabic	3,164	0.6%
Vietnamese	2,653	0.5%
Lao	2,395	0.4%

Region 4	Number of Interpretations	Percent of Interpretations
Spanish	596,863	91.0%
Vietnamese	15,915	2.4%
Mandarin	12,877	2.0%
Arabic	6,509	1.0%
American Sign Language	6,131	0.9%
Korean	2,808	0.4%
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	2,408	0.4%
Romanian	1,888	0.3%
Tagalog	1,859	0.3%
Russian	1,626	0.3%

Figure 5. Most-interpreted languages in Regions 3 and 4

Similar to the findings in the *2020 Study*, the courts are in large part utilizing full-day interpretation sessions to meet their needs (Figure 6). In the earlier study, full-day sessions accounted for 75.9 percent of interpreter assignments, whereas in the current study, that figure has risen to 86.6 percent. Region 2 has shown the most notable growth in full-day sessions, surpassing Region 1 as the leader in

FY 2023–24. Regions 3 and 4 have also experienced steady increases, reflecting the broader rise in demand for full-day services. Although the overall number of half-day sessions has increased, their use varies by region: In FY 2023–24, Region 2 leads with 21.5 percent of assignments being half-day sessions, followed by Region 3 at 12.9 percent, Region 1 at 9.0 percent, and Region 4 at 7.1 percent. Night sessions remain rare, with Region 1 maintaining the highest volume and Region 3 showing modest growth over the study period.



Region	Session Type	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22	FY 2022–23	FY 2023–24
1	Full day	105,618	160,832	148,418	145,173
	Half day	10,152	13,843	15,259	16,054
	Night	205	308	366	320
2	Full day	84,341	104,417	127,353	146,453
	Half day	33,458	38,950	28,834	40,043
	Night	18	8	37	53
3	Full day	96,854	120,643	132,028	137,592
	Half day	14,456	15,963	19,072	22,529
	Night	11	109	268	318
4	Full day	87,533	113,659	125,942	131,765
	Half day	5,768	7,566	9,761	12,008
	Night	0	30	80	30

Figure 6. Interpretations by session type

Interpreter status: employment and certification

Interpreters who provide language access services in California courts can be either employees of the superior courts where they work or independent contractors hired to fill interpreter requests. Under the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act, superior courts are directed to prioritize

the appointment of employees over contractors for spoken language interpretation assignments.[23] With the exception of relay interpreting, only certified or registered court interpreters can become employee interpreters. It is important for courts to utilize certified or registered court interpreters whenever possible to preserve the quality and accuracy of interpretation services for high stakes court events that may impact criminal case processes, civil liberties, housing, and access to public benefits. Depending on interpreter availability and the language, courts may have to locate a contractor interpreter. As noted in the *Annual Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Reports*,[24] contractor costs have continued to increase during the study period and are on an upward trajectory with the contractor interpreter cost ratio for FY 2023–24 increasing by about 8 percent compared to the prior fiscal year. Table 6 presents the number of interpretations by employment status across regions, while Figure 7 illustrates the percentage of interpretations by employment status over fiscal years.

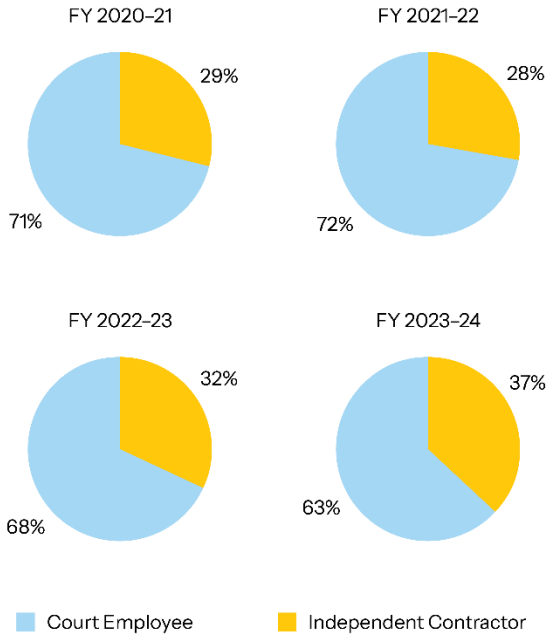
Table 6. Number of Interpretations by Employment Status Across Regions

Region	Employment Status	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22	FY 2022–23	FY 2023–24
1	**Total**	**115,964**	**174,983**	**164,043**	**161,547**
	Court employee	106,734	161,982	153,617	141,846
	Independent contractor	9,230	13,001	10,426	19,701
2	**Total**	**102,759**	**122,126**	**156,224**	**186,549**
	Court employee	64,230	77,885	84,078	87,917
	Independent contractor	38,529	44,241	72,146	98,632
3	**Total**	**111,324**	**136,713**	**151,368**	**160,449**
	Court employee	42,346	50,458	56,994	61,769
	Independent contractor	68,978	86,255	94,374	98,680
4	**Total**	**118,880**	**159,777**	**185,061**	**199,282**
	Court employee	105,345	138,788	151,051	157,889
	Independent contractor	13,535	20,989	34,010	41,393

Statewide, employee interpreters handled an average of 69 percent of all assignments between fiscal years 2020–21 and 2023–24. Notable regional variations in contractor reliance and workload distribution remain, with Regions 1 and 4 showing the highest employee use and Region 3 remaining the most contractor dependent. Despite the overall increase in employee use compared to the prior study period, the *Annual Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Report*s have documented a significant ongoing increase in expenditures for contractor interpreter services due to the high rates charged by contractors. Compared to the previous fiscal year, expenditures for contractor interpreters in FY 2023–24 increased by 42 percent.

[23] Available at *https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=71802*.

[24] Available at *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/about/studies-and-reports*.



Note: Statewide data, including for Solano and Ventura Counties, for FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24 is represented in the chart.

Region	Employment Status	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22	FY 2022–23	FY 2023–24
1	Court employee	92.0%	92.6%	93.6%	87.8%
	Independent contractor	8.0%	7.4%	6.4%	12.2%
2	Court employee	62.5%	63.8%	53.8%	47.1%
	Independent contractor	37.5%	36.2%	46.2%	52.9%
3	Court employee	38.0%	36.9%	37.7%	38.5%
	Independent contractor	62.0%	63.1%	62.4%	61.5%
4	Court employee	88.6%	86.9%	81.6%	79.2%
	Independent contractor	11.4%	13.1%	18.4%	20.8%

Figure 7. Percentage of interpretations by employment status

Region 1 continues to rely primarily on court-employed interpreters, with employees handling an average of 91.5 percent of interpretations during this study period. Contractor use has historically been low, reflecting a preference for in-house interpreters. However, in FY 2023–24, contractor use increased to 12.2 percent, marking a slight uptick from 6.4 percent in the previous year. Despite this, reliance on contractors remains lower than it was in the *2020 Study* period, when contractors handled around 19.2 percent of interpretations.

Historically, Region 2 has relied on a mix of employees and independent contractors. In FY 2023–24, contractors handled a majority (52.9 percent) of interpretations, marking the first time in the study period that independent contractors outnumbered employees in completed assignments. While total interpretations in Region 2 have steadily increased from 102,759 in FY 2020–21 to 186,549 in FY 2023–24, the data from FY 2023–24 suggests that contractors played a crucial role in managing the growing demand.

Region 3 remains the most contractor-dependent region, with 61.5 percent of all assignments in FY 2023–24 completed by independent contractors. This translates to 98,680 interpretations by contractors, compared to 61,769 handled by employees. This trend aligns with findings from the *2020 Study*, which show that contractors handled the majority of interpretations in the region, averaging 67.1 percent of assignments. However, there has been a steady rise in reliance on employees between the five-year study time periods. In FY 2017–18, employees conducted 31.7 percent of interpretations, compared to 38.5 percent in FY 2023–24. Given the region's vast geographic spread and rural court locations, contractor use is expected to remain high, as many courts rely on independent interpreters to meet demand in dispersed areas.

Region 4 has shown a clear trend toward employee reliance, despite some fluctuations in contractor use. In FY 2023–24, court-employed interpreters handled 79.2 percent of all assignments, the highest proportion outside of Region 1. While contractor use has risen considerably in recent years, increasing from 11.4 percent in FY 2020–21 to 20.8 percent in FY 2023–24, it remains lower than in the *2020 Study* period.

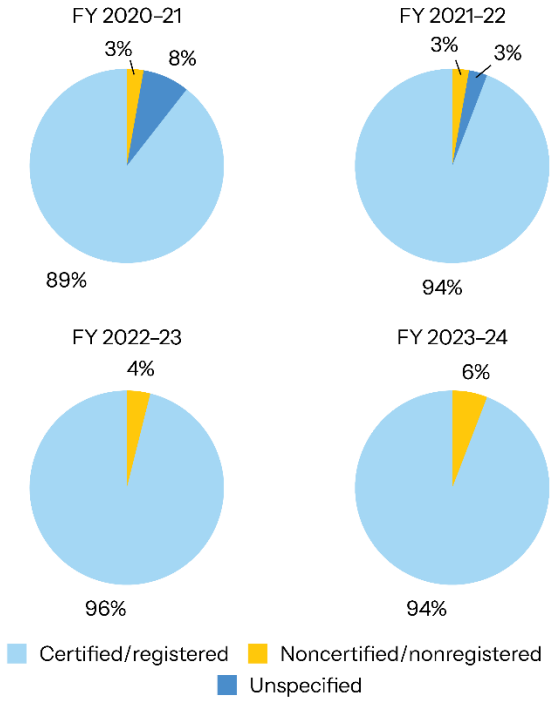
Overall, while California courts have increased reliance on employee interpreters, regional differences in contractor use persist, particularly in rural and high-demand areas. Among the possible explanations is increased language diversity, which makes hiring full-time interpreters for all required languages difficult. Additionally, rising case volumes, staffing shortages in specific languages, and policy decisions regarding interpreter hiring could also contribute to this shift. Future workforce planning efforts should consider these regional disparities to ensure adequate language access coverage across all courts.

Certified and registered interpreters remain critical across California, consistently making up the strong majority of interpreters by certification status in all regions and ensuring the quality and accuracy of interpretation services for the courts (Table 7). Regions 1 and 4 continue to show the strongest reliance on certified/registered interpreters, maintaining 96.5–99.3 percent of total interpretations throughout the study period. In contrast, Regions 2 and 3 exhibit notable changes. Region 2 has seen the sharpest rise in noncertified/nonregistered interpretations, nearly tripling over four years to account for 11.1 percent of total sessions in FY 2023–24, the highest proportion among all regions. This increase may reflect evolving operational strategies, growing demand for less common languages, or the reclassification of previously "unspecified" cases.

Table 7. Number of Interpretations by Certification Status by Region

Region	Certification Status	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22	FY 2022–23	FY 2023–24
1	**Total**	**115,975**	**174,983**	**164,043**	**161,547**
	Certified/registered	115,157	172,959	160,592	156,105
	Noncertified/ nonregistered	818	2,024	3,451	5,442
2	**Total**	**117,995**	**143,500**	**156,224**	**186,549**
	Certified/registered	98,378	118,391	149,657	165,929
	Noncertified/ nonregistered	4,375	3,739	6,567	20,620
	Unspecified	15,242	21,370	NA	NA
3	**Total**	**135,467**	**136,715**	**151,368**	**160,449**
	Certified/registered	106,225	129,681	142,702	149,296
	Noncertified/ nonregistered	5,096	7,034	8,666	11,153
	Unspecified	24,146	NA	NA	NA
4	**Total**	**118,875**	**159,773**	**185,061**	**199,282**
	Certified/registered	115,861	155,121	179,398	192,243
	Noncertified/ nonregistered	3,014	4,652	5,663	7,039

Region 3 also demonstrates a steady increase in noncertified/nonregistered services, rising from 3.8 percent in FY 2020–21 to 7.0 percent in FY 2023–24, and the "unspecified" category was eliminated starting in FY 2021–22 (Figure 8). These trends highlight the evolving dynamics in interpreter service usage across California, with Regions 1 and 4 maintaining their reliance on certified/registered interpreters and Regions 2 and 3 adapting to meet diverse linguistic needs through greater utilization of noncertified/nonregistered resources. This evolving landscape underscores the importance of flexibility and targeted resource allocation to ensure equitable language access across the state.



Region	Certification Status	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22	FY 2022–23	FY 2023–24
1	Certified/ registered	99.3%	98.8%	97.9%	96.6%
	Noncertified/ nonregistered	0.7%	1.2%	2.1%	3.4%
2	Certified/ registered	83.4%	82.5%	95.8%	89.0%
	Noncertified/ nonregistered	3.7%	2.6%	4.2%	11.1%
	Unspecified	12.9%	14.9%	NA	NA
3	Certified/ registered	78.4%	94.9%	94.3%	93.1%
	Noncertified/ nonregistered	3.8%	5.2%	5.7%	7.0%
	Unspecified	17.8%	NA	NA	NA
4	Certified/ registered	97.5%	97.1%	96.9%	96.5%
	Noncertified/ nonregistered	2.5%	2.9%	3.1%	3.5%

Note: Statewide data, including for Solano and Ventura Counties, for FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24 is represented in the chart.

Figure 8. Percentage of interpretations by certification status

Interpretations by case category

Criminal cases represent the largest share of interpretation needs across all regions, with Region 2 leading in volume (Table 8). Family cases show regional variation, with the highest number of family-case interpretations in Region 4, followed by Regions 3 and 1, while significantly fewer family-case interpretations occur in Region 2. Interpretations for juvenile cases are more evenly distributed across regions, with slightly more occurring in Regions 4 and 3. Interpretations for civil cases are most prevalent in Region 1, while the most interpretations for cases categorized as "other" also occur in Region 1. These trends reflect the diverse case types and regional distribution of interpretation needs across California's courts.

Table 8. Number of Interpretations by Case Category (and Region)

	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Statewide*
Criminal	374,427	447,467	413,866	408,883	66.8%
Family	73,127	47,857	77,322	102,360	12.1%
Juvenile	50,379	37,953	59,173	69,536	8.8%
Civil	66,345	19,618	18,878	38,639	5.8%
Other	52,270	51,373	14,760	43,402	6.5%
Total	**616,548**	**604,268**	**583,999**	**662,991**	

* Note: Statewide data, including for Solano and Ventura Counties, for FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24.

Criminal cases. Spanish is the most-interpreted language for criminal cases, constituting 89.1 percent of all criminal-case interpretations (Figure 9). Mandarin makes up nearly 2 percent, with Vietnamese, Punjabi, Cantonese, and ASL each constituting around 1 percent. Criminal cases show the highest reliance on Spanish among all case categories, with 1.5 million Spanish interpretations over the study period.

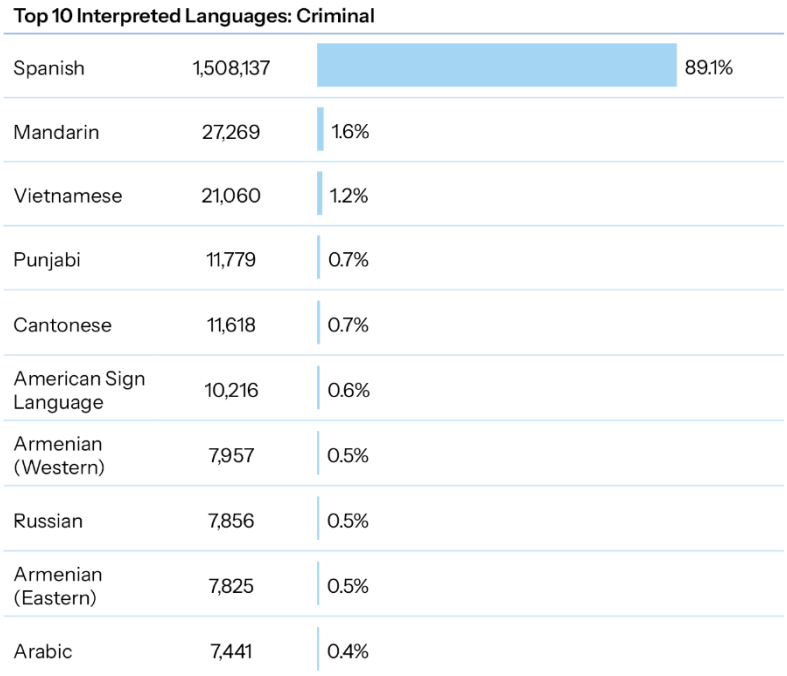


Figure 9. Case category: Criminal

Family cases. Spanish constitutes 88.7 percent of family-case interpretations, a slightly lower percentage than for criminal cases. Vietnamese and Mandarin follow, making up about 2 percent each, reflecting linguistic diversity in family proceedings. Other languages, including Arabic, ASL, and Punjabi, play smaller but significant roles, addressing the needs of specific linguistic communities.

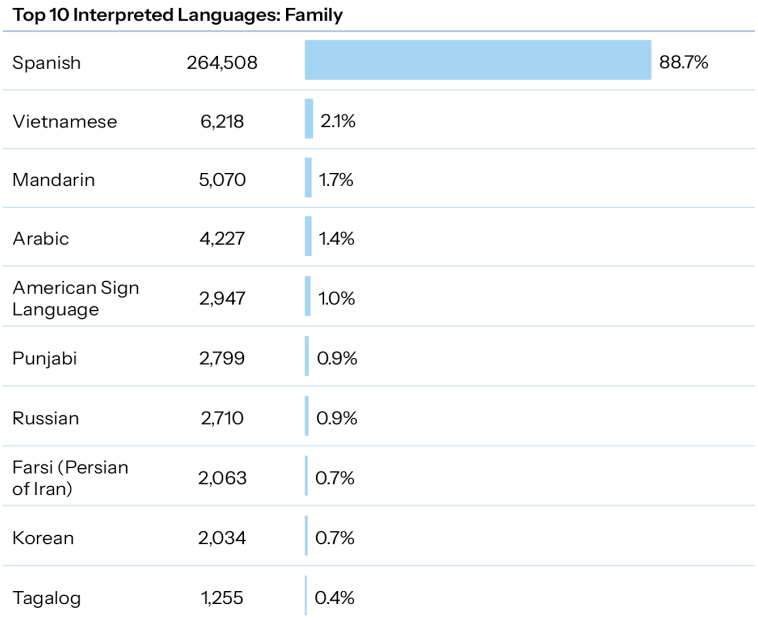


Figure 10. Case category: Family

Juvenile cases. Spanish accounts for 95.4 percent of juvenile-case interpretations (Figure 11). However, juvenile cases feature fewer and lower percentages of non-Spanish interpretations, with Mandarin, ASL, and Vietnamese each making up less than 1 percent. Other languages, including Romanian, Arabic, and Punjabi, constitute minimal percentages.

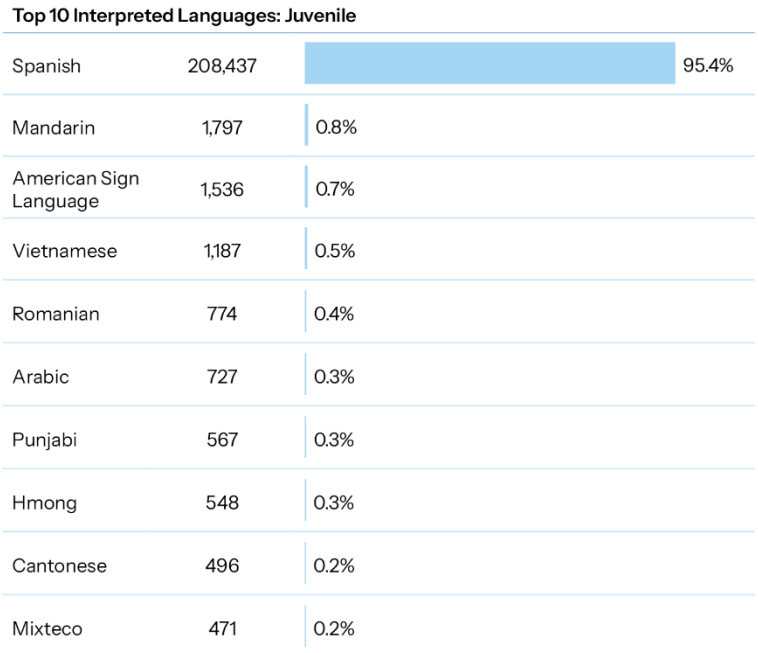


Figure 11. Case category: Juvenile

Civil cases. Spanish accounts for 79.8 percent of interpretations in civil cases (Figure 12), Spanish's lowest percentage among the case categories. Mandarin (6.0 percent) and Korean (nearly 4 percent) play more prominent roles, reflecting a more linguistically diverse landscape in civil matters. Other languages, such as Vietnamese, Cantonese, and Farsi (Persian of Iran), show moderate demand.

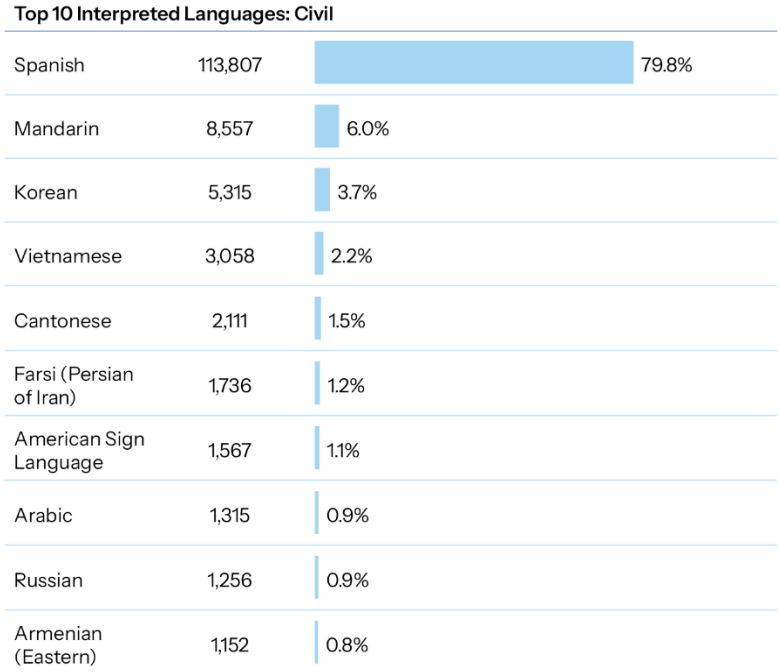


Figure 12. Case category: Civil

Other cases. This category includes the case types of mental health, probate, public assistance, and all other case types not listed in this report (Figure 13). Spanish makes up 83.4 percent of interpretations in this category, with Vietnamese (4.4 percent) and ASL and Mandarin following (a little over 2 percent each). The distribution of interpreted languages indicates diverse linguistic needs in these cases.

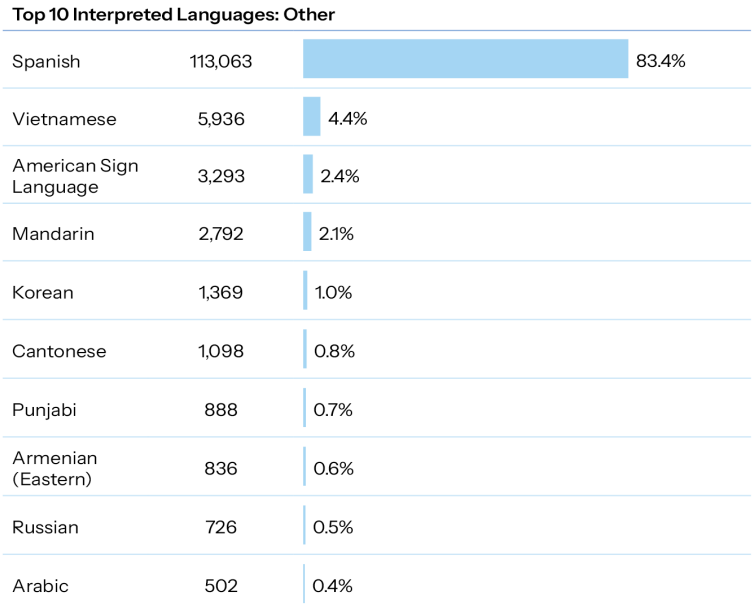


Figure 13. Case category: Other

Spanish remains the most common language across all case categories, ranging from 79.8 percent of interpretations in civil cases to 95.4 percent in juvenile cases. Criminal cases rely the most on Spanish, with 1.5 million interpretations, followed by family cases with 264,508 interpretations and juvenile cases with 208,437 interpretations. The "Other" case category (mental health, probate, public assistance, and others) also demonstrates high reliance on Spanish, with 113,063 interpretations. Among non-Spanish languages, Mandarin and Vietnamese consistently rank among the most interpreted, with Mandarin accounting for around 1–6 percent and Vietnamese around 1–4 percent across categories. Civil cases exhibit the greatest linguistic diversity, with Mandarin (6.0 percent) and Korean (nearly 4 percent) playing notable roles. Other languages, such as ASL, Arabic, and Russian, collectively make up smaller shares across all categories, reflecting the varied demand for non-Spanish interpretations in California's courts.

Table 9 illustrates that misdemeanor and felony cases have the top two interpretation needs across all regions. Traffic cases are the third most common case type for interpretations in Regions 1 and 2, while family (other) cases are third in Regions 3 and 4, with traffic cases being the fourth most common. Region 4 manages the highest volume of family (other) interpretations (67,674). Delinquency cases are also more concentrated in Regions 3 and 4, with Region 4 handling the most (36,051).

Table 9. Case Types by Region

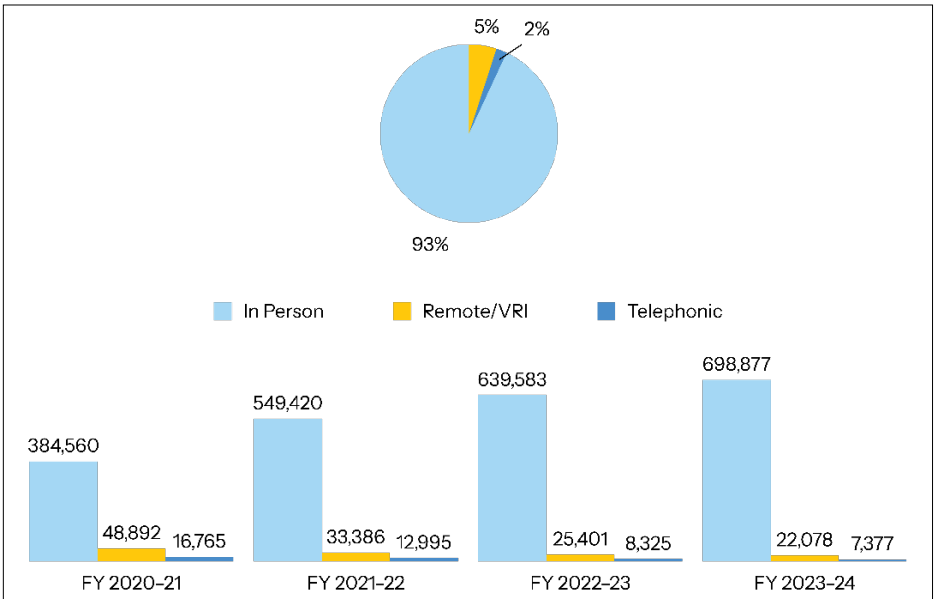
Case Type*	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4
Misdemeanor	**175,171**	**220,375**	**202,502**	**203,081**
Felony	**124,211**	**188,650**	**161,351**	**139,576**
Traffic	**65,788**	**27,819**	39,993	54,435
Family (other)	45,958	24,675	**49,217**	**67,674**
Delinquency	17,162	25,190	32,836	36,051
Dependency	33,217	12,763	26,337	33,485
Domestic violence	19,987	14,951	12,436	22,480
Probate (guardianship/ conservatorship)	15,142	4,713	5,811	22,135
Civil (other)	16,530	6,634	9,488	12,610
Family (child support)	5,564	7,557	14,716	10,534
Civil harassment	14,167	5,346	3,518	11,268
Small claims	18,594	3,594	2,349	9,184
Mental health	22,372	4,604	2,120	2,914
Unlawful detainer	17,054	4,044	3,523	5,577
Infraction	8,412	3,391	7,953	7,355
Drug court	845	7,232	2,067	4,344
Public assistance	2,265	2,758	329	4,044
Probate (other)	4,235	898	1,258	2,677
Elder or dependent adult abuse	1,179	246	247	1,488
Family (termination of parental rights)	439	429	706	348
Other/unknown	8,256	9,717	5,242	11,731

* Ordered by total number of interpretations for case types (largest to smallest).

Interpretations by method: in person, remote/VRI, or telephonic

For remote or video remote interpreting over the *2025 Study* period, the top three languages are Spanish, Mandarin, and ASL and the top three case types are felony, misdemeanor, and dependency. For telephonic interpreting, the top three languages are Spanish, Mandarin, and Vietnamese and the top three case types are dependency, family, and other.

As shown in Figure 14, in-person interpretation is the primary method statewide, accounting for 93 percent of total interpretations. In FY 2020–21, remote/video remote interpreting peaked with 48,892 interpretations, along with the telephonic method at 16,765 interpretations, providing a critical alternative to the in-person method during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Remote/VRI" includes any assignment where the interpreter is outside of the courtroom and is using an audiovisual platform, such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, to provide interpreter services. Broken down by region, Region 4 handles the highest number of in-person interpretations (646,261), followed by Regions 1, 3, and 2. Remote/VRI and telephonic methods, though less utilized, provide a flexible alternative for addressing interpretation needs, especially in Regions 1 and 2, where their usage is most prominent. The most remote/VRI (49,379) and telephonic interpretations (23,330) occurred in Region 1, demonstrating a more diversified approach to service delivery. Meanwhile, Region 4 relies minimally on remote/VRI methods (2,862) but handles a moderate amount of telephonic sessions (13,868). These trends reflect the critical role of in-person interpretation while highlighting the importance of remote methods for providing flexibility in meeting diverse needs.



Note: Statewide data, including for Solano and Ventura Counties, for FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24 is represented in the chart and graph above.

Region	In Person	Remote/VRI	Telephonic
1	543,839	49,379	23,330
2	502,423	36,156	3,287
3	531,156	25,060	3,637
4	646,261	2,862	13,868
Statewide	**93%**	**5%**	**2%**

Figure 14. Interpretations by method type

Part Three: Projecting Future Language Need

Overview

California is home to the most diverse non-English-speaking population in the United States and has over 200 languages spoken statewide, with English and Spanish being the most common languages. Approximately 6.4 million residents have limited English proficiency, which creates a high demand for court interpreters, especially for less commonly spoken languages. The distribution of LEP individuals, including indigenous-language[25] and emerging-language speakers, varies across California. As the state's linguistic diversity continues to grow, California's judicial branch must adapt to meet these evolving needs.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the need for adaptive strategies in court operations, including language access services. Superior courts experienced a 19.9 percent decrease in case filings from FY 2018–19 through FY 2023–24, reflecting the broader disruption caused by the pandemic. Although there was a 2.4 percent increase in case filings in FY 2022–23 and an 8.2 percent increase the following fiscal year, levels have not yet returned to those seen in FY 2018–19. (See Table 10 and Figure 15.) This fluctuation in case volumes underscores the importance of flexible and forward-looking planning to ensure consistent access to justice, particularly for LEP individuals.

Table 10. Total Case Filings for California Superior Courts: FY 2018–19 through FY 2023–24

Fiscal Year	Total Filings
FY 2023–24	4,890,450
FY 2022–23	4,518,895
FY 2021–22	4,413,834
FY 2020–21	4,460,874
FY 2019–20	5,336,733
FY 2018–19	6,104,504

Source: *2025 Court Statistics Report* (*https://courts.ca.gov/system/files/file/2025-court-statistics-report.pdf*).

Looking ahead, the Language Access Services Program and individual courts should continue to implement innovative strategies to improve language access in the courts. The Budget Act of 2023 allocated $6.8 million for the California Court Interpreter Workforce Pilot Program, which is an initiative that will run until 2029 to address the interpreter shortage. This program aims to increase the number of credentialed court interpreters by reimbursing training costs and exam fees (up to three exams) for participants who commit to working in the California trial courts for at least three years postcertification. In 2024, 140 participants were selected by 19 pilot courts.

[25] The term "indigenous languages" is used for minority languages that are native to a region and spoken by indigenous peoples. Many of these languages have limited or no written components. These indigenous languages present unique language-access challenges because finding interpreters who are able to speak both the indigenous language and English with enough proficiency for meaningful communication is often difficult. Therefore, providing relay interpreting is often necessary, where the first interpreter renders the indigenous language into a more common foreign language (e.g., from Mixteco Alto to Spanish) and a second interprets from the more common language to English (e.g., Spanish to English).

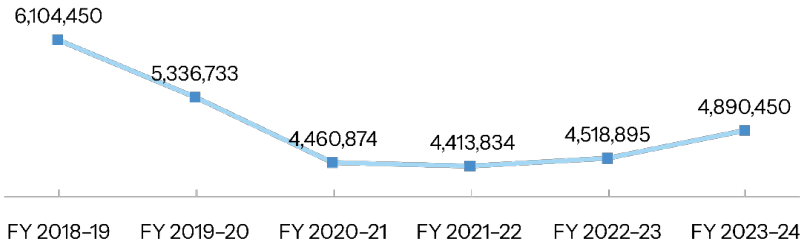


Figure 15. Total case filings for California superior courts: FY 2018–19 through FY 2023–24

Additionally, there is currently no nationally recognized credentialing process for ASL court interpreters. To address this issue, the Judicial Council approved, effective January 1, 2024, the Texas Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services' Board for Evaluation of Interpreters as a recognized testing entity for ASL court interpreter certification in California, and this has expanded the pool of certified interpreters to 44. In February 2025, the council approved revisions to the *Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons*[26] in an effort to support the recognition of additional ASL court interpreter testing entities as they become available. LASP is also working with the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel on a recommended approach for ASL interpreters who hold a generalist certificate to interpret for the California courts.

Moreover, LASP will continue offering near-passer trainings for candidates who narrowly missed passing the certification exam. This initiative has proven effective: In 2024, the overall pass rate for the Bilingual Interpreting Examination was 8 percent, but the pass rate for training participants was 23 percent.

These initiatives address the current needs of California's diverse population while LASP and the courts continue to plan for future improvements. This section focuses on data related to the prevalence and geographic reach of LEP residents in California, giving context for recommendations about how to provide language access throughout the state.

Limited-English-Proficient Population and Language Trends in California

California, home to nearly 40 million residents,[27] is the most populous state in the U.S. and also has the highest proportion of foreign-born residents and significant linguistic diversity. As of 2022, nearly a quarter of the United States' foreign-born residents live in California.[28] Of the 46.2 million foreign-born individuals nationwide, 10.4 million resided in California, making it the state with the largest number of foreign-born residents. These individuals make up 26.5 percent of California's total population.

A key source for comprehensive and up-to-date information on language use is the American Community Survey (ACS), published annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS employs a

[26] Available at *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2025-02/ASL%20Guidelines%20Revised%202-21-25.pdf*.

[27] See U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table DP05: Demographics and Housing Estimates, 5-Year Estimates, 2023, *https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2023.DP05?q=DP05&g=040XX00US06*.

[28] See *https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/acsbr-019.pdf*.

monthly series of samples to produce its annual estimates. The most accurate estimates come from a combined five-year estimate, and therefore, this data is used in the Part Three analysis.

It is important to note that the ACS questions are designed to capture languages spoken and English-speaking ability and do not account for ASL users. Therefore, owing to the limitations in data collection, this analysis does not include separate data on the use of ASL by the general population outside of court interpretations.

As of 2022, an estimated 16,288,125 individuals, or 43.9 percent of California's population aged five and older, speak a language other than English at home. Of this group, 6,358,142 individuals, or 17.1 percent of the population, are classified as limited English proficient, meaning they speak English less than "very well." This represents the largest number and highest proportion of LEP individuals of any state.

To understand changes over time, Figure 16 and Table 11 highlight California's Census information collected from 2013 through 2017 and from 2018 through 2022, focusing on changes in the languages spoken at home. While the U.S. Census Bureau categorizes languages differently from how California courts track interpreter usage by language, data on the most commonly spoken non-English languages generally aligns with the courts' data on the most frequently interpreted languages. These trends highlight specific communities that may require increased language access services. It is important to note that the ACS estimates evolve from year to year; however, the Census remains a crucial tool for courts to identify statewide and local language needs and trends.

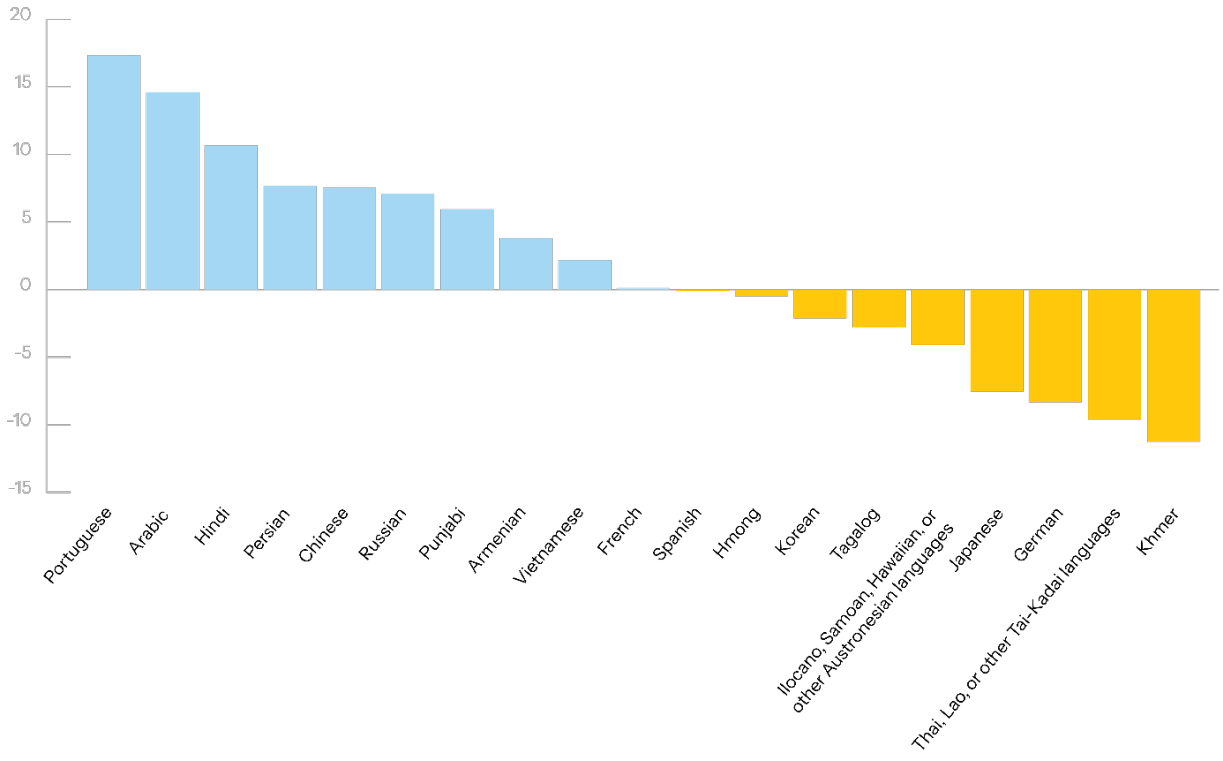


Figure 16. Percentage change in languages spoken at home in California (2013–2017 versus 2018–2022)

Between the two estimate periods, California's total population aged five and older increased by 1.67 percent between 2017 and 2022 (Table 11). The number of people who primarily speak English at

home rose by 1.92 percent, and those who speak a language "other than English" also rose by 1.435 percent. Table 11 shows the percentage change in languages spoken at home between the two periods.

Table 11. Percentage Change in Languages Spoken at Home in California (2013–2017 Versus 2018–2022)

Language	Number of Speakers (2013–2017)	Number of Speakers (2018–2022)	Percentage Change
Speak English at home (exclusively or primarily)	**20,418,288**	**20,809,671**	**1.9%**
Speak a language other than English at home	**16,071,014**	**16,288,125**	**1.4%**
Total for California (all languages)	**36,489,302**	**37,097,796**	**1.7%**
Spanish	10,486,447	10,478,088	-0.1%
Chinese[a]	1,180,602	1,269,524	7.5%
Tagalog[b]	795,154	772,833	-2.8%
Vietnamese	547,165	559,059	2.2%
Korean	367,658	359,747	-2.2%
Persian[c]	201,067	216,475	7.7%
Arabic	178,553	204,651	14.6%
Hindi	183,471	203,098	10.7%
Armenian[d]	189,940	197,135	3.8%
Russian	160,254	171,654	7.1%
Punjabi	138,203	146,406	5.9%
Japanese	143,412	132,576	-7.6%
French[e]	126,686	126,837	0.1%
Ilocano, Samoan, Hawaiian, or other Austronesian languages	124,525	119,432	-4.1%
Portuguese	80,097	93,980	17.3%
German	101,075	92,639	-8.3%
Thai, Lao, or other Tai-Kadai languages	83,242	75,212	-9.6%
Hmong	74,666	74,305	-0.5%
Khmer	75,341	66,867	-11.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, Table B16001: Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over (California), 2013–2017 and 2018–2022.

[a] Includes Mandarin, Cantonese, and other Chinese languages.
[b] Includes Filipino.
[c] Includes Farsi and Dari.
[d] Includes Western and Eastern Armenian.
[e] Includes Cajun.

Building on the overall trends illustrated in Figure 16 and Table 11, it is important to note that, overall, the total number of people who speak English "very well" increased by 6.0 percent, while the number who speak English less than "very well" decreased by 5.2 percent. Among speakers of the most prevalent languages (as shown in Figure 17 and Table 12), the LEP populations for Portuguese, Arabic, and Persian (including Farsi and Dari) saw the most significant increases, rising by 6.8 percent, 6.2 percent, and 4.9 percent, respectively.

A closer examination of individual LEP language groups reveals notable differences in both absolute numbers and in the proportion of speakers classified as LEP, reflecting varying needs for court interpreter services. For instance, the number of speakers of Spanish, the most commonly spoken non-English language in California, experienced only a slight overall decrease of 0.1 percent (8,359 fewer speakers) but saw a pronounced reduction of 7.3 percent (318,054 fewer speakers) in its LEP population. As a result, the proportion of Spanish speakers classified as LEP dropped from 41.3 percent in 2013–2017 to 38.3 percent in 2018–2022, suggesting improvements in English proficiency or demographic shifts within that community. In contrast, the number of Chinese speakers increased by 7.5 percent (88,922 more speakers), yet the number of LEP Chinese speakers grew by only 0.6 percent (4,216 additional speakers), with the LEP proportion declining from 56.4 percent to 52.7 percent, indicating that many Chinese speakers in the 2018–2022 count have stronger English skills.

In several language groups, including Korean, Tagalog, Japanese, German, Khmer, and Hmong, both total and LEP populations of speakers have declined. These shifts may be attributable to demographic changes or gradual improvements in English proficiency over time. Certain language groups, such as Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean, continue to exhibit persistently high proportions of LEP speakers, signaling a strong need for targeted language support. In contrast, while the number of LEP Spanish speakers declined from 41.3 percent to 38.3 percent, the sheer size of the Spanish-speaking community means that the overall demand for language services remains substantial. These insights underscore that effective future language support strategies must balance both the relative LEP rates and the absolute size of each language community to address the evolving needs of California's diverse population. Figure 17 and Table 12 present these changes in more detail.

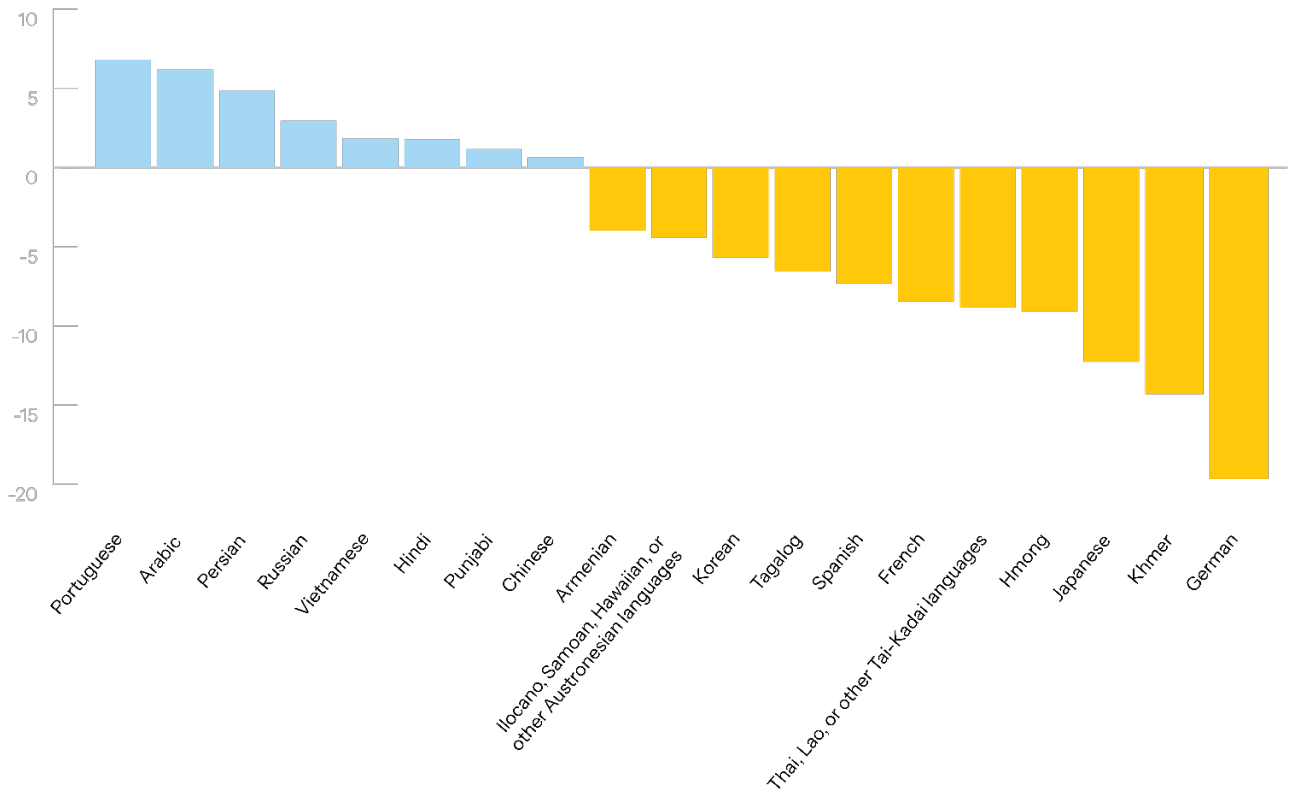


Figure 17. Percentage change in speakers who speak English less than "very well" (2013–2017 versus 2018–2022)

Table 12. Percentage Change in Speakers Who Speak English Less Than "Very Well" (2013–2017 Versus 2018–2022)

Language	Speak English Less than "Very Well" (2013–2017)	Speak English Less than "Very Well" (2018–2022)	Percentage Change
Spanish	4,335,414	4,017,360	-7.3%
Chinese[a]	665,320	669,536	0.6%
Vietnamese	324,984	330,882	1.8%
Tagalog[b]	266,400	248,922	-6.6%
Korean	206,974	195,175	-5.7%
Persian[c]	80,698	84,622	4.9%
Armenian[d]	87,966	84,464	-4.0%
Russian	69,843	71,919	3.0%
Arabic	67,493	71,666	6.2%
Punjabi	61,088	61,807	1.2%
Japanese	64,189	56,303	-12.3%
Ilocano, Samoan, Hawaiian, or other Austronesian languages	42,798	40,905	-4.4%
Thai, Lao, or other Tai-Kadai languages	44,379	40,458	-8.8%
Hindi	35,051	35,676	1.8%
Khmer	39,281	33,656	-14.3%
Hmong	33,301	30,275	-9.1%
Portuguese	24,681	26,356	6.8%
French[e]	17,238	15,778	-8.5%
German	11,518	9,254	-19.7%
Total speakers who speak English less than "very well" for California (all languages)	**6,703,770**	**6,358,142**	**-5.2%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, Table B16001: Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over (California), 2013–2017 and 2018–2022.

[a] Includes Mandarin, Cantonese, and other Chinese languages.
[b] Includes Filipino.
[c] Includes Farsi and Dari.
[d] Includes Western and Eastern Armenian.
[e] Includes Cajun.

In addition to considering individual language proficiency, observing language use at the household level—where English proficiency can affect access to services for entire families—is important. The American Community Survey also collects data on households classified as limited English speaking, where for those over the age of 14, English is not the exclusive or primary language and is spoken less than "very well." In California, 8.4 percent of all households fall into this category. Additionally, eight counties in California have 10 percent or more limited-English-speaking households. See Table 13 and Figure 18.

Table 13. California Counties with 10 Percent or More Limited-English-Speaking Households

County	Percent
Imperial	24.6%
Tulare	14.1%
Kings	13.0%
Merced	12.2%
Los Angeles	12.0%
San Francisco	10.9%
Monterey	10.5%
Santa Clara	10.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S1602: Limited English-Speaking Households (California), 5-Year Estimates, 2018–2022.

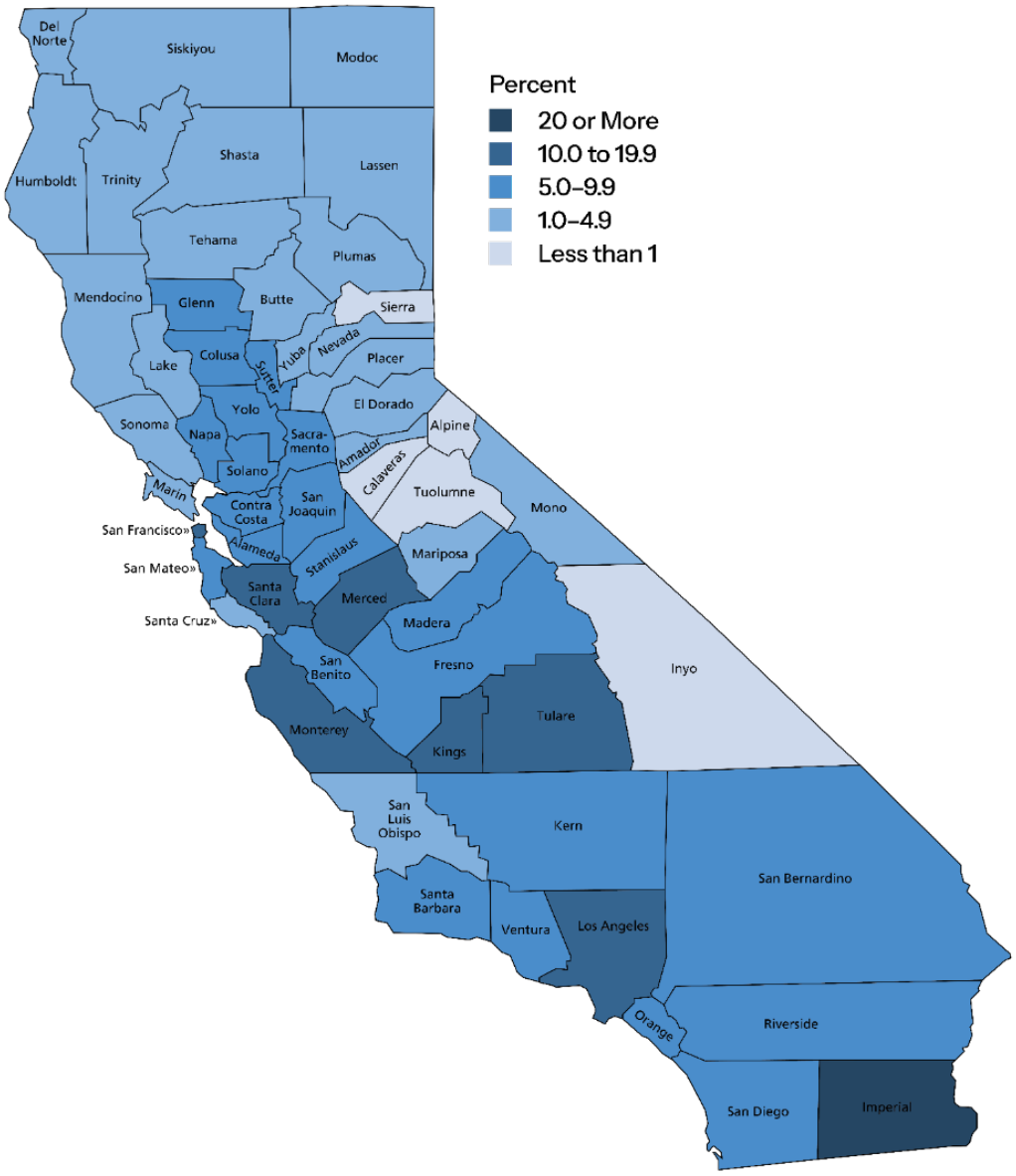


Figure 18. Limited-English-speaking households in California

Language trends among the general population are also reflected in California's public schools. Census and court data on language prevalence are further supported by the California Department of Education, which tracks "home languages" spoken by school-based English-language learners. Table 14 lists home languages spoken by English learners in kindergarten through grade 12. In the fall of 2022, there were approximately 1.1 million English learners in California public schools. Although data is collected for 108 language groups, 93.2 percent of these learners speak one of the top 10 home languages other than English in the state.

Table 14. Home Languages Spoken by California English Learners, Fall Semester 2022

Language	Percent
Spanish	81.9%
Vietnamese	1.9%
Mandarin (Putonghua)	1.8%
Arabic	1.4%
Cantonese	1.2%
Russian	1.0%
Farsi (Persian)	0.9%
Filipino (Pilipino or Tagalog)	0.9%
Punjabi	0.8%
Korean	0.7%

Source: California Department of Education (*https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/cefelfacts.asp*).

Key findings from the California Department of Education

The following are additional key findings from the California Department of Education:

- The 1,112,535 English learners in California public schools in the 2022–2023 school year made up 19.0 percent of the total enrollment.
- A total of 2,310,311 students, including both English learners and those who are fluent in English, speak a language other than English at home, representing about 39.5 percent of the state's public school enrollment.
- The majority of English learners (65.8 percent) are in elementary grades (kindergarten through grade 6), while 34.2 percent are in secondary grades (7 through 12) or ungraded categories.

California's Hmong population

Hmong interpretation remains a significant language need in California courts, particularly in counties with large Hmong populations such as Fresno and Sacramento. Although the frequency of Hmong interpretation requests has decreased since the *2020 Study*, the language continues to be an important component of language access services in many areas of the state, especially within the Central Valley.

From FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24, there were a total of 4,673 Hmong interpretations, compared to a total of 12,059 interpretations from FY 2014–15 through FY 2017–18, which is a drop of 61.2 percent. However, Hmong still remains among the 20 most interpreted languages in the California courts, and California is home to the largest population of Hmong residents in the United States. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, up to 106,000 Hmong residents live in California, primarily in the state's Central Valley. This demographic data informs the sustained need for language access services for Hmong-speaking individuals.

Use of indigenous languages

Additionally, California courts are experiencing a rising demand for interpreter services in indigenous languages from Mexico and Guatemala. Currently, 7 of the 30 most interpreted languages are

indigenous languages, including (in order of frequency): Mixteco Alto, Mixteco, Mixteco Bajo, Triqui, Mam, Mixteco de Guerrero, and Kanjobal. Of this group, Mam, Mixteco de Guerrero, and Kanjobal are new additions to the top 30 list. In a comparison of notable growth between the two study periods, Mixteco Bajo interpretations have increased by 66 percent and Mixteco Alto interpretations have increased by 38 percent.

Summary of language trends

Collectively, these trends reinforce California's enduring linguistic diversity and reveal meaningful shifts in language proficiency that are important for language access planning. While English proficiency has modestly improved across several language groups, as reflected by declining LEP proportions among major populations like Spanish speakers (from 41.3 percent to 38.3 percent) and Chinese speakers (from 56.4 percent to 52.7 percent), the analysis also highlights key differences across communities. Vietnamese speakers, for instance, continue to exhibit a persistently high LEP rate of around 59.2 percent, signaling sustained need for interpreter services. Meanwhile, growth in Arabic, Persian, and Portuguese-speaking populations appears to be accompanied by relatively higher English proficiency, suggesting differing patterns of language acquisition.

At the regional level, household data point to substantial disparities, with several counties showing especially high proportions of limited-English-speaking households. In parallel, school-based data confirm that the most frequently interpreted languages in court mirror those spoken by a large share of California's school-aged English-learner population.

Taken together, these insights support the council's current strategy of maintaining certification for the 12 most frequently interpreted languages, which continue to represent both the largest volume and the most persistent need for services. At the same time, the trends underscore the importance of monitoring emerging and indigenous languages to ensure courts are prepared to respond to shifting demographics and evolving linguistic needs.

Challenges and opportunities in providing language access services

California is the most populous state and has the largest court system in the nation, and the 6.4 million LEP court users, as well as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, need language assistance to access the court system. There are a number of factors that are part of the discussion about the use and availability of interpreters in California's trial courts, including challenges for the judicial branch and opportunities identified to help mitigate these challenges.

- The findings on the most-commonly interpreted languages for this study period (FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24) generally match the most recent U.S. Census data and California Department of Education information regarding the LEP population in California, with Spanish remaining the language of greatest need. Per the U.S. Census ACS data, the number of Arabic, Persian (including Farsi and Dari), and Portuguese speakers notably increased during the study's period. Also, according to the Department of Education "home languages" data, 93.2 percent of English learners speak one of the top 10 home languages other than English in the state.
- In FY 2023–24, the judicial branch continued the upward trajectory in case filings since the COVID-19 pandemic, with over 4.8 million total in California's trial courts.

- As of March 2025, there are 1,856 interpreters on the Judicial Council's Master List of certified and registered court interpreters. Of this pool, 32 percent are over the age of 65. The court system is facing a limited, aging interpreter workforce.

Some certified and registered interpreters hold credentials in multiple languages. As of March 2025, the total number of credentials held by the current interpreter workforce is 2,093.

- The costs associated with hiring qualified interpreters have been increasing over the past several years. These costs include the high rates paid to contract interpreters and the negotiated wage and benefit increases for court interpreter staff.

There are several opportunities for California to help mitigate these challenges. Those opportunities include the following:

- The Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) is engaged in several projects as part of its 2025 Annual Agenda:
    - **ASL generalist credentials**: CIAP is identifying pathways for interpreters who hold ASL generalist credentials to work in the California courts and expand the pool of qualified ASL interpreters to better meet court needs.
    - ***Professional Standards and Ethics for California Court Interpreters***: The ethics guide has been updated to reflect contemporary interpreting practices and technology and newly emerging ethical issues.
    - **Interpreting skills assessment process**: CIAP is developing a fair procedure for evaluating interpreters facing complaints of gross incompetence, as recommended in the *California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures*.[29]
    - **Carryover of Bilingual Interpreting Examination scores**: CIAP is exploring options to enhance flexibility for interpreter candidates, potentially adopting practices used in other states to allow candidates to carry over passing scores of 70 percent or higher on two or more exam sections of the BIE within a two-year period.
- The Judicial Council, with support from CIAP, will conduct a workforce study mandated by Assembly Bill 1032 (Stats. 2023, ch. 556). This study requires the Judicial Council to assess court interpreter availability and the future interpreter workforce, with recommendations due to the Legislature by January 1, 2026. This study stems from amendments to the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act, effective January 1, 2025. The Judicial Council will collaborate with key stakeholders, including court interpreter labor organizations and independent contractor representatives, to ensure comprehensive input on issues such as interpreter employment, compensation, and workforce sustainability.
- California can look into modern and robust recruitment efforts to build a pipeline of future interpreters for the courts, including training programs, collaboration with the courts, online resources and information, and outreach campaigns.

[29] Available at *https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2023-12/CIP_CRProcedures.pdf*.

- California can explore alternative credentialing options for spoken languages that would allow for credentialing of master-level interpreters, while still utilizing interpreters with identified minimum skills who could potentially work in defined settings and improve their skills through mentoring or on-the-job training.

California's superior courts recorded over 2.5 million interpretations during the study period, FY 2020–21 through FY 2023–24. The interpreter usage data shows that of the 13 currently designated certified languages, 12 of them are the most-interpreted languages for this study period (listed here in order of prevalence): Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, ASL, Punjabi, Cantonese, Arabic, Korean, Russian, Armenian (Eastern), Farsi, and Tagalog (Portuguese was 19th). The data also shows language needs remain regionally diversified and that emerging languages like Hindi and some indigenous languages, including Mam and Mixteco de Guerrero, are on the rise and now on the list of the 30 most interpreted languages.

A collaborative effort between the Judicial Council and the courts is central to implementing effective language access solutions for the benefit of California's diverse population. Due to interpreter shortages in some courts and an aging workforce, workforce development is likely to remain a key area of focus moving forward. This includes the strategic use of technology as well as recruitment and training efforts aimed at reaching younger audiences and fostering interest in working for the courts and a career in public service. Interpreters play a crucial role in ensuring access and procedural fairness by helping individuals who may not speak English proficiently or who are deaf or hard of hearing, thereby leveling the playing field and making court processes understandable for all who come to court. Additional considerations for the council and courts are highlighted on pages 3–4 of this study.

Appendix

Appendix Table 1. Interpretations by Language and Case Category

Language	Criminal	Family	Juvenile	Civil	Other
Spanish	1,508,137	264,508	208,437	113,807	113,063
Mandarin	27,269	5,070	1,797	8,557	2,792
Vietnamese	21,060	6,218	1,187	3,058	5,936
American Sign Language	10,216	2,947	1,536	1,567	3,293
Punjabi	11,779	2,799	567	1,101	888
Cantonese	11,618	1,152	496	2,111	1,098
Arabic	7,441	4,227	727	1,315	502
Korean	5,232	2,034	330	5,315	1,369
Russian	7,856	2,710	443	1,256	726
Armenian (Eastern)	7,825	738	230	1,152	836
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	4,848	2,063	256	1,736	348
Tagalog	5,558	1,255	406	426	479
Armenian (Western)	7,957	67	0	50	37
Hindi	2,920	716	244	401	347
Mixteco Alto	3,944	191	440	28	81
Hmong	3,135	744	548	145	101
Mixteco	3,579	337	471	63	120
Romanian	3,224	128	774	83	54
Portuguese	2,475	889	147	325	228
Dari (Persian of Afghanistan)	2,281	613	269	235	83
Lao	2,804	206	111	90	101
Mixteco Bajo	2,709	61	185	5	19
Khmer (Cambodian)	1,827	403	192	131	156
Triqui	2,107	64	354	5	21
Urdu	1,022	564	152	431	82
Mam	1,448	51	184	7	70
Bengali	887	421	244	322	239
Mixteco de Guerrero	1,449	71	251	24	18
Japanese	441	713	59	220	155
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al)	1,079	112	256	4	101
Total	**1,674,127**	**302,072**	**221,293**	**143,970**	**133,343**

Appendix Table 2. Interpretations by Language and Case Type (Criminal)

Language	Misdemeanor	Felony	Traffic	Infraction	Drug Court
Spanish	755,398	562,588	148,920	27,687	13,473
Mandarin	8,573	8,785	9,543	352	9
Vietnamese	8,903	7,747	3,392	186	822
American Sign Language	4,338	4,731	880	225	38
Punjabi	5,001	5,241	1,406	103	28
Cantonese	4,860	4,859	1,757	133	9
Korean	1,636	1,957	1,553	54	31
Arabic	2,125	2,693	2,504	116	2
Russian	2,819	2,057	2,900	74	6
Armenian (Eastern)	1,829	2,252	3,245	497	0
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	1,611	1,232	1,935	69	1
Tagalog	2,515	2,776	222	26	19
Armenian (Western)	2,994	205	4,755	3	0
Mixteco Alto	2,818	1,075	24	20	7
Hmong	1,144	1,840	118	13	19
Hindi	1,164	1,241	468	45	2
Mixteco	2,662	888	9	20	0
Romanian	714	2,236	242	27	1
Portuguese	1,040	827	551	47	10
Dari (Persian of Afghanistan)	537	804	926	13	1
Lao	1,310	1,386	88	17	3
Mixteco Bajo	1,961	646	98	3	1
Khmer (Cambodian)	772	911	106	25	13
Triqui	1,533	540	34	0	0
Urdu	296	440	238	46	2
Bengali	240	428	219	0	0
Mixteco de Guerrero	1,011	430	3	5	0
Mam	1,019	346	59	5	19
Japanese	200	137	102	2	0
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al)	476	593	10	0	0
Total	**821,499**	**621,891**	**186,307**	**29,813**	**14,516**

Appendix Table 3. Interpretations by Language and Case Type (Family)

Language	Family (Other)	Child Support	Elder or Dependent Adult Abuse	Termination of Parental Rights	Domestic Violence
Spanish	161,369	35,798	2,633	1,706	894
Mandarin	3,649	484	64	44	14
Vietnamese	4,088	644	162	25	35
American Sign Language	1,905	295	10	15	0
Punjabi	1,983	174	9	23	0
Cantonese	756	95	32	2	0
Korean	1,520	63	87	10	5
Arabic	3,146	402	11	28	12
Russian	1,732	263	7	23	9
Armenian (Eastern)	512	21	1	1	0
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	1,522	121	68	5	0
Tagalog	756	125	20	9	1
Armenian (Western)	26	0	0	0	0
Mixteco Alto	143	16	0	2	0
Hmong	464	144	2	0	0
Hindi	466	51	2	10	0
Mixteco	277	14	0	1	0
Romanian	89	6	1	3	0
Portuguese	598	66	6	7	0
Dari (Persian of Afghanistan)	351	66	6	11	0
Lao	113	45	5	7	0
Mixteco Bajo	32	7	1	0	0
Khmer (Cambodian)	239	67	5	4	0
Triqui	31	13	0	1	0
Urdu	386	59	1	9	2
Bengali	328	2	0	0	0
Mixteco de Guerrero	52	4	0	0	0
Mam	29	5	2	1	0
Japanese	569	51	11	4	0
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al)	92	0	0	1	0
Total	**187,223**	**39,101**	**3,146**	**1,952**	**972**

Appendix Table 4. Interpretations by Language and Case Type (Juvenile)

Language	Delinquency	Dependency
Spanish	109,469	98,968
Mandarin	298	1,499
Vietnamese	623	564
American Sign Language	307	1,229
Punjabi	289	278
Cantonese	116	380
Korean	32	298
Arabic	493	234
Russian	198	245
Armenian (Eastern)	17	213
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	93	163
Tagalog	155	251
Armenian (Western)	0	0
Mixteco Alto	310	130
Hmong	125	423
Hindi	50	194
Mixteco	268	203
Romanian	546	228
Portuguese	69	78
Dari (Persian of Afghanistan)	96	173
Lao	41	70
Mixteco Bajo	120	65
Khmer (Cambodian)	108	84
Triqui	306	48
Urdu	72	80
Bengali	53	191
Mixteco de Guerrero	100	151
Mam	85	99
Japanese	8	51
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al)	141	115
Total	**114,588**	**106,705**

Appendix Table 5. Interpretations by Language and Case Type (Civil)

Language	Domestic Violence	Civil (Other)	Civil Harassment	Unlawful Detainer
Spanish	62,258	33,622	30,180	25,440
Mandarin	818	2,980	917	993
Vietnamese	1,272	1,513	558	324
American Sign Language	722	847	287	175
Punjabi	610	705	209	66
Cantonese	267	615	313	426
Korean	349	2,347	570	979
Arabic	630	508	240	256
Russian	676	258	231	420
Armenian (Eastern)	203	266	72	242
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	347	495	260	352
Tagalog	344	189	103	49
Armenian (Western)	41	40	0	3
Mixteco Alto	30	24	0	0
Hmong	134	89	25	17
Hindi	187	251	37	57
Mixteco	45	36	10	4
Romanian	29	8	35	27
Portuguese	212	93	53	75
Dari (Persian of Afghanistan)	179	91	43	58
Lao	36	43	15	10
Mixteco Bajo	21	2	2	0
Khmer (Cambodian)	89	36	20	40
Triqui	19	2	1	1
Urdu	107	343	41	26
Bengali	91	296	1	16
Mixteco de Guerrero	15	4	0	0
Mam	14	5	2	0
Japanese	79	81	20	44
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al)	19	2	1	0
Total	**69,843**	**45,791**	**34,246**	**30,100**

Appendix Table 6. Interpretations by Language and Case Type (Other)

Language	Probate	Other/Unknown	Mental Health	Public Assistance
Spanish	53,218	27,504	25,255	7,156
Mandarin	554	1,257	756	232
Vietnamese	575	1,650	2,387	1,335
American Sign Language	399	1,903	626	369
Punjabi	415	342	130	1
Cantonese	225	346	522	5
Korean	341	372	548	109
Arabic	163	199	108	32
Russian	65	456	191	14
Armenian (Eastern)	71	400	367	0
Farsi (Persian of Iran)	103	83	151	11
Tagalog	97	130	250	2
Armenian (Western)	2	27	8	0
Mixteco Alto	12	57	10	2
Hmong	41	21	39	0
Hindi	92	204	44	7
Mixteco	13	32	17	58
Romanian	23	22	3	10
Portuguese	122	66	35	5
Dari (Persian of Afghanistan)	20	33	24	6
Lao	23	22	55	1
Mixteco Bajo	3	13	2	1
Khmer (Cambodian)	48	46	61	1
Triqui	3	14	3	1
Urdu	26	53	3	0
Bengali	79	141	19	0
Mixteco de Guerrero	2	7	8	1
Mam	52	15	3	0
Japanese	68	25	56	6
Kanjobal (Q'anjob'al)	95	5	1	0
Total	**56,950**	**35,445**	**31,682**	**9,365**