

# **BOSTON'S MULTILINGUAL POPULATIONS**

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City of Boston  
Planning Department  
**RESEARCH DIVISION**

City of Boston Planning Department

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# MULTILINGUAL POPULATIONS ACROSS THE U.S.



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# Key Definitions and the ACS Language Question

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- **Multilingual population**
  - Refers to residents who speak a language other than English at home.
  - Includes residents who only speak one language if that language is not English.
- **Language Access population**
  - Refers to the subset of the Multilingual population who report speaking English “Well,” “Not well,” or “Not at all” in the American Community Survey.

## Sample survey questions on this topic

**14** a. Does this person speak a language other than English at home?

- Yes
- No → *SKIP to question 15a*

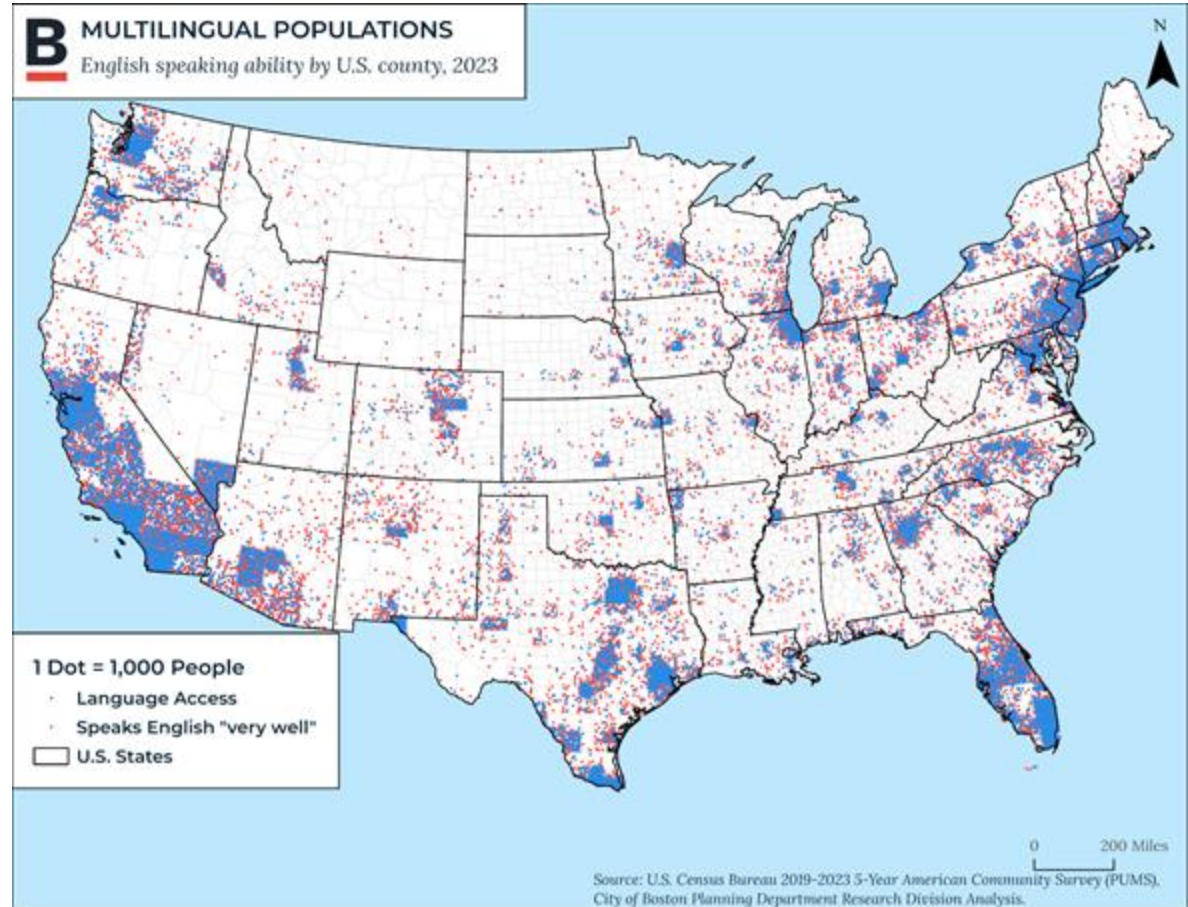
b. What is this language?

*For example: Korean, Italian, Spanish, Vietnamese*

c. How well does this person speak English?

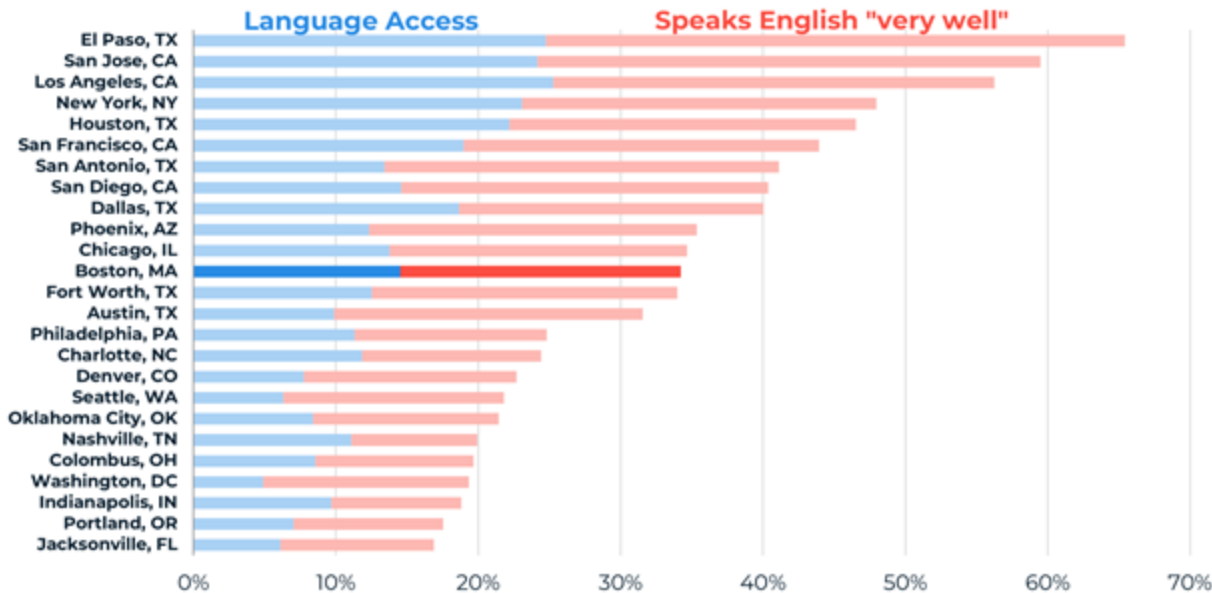
- Very well
- Well
- Not well
- Not at all

- **Almost 72 million residents of the U.S. speak a language other than English at home.**
- **22 of the 30 counties with the highest share of multilingual population are in Texas.**
- **States with the largest multilingual population shares:**
  - California (44.1%)
  - Texas (34.9%)
  - New Jersey (32.7%)
  - New Mexico (31.6%)
  - New York (30.6%)



# More than a third of Boston's population aged 5+ speaks a language other than English at home.

Multilingual populations of the 25 largest cities in the U.S. by English speaking ability, as of 2023

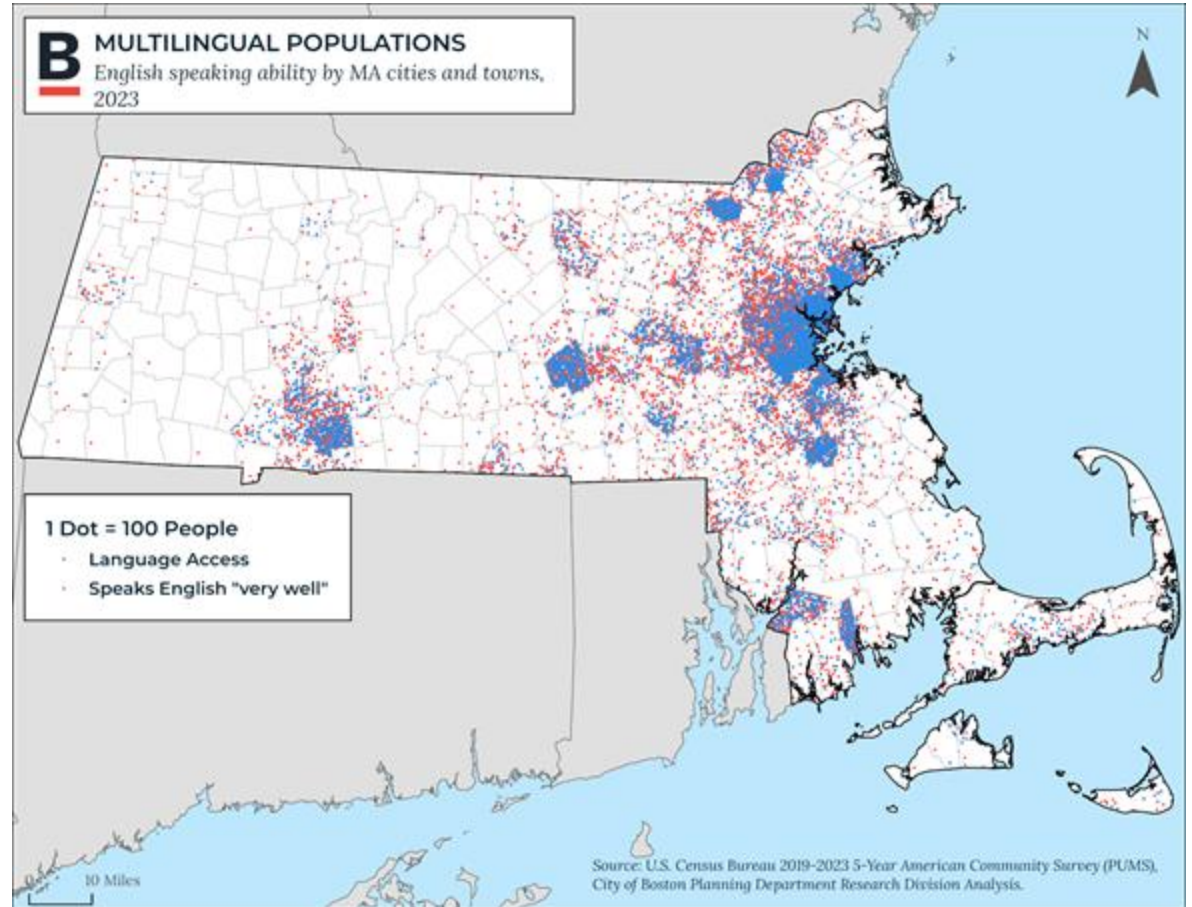


65% of El Paso's population speaks a language other than English at home

In contrast, just over 15% of Jacksonville's population is multilingual

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 1-Year American Community Survey, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

- **Approximately 1,650,000 Massachusetts residents are multilingual**
- **Boston has the largest number of multilingual residents**
- **Cities with the largest multilingual population shares:**
  - Lawrence (78.5%)
  - Chelsea (70.4%)
  - Everett (62.9%)
  - Revere (56.6%)
  - Lynn (51.3%)



# MULTILINGUAL POPULATIONS IN BOSTON

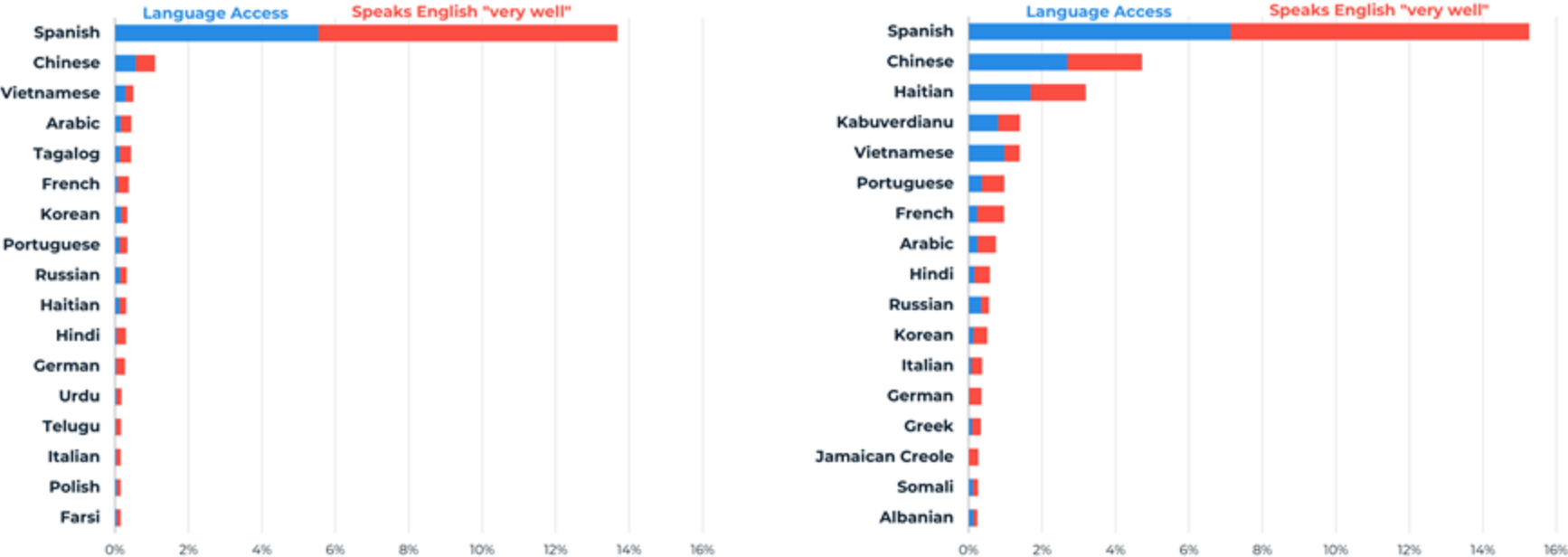


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# In addition to Spanish, Boston also has significant shares of Chinese, Haitian, Kabuverdianu, and Vietnamese speakers.

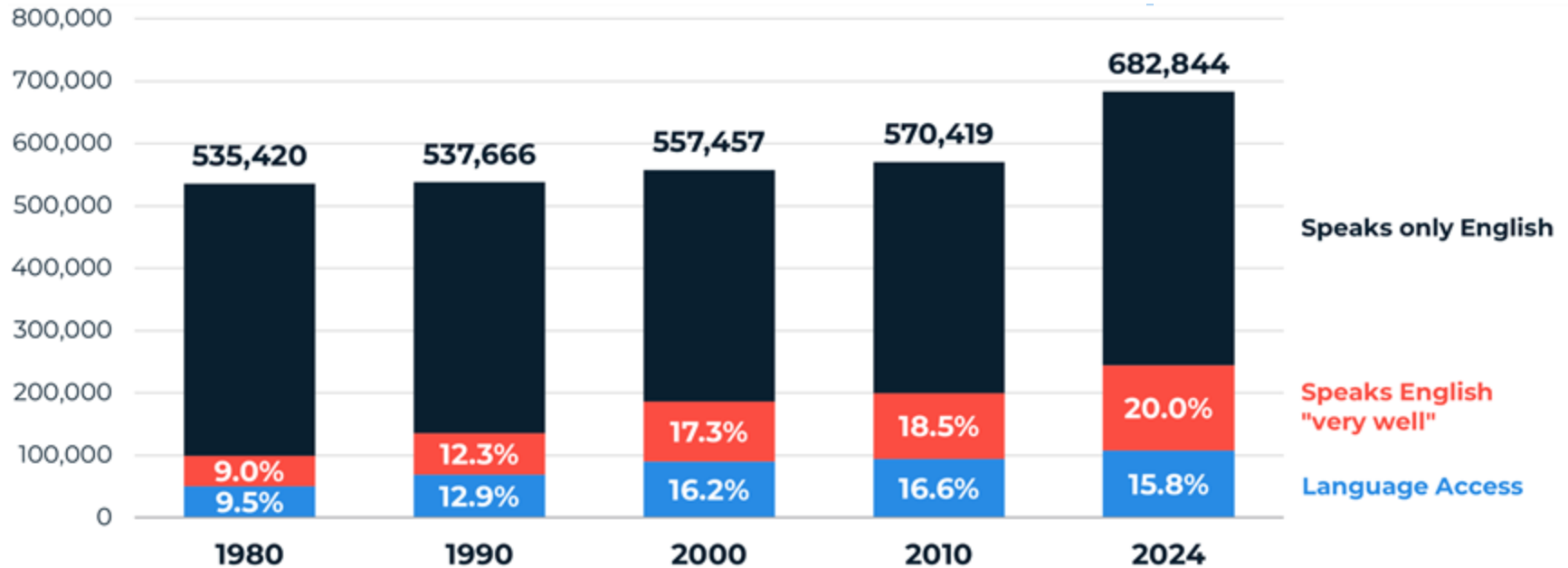
Top languages spoken at home in the U.S. (left, 2023) and Boston (right, 2024), as shares of the population aged 5+



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2023 5-Year American Community Survey (PUMS), 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

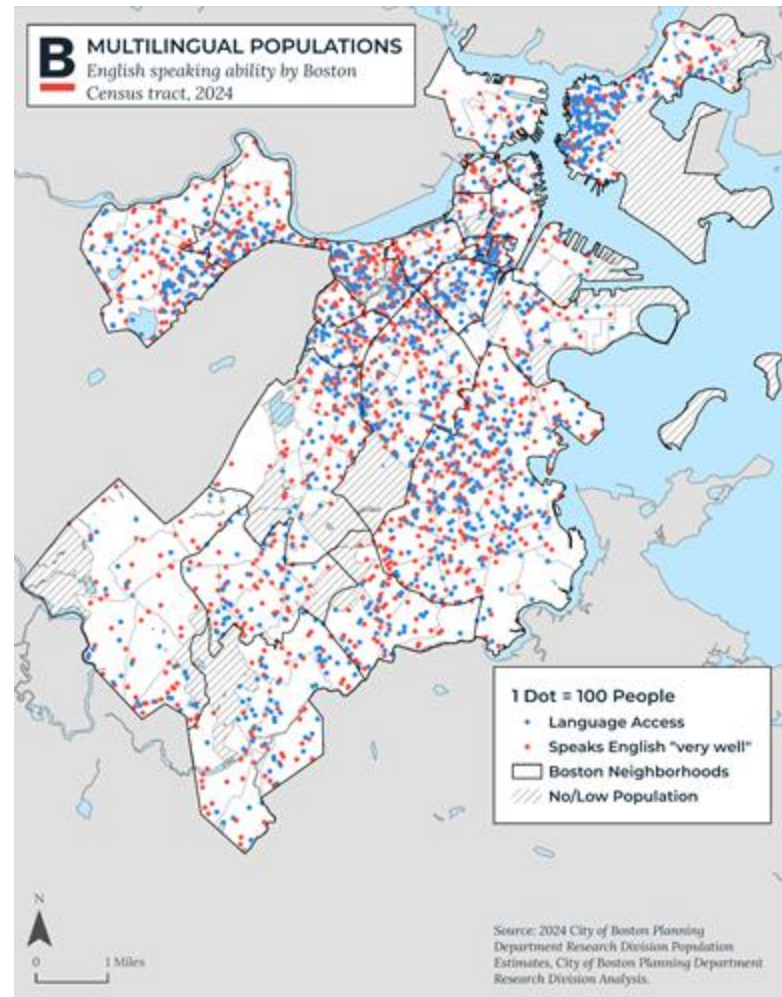
# Boston's population growth since 1980 has come from the multilingual population.

*Multilingual populations as shares of Boston's total population aged 5+, 1980 - 2024*

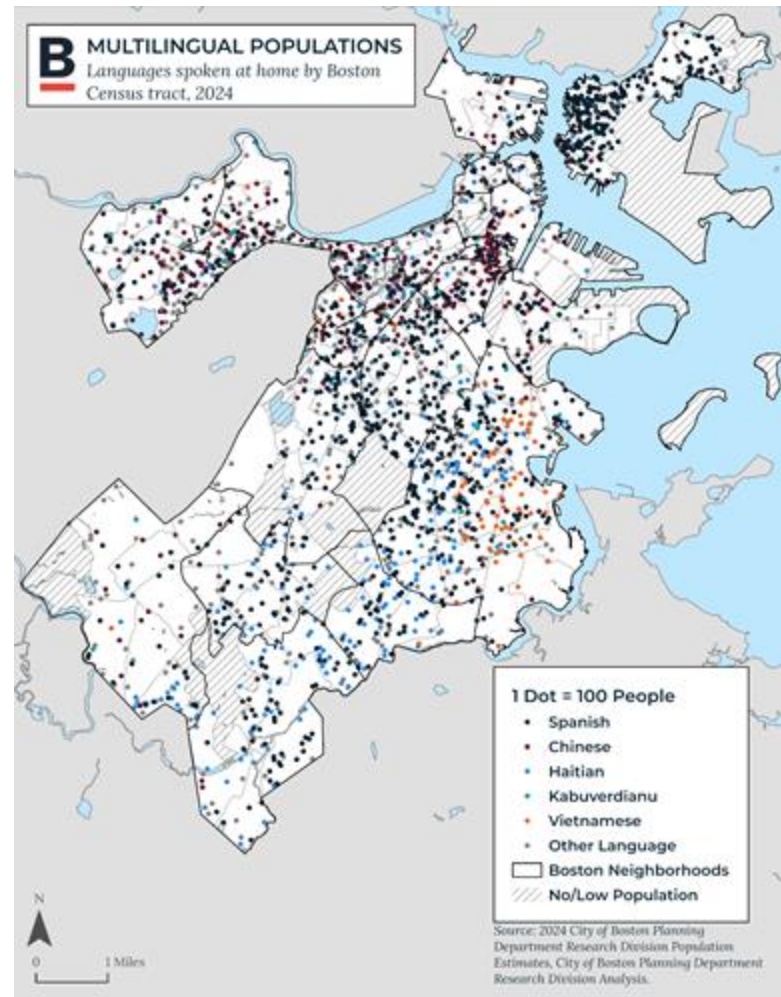


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980-2000 Decennial Censuses (IPUMS), 2010 American Community Survey (PUMS), 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Analysis.

- **Approximately 245,000 Boston residents are multilingual**
- **Dorchester has the largest number of multilingual residents**
- **Neighborhoods with the largest multilingual population shares:**
  - Chinatown (69.0%)
  - East Boston (60.3%)
  - Mission Hill (41.8%)
  - Roxbury (40.9%)
  - Dorchester (39.8%)



- **Boston residents speak more than 100 languages**
- **Spanish is the most prevalent language with 104,259 speakers, concentrated in East Boston**
- **Chinese - 32,223 speakers concentrated in Chinatown**
- **Haitian - 21,796 speakers concentrated in Mattapan and Hyde Park**
- **Kabuverdianu - 9,541 speakers concentrated in Dorchester**
- **Vietnamese - 9,488 speakers concentrated in Dorchester**

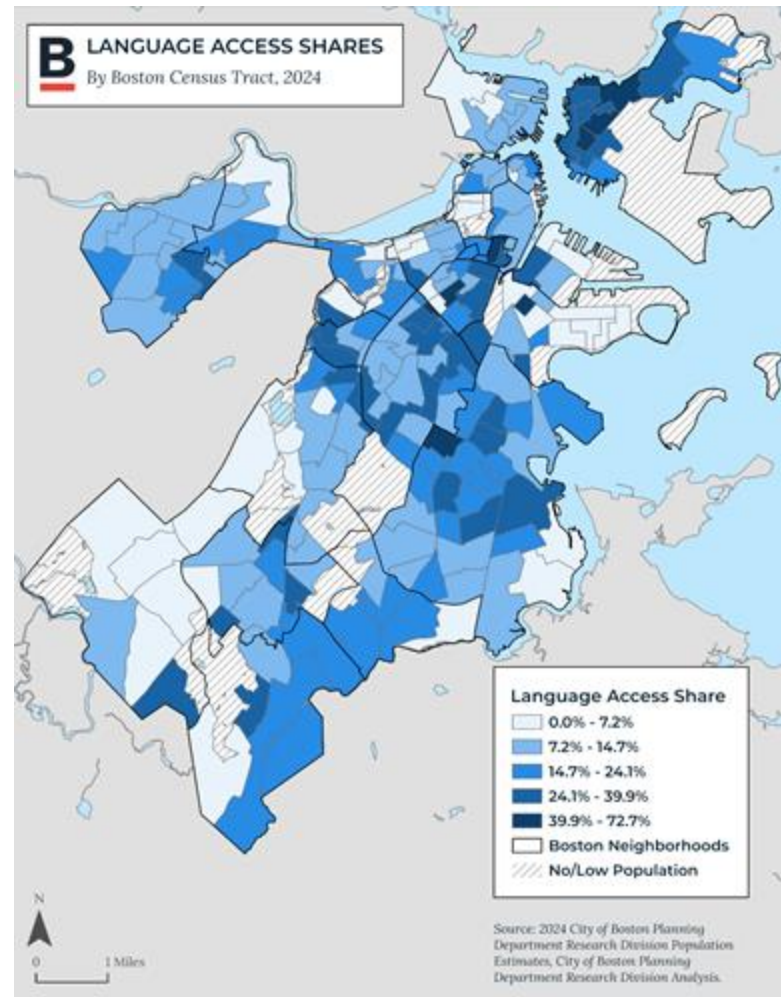


# LANGUAGE ACCESS POPULATIONS IN BOSTON



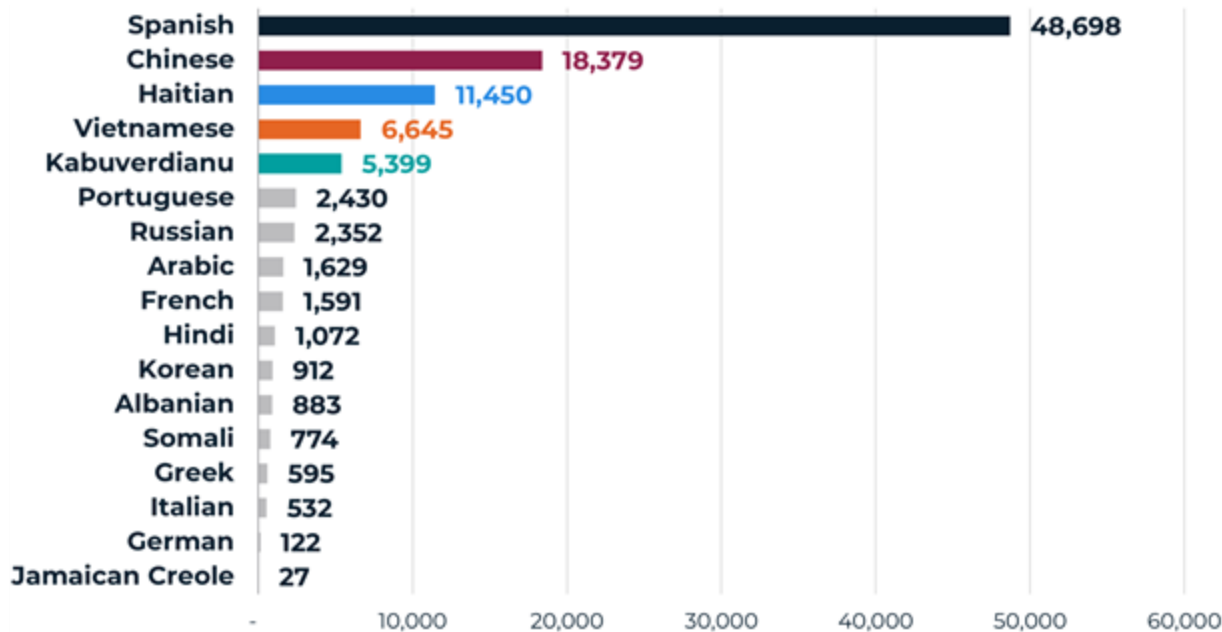
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- **Approximately 108,000 Boston residents are Language Access**
- **Dorchester has the largest number of Language Access residents**, but only 18% of its population is Language Access
- **Neighborhoods with the largest Language Access population shares:**
  - Chinatown (41.4%)
  - East Boston (36.3%)
  - Mission Hill (21.7%)
  - South End (20.7%)
  - Roxbury (20.6%)



# Almost 49,000 Boston residents speak Spanish at home and speak English “well,” “not well,” or “not at all.”

Language Access population by top languages spoken at home, 2024

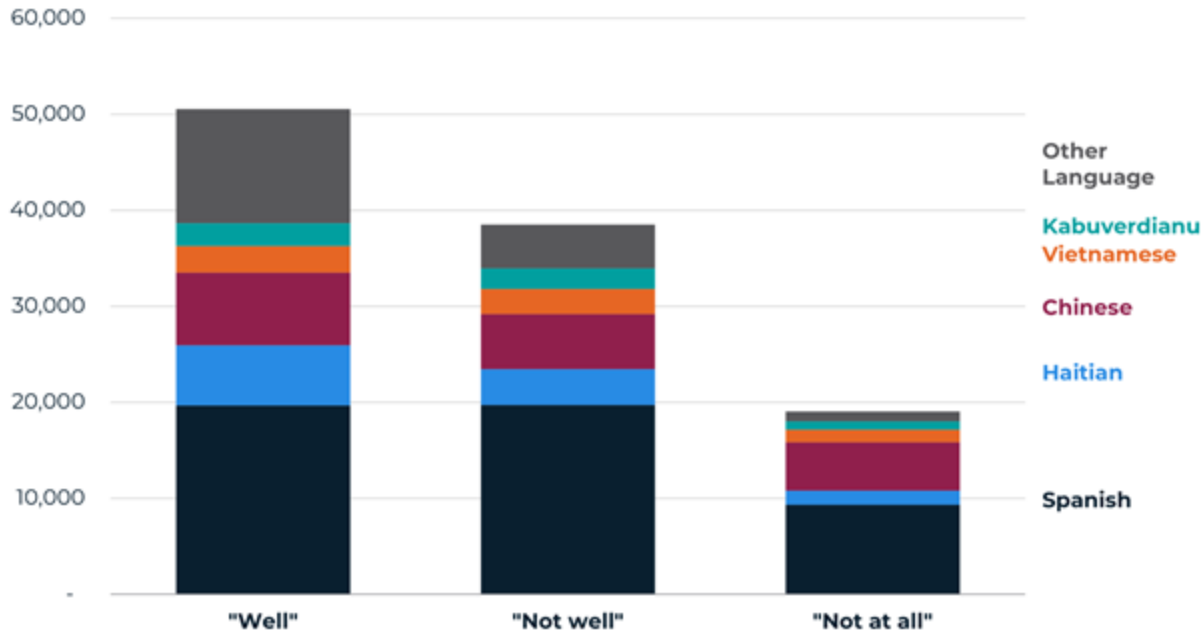


- Boston’s top five languages make up 84% of its Language Access population

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# ~47% of the Language Access population in Boston speaks English “well,” and ~53% speaks English “not well” or “not at all.”

English ability of the Boston Language Access population by language spoken at home, 2024



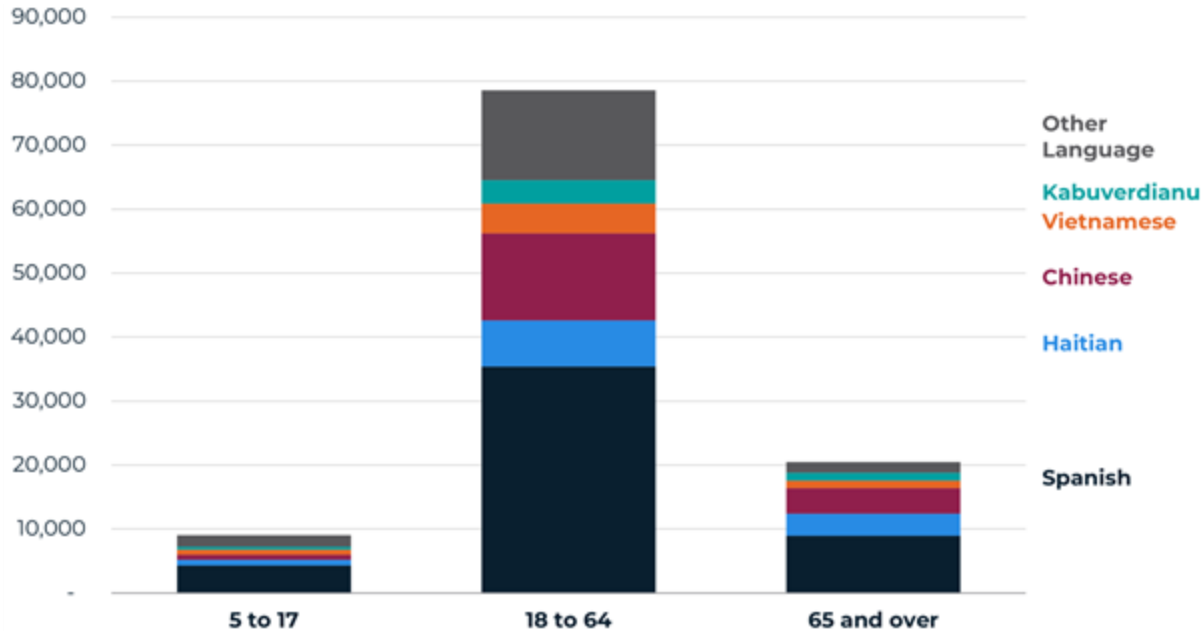
- 41.1% of Chinese speakers in the Language Access population speak English “well;” but 27.6% don’t speak English at all
- 54.9% of Haitian speakers in the Language Access population speak English “well;” and only 12.5% don’t speak English at all

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.



# ~73% of the Language Access population in Boston are aged 18-64.

Age of Boston Language Access population by language spoken at home, 2024

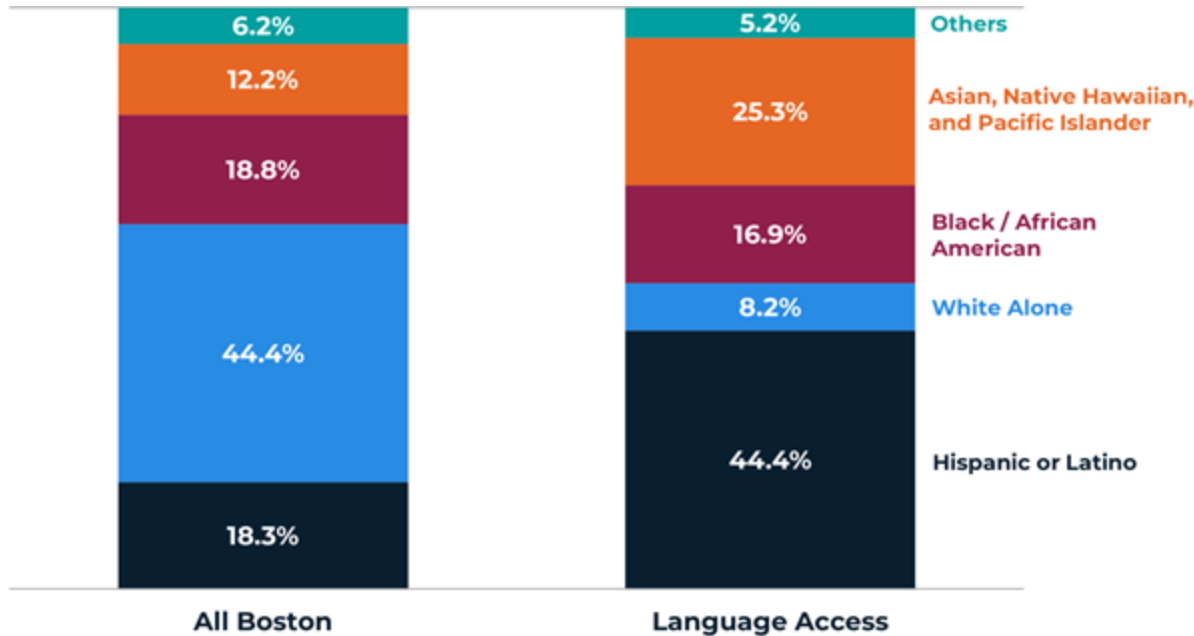


- Chinese speakers have the lowest share aged 5 to 17 (4.2%)
- 29.5% of those who speak Haitian at home are aged 65+

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# ~44% of the Language Access population in Boston is Hispanic and ~25% is Asian.

*Race/Ethnicity distribution of all Boston and the Language Access population aged 5+, 2024*

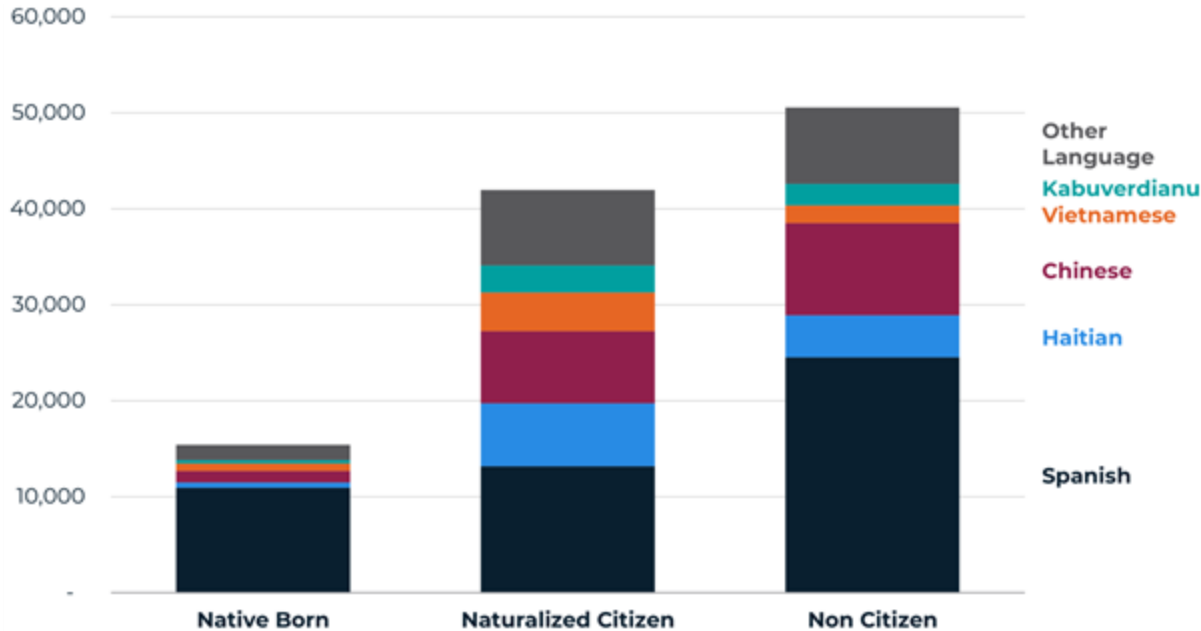


More than half of Kabuverdianu speakers fall in the “others” category of the Census’ definition of race

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# ~47% of the Language Access population in Boston are not U.S. citizens.

*Citizenship of the Language Access population by language spoken at home, 2024*

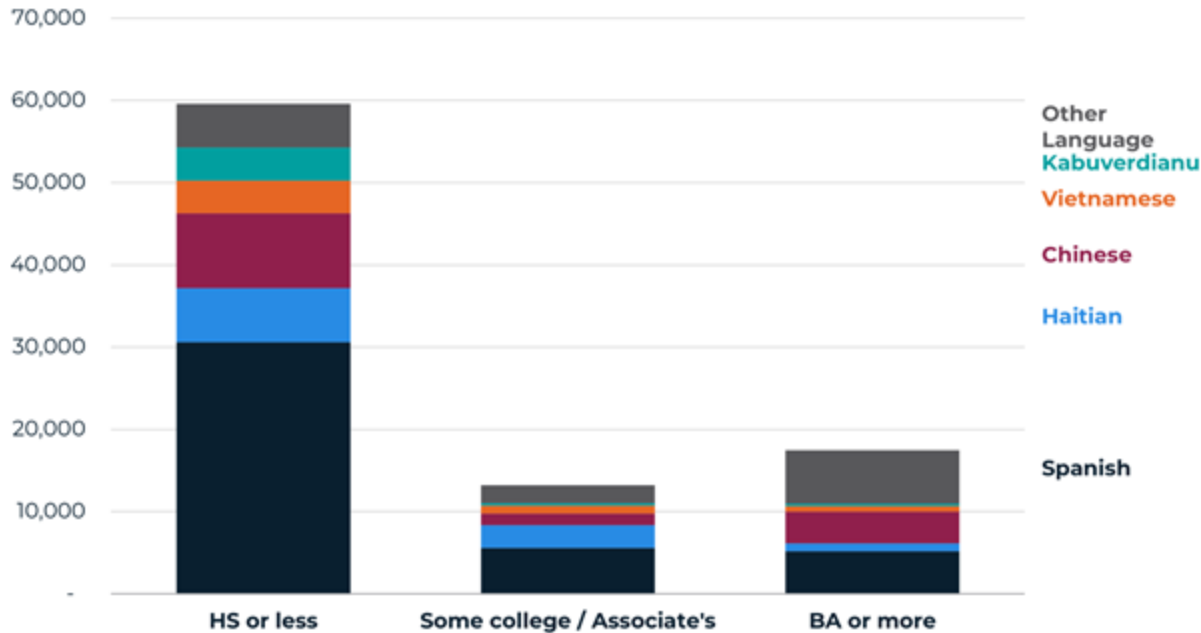


- 23% of the Spanish speaking language access population are native born, perhaps due to the large Puerto Rican population
- Chinese speakers have the highest share (52%) of non citizens

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# ~66% of Boston's Language Access population aged 25+ has a HS diploma or less.

*Educational attainment of the Language Access population aged 25+ by language spoken at home, 2024*

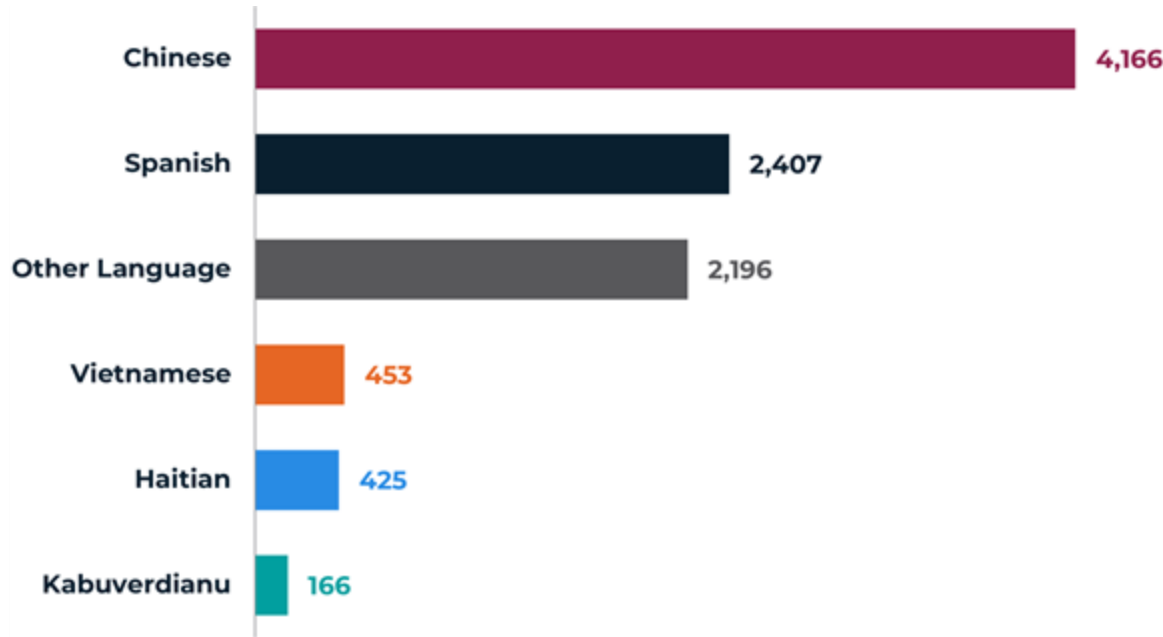


- 26.9% of Chinese speakers have a Bachelor's degree or higher
- Only 6.1% of Kabuverdianu speakers have a Bachelor's degree or higher

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# ~9% of Boston's Language Access population is enrolled in college, ~9,800 students.

College/University enrolled Language Access population by language spoken at home, 2024

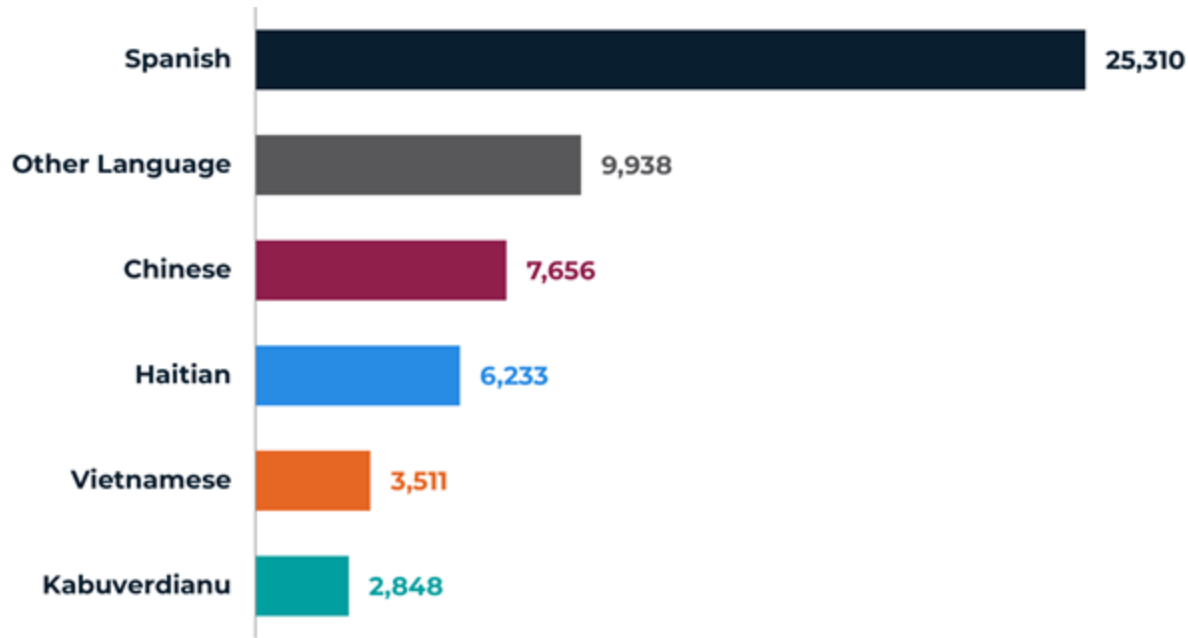


- 22.7% of the Chinese speaking language access population is enrolled in college/university

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# ~55% of Boston's Language Access population aged 16+ is employed, ~55,500 workers.

*Employed Language Access population aged 16+ by language spoken at home, 2024*

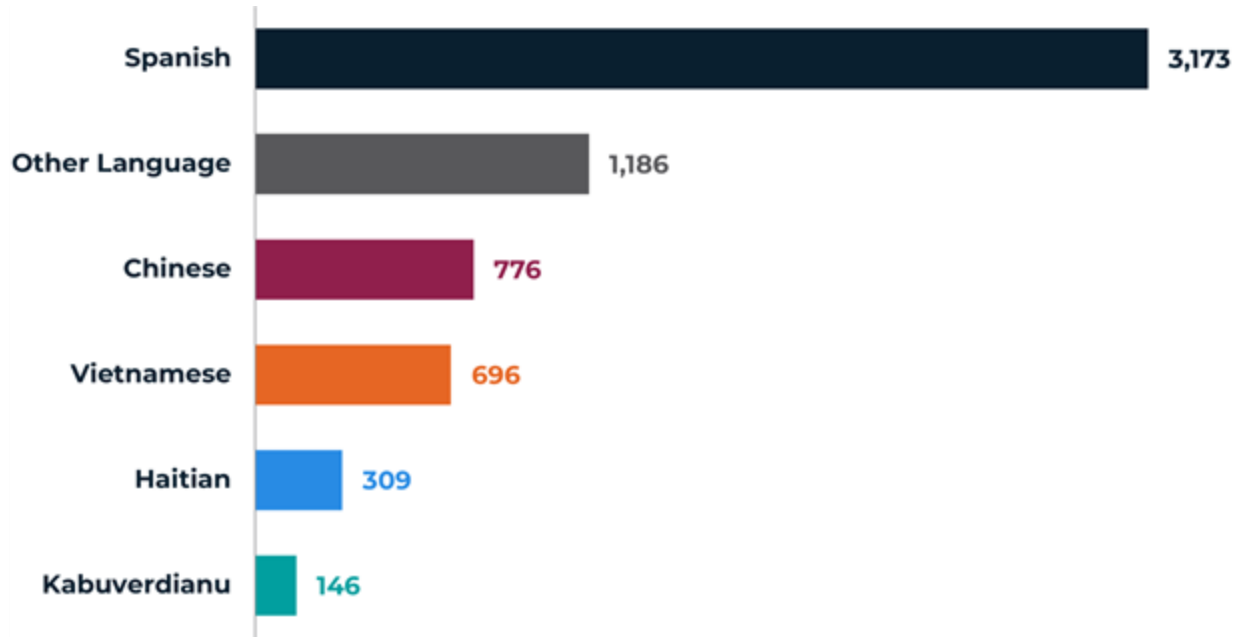


- Vietnamese speakers have the highest share of employment out of the top languages (59%)
- Chinese speakers have the lowest employment share (43%)

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# ~9% of the employed Language Access population aged 16+ is self-employed, representing ~6,300 businesses.

*Self-employed Language Access population aged 16+ by language spoken at home, 2024*



- Spanish speakers make up just over 50% of the entire self-employed Language Access population
- Vietnamese speakers only have 700 self-employed workers, but they have the highest self-employment share (16.5%)

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# Boston's employed Language Access population has median personal earnings of \$34,796, lower than the city median of \$60,454.

Median personal earnings in 2022\$ of the employed Language Access population by language spoken at home, 2024



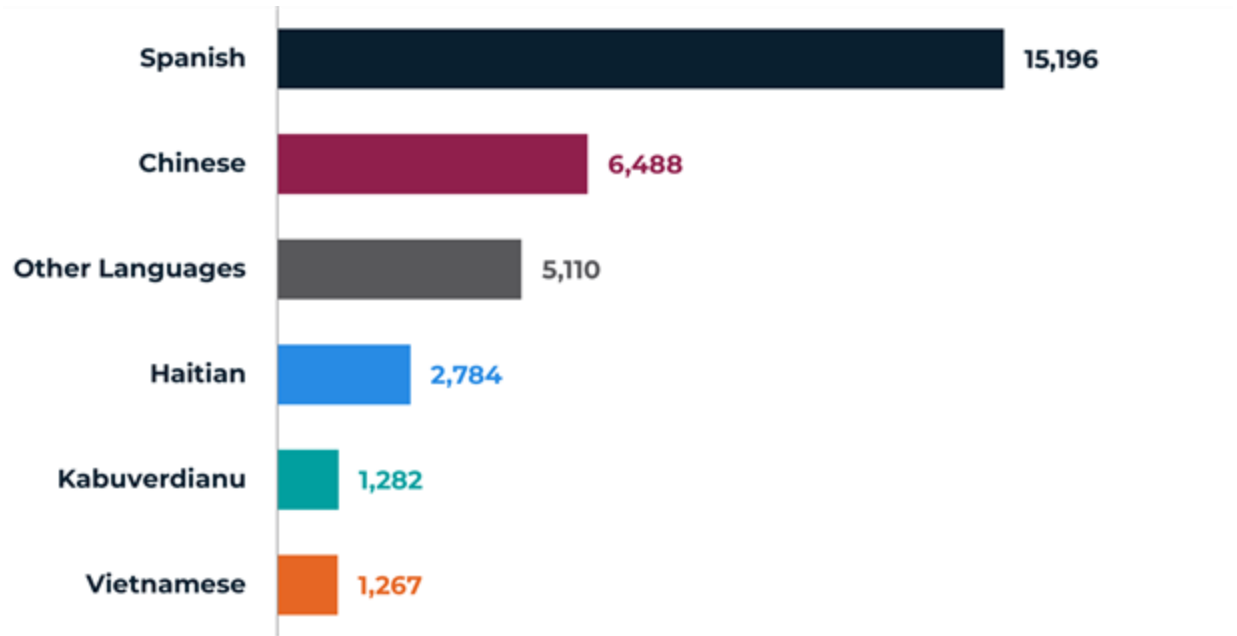
- Haitian speakers have the second highest median personal earnings, consistent with their higher rates of employment
- Chinese speakers have the second lowest median personal earnings, likely due to the higher share of college enrollment

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.



# More than 30,000 Language Access households in Boston are linguistically isolated.\*

*Linguistically isolated households by language spoken at home, 2024*



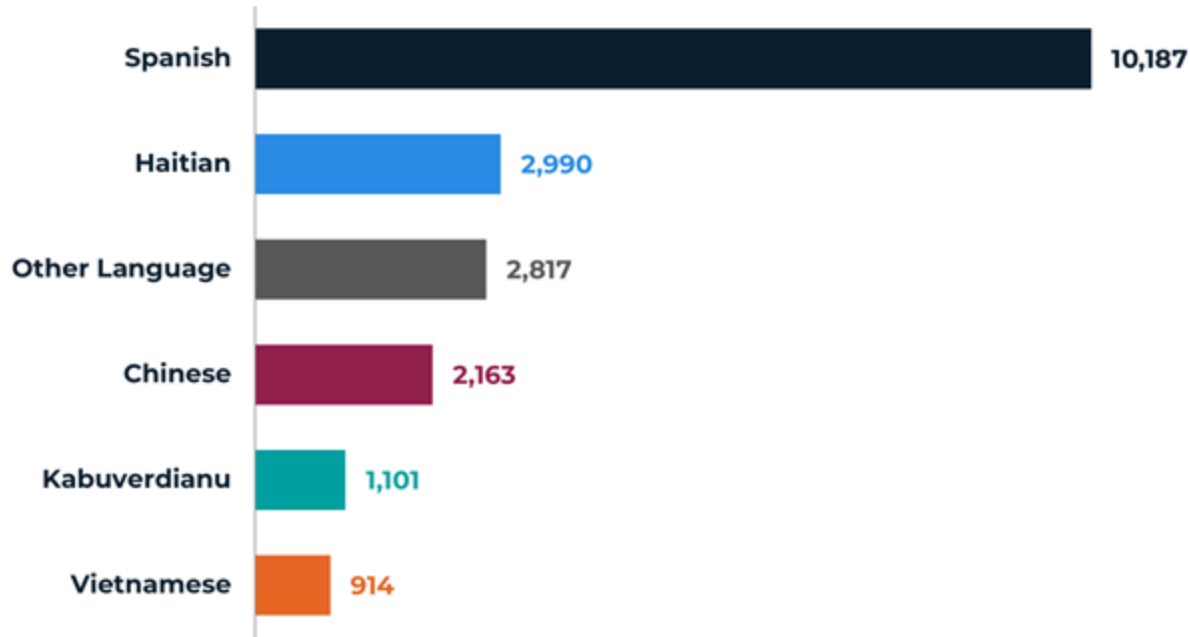
- Spanish speakers make up almost 50% of all Language Access linguistically isolated households
- **73% of Chinese speaking households are linguistically isolated**
- **Only 55% of Kabuverdianu speaking households are linguistically isolated**

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

\*Note: The U.S. Census Bureau defines a linguistically isolated household as one where no member of the household 14+ speaks English only or “very well.”

# ~19% of Boston's Language Access population has a disability, ~20,200 residents.

Those living with a disability in the Language Access population by language spoken at home, 2024



- Haitian speakers have the highest share (26%) of individuals living with a disability
- Chinese speakers have the lowest share (12%), of individuals living with a disability

Source: 2024 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.

# OFFICE OF LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATIONS ACCESS

Gayana Daniel, Chief of Staff  
Erika Garcia, Research & Data Manager

The Mayor's Office of Language and Communications Access  
Equity and Inclusion Cabinet



# OVERVIEW OF OLCA



- Who we are.
- What do we do.
- Internal & External Stakeholders
- Policy & ordinance
- Standards & thresholds.

The Office of Language and Communication Access (OLCA) strives to empower speakers of all languages and communication abilities to receive the full spectrum of services offered by the City of Boston and play a critical centralized role in decision making.

OLCA does this by training staff on providing accessible services to all constituents, assisting departments with budgeting for accommodations and ensuring city-wide implementation & compliance with Boston's Language and Communications Access ordinance.

# WHO IS INVOLVED?



## OLCA STAFF

FTE (LCA Specialists)

Fellows/Interns

Municipal Network



## LCA LIAISONS

Point person and content expert to support Departments Heads and support OLCA policy implementation



## DEPARTMENTS & THEIR STAFF

Staff Roles:

What do I do? How do I do it? When? With what? With whom?



## BOSTON COMMUNITY

Individuals

Community & Advocacy Groups

Ethnic Media

## LCA Liaison vs. LCA Specialist What is the difference?

<u><a href="#">LCA Liaison</a></u>	<u><a href="#">LCA Specialist</a></u>
<p>- One or more members of your department designed as a point of contact for language and communications access needs.</p> <p>* Please note that all staff can acquire accommodations on their own, it is just helpful to loop in your departmental liaisons so they can assist when needed.</p> <p>* Please find your department's LCA Liaison on the <a href="#">LCA Liaison List</a>.</p>	<p>- A member of the LCA Office who has been assigned to work with your department and often interacts with LCA Liaisons as well as with POs and anyone who runs meeting/events for your office.</p> <p>* Please find the LCA Specialist who has been assigned to your office or cabinet on the <a href="#">OLCA Specialists' Assignments List</a>.</p>



# POLICY & ORDINANCE

- Federal level language and communication access protections.
- City of Boston language and communication access protections.



## FEDERAL:

- Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title II

## CITY OF BOSTON:

- 2008 Executive Order
- 2016 Communications Access Ordinance
  - Persons who use languages other than English (LOTE)
  - Persons with disabilities
- 2021 Amended Language and Communications Access Ordinance

The [Language and Communication Access Policy](#) (LCAP) and [Language and Communications Access Ordinance](#) which outline the requirements the City will comply with provide access to LOTE individuals and persons with a disability.

- All COB departments' programs, services and activities must be accessible to LOTE individuals and persons with disabilities at no cost to the residents.
- Provide translation, interpreting, and assistive technology to City created events, programs, information and documents.

\* Please note LCA training sessions are for City of Boston departments; quasi-City departments should follow their language access plan and process. For example, Boston Public Schools staff should follow the [BPS language access process](#), and contact [languageaccess@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:languageaccess@bostonpublicschools.org) with any questions.

## WHAT ARE THRESHOLD LANGUAGES?

Refers to any language spoken by individuals of the Language Other Than English population totalling 5% of the population or 1000 individuals, whichever is less, within the City of Boston.

[LCA Demographic Data Report](#)

*\* From the Official Language and Communications Access Policy - City of Boston*

**THE HUB** MY ACCOUNT TOOLS TRANSLATE

[GUIDES FOR SERVICES](#) [LCA RESOURCES FOR STAFF](#) [DEMOGRAPHICS AND STANDARDS](#) [ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY](#) [IMPORTANT TOOLS](#) [MORE RESOURCES](#)

## LCA RESOURCES FOR STAFF

**LIAISON DIRECTORY**

- ACCOMMODATIONS FINANCIAL PLANNING**  
Planning tool to identify approximate costs across each accommodation...
- ACCOMMODATIONS FUND REQUEST**  
A form to be completed to leverage your LCA funding
- ACCOMMODATIONS FUND USE - FY22**  
Document to keep track of your department's spending use
- ASL / CART REQUEST**  
How To Acquire ASL or Cart Services
- BABEL NOTICE**  
A multilingual notice attachment, indicating this document contains...
- CERTIFICATION OF ACCOMMODATIONS OFFERED - DRAFT**  
Used in interactions of legal consequence to verify which accommodations...