

# MEDI-CAL STATISTICAL BRIEF

SEPTEMBER 2016

## Frequency of Threshold Language Speakers in the Medi-Cal Population by County for January 2015

### Background

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly 43.8% of Californians have reported that they speak a language other than English at home.<sup>1</sup> This is compared to 20.8% of the U.S. population, nationally, that report a non-English language spoken at home and represents the highest rate for non-English speakers among all 50 states. Among non-English speakers in California, 8.4% reported that they spoke English “not at all”, and 16.6% reported that they spoke English “not well.”

Within the Medi-Cal population roughly 38% of all certified eligibles report a language other than English as their primary spoken language. Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Armenian are the most frequently reported languages among Medi-Cal’s non-English speakers.<sup>2</sup>

Broadly, threshold languages are those which are spoken at a high proportional rate within a geographic region of the state and as such may contribute to obstacles in understanding and accessing health care services. Threshold language statistics are provided on an annual basis to counties through an informational notice. A summary of the 2015 Threshold Language data is found in the section entitled “Findings.”

### Methodology

Individuals meeting the threshold language criteria were identified using the definition mandated by the California Code of Regulations, Title 9, Rehabilitative and Developmental Services, Section

1810.410 “Cultural and Linguistic Requirements” which reads:

(3) “Threshold Language” means a language that has been identified as the primary language, as indicated on the MEDS (Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System), of 3,000 beneficiaries or five percent of the beneficiary population, whichever is lower, in an identified geographic area.

The MEDS enrollment file contains a data element indicating each beneficiary’s **primary** language, and was used as the identifying variable for this report.

### Date Range

This report counts Medi-Cal beneficiaries for January 2015, updated as of December 2015. Information presented in this report reflects 11 monthly updates.

### Universe

This report counts **both** certified eligibles, as well as those enrolled with an unmet Share-of-Cost Obligation (SOC).

Certified eligibles are defined as those beneficiaries who are deemed qualified for Medi-Cal based on a valid eligibility determination and may receive health care services reimbursable by Medi-Cal.

The SOC program is designed to assist individuals and families whose incomes are too high to qualify for Medi-Cal but insufficient to cover their medical expenses. Unlike traditional or no-cost Medi-Cal coverage, SOC beneficiaries must contribute to

their coverage by paying their medical expenses up to a predetermined threshold (also called the SOC obligation) each month. In contrast to other forms of cost-sharing (i.e., copayments or deductibles), it is only after beneficiaries meet their monthly SOC obligation that they qualify for Medi-Cal benefits. For this reason, SOC beneficiaries are not counted as certified in months when they do not meet their SOC obligations, because they are not eligible to receive Medi-Cal covered benefits. However, they are included in the universe of Medi-Cal enrollees for purposes of the annual Threshold Language report.

**Table 1: Total Certified Eligibles and Eligibles with an Unmet Share of Cost as of January 2015**

Status	Number of Eligibles	Percent
<b>Certified</b>	12,368,517	97.7%
<b>Not Certified; Unmet Share of Cost</b>	297,011	2.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>12,665,528</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Findings**

- Just over 35%, or 4,483,455 Medi-Cal eligibles state-wide, reported a language other than English as their primary language and met the statutory criteria for a threshold language population.
- Forty-five of fifty-eight California counties contained the minimum number of Medi-Cal eligibles meeting the threshold language definition.
- Thirteen distinct languages qualified as threshold languages, as indicated in Table 2 below.
- Spanish was the most frequently occurring threshold language (29.9%), and was represented in the greatest number of counties (45).
- Los Angeles had the greatest number of threshold languages (12) of any county. (See Table 3).

**Table 2: Summary by Threshold Language; January 2015 (updated through December 2015)**

Language	Number of Counties Where Primary Language Frequency Reaches Threshold Level	Number of Eligibles Speaking Threshold Language	Percent of Total Medi-Cal Eligibles
Spanish	45	3,784,578	29.9%
Vietnamese	8	202,944	1.6%
Cantonese	6	140,193	1.1%
Tagalog	6	39,057	0.3%
Farsi	4	26,902	0.2%
Mandarin	4	68,608	0.5%
Arabic	3	29,566	0.2%
Russian	3	36,203	0.3%
Hmong	2	21,265	0.2%
Korean	2	49,287	0.4%
Armenian	1	67,712	0.5%
Cambodian	1	9,180	0.1%
Other Chinese	1	7,960	0.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4,483,455</b>	<b>35.4%</b>

**Note:** A threshold language means a language identified on the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS) as the primary language of 3,000 beneficiaries or five percent of the beneficiary population, whichever is lower, in an identified geographic area, per Title 9, CCR, Section 1810.410 (f) (3).

**Table 3: Summary of Threshold Languages by County: January 2015 (updated through December 2015)**

County	County or Primary Language Population	Number of Eligibles	Percent of County Population
<b>Alameda</b>	Entire Population	434,842	100.0%
	Spanish	89,028	20.5%
	Cantonese	25,706	5.9%
	Vietnamese	10,838	2.5%
	Mandarin	7,268	1.7%
	Tagalog	3,823	0.9%
<b>Butte</b>	Entire Population	80,010	100.0%
	Spanish	5,936	7.4%
<b>Colusa</b>	Entire Population	8,588	100.0%
	Spanish	4,295	50.0%
<b>Contra Costa</b>	Entire Population	262,639	100.0%
	Spanish	63,830	24.3%
<b>El Dorado</b>	Entire Population	37,020	100.0%
	Spanish	3,953	10.7%
<b>Fresno</b>	Entire Population	463,004	100.0%
	Spanish	133,898	28.9%
	Hmong	11,575	2.5%
<b>Glenn</b>	Entire Population	11,610	100.0%
	Spanish	3,591	30.9%
<b>Imperial</b>	Entire Population	88,165	100.0%
	Spanish	50,380	57.1%
<b>Inyo</b>	Entire Population	5,730	100.0%
	Spanish	1,136	19.8%
<b>Kern</b>	Entire Population	366,898	100.0%
	Spanish	115,964	31.6%
<b>Kings</b>	Entire Population	54,455	100.0%
	Spanish	16,886	31.0%
<b>Lake</b>	Entire Population	29,669	100.0%
	Spanish	3,033	10.2%
<b>Los Angeles</b>	Entire Population	3,770,731	100.0%
	Spanish	1,363,712	36.2%
	Armenian	67,712	1.8%
	Mandarin	45,236	1.2%
	Cantonese	42,334	1.1%
	Korean	39,429	1.0%

	Vietnamese	30,376	0.8%
	Farsi	14,543	0.4%
	Tagalog	12,844	0.3%
	Russian	11,304	0.3%
	Cambodian	9,180	0.2%
	Other Chinese	7,960	0.2%
	Arabic	6,170	0.2%
<b>Madera</b>	Entire Population	68,309	100.0%
	Spanish	28,737	42.1%
<b>Marin</b>	Entire Population	42,702	100.0%
	Spanish	16,228	38.0%
<b>Mendocino</b>	Entire Population	39,374	100.0%
	Spanish	7,127	18.1%
<b>Merced</b>	Entire Population	133,302	100.0%
	Spanish	44,726	33.6%
<b>Modoc</b>	Entire Population	3,168	100.0%
	Spanish	228	7.2%
<b>Mono</b>	Entire Population	3,516	100.0%
	Spanish	1,421	40.4%
<b>Monterey</b>	Entire Population	166,346	100.0%
	Spanish	89,945	54.1%
<b>Napa</b>	Entire Population	31,178	100.0%
	Spanish	13,384	42.9%
<b>Nevada</b>	Entire Population	23,725	100.0%
	Spanish	1,419	6.0%
<b>Orange</b>	Entire Population	864,178	100.0%
	Spanish	287,344	33.3%
	Vietnamese	79,151	9.2%
	Korean	9,858	1.1%
	Farsi	6,036	0.7%
	Arabic	3,080	0.4%
<b>Placer</b>	Entire Population	62,260	100.0%
	Spanish	5,881	9.4%
<b>Riverside</b>	Entire Population	774,800	100.0%
	Spanish	222,997	28.8%
<b>Sacramento</b>	Entire Population	531,602	100.0%
	Spanish	65,266	12.3%
	Russian	20,230	3.8%
	Vietnamese	10,569	2.0%
	Hmong	9,690	1.8%
	Cantonese	7,797	1.5%

<b>San Benito</b>	Entire Population	17,778	100.0%
	Spanish	6,859	38.6%
<b>San Bernardino</b>	Entire Population	821,344	100.0%
	Spanish	192,818	23.5%
	Vietnamese	3,090	0.4%
<b>San Diego</b>	Entire Population	831,593	100.0%
	Spanish	234,862	28.2%
	Arabic	20,316	2.4%
	Vietnamese	14,259	1.7%
	Tagalog	8,362	1.0%
	Farsi	3,149	0.4%
<b>San Francisco</b>	Entire Population	226,801	100.0%
	Cantonese	56,638	25.0%
	Spanish	34,232	15.1%
	Vietnamese	4,890	2.2%
	Mandarin	4,785	2.1%
	Russian	4,669	2.1%
	Tagalog	3,926	1.7%
<b>San Joaquin</b>	Entire Population	283,127	100.0%
	Spanish	66,955	23.6%
<b>San Luis Obispo</b>	Entire Population	60,103	100.0%
	Spanish	12,732	21.2%
<b>San Mateo</b>	Entire Population	150,862	100.0%
	Spanish	55,977	37.1%
	Tagalog	3,505	2.3%
	Cantonese	3,057	2.0%
<b>Santa Barbara</b>	Entire Population	132,392	100.0%
	Spanish	60,658	45.8%
<b>Santa Clara</b>	Entire Population	427,513	100.0%
	Spanish	116,901	27.3%
	Vietnamese	49,771	11.6%
	Mandarin	11,319	2.6%
	Tagalog	6,597	1.5%
	Cantonese	4,661	1.1%
	Farsi	3,174	0.7%
<b>Santa Cruz</b>	Entire Population	76,031	100.0%
	Spanish	30,831	40.6%
<b>Solano</b>	Entire Population	118,028	100.0%
	Spanish	23,060	19.5%
<b>Sonoma</b>	Entire Population	122,851	100.0%
	Spanish	38,323	31.2%

<b>Stanislaus</b>	Entire Population	223,911	100.0%
	Spanish	56,939	25.4%
<b>Sutter</b>	Entire Population	39,575	100.0%
	Spanish	7,798	19.7%
<b>Tehama</b>	Entire Population	26,704	100.0%
	Spanish	4,409	16.5%
<b>Tulare</b>	Entire Population	243,122	100.0%
	Spanish	91,577	37.7%
<b>Ventura</b>	Entire Population	220,917	100.0%
	Spanish	90,355	40.9%
<b>Yolo</b>	Entire Population	55,272	100.0%
	Spanish	14,458	26.2%
<b>Yuba</b>	Entire Population	30,174	100.0%
	Spanish	4,489	14.9%

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey, Language Use in the United States: 2011, Table 4.

<sup>2</sup> Research and Analytic Studies Division. October 2015. Medi-Cal Monthly Enrollment Fast Facts, June 2015, California Department of Health Care Services

### More Information on the Medi-Cal Population

The Research and Analytic Studies Division (RASD) of the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) performed the analysis for this report. RASD compiles official statistics and performs analytical studies to assist DHCS in achieving its mission and goals. More information regarding Medi-Cal enrollment, program expenditures, and other relevant topics is available at the RASD [website](#).

### Subscribe to the RASD Mailing List

Click [here](#) to receive email notifications when new statistical content is added to the RASD website. The RASB website is updated regularly with graphics, pivot tables and statistical briefs describing the Medi-Cal population, Medi-Cal enrollment trends, and other issues relevant to the Medi-Cal program and its stakeholders.

**IF YOU PLAN TO CITE THIS PAPER IN A SUBSEQUENT WORK, WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING CITATION:**  
Research and Analytic Studies Division. September 2016. *Frequency of Threshold Language Speakers in the Medi-Cal Population by County for January 2015*. Medi-Cal Statistical Brief. California Department of Health Care Services.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

This document provides a brief summary of complex subjects and should be used only as an overview and general guide to the Medi-Cal program. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policies or legal positions of the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS) or the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). These summaries do not render any legal, accounting, or other professional advice, nor are they intended to explain fully all of the provisions or exclusions of the relevant laws, regulations, and rulings of the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Original sources of authority should be researched and utilized.