

DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN HEAD START PROGRAMS



Head Start programs reflect our nation's growing cultural diversity . This includes **dual language learners** (DLLs). The Office of Head Start promotes the full and effective participation of children who are DLLs and their families. This overview describes dual language learners, their home languages, their enrollment in Head Start programs, and the language proficiency of Head Start staff serving them.

Head Start program(s): The Head Start program includes Head Start preschool programs, which primarily serve 3-and-4-year-old children, and Early Head Start programs for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women.

Dual Language Learners (DLLs): Children who are learning two or more languages at the same time or learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language. (Terms, 45 CFR §1305.2)

DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN HEAD START PROGRAMS

Approximately
800,000
children and families are
enrolled in
Head Start programs.

Over
260,000
enrolled children and
families are dual language
learners.

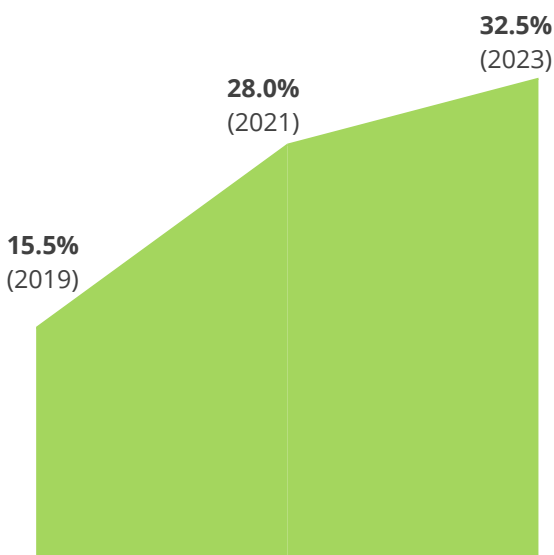
According to the 2023 Program
Information Report data,



3.5 out of 10

enrolled children and families
are **dual language learners.**

DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNER ENROLLMENT RATE



Over the last 4 years,
there has been a
**rise in the enrollment
of DLLs in Head Start
programs.**

From 2019 to 2023, DLL enrollment
in Head Start programs increased

12.5%

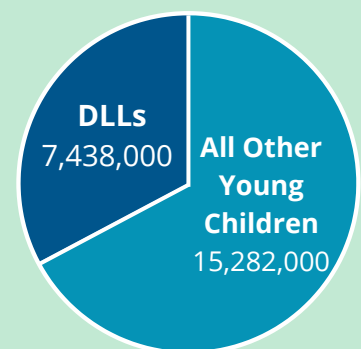


Did you know...

Learning more than one language has been proven to be beneficial for DLLs, improving **brain development** and school performance, creating more job opportunities, and encouraging an overall positive and **respectful attitude towards different languages and cultures.**¹

Did you know...

Approximately, **one-third** of children in the United States aged 0-5 are dual language learners, **consistent with the rate of DLLs enrolled in Head Start programs.**²

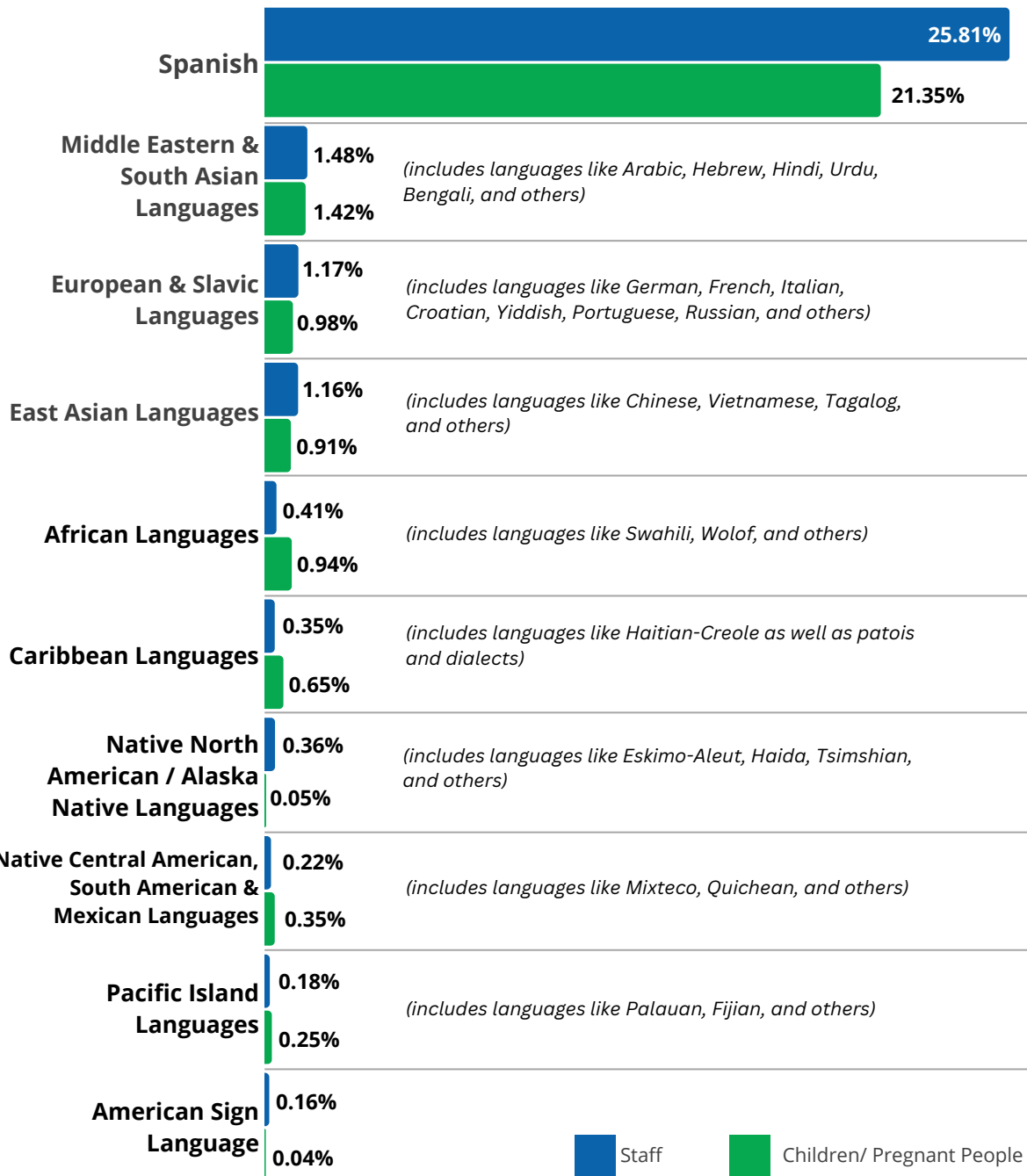


COMPARING DUAL LANGUAGE STAFF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ENROLLEES' PRIMARY HOME LANGUAGES

Over 30% of Head Start staff are proficient in languages other than English.

The proportions of multilingual staff largely match the proportions of enrolled children/pregnant people who are DLLs across language families.

Language Groups spoken by **Enrolled Children/Pregnant People** and **Head Start Staff** (excluding English; based on 2023 PIR data)



Did you know...

Over 35,000 Head Start staff speak two or more languages, resulting in an **inclusive environment for DLLs** through effective communication in children's native languages,³ and further contributing to cognitive development, social integration, and academic success. This supports **diverse and multilingual communities** across Head Start programs.⁴



Did you know...

The Head Start Program Performance Standards **require** Head Start programs to use evidence-based teaching practices for **English and home language development**, even giving guidance to follow when staff do not speak the same language as the child.

Sources:

- 1 National Library of Medicine. The Benefits of Multilingualism to the Personal and Professional Development of Residents of The US. (2018).
- 2 Park, Maki., Hofstetter, Jacob., Giang, Ivana Tú Nhi. Overlooked but Essential: Language Access in Early Childhood Programs. (October, 2022).
- 3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. Program Information Report (PIR) Summary Report - 2022 - National Level. Washington, DC.
- 4 Bloom, Howard S., Weiland, Christina. Quantifying Variation in Head Start Effects on Young Children's Cognitive and Socio-Emotional Skills Using Data from the National Head Start Impact Study. (2015).