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Housing and Community Development Language Access Policy

Updated 4/24/24 (next update must be no later than 4/23/2029)

PURPOSE AND INTENT

San Mateo County is linguistically diverse, with nearly half its residents speaking a language other than English at home. Collectively, County residents speak more than 100 different languages from across the world. Other than English, the most prevalent language spoken in the County is Spanish. In addition, a portion of County residents are deaf or hard of hearing and may communicate via sign language.

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution in June of 2017 seeking to provide meaningful access to County services, programs, benefits, and information to all County residents, regardless of their English language proficiency. The purpose of this *Language Access Policy (Policy)* is to outline how the Department of Housing's Housing and Community Development (HCD) unit will take affirmative steps to communicate with members of the public with limited English proficiency (LEP) or that are deaf or hard of hearing and to be responsive to the diverse means by which these residents communicate with the County.

SCOPE

This Policy will focus on HCD's community participation activities including community meetings, public hearings, and surveys designed to solicit community input on federal funding priorities and plans related to housing and community improvement activities. This Policy will focus primarily on providing services in the language(s) spoken at home by those with limited English proficiency that include 5% or more of County residents, which, as of 2024, include Spanish as well as individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing.¹ To determine the level of access needed by these individuals, HCD will balance the following four factors:

1. Number or proportion of LEP and/or deaf or hard of hearing persons likely to be benefit from or be impacted by the results of the activity;
2. Purpose of the activity;
3. Nature and importance of the activity to people's lives; and
4. Resources available to the HCD and associated costs.

¹ Please see Attachment A

Balancing these four factors will ensure meaningful access by LEP and/or deaf or hard of hearing persons to critical services while not imposing undue burdens on the HCD.

POLICY

This Policy is comprised of two related activities: (1) spoken interpretation and (2) written translation.

A. Spoken Interpretation

Bilingual Staff:

- HCD shall create a list or obtain a list from the Human Resources Department of its staff members who are certified by the County as bilingual each year through the Employee Services Agency's certification process. As much as possible, HCD will utilize its own certified bilingual staff members, pursuant to all applicable labor agreements, to provide interpretation services when a bilingual staff member is available and doing so will not disrupt County operations. HCD staff members who are not certified by the County may not perform interpretation services for which they are not certified.
- Bilingual staff are not dedicated interpreters or translators. Thus, County bilingual staff are paid on the normal biweekly basis, not based on their hours of interpretation services. Bilingual staff may also not be trained on conducting simultaneous interpretation services and therefore, professional interpreters may still need to be secured for community participation events, which require simultaneous interpretation.

Simultaneous Interpretation:

- Upon request, the HCD will make its best effort to provide real-time, simultaneous interpretation services – including the use of American Sign Language - for LEP persons and/or those that are deaf or hard of hearing at community participation events soliciting community input on federal funding priorities and plans related to housing and community improvement activities. Every five-years, the HCD creates a Consolidated Plan, which outlines the needs and priority activities for the next five-years of federal funding. The next five-year plan will be for the FY28-32 funding cycle, which will begin in the fall of 2027. Community input is a critical component of this plan. To that end, the HCD hosts a series of community meetings to solicit input on community needs and priorities. Upon request, simultaneous interpretation services will be provided at one, or all, of these events for the threshold language spoken in the County: Spanish. Over the past two cycles, a Spanish-language meeting and a meeting with simultaneous Chinese interpretation were proactively held by the HCD despite not having received a request for interpretation. The HCD anticipates automatically holding community participation meetings in at least Spanish in the FY28-32 funding cycle, which will begin in the fall of 2027. Interpretation for deaf and/or hard of hearing persons via American Sign Language will be provided upon request.

- Over time, other meetings may be identified as critical for community input and /or benefit and interpretation services would also be offered for these meetings as needed.

B. Written Translation

HCD will identify documents that need to be translated and provided in multiple languages based on the importance of the information; the consequence to the LEP and/or deaf or hard of hearing person if the information is not provided accurately; and the urgency of the program or service.

As aforementioned, every five-years, the HCD creates a Consolidated Plan, which outlines the needs and priority activities for the next five-years of federal funding. Community input is a critical component of this plan. To that end, the HCD hosts a series of community meetings and conducts a community needs and priorities survey.

The County will provide public notice of the community meetings in English and the primary threshold language spoken in the County: Spanish. These notices will invite LEP and/or deaf or hard of hearing persons to contact the HCD and request language interpretation for the upcoming meetings.

The needs assessment survey is generally conducted to solicit input from the community on needs and priorities they see in the community. This survey will be translated into the primary threshold language spoken in the County: Spanish.

Other documents may be identified as critical for translation over time and as needed.



ATTACHMENT A

County Executive's Office

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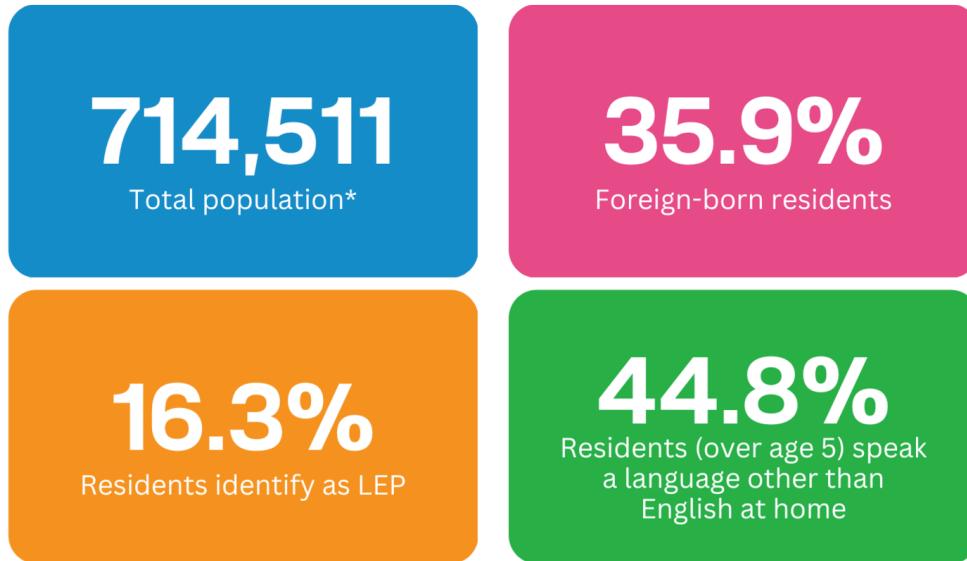
[County Executive's Office](#) > [Office of Community Affairs](#)

San Mateo County Demographics

San Mateo County is home to people of all backgrounds, including those who were not born in the United States, with **35.1%** of our population being **foreign-born**, and **43.2%** **speaking a language other than English** at home. Recent American Community Survey Data (2022) shows that just over 55% of San Mateo County residents speak only English. Limited English Proficient (LEP) speakers in the county include those who speak Spanish (6.71%), Chinese (4.06%), and Tagalog (2.15%).

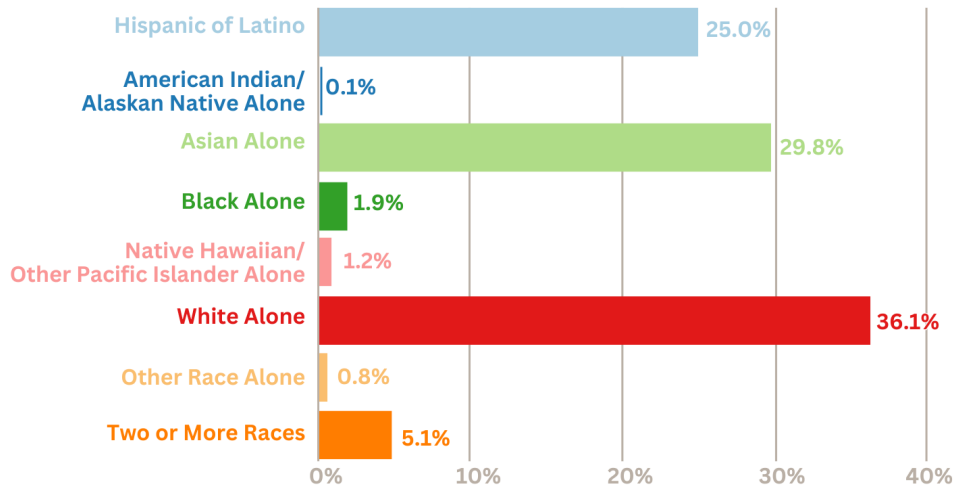
Some other interesting facts about San Mateo County include:

- There are 21,000 veterans living here
- Over 96% of households have a computer, and almost 93.5% of households have a broadband internet subscription
- 90.8% of persons 25 years or older are high school graduates or higher, and 52.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher



*United States Census Bureau’s 2018-2022 American Community Survey, Table C16001, and 2022 American Community Survey, Table DP05

San Mateo County: 2020 Census Race/Ethnicity



*United States Census Bureau’s Decennial 2020 Survey

Every 10 years, the federal government is required to count **all residents** in the United States, citizens and noncitizens alike, through a national census. The latest national census began in April 2020. The information is used to make sure everyone is equally represented in our political system and that government resources are allocated fairly. It is also used to make important decisions about community programs and services, like where to build homes and parks, establish public transit routes, build new roads and offer language access services.

The American Community Survey, or ACS, is different than the Decennial Census. The American Community Survey shows how we live—our education, housing, jobs, and more.

The American Community Survey provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year. The ACS:

- Asks about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as education, employment, internet access, and transportation
- Provides current information to communities every year. It also provides local and national leaders with the information they need for programs, economic development, emergency management, and understanding local issues and conditions.

**Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English
by the Population 5 Years or Older (Total Individuals 5+ in San Mateo County = 714,511)**

Language	Estimate	Percentage	LEP % of Total Speakers
Speaks only English	394,192	55.17%	-
Spanish	122,518	17.15%	6.71%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	66,286	9.28%	4.06%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	43,951	6.15%	2.15%
Other Asian or Pacific Island	21,541	3.01%	1.01%
Other Indo-European	28,638	4.01%	0.86%
Russian, Polish or other Slavic	11,765	1.65%	0.58%
Korean	4,295	0.60%	0.26%
Arabic	5,482	0.77%	0.24%
Vietnamese	3,620	0.51%	0.18%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	5,202	0.73%	0.11%
German or other West Germanic	3,606	0.50%	0.04%
Other	3,416	0.48%	0.06%

Source: American Community Survey, 2018-2022, 5-Year Estimates, Table C16001