

Changing Demographics



1 in every 5 U.S. residents does not speak English at home.

Are you providing optimal language access for this growing population?

THE ISSUE: U.S. Census data shows the limited English proficient (LEP) population grew 80 percent from 1990-2013. Healthcare organizations are required by both federal and state laws to provide language access to these patients.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, the U.S. continues to attract more immigrants than any other country in the world. They join the melting pot of America by becoming citizens, legal permanent residents, or by seeking humanitarian protection and bringing more than 300 indigenous and immigrant languages with them.

The Institute reported that approximately 61.6 million individuals, foreign and U.S. born, spoke a language other than English at home in 2013. The 2013 American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, found roughly 41 percent (25.1 million) were considered LEP. LEP refers to anyone older than 5 who reported speaking English less than “very well.” Although the majority of LEP individuals surveyed were immigrants, nearly 19 percent (4.7 million) were born in the United States, most to immigrant parents. Overall, the Census data showed that the LEP population represented 8 percent, or about 1 in 9 U.S. residents aged 5 and older. These statistics vary depending on the location of your facilities. You can find local immigration demographics in the Migration Policy Institute Data Hub.

Without the ability to provide timely access to high-quality language services, your organization is also in danger of legal and regulatory consequences stemming from noncompliance with federal and state laws, including Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

THE IMPACT: Without access to healthcare in their native language, LEP patients are at risk for adverse events due to their lack of understanding.

According to the official journal of the American Telemedicine Association, “language barriers result in poor understanding of diagnosis, treatment, and medication instructions; poor understanding of and compliance with recommendations for treatment and follow-up; a significantly greater likelihood of a serious medical event; and lower patient satisfaction.”

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) reported that limited English proficient (LEP) patients suffer temporary harm or death twice as often as English-speaking patients. The agency said that communication breakdowns cause nearly 3,000 unexpected patient deaths every year, the majority of these involve LEP patients. Using qualified medical interpreting reduces risk to providers caused by poor language comprehension and lack of cultural sensitivity. Without an effective language access program, the AHRQ warns that healthcare providers must consider these potential exposures to liability:

- Patient comprehension of their medical condition, treatment plan, discharge instructions, complications, and follow-up
- Inaccurate and incomplete medical history
- Ineffective or improper use of medications or serious medication errors
- Improper preparation for tests and procedures
- Poor or inadequate informed consent

HOW INDEMAND CAN HELP

At InDemand, we strongly believe that every patient in any medical setting should receive the highest quality healthcare, regardless of language, cultural background or disability. We help you deliver on this promise by offering a variety of products and services to provide immediate, secure access to highly trained, medically qualified interpreters who support an exceptional experience for your patients while ensuring their safety.

InDemand has unparalleled standards when it comes to our interpreters. All of our interpreters focus solely on medical interpretation, are culturally competent and are nationally certified — or work to become certified within six months of joining our team. We also offer interpreting in a wide variety of diffuse languages to serve these diverse populations.

With our state-of-the art, video remote interpreting (VRI), clinicians can engage in effective medical conversations with LEP, Deaf and hard of hearing (HOH) patients in virtually every setting across the continuum of care. InDemand has facilitated over two million interpreting sessions for these diverse patients using VRI. ■■■