

SILICON VALLEY ALLIES RESEARCH BRIEF

APRIL 10, 2015

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER ADULTS IN SILICON VALLEY

INTRODUCTION

Over half of all working-age adults in Silicon Valley speak a language other than English at home. With over 77 languages spoken, the geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics of these communities form a complex landscape.

The majority of non-native speakers in Silicon Valley are fluent in English as a second (or third, fourth or fifth) language. This brief is focused on the remaining population of all those nonelderly adults living in Santa Clara or San Mateo counties who have not yet reached English fluency. These 373,097 people comprise the region's adult English language learners (ELLs).

This analysis is intended to serve as a resource to inform the ongoing coordination, collaboration, and development of programs and services that support the English language, educational, and career development of English language learner adults. It includes basic demographic, educational, and economic profiles, along with breakdowns of that information by major language groups, gender, and geographic sub-regions.

A major finding emerging from this analysis is that although most adult ELLs are in the workforce, the majority earn very low incomes, due in large part to their concentration in low-wage occupations. These data highlight the need for innovative approaches to systems alignment and greater coordination with industry and career pathways such as those being pursued by ALLIES.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This research brief is produced by Working Partnerships USA on behalf of the Silicon Valley Alliance for Language Learners' Integration, Education, and Success (SV ALLIES), a collaboration dedicated to supporting English learner adults to attain and succeed in family-sustaining careers through collective impact and collaborative systems change. SV ALLIES is funded by a Workforce Innovation Fund grant awarded to the County of San Mateo by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Unless otherwise indicated, all data is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey (ACS).

HIGHLIGHTS

- **373,097** adult English Language learners (ages 18-64) live in San Mateo & Santa Clara Counties.
- **47%** are naturalized U.S. citizens.
- **43%** have attended college.
- **75%** are working or looking for work.
- Among those working, **52%** earn less than \$30,000 per year.

KEY FINDINGS

Languages Spoken

- Over 77 different home languages are spoken by English language learners in Silicon Valley.
- Among the most common are **Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese/Mandarin, Tagalog, and Cantonese.**

Geographic Distribution

- Spanish-speaking ELLs live across Silicon Valley and are a significant population in nearly every city.
- Other language communities are more concentrated in particular areas, including Cantonese- and Russian-speakers in north/central San Mateo; Tagalog-speakers in north San Mateo and east Santa Clara; Vietnamese-speakers in central and east San Jose; and Korean-speakers in west San Jose.

Educational Levels

- Twenty-five percent of Silicon Valley's ELL adults have a bachelor's or advanced degree, 18% have some college or an associate's degree, and 57% have a high school diploma or less.

Residency and Citizenship

- Nearly all (96%) of Silicon Valley's ELL adults have lived in the United States for at least a year; recent arrivals are more likely to live in Santa Clara County than in San Mateo.
- Just under half (47%) of ELL adults are U.S. citizens.

Employment and Earnings

- Three-quarters of ELL adults in Silicon Valley are working or looking for work.
- Over half (52%) of employed English language learners earn less than \$30,000 per year.
- The top five occupations in which ELLs work are cook, construction laborer, janitor, maid/housekeeper, and personal care aide.
- Higher-wage occupations with concentrations of ELLs include software developers, accountants/auditors, engineering techs, registered nurses, and some supervisory or managerial positions.

Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance

- Nearly half (47%) of adult ELLs have household incomes below 250% of the federal poverty level.
- As of 2013, nearly one-third (32%) of adult ELLs had no health insurance coverage.

What is an "ELL"?

An English Language Learner, or ELL, refers broadly to any speaker of another language who is in the process of learning English.

Because the SV ALLIES project is aimed at career and employment pathways, in this analysis we have focused on adults in their prime working years. For the purpose of this brief, an ELL is defined as an individual aged 18 to 64 who speaks a language other than English at home and speaks English less than "very well."

LANGUAGES SPOKEN

- **Over half of all working-age adults in Silicon Valley speak a language other than English.**
- **Out of those non-native speakers, 58% are fluent in English.**
- **The remaining 42% (373,097 people) comprise the region’s adult English language learners (ELLs).**
- **Over 77 different home languages are spoken by ELLs in Silicon Valley. Among the most common are Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese/Mandarin, Tagalog, and Cantonese.**

The linguistic landscape in Silicon Valley is among the most diverse in the nation. At least 77 different languages are spoken at home in San Mateo or Santa Clara Counties.¹ Among adults aged 18-64, a total of 881,776 residents – 52.6% of the population – speak a language other than English at home. Well over half (58%) of those individuals are also fluent in English.

English fluency ranges widely by language community. Among adults aged 18-64, only 36% of Vietnamese speakers are English fluent, while on the opposite extreme, 92% of adult Tamil speakers are English fluent. Spanish-speakers – by far the largest language community in the region – fall in the middle of the range with just

over half (50.3%) of adult Spanish speakers fluent in English.

Focusing in on those who are not fluent in English, there are an estimated 373,097 adults aged 18-64 who speak English less than “very well”. In the remainder of this brief, we will refer to this group as “English Language Learner adults (ELLs).”

The table below shows the top 10 languages spoken by English language learners in the region, along with the number of speakers in each county. In total, 88% of all English language learners speak one of these top ten as their primary language.

Top 10 Languages Spoken by English Language Learners in Silicon Valley (Ages 18-64)			
Primary Language Spoken	Total Number of People	San Mateo County Residents	Santa Clara County Residents
Spanish	162,813	51,620	111,193
Vietnamese	56,354	1,398	54,956
Chinese	37,584	10,980	26,604
Tagalog	20,891	6,889	14,002
Mandarin	13,954	2,979	10,975
Cantonese	11,635	5,974	5,661
Korean	8,268	1,216	7,052
Japanese	6,993	1,620	5,373
Russian	5,174	2,098	3,076
Hindi	5,120	1,480	3,640
All other languages	44,311	12,117	32,194
TOTAL ELL ADULTS	373,097	98,371	274,726

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

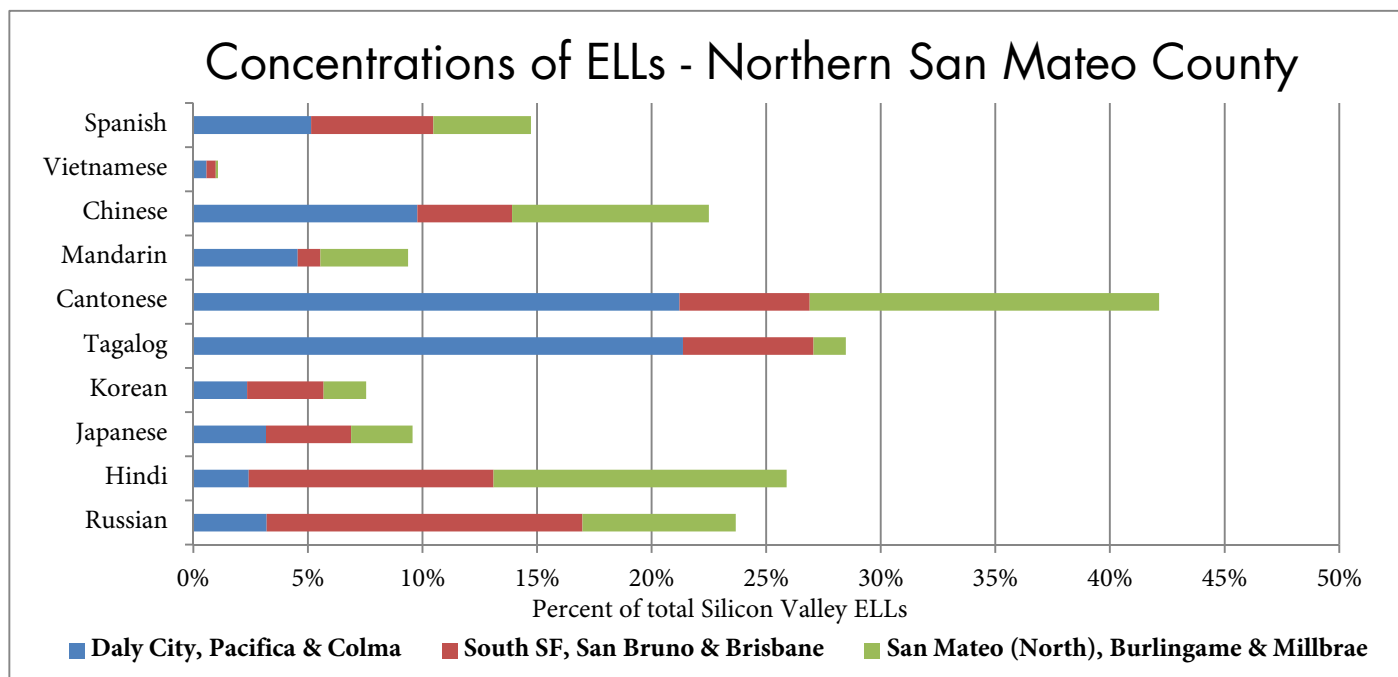
- Spanish-speaking ELLs live across Silicon Valley and are a significant population in nearly every city.
- Cantonese-speaking and Russian-speaking ELLs are both concentrated in northern /central San Mateo County.
- There is a significant concentration of Tagalog-speaking ELLs in northern San Mateo County, as well as in eastern Santa Clara County.
- Vietnamese-speaking ELLs live almost exclusively in Santa Clara County, primarily in the east as well as in central San Jose.
- Korean-speaking ELLs predominantly live in western Santa Clara County.

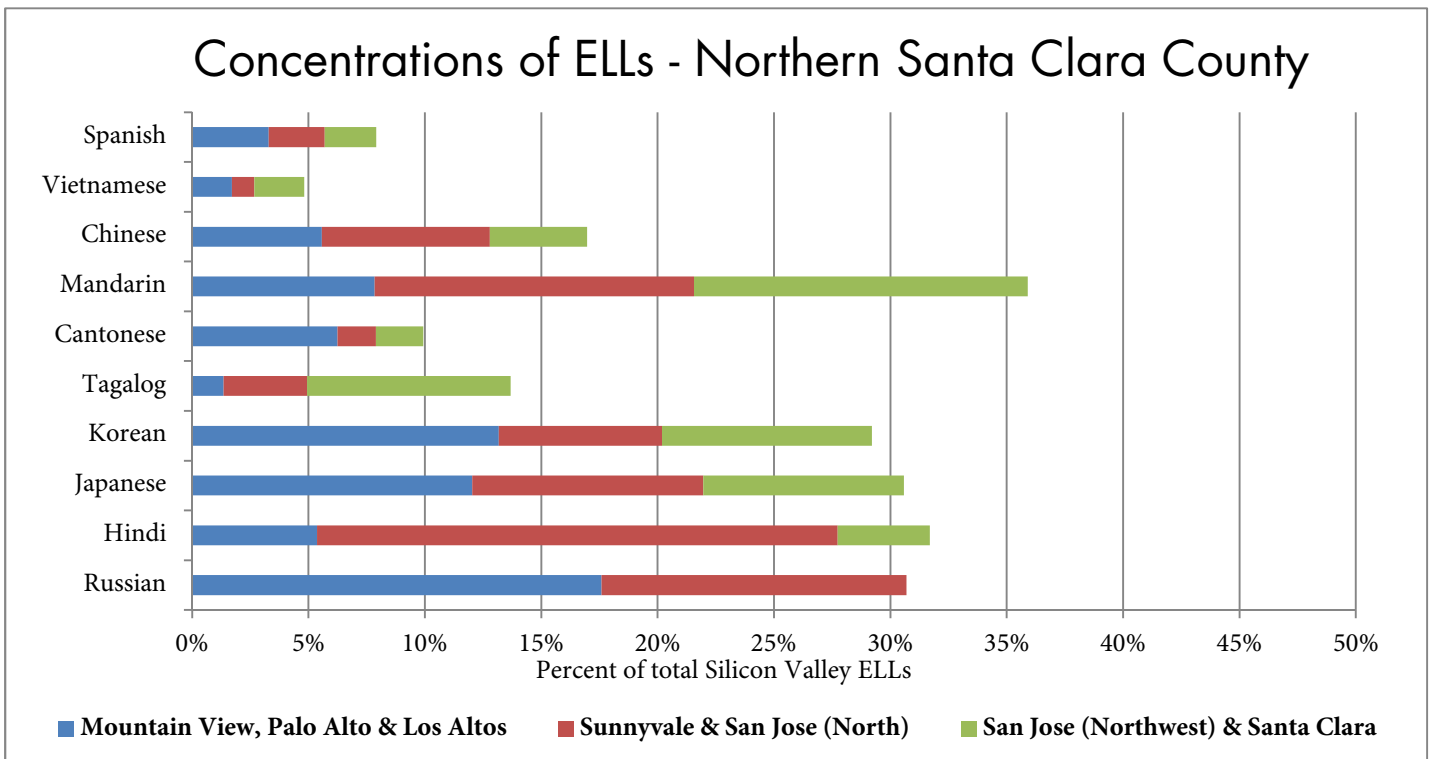
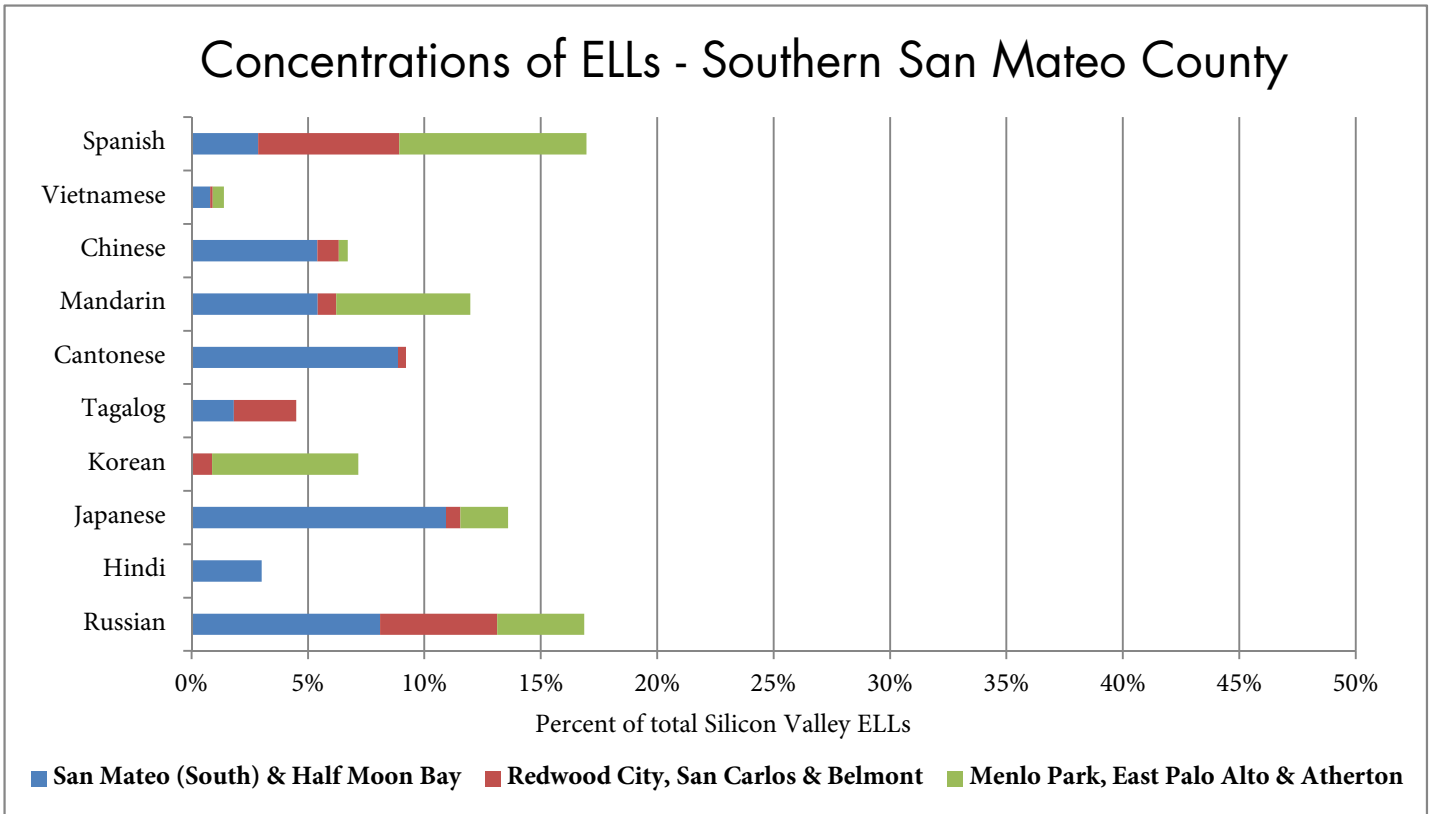
Adult English language learners are not evenly distributed across Silicon Valley. Rather, each language community has a different distributional pattern; some are clustered in just one or a handful of cities, while others are spread across the entire region. These geographic distributions have implications for access to English classes and other educational opportunities, as well as for the varying demands on educational and service providers in different areas of the region.

(The only exceptions are the Cupertino/ Saratoga/ Los Gatos area, where Chinese is more common, and the Milpitas/ Northern San Jose area, where Vietnamese dominates.) However, some other common languages, including Cantonese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean, and Russian, are more concentrated in particular neighborhoods.

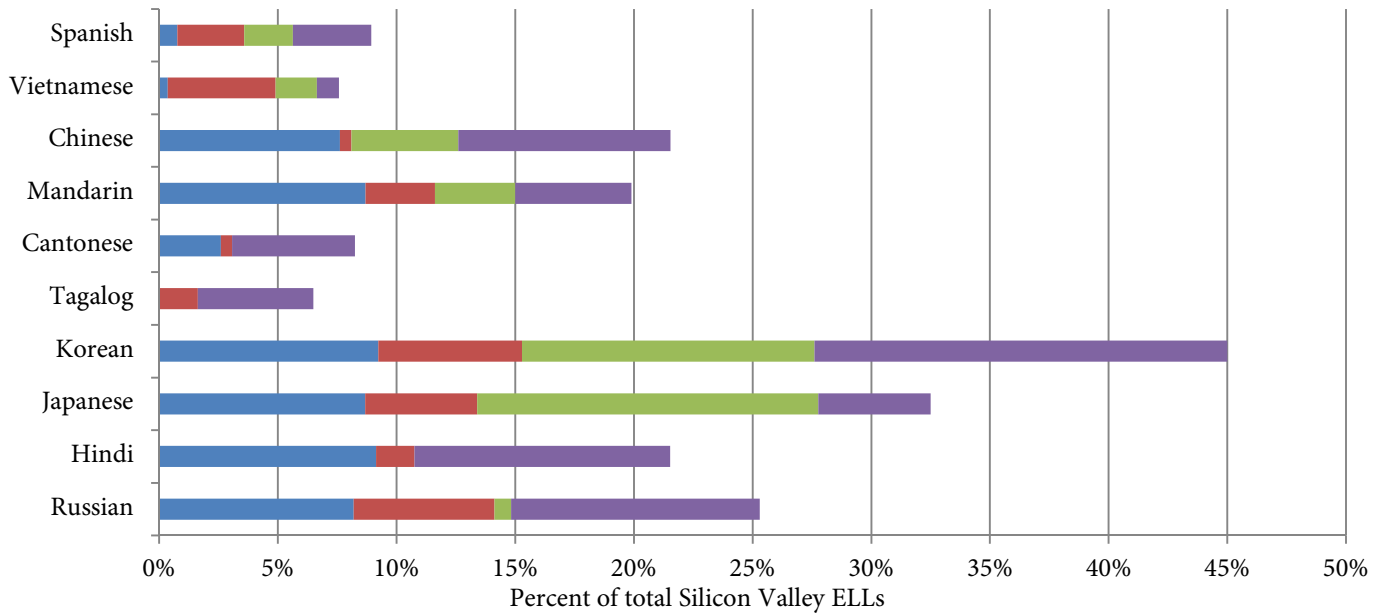
Spanish-speakers, who make up 44% of all adult ELLs, are widely spread across Silicon Valley. In almost every sub-area of the region, Spanish is the most common language spoken by ELLs.

The graphs below and on the following pages show the concentration of ELLs by language spoken in each of the various sub-areas of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. The geographic designations indicated in the legends represent the sub-county areas as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.²

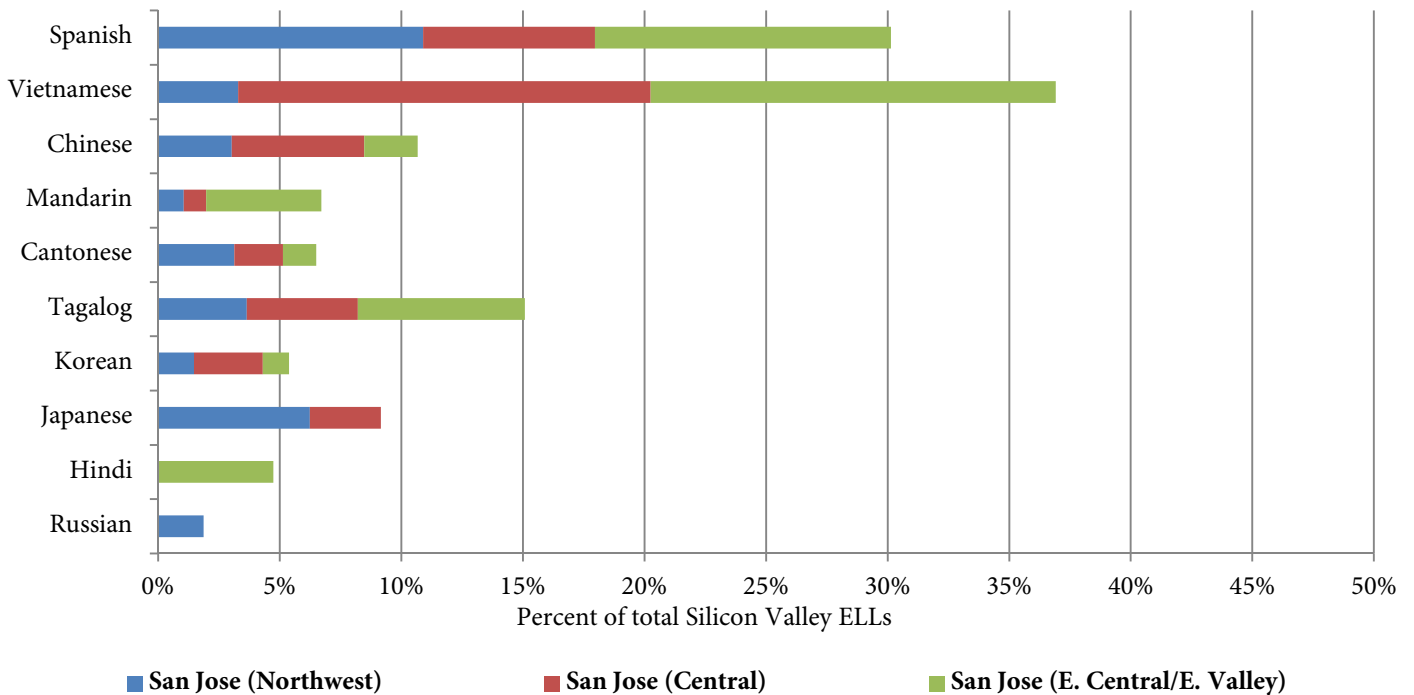


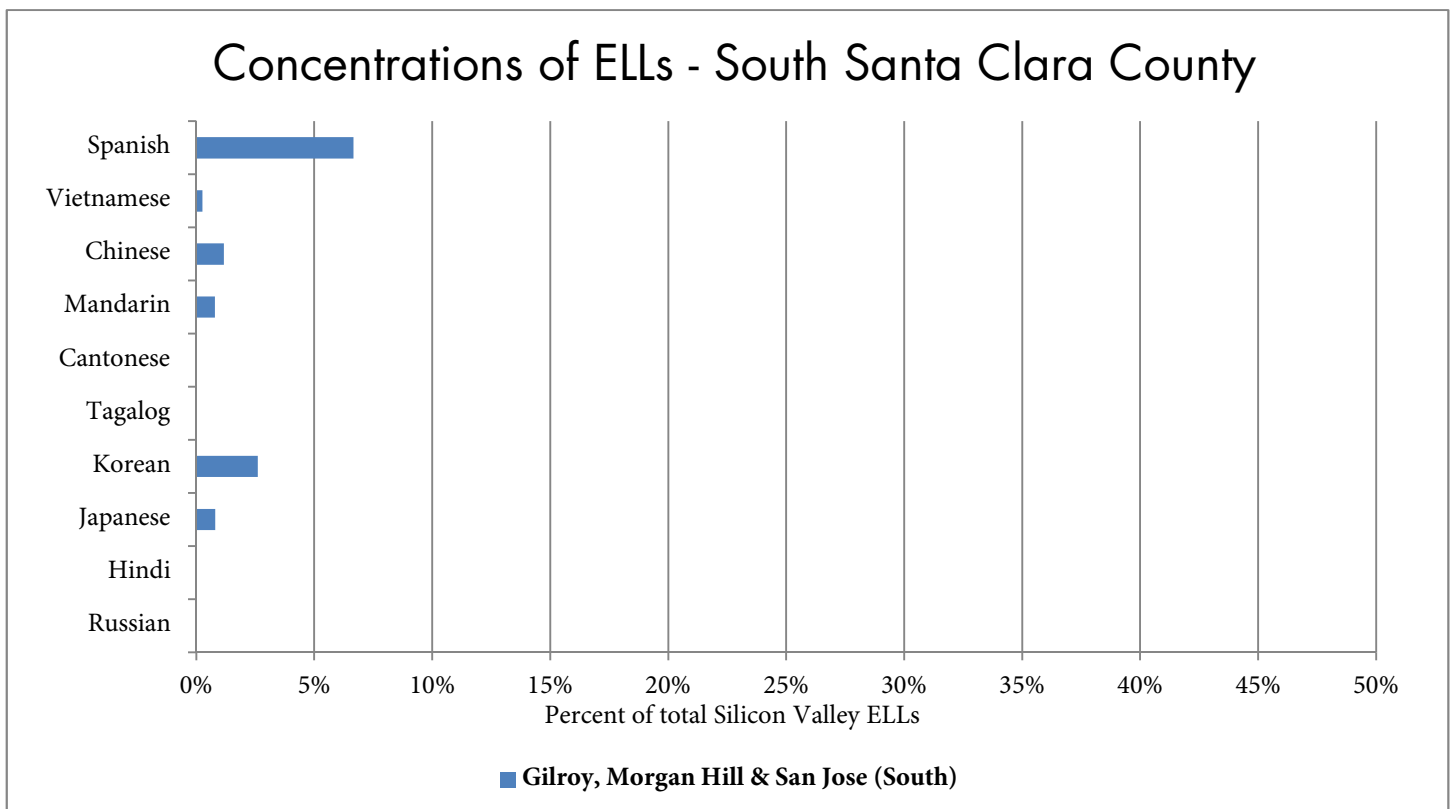
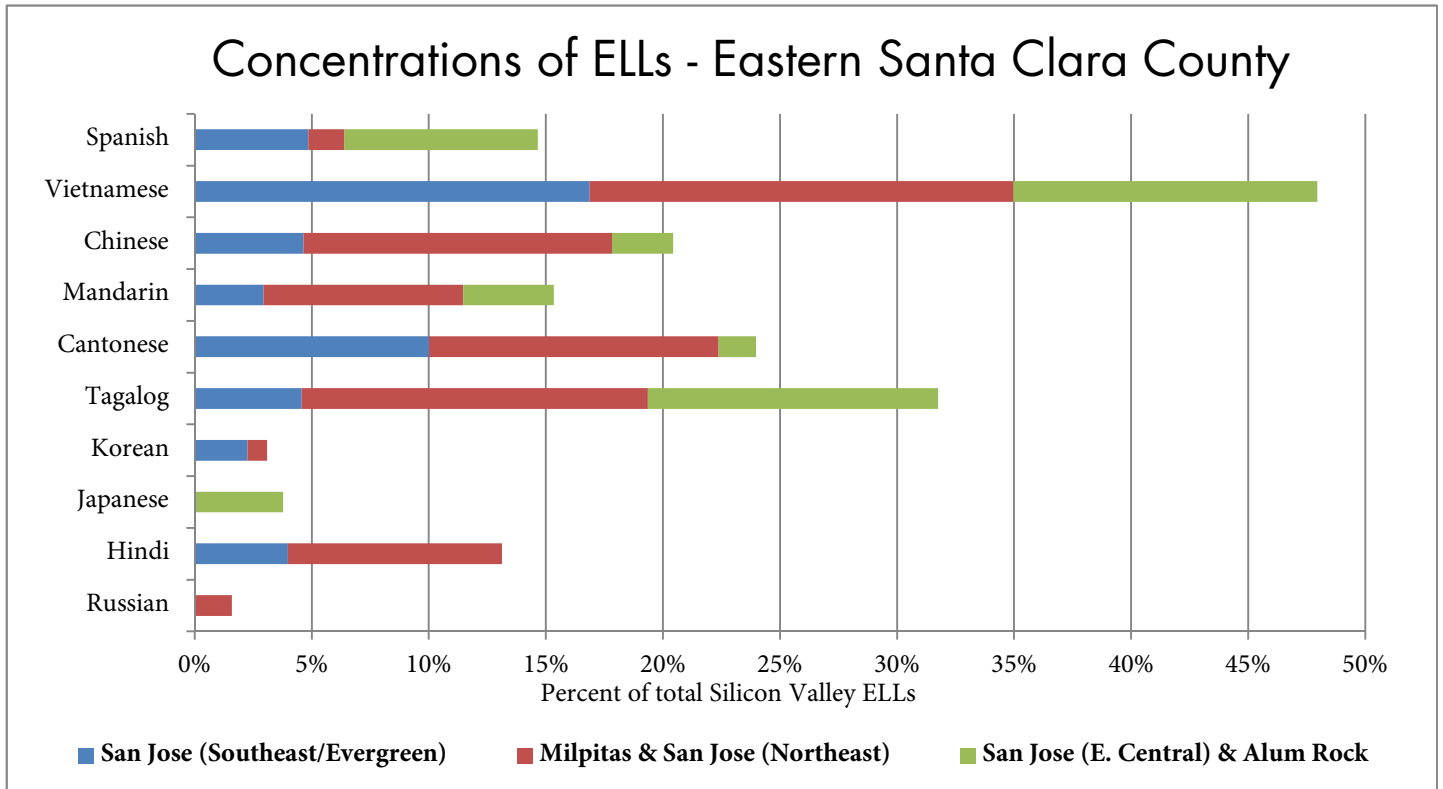


Concentrations of ELLs - Western Santa Clara County



Concentrations of ELLs - East-Central San Jose





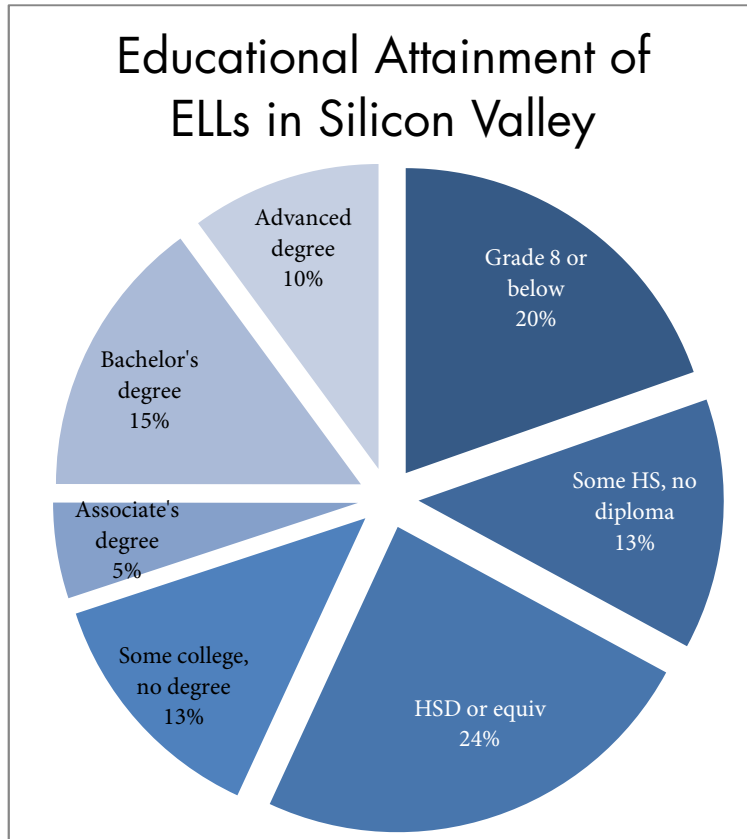
EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

- In aggregate, 25% of Silicon Valley’s ELLs have a bachelor’s or advanced degree, 18% have some college or an associate’s degree, and 57% have a high school diploma or less.
- Virtually all (91%) of Tagalog-speaking ELLs have a high school diploma, compared to just 42% of Spanish-speaking ELLs.
- 59% of Vietnamese-speaking ELLs have never attended college.
- 62% of Chinese/Mandarin-speaking ELLs have an associate’s, bachelor’s or higher degree.

Silicon Valley’s adult English language learners are extremely diverse not only linguistically, but also in their current educational levels. While over half (57%) of adult ELLs have never attended college, another 25% of ELLs have a bachelor’s or advanced degree.

Spanish-speaking ELLs, 57% do not have a high school diploma, which can pose a significant impediment to further education as well as to career opportunities. At the other extreme, 53% of Chinese/ Mandarin-speaking ELLs have a bachelor’s or advanced degree.

This wide range of educational levels indicates that there is no “one size fits all” educational approach to ELLs. Those with less than a high school education may be most in need of basic skills classes, while those with college degrees might benefit from assistance in understanding how to translate their degrees and experience from another country to enable them to find employment in their field.

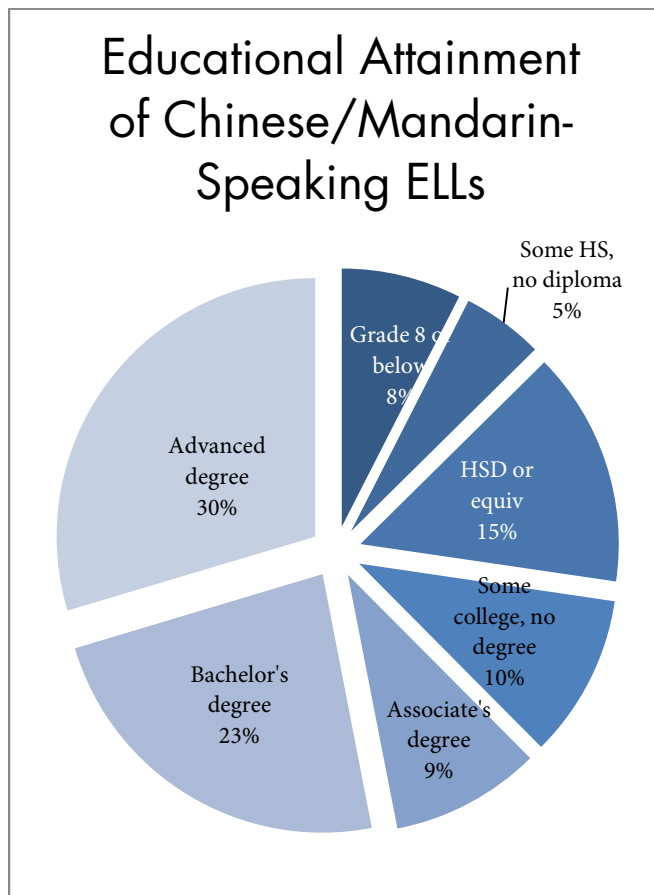
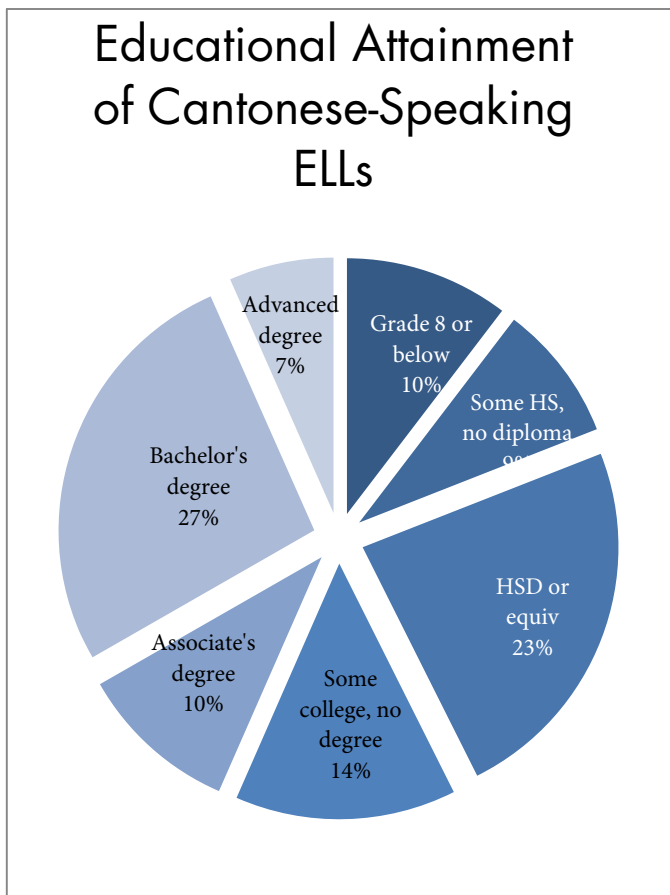
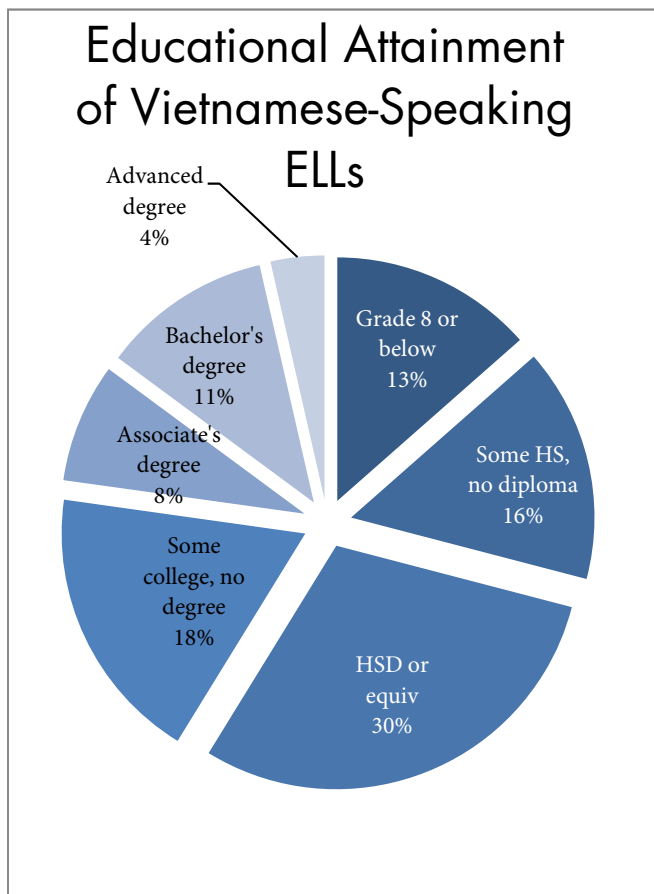
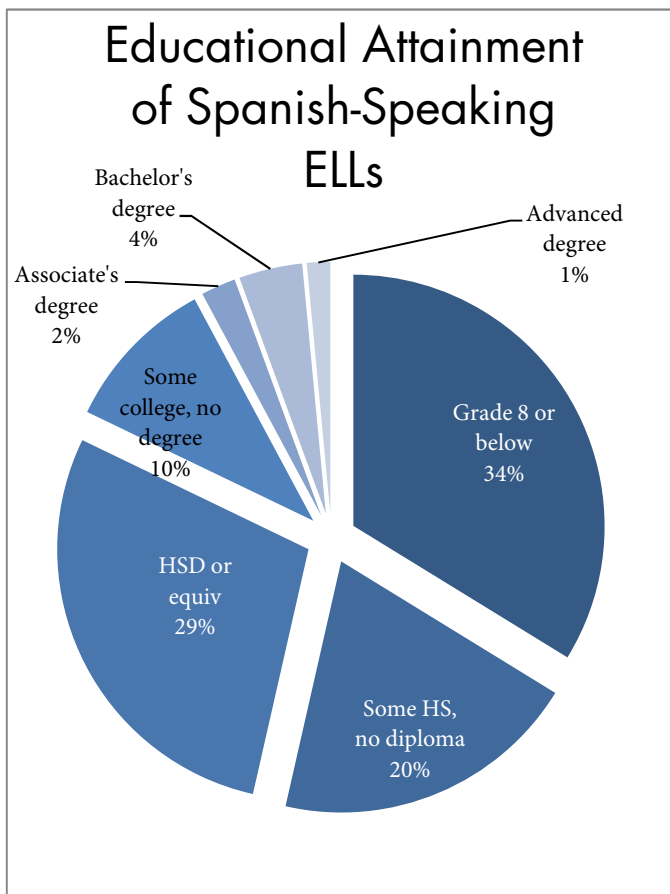


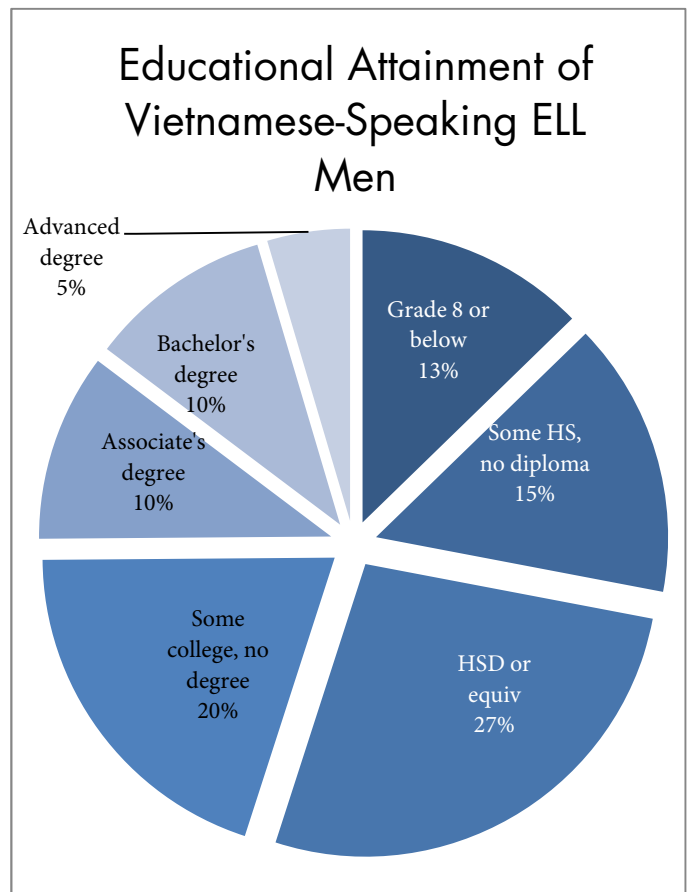
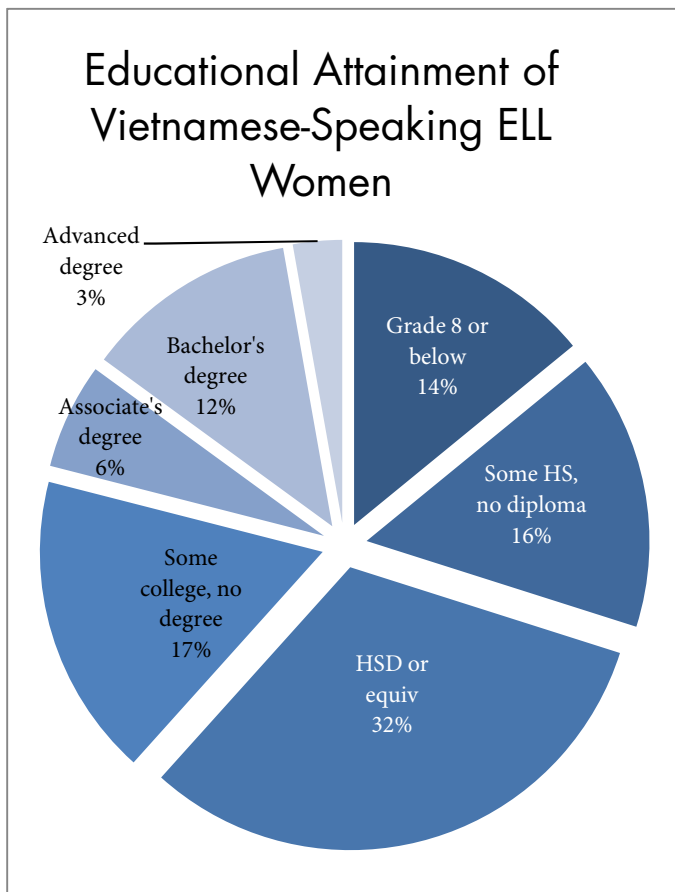
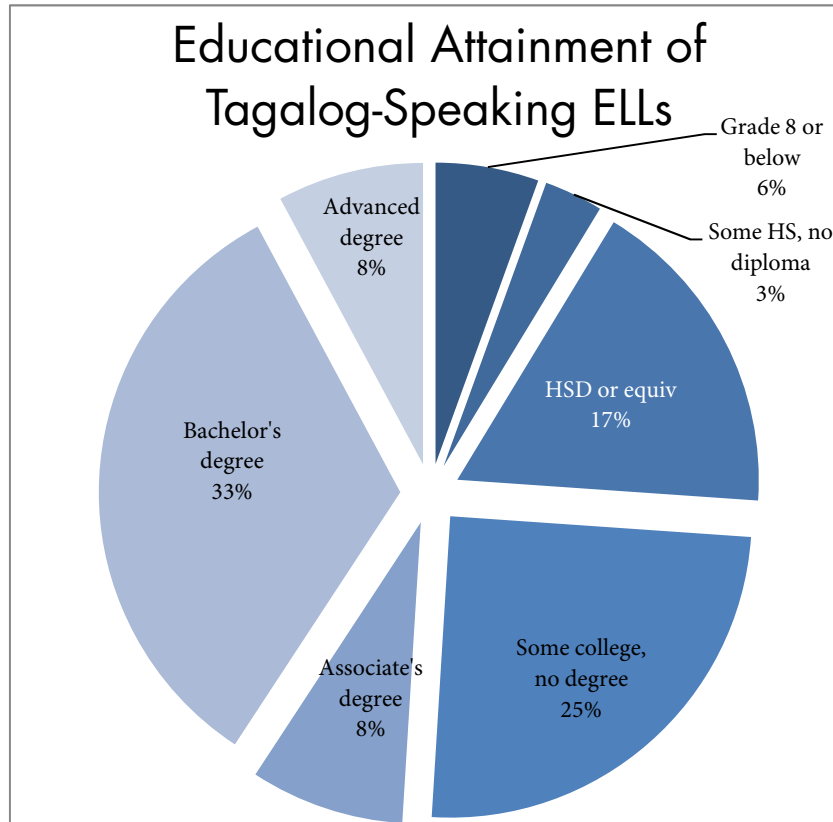
The charts here and on the following pages show educational attainment of ELLs in total and by primary language spoken.

Educational attainment was also analyzed by gender. Among ELLs overall little gender difference was evident. However, within specific language communities there may be educational

Educational attainment patterns also differ between language communities. Among

differences by gender. For instance, among Vietnamese-speaking ELLs, 62% of women have a high school diploma or less, compared to 55% of men.





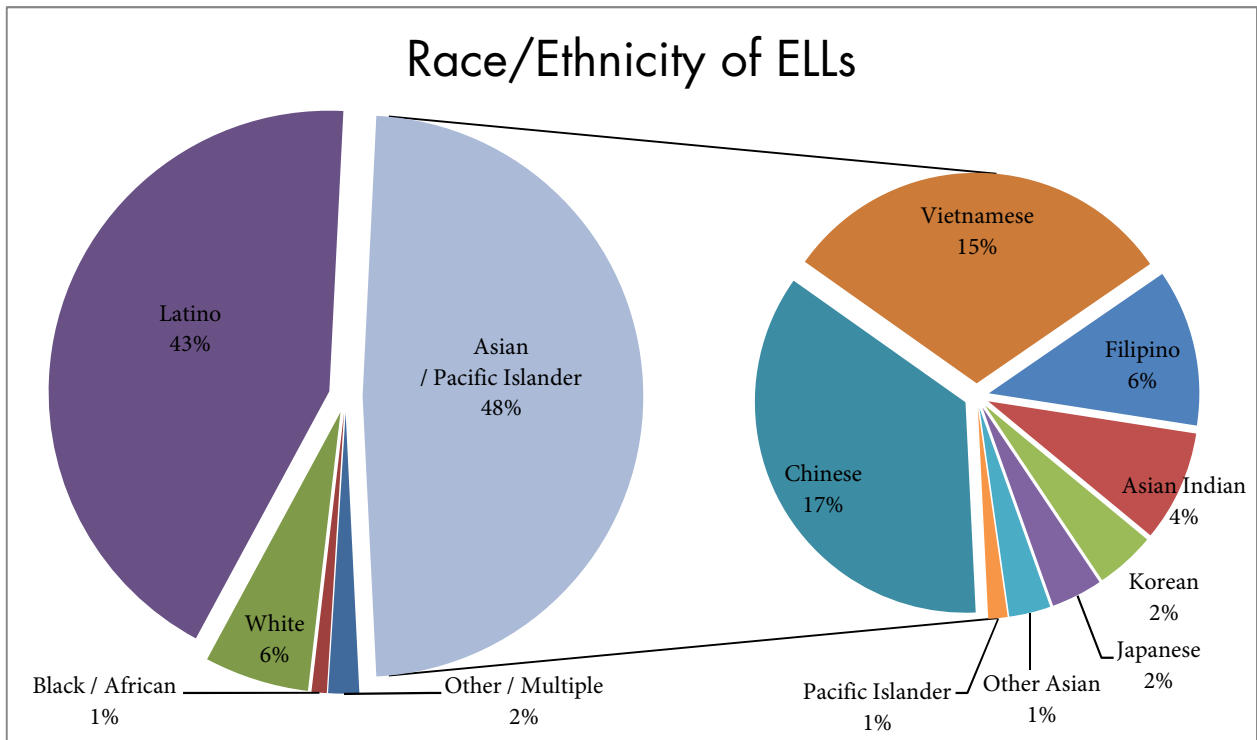
RACE / ETHNICITY

- **Approximately 43% of Silicon Valley ELLs identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 48% as Asian/Pacific Islander.**
- **Among Asian ELLs, roughly one-third identify as Chinese, one-third as Vietnamese, and substantial portions as Filipino, Indian, Korean or Japanese.**

The ethnic makeup of adult English Language learners in Silicon Valley likewise reflects the diversity of the regions’ immigrant communities.

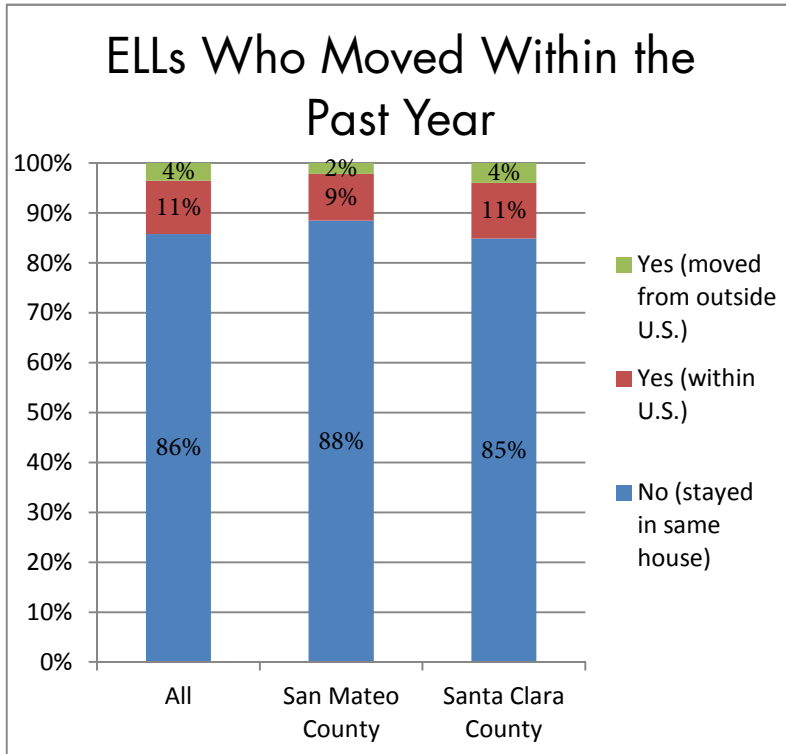
The large majority of ELLs identify as either Latino or Asian/Pacific Islander, with smaller portions identifying as Black/African, white, some other race or multi-racial.

Within each of these broad categories there is great variability. For example, within the overall category of “Asian”, major populations of ethnic groups include Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, Japanese, and Pacific Islander, as well as dozens of other communities with smaller populations. Each of these communities has distinct cultural and demographic characteristics.



RESIDENCY AND CITIZENSHIP

- **96% of all ELL adults have lived in the United States for at least a year.**
- **Recent arrivals are more likely to live in Santa Clara County than in San Mateo.**



While new immigrants continue to come to Silicon Valley, their numbers are small compared to the total population. Most adult ELLs currently in Silicon Valley (86%) have lived here for at least a year. Of those who did move, three-quarters came from elsewhere within the United States. Only 4% of adult ELLs arrived in the country in the past year.

There is considerable geographic variation in where newly arrived ELLs live. Compared to those in San Mateo County, ELLs in Santa Clara County are 30% more likely to have moved within the past year, and 80% more likely to have recently moved from outside of the United States.

- **Nearly half of ELLs are U.S. citizens.**
- **Citizenship status varies greatly by language community.**

Citizenship status has a considerable impact on employment and career opportunities, and may also affect eligibility for some educational programs or services.

There have been considerable public and community efforts in the region to support and encourage immigrants in the application process to become naturalized U.S. citizens. Currently, nearly half (47%) of ELLs in Silicon Valley are U.S. citizens. Of the remaining ELLs who are non-U.S. citizens, it is likely that fewer than half are currently eligible for citizenship.

The portion who are U.S. citizens varies widely across language communities. As shown in the chart on the next page, only 27% of Spanish-speaking ELLs are U.S. citizens, compared with 60% of Chinese/Mandarin, and Tagalog speakers, 78% of Vietnamese speakers, and 86% of Cantonese speakers. This disparity is likely due primarily to differences in eligibility status, although access to resources could also be a contributing factor.

RESIDENCY AND CITIZENSHIP (CONTINUED)

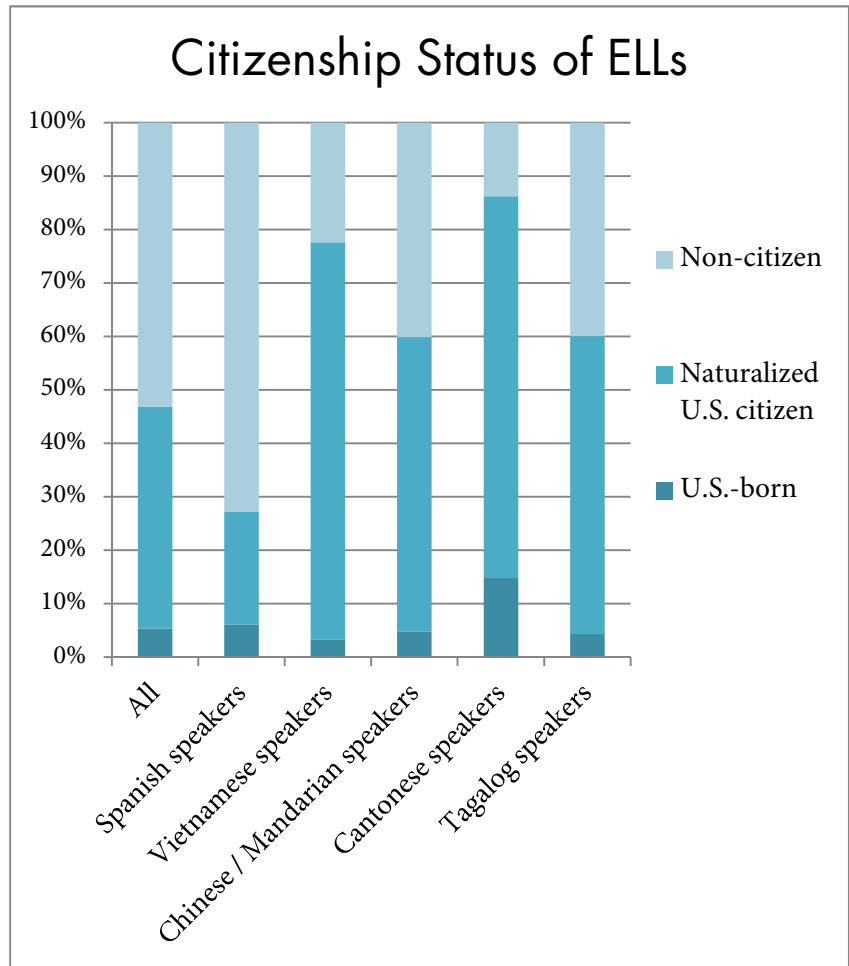
- An estimated 148,000 undocumented adults live in Silicon Valley (not all of whom are ELLs).
- Nearly half (45%) of undocumented adults are projected to be potentially eligible for temporary legal status under the President’s 2014 order for Administrative Relief.

There is no data directly available on the portion of ELLs who are undocumented. However, there have been estimates made of the total undocumented population in Silicon Valley.

to 73,000 undocumented residents in the two counties may be eligible for deferred action, of whom at least 67,000 are age 18 and over.

The Migration Policy Institute estimates that there are a total of 148,000 undocumented residents age 18 and over in Silicon Valley, 104,000 who live in Santa Clara County and 44,000 who live in San Mateo County.³

A number of these residents may be eligible for temporary immigration status under the deferred action (administrative relief) programs announced by the Obama Administration, including the original Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program established in 2012 as well as the expansion and new program announced in November 2014. Based on available data, the Migration Policy Institute estimates that up



EMPLOYMENT

- **Three-quarters of English language learner adults in Silicon Valley are working or looking for work.**
- **The gender gap in employment is higher among English language learners than in the general population.**

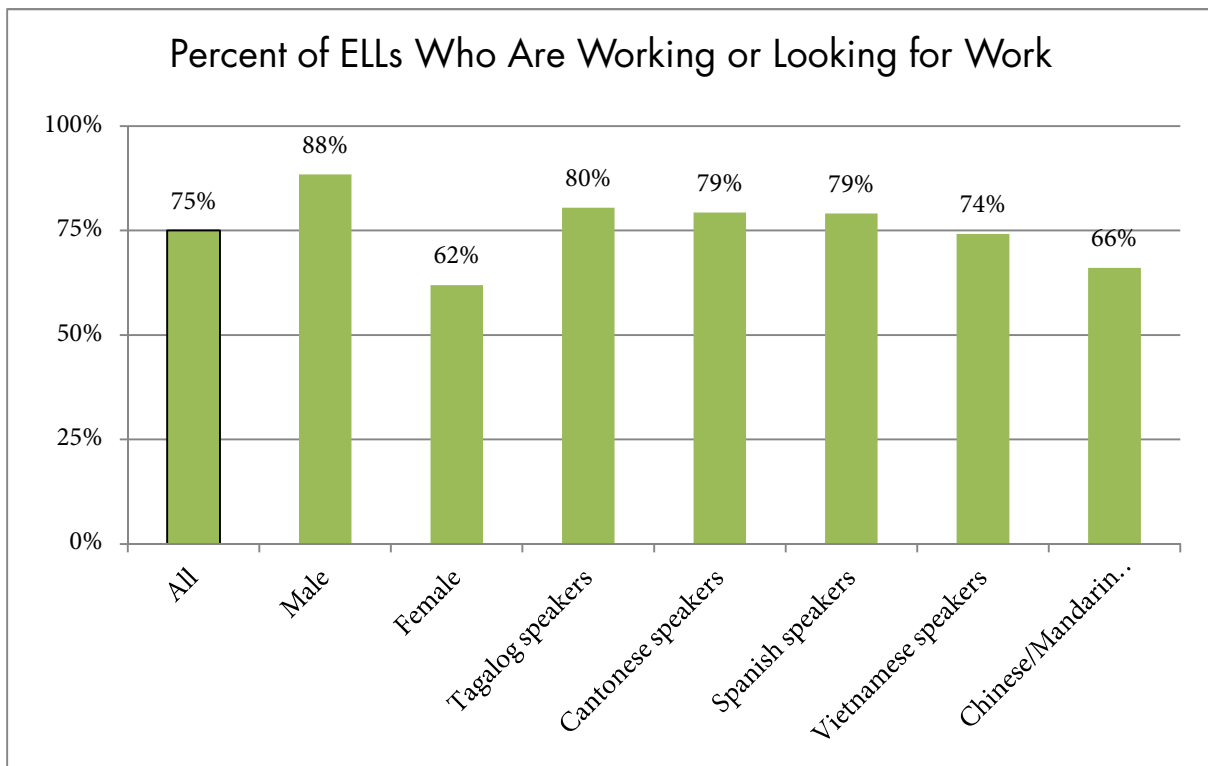
Among Silicon Valley’s English language learners (ages 18 to 64), 75% are labor force participants: meaning they are either employed, or unemployed and actively looking for work.

This is slightly lower than the 80% labor force participation for the general population in the same age bracket, due to the fact that women who are English language learners are less likely than women overall to be in the labor force, with labor force participation rates of 65% and 73% respectively. On the other hand, men who are English language learners are slightly *more* likely

than men overall to be in the labor force (88% versus 86%).

The graph below shows labor force participation rates of English language learners by gender and primary language spoken.

Among employed English language learners, the large majority (78%) work for a private for-profit employer; 55% work in the nonprofit sector and 6% in the public sector. The remaining 11% are self-employed or work without pay for a family business.



EARNINGS FROM WORK

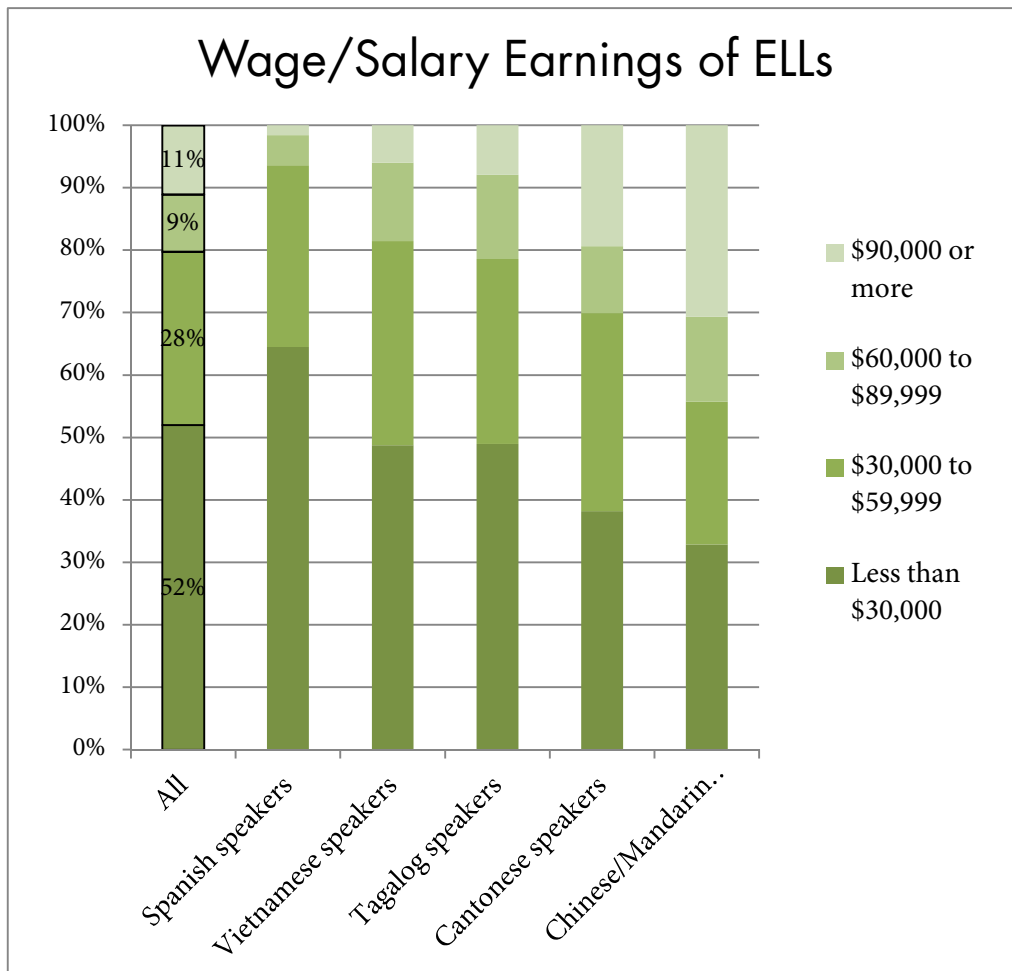
- **Over half (52%) of working English language learners earn less than \$30,000 per year.**
- **Spanish-speakers are the most likely to earn low wages, followed by Vietnamese- and Tagalog-speakers.**

In contrast to the image of Silicon Valley as a high-tech, high-wage employment center, most English language learners working in the region earn low to moderate wages.

Among ELL workers (ages 18 to 64), 52% had annual wage/salary earnings of less than \$30,000, which equates to just below \$15 per hour for a full-time, year-round job. Another 28% earned between \$30,000 and \$60,000. Nine percent earned between \$60,000 and \$90,000; the remaining 11% earned more than \$90,000. By comparison, among *all* workers in Santa Clara

County, only 36% earned less than \$30,000, and 27% earned more than \$90,000.

There is considerable differentiation in ELLs' earnings between different language communities. As shown in the graph below, among the largest language communities, Spanish-speakers are the most likely (64%) to work in jobs paying less than \$30,000, followed by Vietnamese and Tagalog speakers (both at 49%). In contrast, there is much greater diversity in earnings of Chinese/Mandarin speakers: 33% earn less than \$30,000, while another 31% earn more than \$90,000.



OCCUPATIONS

- **The top five occupations in which ELLs work are cook, construction laborer, janitor, maid/housekeeper, and personal care aide.**
- **Higher-wage occupations with notable concentrations of ELLs include software developers, accountants/auditors, engineering techs, registered nurses, and some supervisory or managerial positions.**

In San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, adult English language learners work in 287 distinct occupations. However, the majority of workers are concentrated in just a few dozen types of jobs. The top 42 occupations employ two-thirds of all English language learners.

Notably, the majority of these occupations tend to be low-wage service sector positions, although there are a few high-wage occupations such as software developer.

The chart on the next page lists the top 42 occupations (all those employing at least 2,000 English language learners) and the employment concentration in each.

Again, there are notable gender differences. The top three occupations for men are construction laborer, cook, and ground maintenance worker; for women, the top three are personal care aide, maid/housekeeper, and childcare worker.

Different language communities also tend to be concentrated in different occupations, although there is some overlap. As shown in the table below, Spanish-speakers are most likely to be cooks; Chinese or Mandarin speakers to be software engineers; Vietnamese speakers to be “miscellaneous personal appearance workers”, such as at a nail salon; and both Cantonese and Tagalog speakers are most likely to be personal care aides, such as homecare or home health aides.

Occupations Employing the Highest Concentrations of English Language Learners (includes all occupations in which >5% of a given language community works)				
Spanish speakers	Chinese/ Mandarin speakers	Cantonese speakers	Vietnamese speakers	Tagalog speakers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooks • Construction laborers • Janitors • Maids & housekeepers • Grounds maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software developers, applications & systems • Accountants & auditors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal care aides • Retail salespersons • Accountants & auditors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misc. personal appearance workers (e.g., nail salons) • Dishwashers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal care aides • Retail salespersons • Registered nurses

Top Occupations Where English Language Learners Work			
	Percent of All ELLs	Percent of Male ELLs	Percent of Female ELLs
Cooks	4.4%	5.2%	3.4%
Construction laborers	3.8%	6.6%	0.1%
Janitors	3.4%	3.8%	2.9%
Maids & housekeepers	3.3%	0.9%	6.5%
Personal care aides	3.0%	0.3%	6.6%
Grounds maintenance	2.9%	4.9%	0.2%
Software developers, applications & systems	2.6%	3.4%	1.5%
Cashiers	2.3%	1.1%	3.8%
Laborers & hand materials movers	2.0%	2.7%	1.0%
Driver/sales & truck drivers	2.0%	3.3%	0.4%
Childcare workers	1.8%	0.2%	3.8%
Retail salespersons	1.8%	1.5%	2.3%
Misc. assemblers & fabricators	1.8%	1.4%	2.2%
Waiters & waitresses	1.7%	1.4%	2.2%
Misc. managers	1.7%	1.9%	1.5%
Inspectors, testers, samplers, sorters & weighers	1.6%	0.8%	2.5%
Accountants & auditors	1.6%	0.6%	2.9%
Food prep workers	1.5%	1.1%	2.0%
Nursing & home health aides	1.5%	0.8%	2.4%
Misc. personal appearance workers (e.g, nail salons)	1.3%	0.1%	2.9%
First-line supervisors of retail workers	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%
Engineering techs, except drafters	1.3%	1.7%	0.7%
Electrical & electronics assemblers	1.2%	1.0%	1.4%
Misc. agricultural workers	1.2%	1.3%	1.0%
Automotive techs & mechanics	1.1%	2.0%	0.0%
Food service managers	1.1%	1.4%	0.6%
Hairstylists & cosmetologists	1.0%	0.1%	2.1%
Carpenters	1.0%	1.8%	0.0%
Customer service reps	1.0%	0.6%	1.5%
Misc. engineers	1.0%	1.5%	0.2%
Misc. metal & plastic workers	1.0%	1.2%	0.6%
Registered nurses	0.9%	0.3%	1.8%
Stock clerks & order fillers	0.8%	0.7%	0.9%
Designers	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
Electrical & electronics engineers	0.8%	1.2%	0.2%
Painters & paperhangers	0.8%	1.4%	0.1%
Misc. production workers	0.7%	0.9%	0.5%
Taxi drivers & chauffeurs	0.7%	1.2%	0.0%
Secretaries & admin assistants	0.7%	0.0%	1.5%
First-line supervisors of non-retail sales workers	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
Security guards	0.7%	1.0%	0.3%
Dishwashers	0.7%	1.0%	0.4%

INCOME AND POVERTY

- **Nearly half (47%) of nonelderly adult English language learners have household incomes below 250% of the federal poverty level.**

Due primarily to their concentration in lower-wage jobs, English language learners tend to have lower household incomes and are more likely to be in poverty compared to the overall Silicon Valley population.

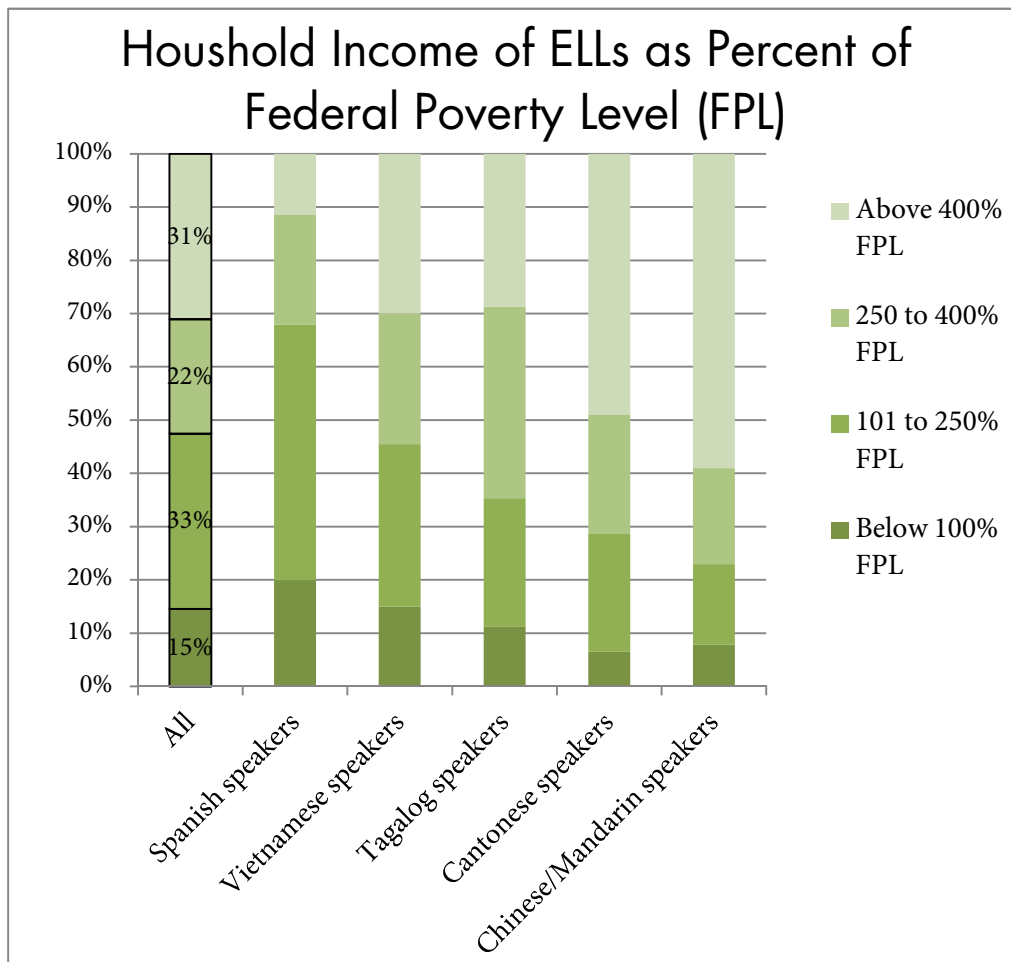
Among adult ELLs (aged 18-64), 15% have household incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL) – a level which in high-cost Silicon Valley indicates extreme poverty.⁴ This is considerably higher than the 9% poverty rate of the total adult population (ages 18-64).

Another 33% of adult ELLs have incomes between 100% and 250% of FPL,⁵ meaning they

are likely to be very low-income and struggling to meet basic necessities of food, rent, utilities, transportation, and childcare. In total, 47% - nearly half - of all adult ELLs have incomes below 250% of poverty, compared to just 28% of the overall adult population.

On the other end of the spectrum, only 31% of adult ELLs have incomes above 400% FPL, compared to 57% of the overall adult population.

Among the largest language communities, Spanish-speakers are the most likely to be low-income, with 20% below the poverty line and a



total of 68% below 250% FPL. They are followed by Vietnamese speakers (45% below 250% FPL) and Tagalog speakers (35% below 250% FPL). Cantonese speakers are less likely to have low incomes, and Mandarin or Chinese speakers are the least likely, as shown in the graph at left.

HEALTH INSURANCE

- As of 2013, nearly one-third (32%) of adult nonelderly English Language Learners had no health insurance coverage.
- Spanish-speakers were the most likely to lack health coverage, with 42% uninsured.

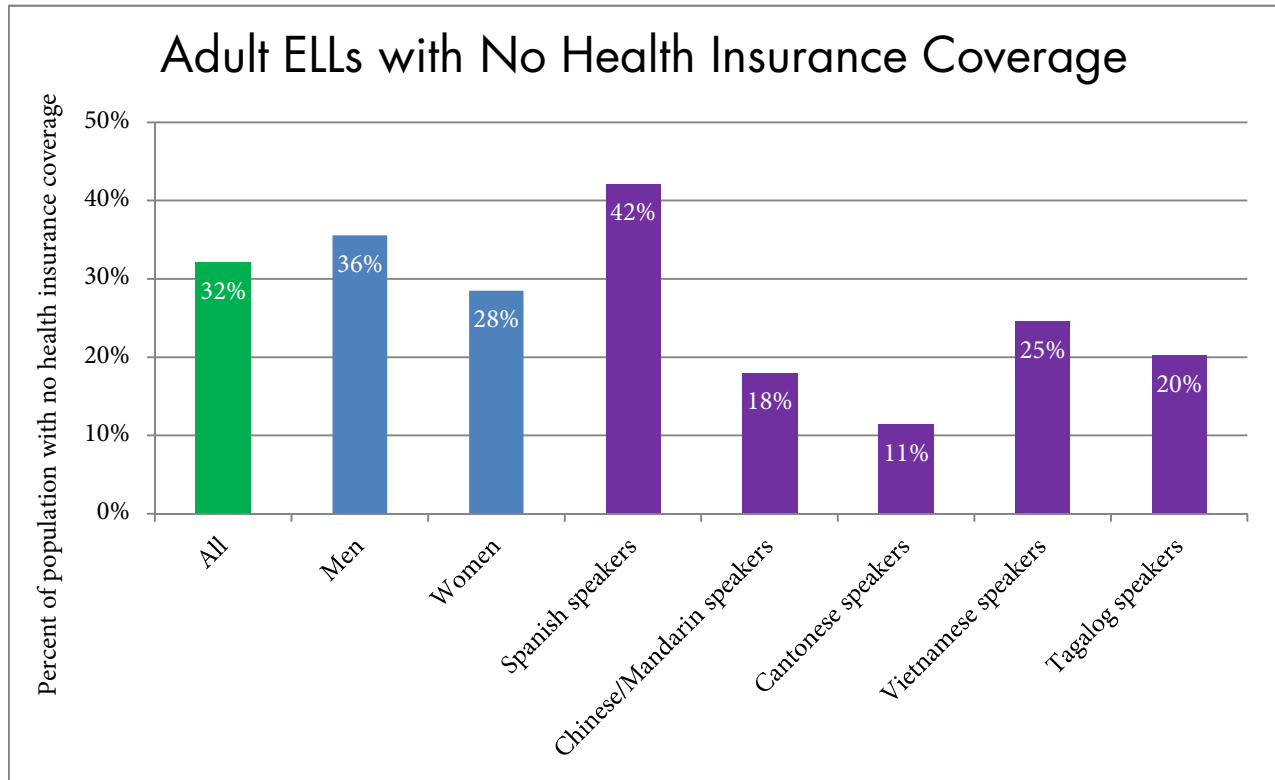
Health insurance coverage is an important component of personal and family financial stability and well-being. Adult English language learners are less likely to have access to health coverage than the general population; this is probably due to a combination of working in jobs that are less likely to provide health coverage, and a lower rate of eligibility for public health coverage programs.

The graph below shows the uninsured rate for all adult nonelderly ELLs and for several sub-populations as of 2013, the most recent data available. Health insurance coverage numbers have likely gone up in 2014-15 with the rollout

of the various elements of the federal Affordable Care Act and related state policies.

As of 2013, 32% of adult nonelderly ELLs had no health insurance coverage. Women were more likely to have coverage than men, which may be partly attributable to the wider availability of public health coverage for mothers with young children.

Among the largest language communities, Spanish speakers had the least access to health insurance, with 42% uninsured. Cantonese speakers were most likely to be covered with only 11% uninsured.



ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

With the exceptions notes below, all data provided in this brief are from the 2013 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

¹ American Community Survey 2013. The Census Bureau does not provide data on all languages, so this is likely an under-estimate.

² Specifically, the geographic areas indicates are the Census Bureau's 2010 Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs), which are the smallest geographic areas for which detailed microdata are made available to the public.

³ Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data (2015).

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/county/6081>

⁴ In 2015, the Federal Poverty Level for a single person is \$11,770. For a family of four, it is \$24,250.

⁵ For a family of four, 100 – 250% FPL is between \$24,250 and \$60,625.

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