

2025 Language Access Updates

**Presentation to the Budget and Appropriations
Committee, San Francisco Board of Supervisors**

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Frequently Used Terms

LAO - Language Access Ordinance

Administrative Code, Section 91, directs City agencies to ensure that public services and information are accessible to all people, regardless of language ability.

LEP - Limited English Proficient

Term used to refer to people who do not speak English as a primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

San Francisco's Required Languages

The current LAO requires City departments to provide language access services in Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino. Languages are certified by OCEIA once they reach a population threshold of 10,000 LEP residents. Effective January 1, 2026, the threshold will decrease to 6,000 LEP residents.

Language Access Ordinance (LAO)

TIMELINE

2001	2009	2015	2024
Equal Access to Services (EAS) Ordinance passes.	EAS renamed the Language Access Ordinance (LAO) and OCEIA designated to oversee compliance.	LAO amended to extend services and reporting requirements to all Departments providing information and services to the public.	LAO amendments further strengthen language access in the City and clarify roles.

2024 LAO Amendments: Key Changes

LEP Population Threshold

Effective January 1, 2026, the threshold for certifying an LEP language population will be reduced from 10,000 to 6,000 LEP individuals.

It is anticipated that Vietnamese and/or other languages will be eligible for certification as required in 2026.

Outreach and Education

- OCEIA will develop a multilingual brochure detailing language access rights and how to file a complaint.
- OCEIA must develop best practices for first responders.

Increase Transparency and Enhance Complaint Investigations

- OCEIA will provide quarterly language access complaint reports to the Immigrant Rights Commission and the Board of Supervisors.
- OCEIA will create a website to post summary investigative reports.

2024 LAO Amendments: Key Changes (Cont.)

Translation Requirements

Departments must translate vital information, including signage and digital content, into required threshold languages.

Departments must respond to public translation requests within 48 business hours and provide updates on completion timelines.

Crisis Situations and Disaster-Related Activities

- First responder departments are mandated to provide language assistance during emergencies in accordance with the recent updates to the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act.

Taxes and Utility Bills

- The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and Treasurer and Tax Collector (TTX) must provide additional support to help LEP residents understand their taxes and utility bills.

2024 BOS Language Access Resolution

Translation of the Language Access Complaint Form into Top 20 Languages

Publish the LAO complaint form into the top 20 languages with the most need in the City.

Development of best practices for recruiting and retaining bilingual staff

Expansion of community employment opportunities and establishment of a community language bank

A Community Language Bank is a network of trained community-based interpreters and translators that can increase capacity for language services in San Francisco.

Creation of benchmarks for Departmental investment in language access services

Based on factors such as Department size, service types, and number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients.

2025 Compliance Summary Report



Full report and a
multilingual summary of key
findings and
recommendations at:

sf.gov/languageaccess

Reporting Background

Under the LAO, public-facing City departments must collect data about their language access activities and submit an annual compliance report to OCEIA by October 1.

- Departmental goals
- Barriers and proposed solutions
- **Key Data Points:**
 - Total LEP client interactions by language
 - Total telephonic interpretations, in-person interpretations, and documents translated
 - Bilingual staff
 - Budget for language access

Snapshot of SF and District Data

One in three San Francisco residents is an immigrant.

18% of residents identify as Limited English Proficient (LEP).

District 11 has the highest LEP population, at 35%.

SNAPSHOT OF SAN FRANCISCO

1 in 3 San Francisco residents is an immigrant.

With **34%** of its residents born outside of the U.S., San Francisco remains one of the most **culturally and linguistically diverse cities** in the country.

836,321

Total population*

34%

Foreign-born residents

18%

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

42%

Residents (over the age of 5) speak a language other than English at home

40+

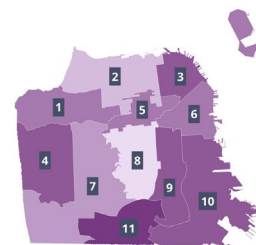
Languages spoken in San Francisco**

* United States Census Bureau's 2019-2023 American Community Survey

** These estimated numbers represent a departure from previous reports due to a change in how the United States Census Bureau categories and codes language data. In 2016, the code list was revised to match the ISO-639-3 standard. The Census Bureau also reports that the ACS estimates are samples of the total population and there may be languages spoken that are not recorded. A detailed list and explanation of how the Census Bureau defines and uses language coding and tabulation are available [here](#).

District Data

San Francisco's Supervisorial Districts, from the highest to lowest percent Limited English Proficient (LEP) population.



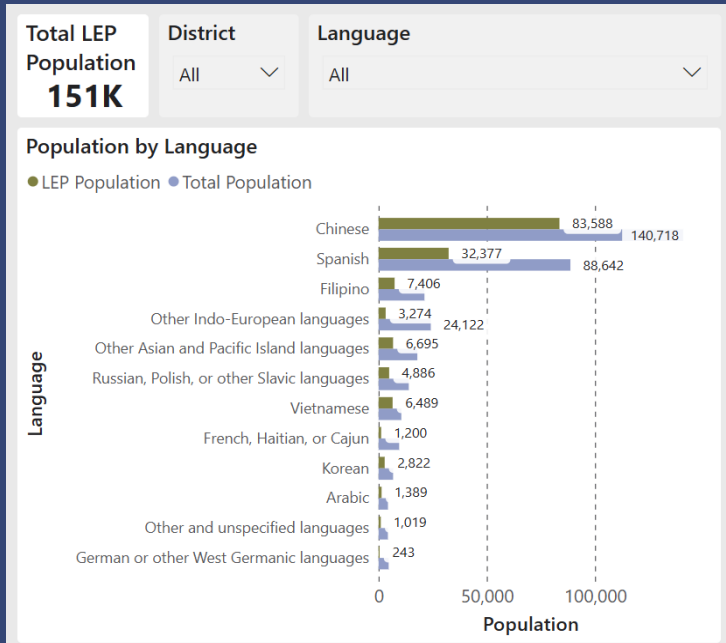
Source: United States Census Bureau's 2019-2023 American Community Survey

District	Total Population	LEP Population	% LEP
11	80,433	28,418	35%
10	71,120	19,983	28%
3	74,705	18,542	25%
4	72,041	17,695	25%
9	76,087	16,212	21%
1	71,235	12,215	17%
5	78,891	12,607	16%
6	62,076	9,659	16%
7	77,312	9,745	13%
2	63,426	3,360	5%
8	70,971	2,952	4%

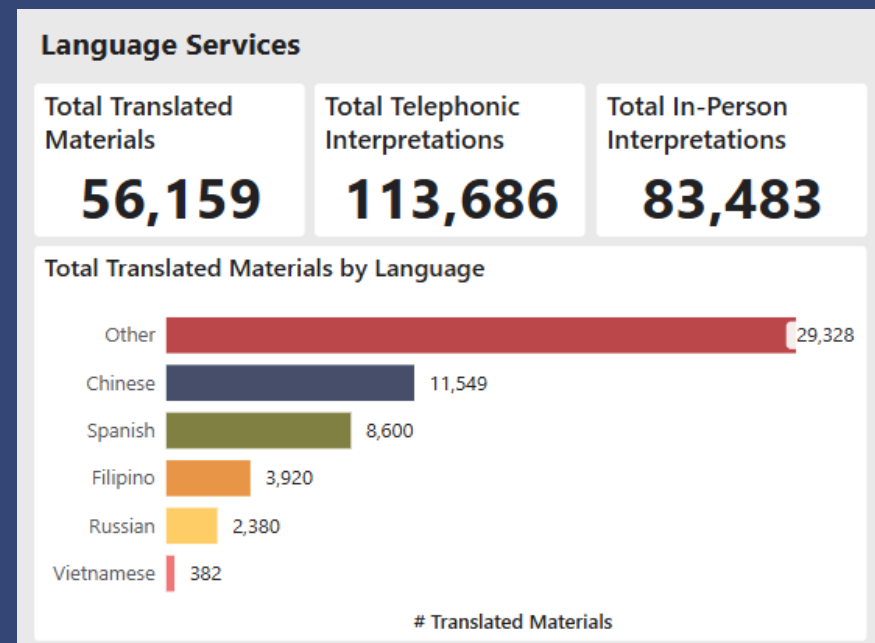
Language Access Dashboards

View language access data dashboards at: sf.gov/languageaccess

San Francisco language diversity data



Annual LAO compliance data

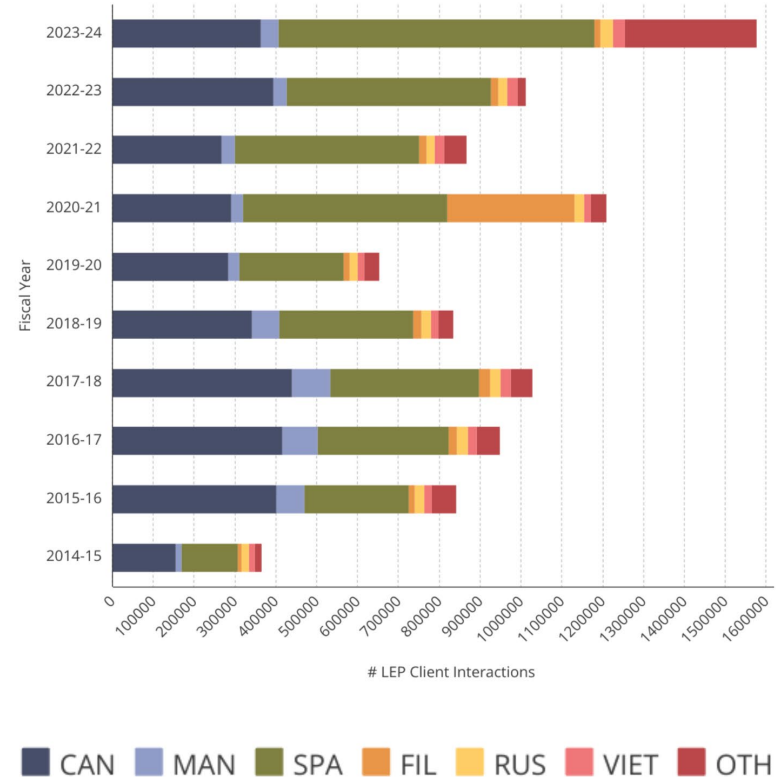


Findings: Increases

Citywide Increases

- Total LEP Client Interactions
- Translated Materials
- Telephonic Interpretation
- In-person Interpretation
- Language-Services Budget

Total LEP Client Interactions by Language, Over Time



Findings: Decreases

Citywide Decreases

- City departments reported about 2,600 bilingual employees, a 2% decline from the previous fiscal year
- Below the five-year average of about 2,680 bilingual employees

Language	Bilingual Staff	Bilingual Staff	Certified Bilingual Staff	Certified Bilingual Staff
	FY 2023-2024	Five-Year Average (FY 2020-2024)	FY 2023-2024	Five-Year Average (FY 2020-2024)
CANTONESE	746	741	619	646
MANDARIN	286	311	186	222
SPANISH	939	943	796	864
FILIPINO	200	239	108	131
RUSSIAN	65	73	53	65
VIETNAMESE	69	85	53	68
OTHER LANGUAGES	292	289	39	58
TOTAL	2,597	2,682	1,854	2,054

Recommendations

Language Services Budgeting

It is essential for each Department to ensure a planned language services budget for the new threshold language(s) effective on January 1, 2026.

Training City Staff

Training City staff about the LAO and its amendments is imperative to ensuring that City departments are in compliance and ready to provide services to members of the public.

Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Bilingual Staff

Bilingual staff are experts in City department programs, services and terminology.

Develop a robust list of culturally competent bilingual employees in the Department.

Resources for City Employees

Updated Online LAO Liaison Library

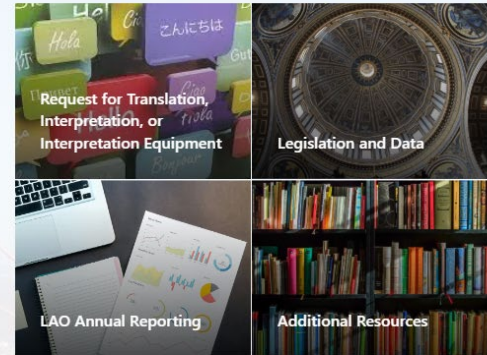
New SharePoint site for LAO liaisons includes:

- Updated slides from previous LAO trainings
- Full text of the 2024 LAO amendments
- OCEIA's new digital form for City departments to request language services
- Language access resources and more!

Resources for LAO Liaisons

OCEIA

SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE OF
**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
& IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS**



Announcements: 🗨️

Check out the latest [Language Access Compliance Report 2025](#)

Stay connected with us:

Additional Questions?

- Email language.access@sfgov.org
- Call OCEIA at 415-554-0600

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