

Demographic Profile of Adult Limited English Speakers in Massachusetts

The BPDA Research Division presents a profile on adults in Massachusetts with limited English-speaking abilities. Limited English-Speaking (LES) adults are self-reported as speaking English less than "very well". The profile includes where LES adults live in Massachusetts, population demographics and workforce statistics.

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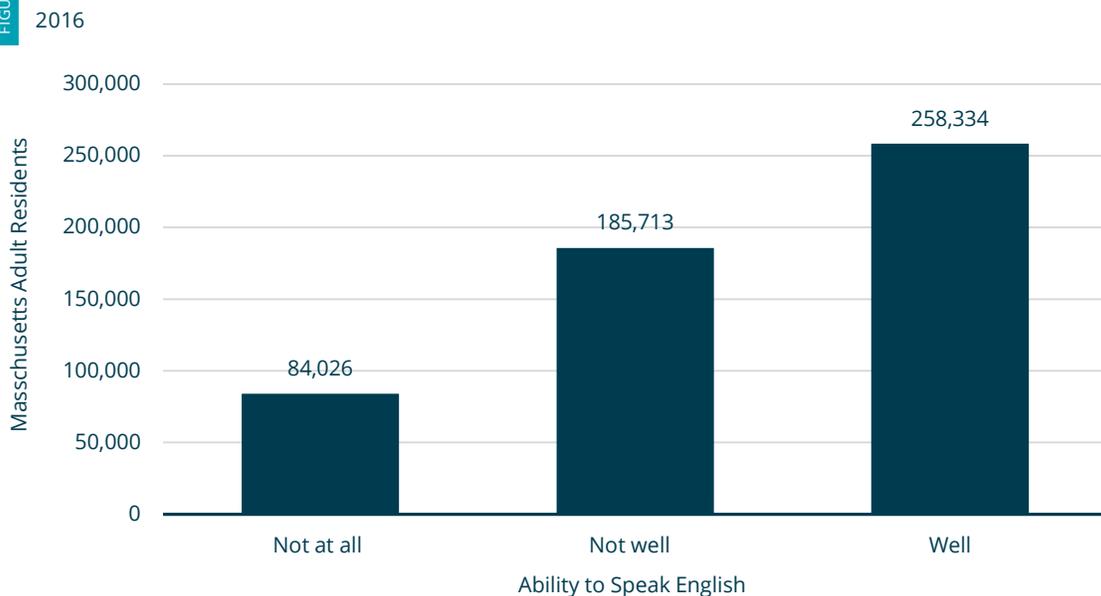
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Population of Adult Limited English Speakers in Massachusetts

Approximately 528,324 Massachusetts residents ages 18 and over speak limited English, self-reporting that they speak English less than “very well”.¹ This equates to just under 10 percent of the adult population lacking proficiency in English. Of the limited-English speaking (LES) adults in Massachusetts, approximately 84,000 do not speak English at all, 18,500 speak some English but do not speak it “well”, and 258,000 self-report that they speak English well, but not “very well”. Figure 1 provides the breakdown of Massachusetts adults by English speaking ability.

FIGURE 1 Massachusetts Residents by English Speaking Ability



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, PUMS, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

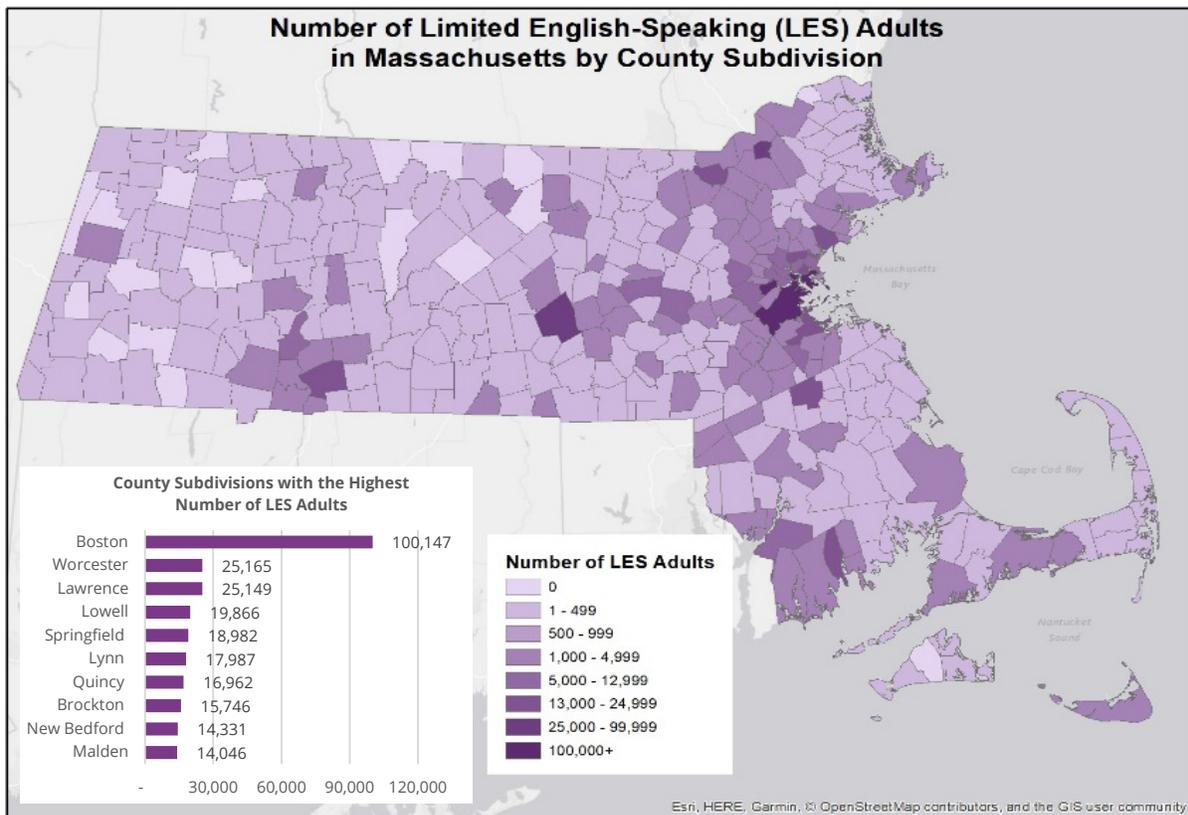
The largest LES populations are found in the major urban centers of the Commonwealth—including Boston, Lawrence, Worcester, Lowell, and Springfield. Boston alone is home to 100,000 limited-English speaking adults – 11 percent of all adults in Boston. A high share of the adult population in some Massachusetts cities and towns are limited English speakers. The cities and towns with the highest shares of adults speaking limited English are Chelsea (33 percent), Lawrence (31 percent), Lynn (16 percent) and Everett (16 percent).

¹ The U.S. Census Bureau collects information regarding a person’s ability to speak English. Respondents who report that they speak a language other than English at home are asked if they speak English “very well,” “well,” “not well,” or “not at all”. For the context of this report, respondents are considered “limited-English speakers” if they respond “not at all,” “not well,” or “well”. Respondents who speak English only or speak English “very well” in addition to another language are considered proficient in English.

Limited English Speaking Households

Almost 150,000 households in Massachusetts – 5.6 percent of all households - do not have anyone age 14 or older who is proficient in English. 40.1 percent of these households speak Spanish. Approximately 54,000 school age children (age 5 to 17) live in limited English speaking households. About 11 percent of these children themselves speak English only, but there is no adult in their household who speaks English very well. More than 47 percent of the school age children in limited English speaking households speak Spanish. Map 1 below shows where the Limited English-Speaking adults live in Massachusetts by county subdivision.²

MAP 1 Number of Limited English Speaking (LES) Adults in Massachusetts by County Subdivision
2016

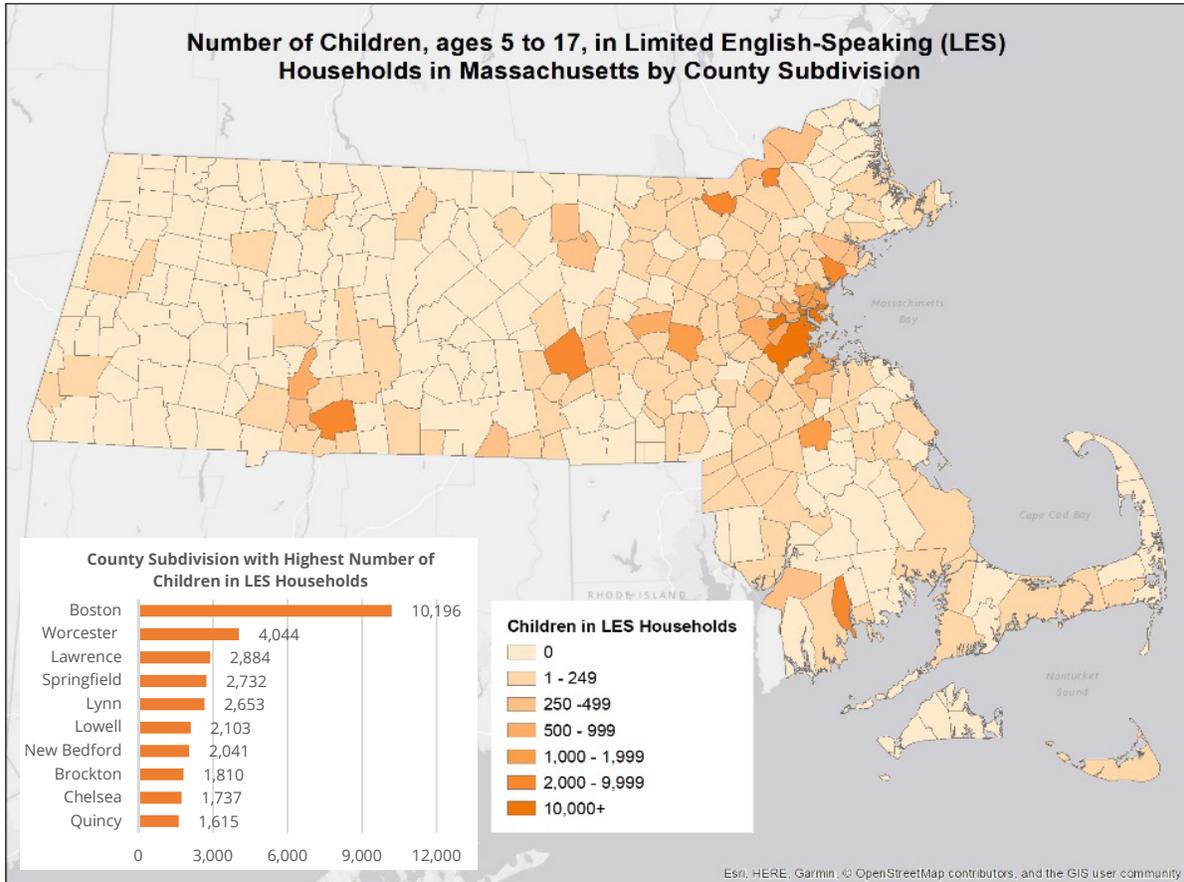


Note: A "limited English-speaking adult" is one who does not speak only English or speaks English "very well" in addition to another language
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, BPDA Research Division Analysis

² County sub-divisions are divisions of counties used by the U.S. Census Bureau. In many cases they conform to city/town boundaries.

Map 2 shows the number of children aged five to 17 years that live in Limited English-Speaking households in each county-subdivision in Massachusetts.

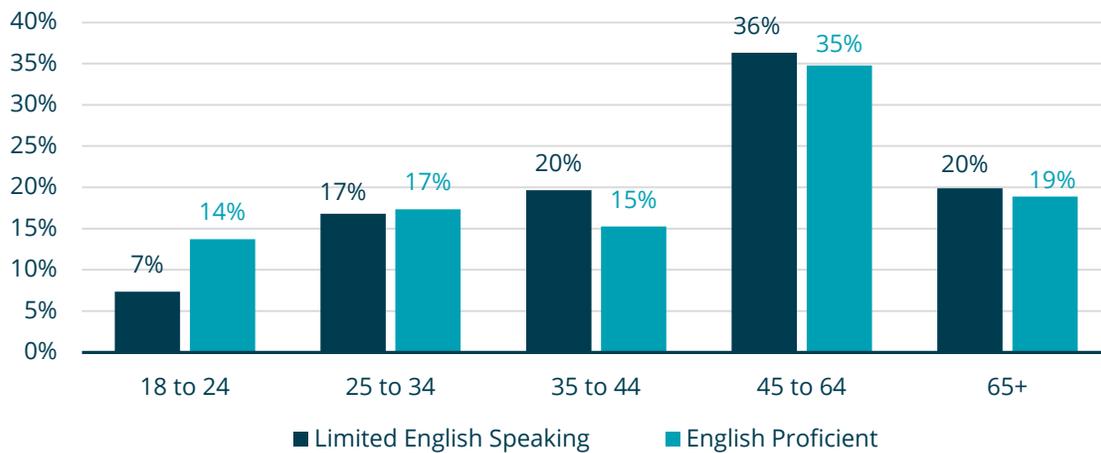
MAP 2
Number of Children, ages 5 to 17, in Limited English-Speaking Households in Massachusetts by County Subdivision
 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Limited English speaking adults in Massachusetts tend to be older – 76 percent are age 35 and older, compared to 69 percent of the English proficient population. Figure 2 provides the age distribution of adult limited English speakers compared to those who speak English proficiently.

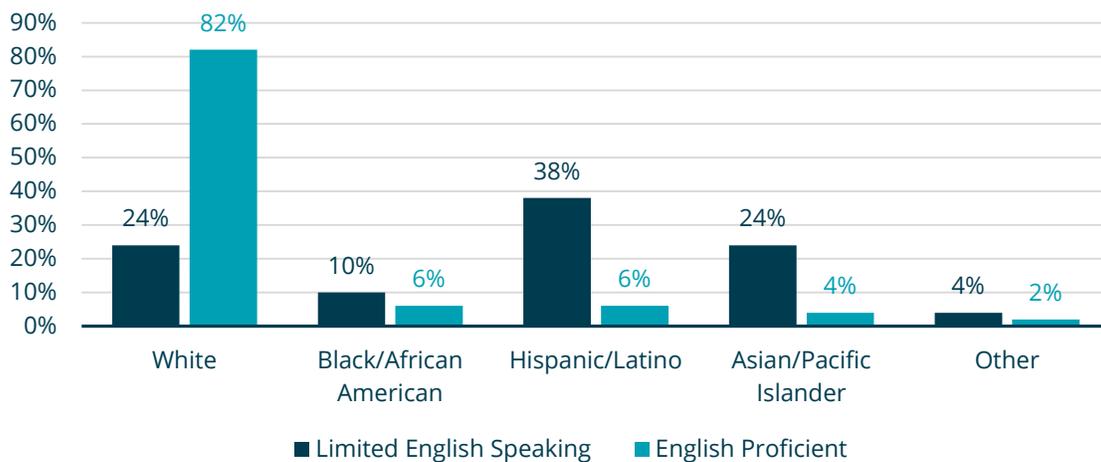
FIGURE 2
Massachusetts Adults by Age and English Proficiency
 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BPDA Research Division Analysis.

The majority of limited English speaking adults in Massachusetts are Hispanic or Asian – 38 percent are Hispanic and 24 percent are Asian. In contrast, 82% of Massachusetts adults who are proficient in English are non-Hispanic Whites. Figure 3 shows the share of each racial/ethnic group that are limited English speaking.

FIGURE 3
Massachusetts Adults by Race/Ethnicity and English Proficiency
 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BPDA Research Division Analysis.

LES adult residents of Massachusetts were born in 147 different countries and territories. The top 20 places of birth are given in Table 1. Of the 31,406 limited English speaking adults who were born in the United States, 65.7 percent were born in Massachusetts.

TABLE 1 **Top Places of Birth of Adult LES Massachusetts Residents**
2016

Place of Birth	LES Massachusetts Adults	Percent of LES Massachusetts Adults
Dominican Republic	50,687	9.6%
Puerto Rico	50,367	9.5%
China	47,488	9.0%
Brazil	33,374	6.3%
USA (excluding territories)	31,406	5.9%
El Salvador	28,200	5.3%
Haiti	27,922	5.3%
Vietnam	24,657	4.7%
Portugal	20,647	3.9%
Guatemala	19,213	3.6%
Cabo Verde	15,216	2.9%
India	13,619	2.6%
Colombia	11,431	2.2%
Cambodia	9,496	1.8%
Mexico	7,166	1.4%
Russia	6,830	1.3%
Azores Islands	6,740	1.3%
Honduras	6,484	1.2%
Italy	6,480	1.2%
Korea	5,709	1.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Overall 16.2 percent of Massachusetts LES adults are native-born U.S. citizens, 37.9 percent are naturalized citizens, and 45.9 percent of LES adults (242,699) are not U.S. citizens. Non-citizens could include green card holders, international students, H-1B workers, refugees, or unauthorized immigrants, among others.

The most commonly spoken language at home for LES residents of Massachusetts is Spanish, which accounts for 38.9 percent of adult LES residents. This is more than three times the frequency of LES adults speaking Portuguese at home (the second most common language) and five times the frequency of LES adults speaking Chinese (the third most common language). The 20 most common languages are presented in Table 2.

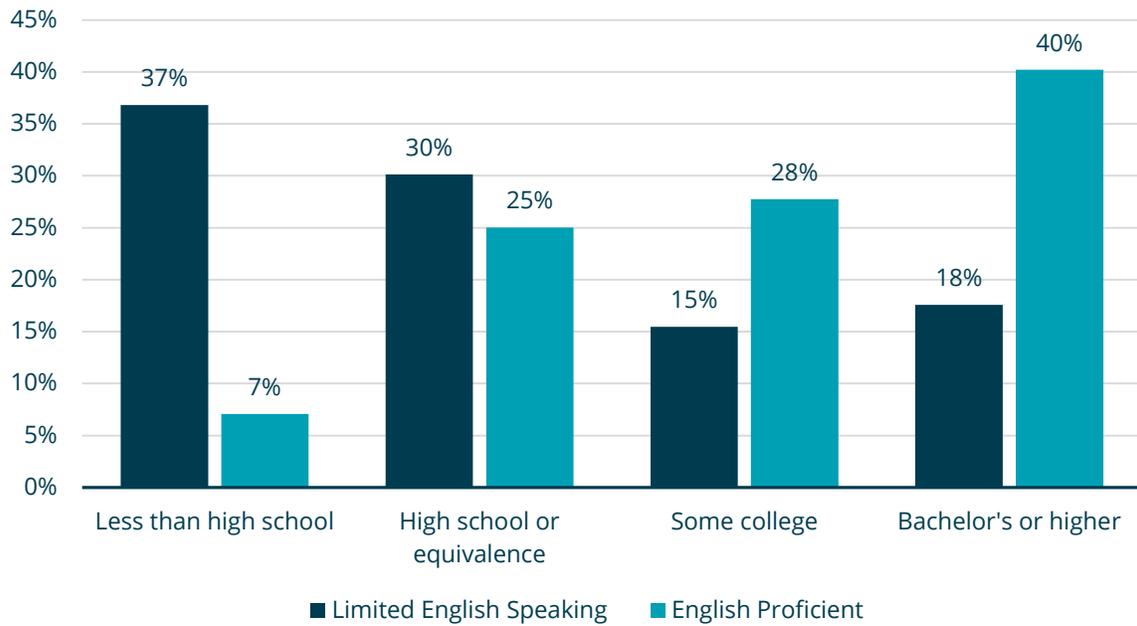
TABLE 2 Language Spoken at Home of Adult LES Massachusetts Resident
2016

Language Spoken at Home	LES Massachusetts Adults	Percent of LES Massachusetts Adults
Spanish	205,573	38.9%
Portuguese	65,695	12.4%
Chinese	37,482	7.1%
Haitian	30,891	5.8%
Vietnamese	23,360	4.4%
Russian	15,640	3.0%
Arabic	13,156	2.5%
Cantonese	11,032	2.1%
Khmer (Cambodian)	10,091	1.9%
French	9,499	1.8%
Kabuverdianu (Cape Verdean)	8,825	1.7%
Mandarin	8,651	1.6%
Italian	8,550	1.6%
Greek	6,208	1.2%
Korean	6,066	1.1%
Polish	5,587	1.1%
Albanian	4,605	0.9%
Hindi	3,889	0.7%
Gujarati	3,804	0.7%
Japanese	3,220	0.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012- 2016 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Limited English speaking adults tend to have lower levels of education than adults who are proficient in English. Almost 37 percent of Limited-English Speaking adults have less than a high school education, and less than 18 percent have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Figure 4 provides a visualization of the relationship between English proficiency and education.

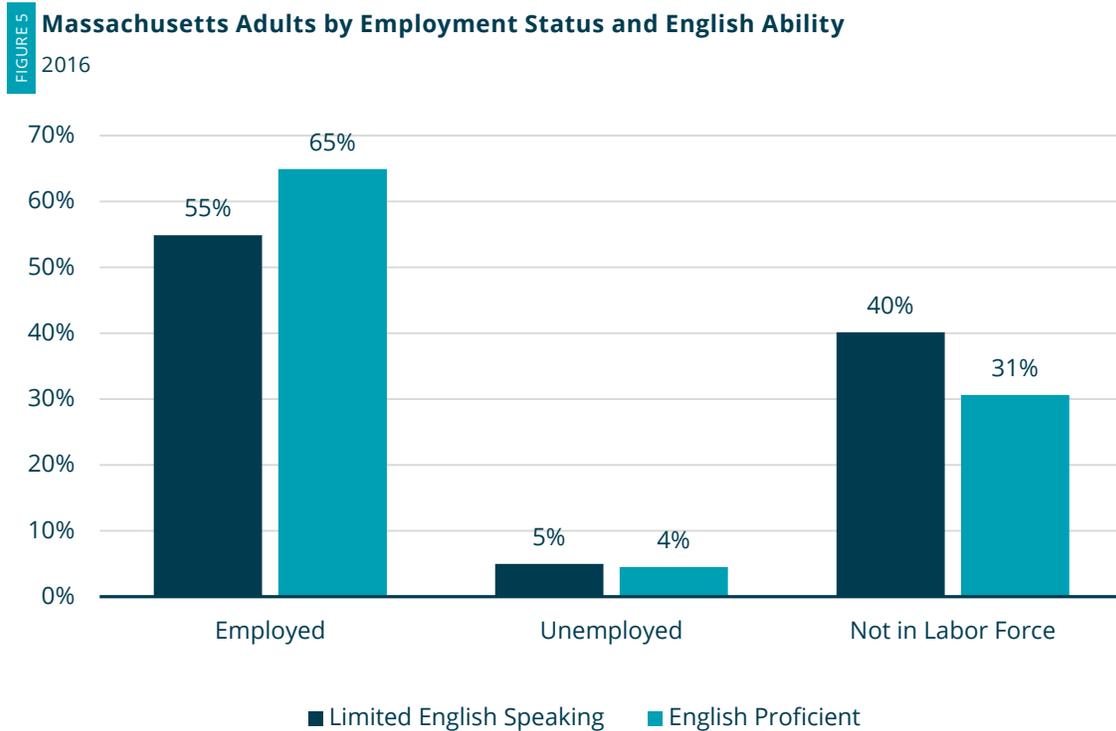
FIGURE 4
Massachusetts Adults by Educational Attainment and English Proficiency
2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Limited English Speaking Massachusetts Residents in the Workforce

Limited English Speakers living in Massachusetts are less likely to participate in the labor force – 40 percent of LES adults are not in the labor force compared to 31 percent of proficient English speaking adults. Figure 5 shows the employment status and English proficiency of adults in Massachusetts.

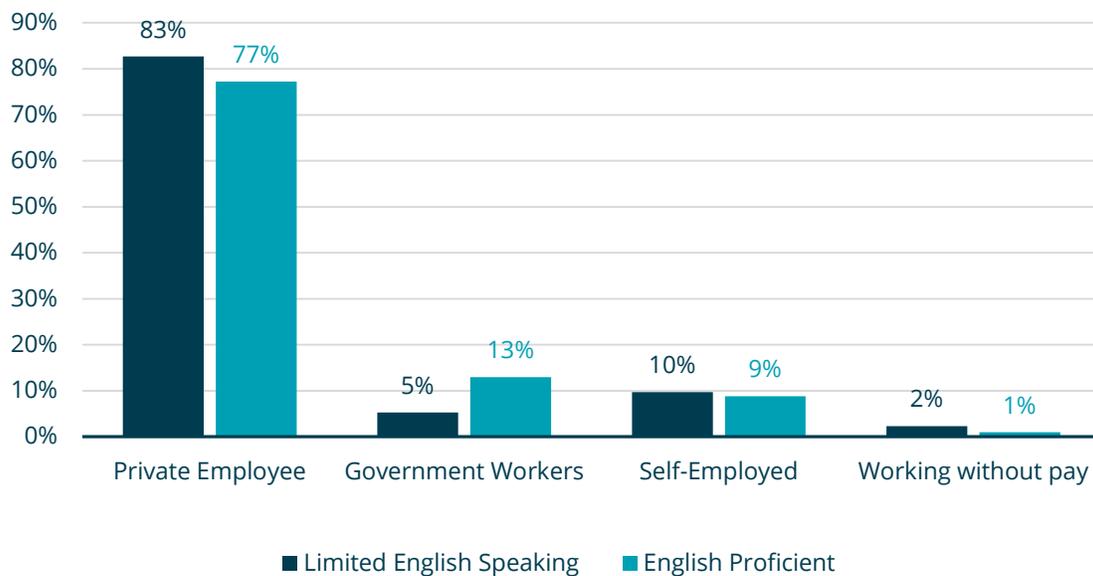


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Note: The unemployment rates given by the 5-year ACS will differ from the monthly rates given by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Limited English Speakers are less likely to hold government jobs than English proficient adults. About 5 percent of LES adults work in government while 12.9 percent of English-proficient adults hold government jobs. LES adults who are self-employed compose 9.7 percent of the population, similar to the 8.8 percent of self-employed, English proficient adults. Figure 6 breaks down Massachusetts resident workers by type of employment.

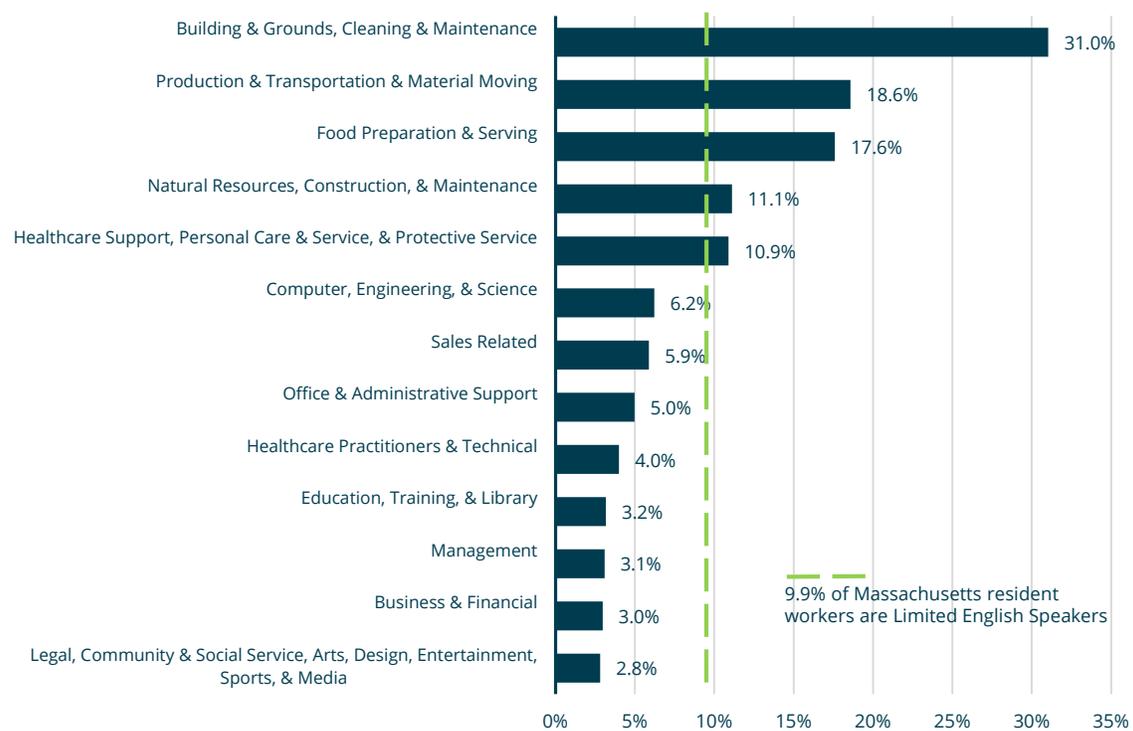
FIGURE 6 Massachusetts Adults by Class of Workers and English Proficiency
2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

There are significant differences in the occupations of limited-English speaking residents and proficient-English speaking residents. LES working adults in Massachusetts make up 9.9 percent of working residents. However, they make up 31 percent of workers in building and grounds cleaning and maintenance, 19 percent of workers in production, transportation, and material moving and 18 percent of workers in food preparation and serving. LES workers are also overrepresented in healthcare support, personal care, natural resources, construction, and maintenance.³ In contrast, limited English speakers make up only four percent of healthcare practitioners, and three percent each of workers in education, management, business, and legal, community, and social services. The relative representation of limited English speakers in different occupations is shown in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7 Share of Massachusetts Residents Working in Occupations who are LES
2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Approximately 22 percent of Limited English-Speaking Massachusetts resident workers work in Suffolk County and about half work in Essex, Middlesex, Worcester, Norfolk, Bristol, or Plymouth counties. About 78,000 LES Massachusetts residents (22 percent) work out of state.

³Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas Extraction

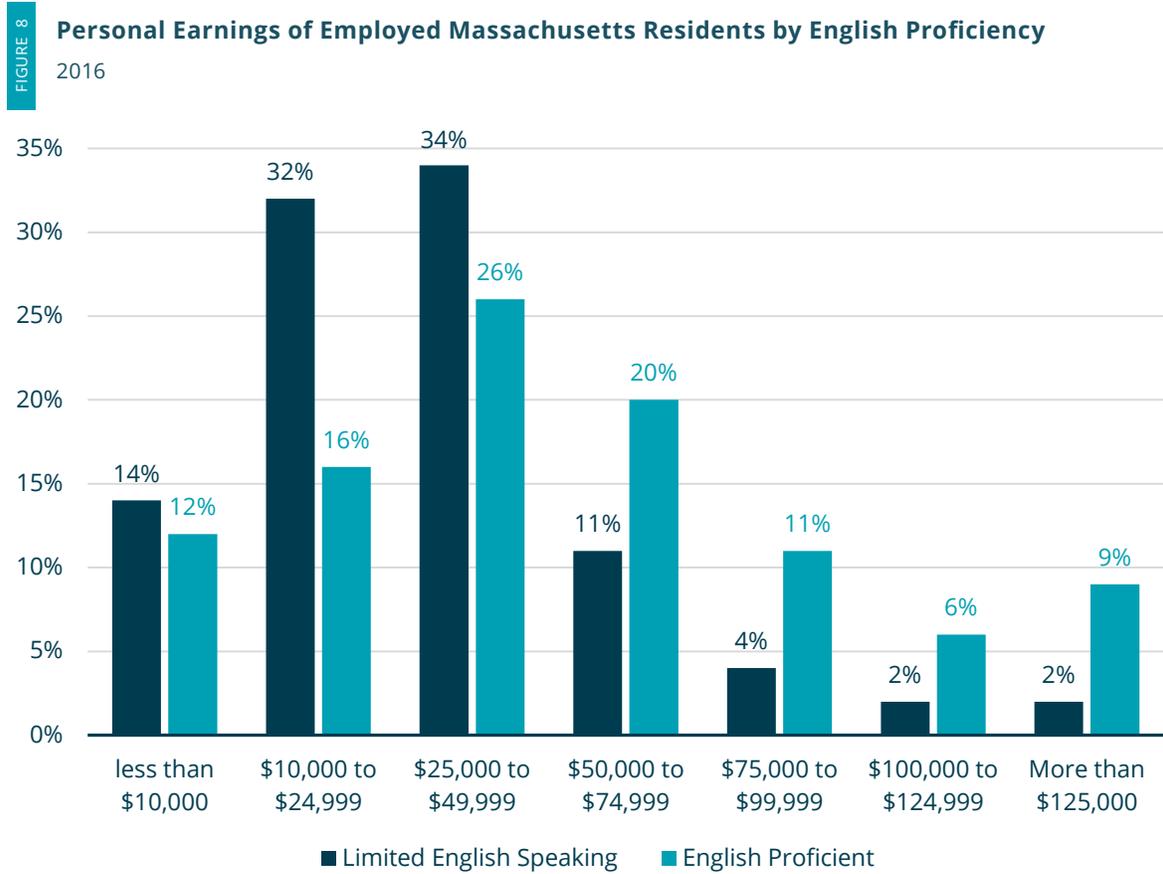
Table 3 provides the employment of limited English-speaking Massachusetts residents by occupation and place of work.

TABLE 3 Occupation of Work for Adult LES Massachusetts Residents by Place of Work
2016

	Berkshire County	Franklin, Hampden, & Hampshire County	Essex, Middlesex, Worcester, Norfolk, Bristol, & Plymouth Counties	Suffolk County	Barnstable, Dukes & Nantucket Counties	Out of State	Total
Production & Transportation & Material Moving	260	3,324	39,498	10,829	438	16,570	70,919
Building & Grounds, Cleaning & Maintenance	272	1,666	24,401	13,027	740	8,558	48,664
Food Preparation & Serving	675	1,397	18,493	12,059	564	8,649	41,837
Healthcare Support, Personal Care & Service, & Protective Service	153	2,294	19,896	9,300	536	8,366	40,545
Natural Resources, Construction, & Maintenance	105	1,122	16,873	5,628	915	8,442	33,085
Office & Administrative Support	146	1,020	12,806	5,718	149	6,428	26,267
Sales Related	43	1,318	11,602	4,758	452	6,258	24,431
Computer, Engineering, & Science	81	326	10,272	4,765	72	4,008	19,524
Management	7	613	6,938	3,101	193	2,889	13,741
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	25	540	4,999	2,694	125	1,790	10,173
Education, Training, & Library	3	457	4,099	2,276	67	2,766	9,668
Business & Financial	-	94	3,285	2,054	-	1,622	7,055
Legal, Community & Social Service, Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media	21	237	2,710	1,490	75	2,073	6,606
Military	-	-	55	11	-	26	92
Total	1,791	14,408	175,927	77,710	4,326	78,445	352,607

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.
Note: County groupings correspond to Place of Work PUMAs, the smallest available geography.

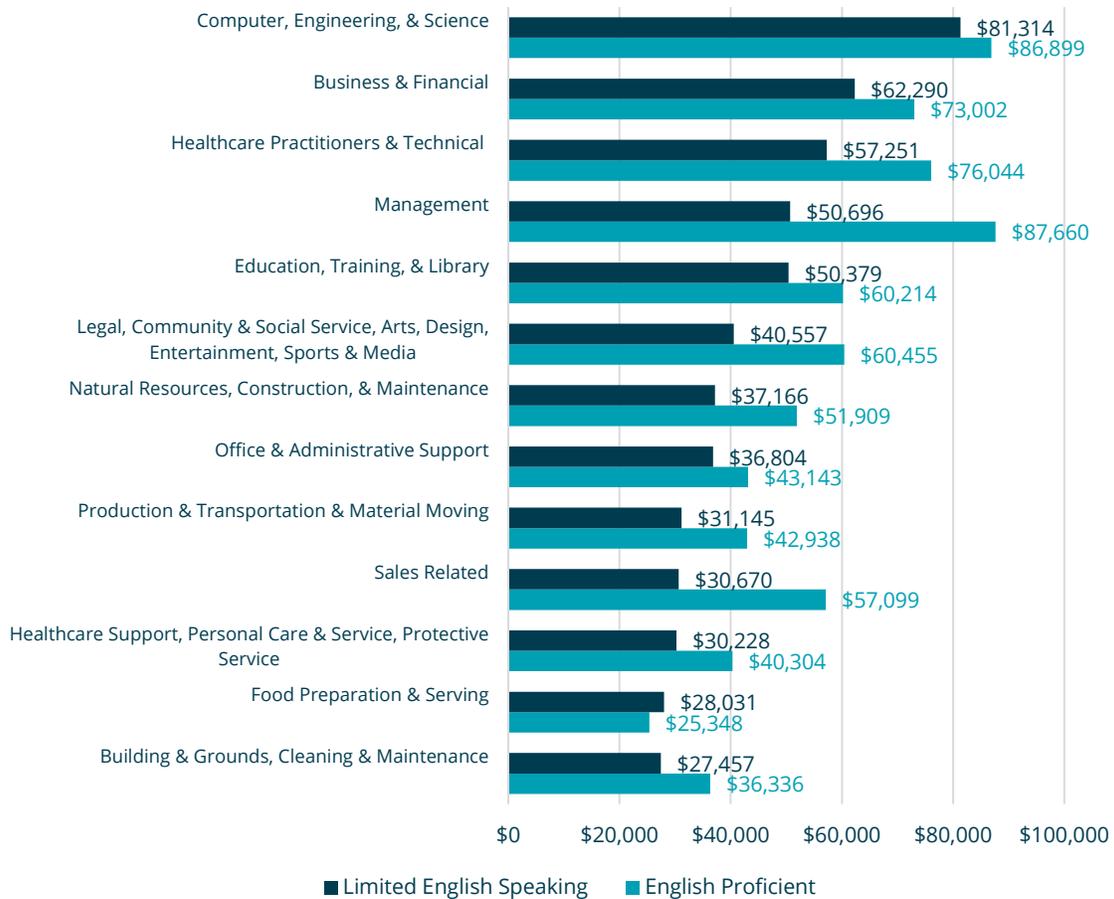
The median annual earnings of an employed LES adult living in Massachusetts is \$25,000, significantly less than the median annual earnings of employed, English-proficient adults—\$45,000. Two-thirds of employed LES residents make between \$10,000 and \$50,000 per year. Figure 8 shows the distribution of personal earnings for employed Massachusetts residents by English proficiency.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Limited English speaking workers are concentrated in lower-paying occupations such as building and grounds cleaning and maintenance. However, even within the same occupation, limited English speakers make less than those who speak English proficiently. Sales occupations are an extreme example in which English proficient workers earn an average of \$57,000 a year, while those with limited English earn an average of \$31,000 a year. Figure 9 shows the median earnings of Massachusetts resident full-time and full-year workers.

FIGURE 9 Median Earnings of Massachusetts Resident Full-Time Full-Year Workers by Occupation and English Proficiency (18+) 2016



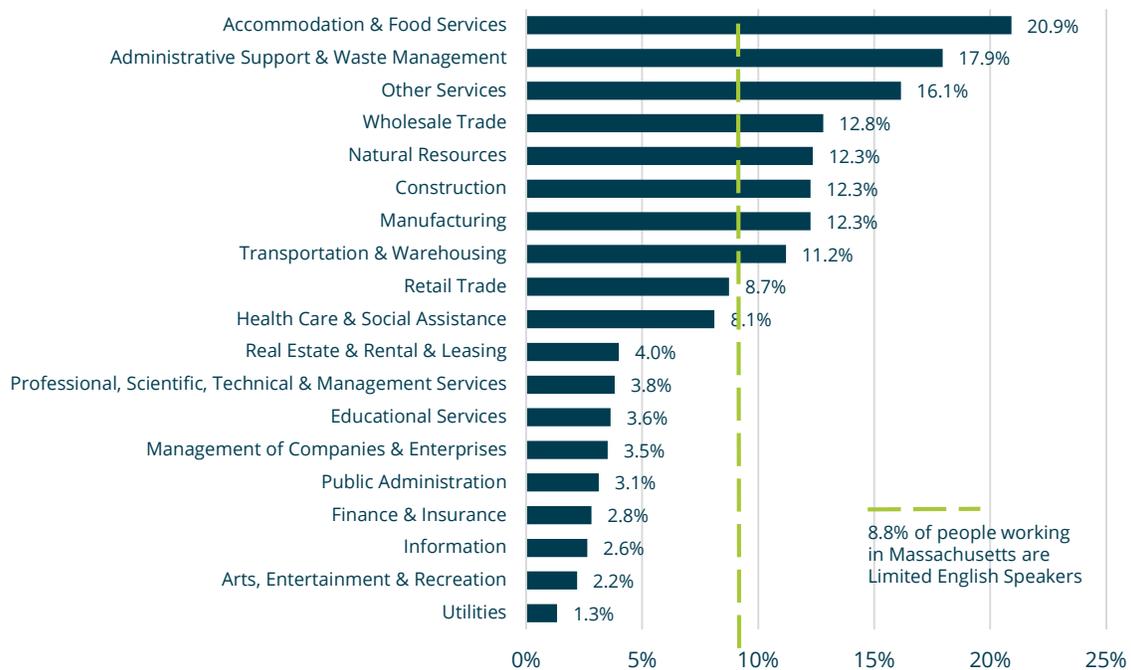
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Limited English Speaking Adults Working in Massachusetts

Approximately 310,273 limited-English speaking adults work in Massachusetts, 95 percent of whom also live in Massachusetts, and five percent of whom commute from nearby states. Limited English speakers make up nine percent of the people working in Massachusetts.

The industries in Massachusetts employing the most LES workers are accommodation and food services (47,000), health care and social assistance (47,000), manufacturing (39,000), and retail trade (32,000). The industries in Massachusetts with the highest share of workers who are limited English speakers are accommodation and food services at 22 percent, followed by administrative support and waste management at 18 percent. LES workers are also over-represented in other services, wholesale trade, natural resources,⁴ construction, manufacturing, and transportation & warehousing. Limited English speakers working in Massachusetts are underrepresented in industries such as professional, technical, and scientific services, education, finance and insurance, information, and public administration. Figure 10 illustrates the share of workers in each industry that are limited English speakers.

FIGURE 10 Share of Limited English Speaking Workers in Massachusetts Industries
2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

⁴Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil & Gas Extraction

Limited-English Speaking workers are concentrated in the eastern part of the state: 92 percent work in Essex, Middlesex, Worcester, Norfolk, Bristol, Plymouth or Suffolk counties. In comparison, 85 percent of English-proficient workers in Massachusetts hold jobs in these counties. Table 4 reviews the number of LES workers in all industries by place of work in Massachusetts.

TABLE 4 Industry of Work for Adult LES Massachusetts Workers by Place of Work
2016

	Berkshire County	Franklin, Hampden, & Hampshire Counties	Essex, Middlesex, Worcester, Norfolk, Bristol, & Plymouth Counties	Suffolk County	Barnstable, Dukes, & Nantucket Counties	All of Massachusetts
Accommodation & Food Services	290	1,889	23,997	20,369	943	47,488
Health Care & Social Assistance	103	3,729	24,922	17,641	973	47,368
Manufacturing	96	2,518	31,914	4,307	64	38,899
Retail Trade	227	1,663	22,025	7,369	582	31,866
Other Services	61	428	20,199	5,748	509	26,945
Construction	134	152	17,646	6,813	1,434	26,179
Administrative Support & Waste Management Services	0	406	15,633	5,648	722	22,409
Educational Services	0	1,158	7,889	5,396	31	14,474
Professional, Scientific, Technical & Management Services	13	747	7,800	4,923	107	13,590
Transportation & Warehousing	0	404	6,624	5,296	0	12,324
Wholesale Trade	0	0	6,934	3,954	0	10,888
Finance & Insurance	0	298	2,786	2,444	0	5,528
Public Administration	0	308	2,183	1,939	0	4,430
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	0	146	597	1,662	0	2,405
Information	0	0	1,651	542	0	2,193
Natural Resources	0	249	1,206	134	0	1,589
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	125	0	1,148	0	144	1,417
Utilities	0	0	206	75	0	281
Total	1,049	14,095	195,360	94,260	5,509	310,273

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.
Note: County groupings correspond to Place of Work PUMAs, the smallest available geography.

