

Population Estimates and Projections

Series P-25, No. 627
Issued June 1976

**Language Minority, Illiteracy,
and Voting Data Used in
Making Determinations
for the Voting Rights Act
Amendments of 1975
(Public Law 94-73)**





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SUGGESTED CITATION

U.S. Bureau of the Census, **Current Population Reports**, Series P-25, No. 627, "Language Minority, Illiteracy, and Voting Data Used in Making Determinations for the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1975 (Public Law 94-73)," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.

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CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS

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Language Minority, Illiteracy, and Voting Data Used in Making Determinations for the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1975 (Public Law 94-73)

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LANGUAGE MINORITY, ILLITERACY, AND VOTING DATA USED IN MAKING DETERMINATIONS FOR THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1975 (PUBLIC LAW 94-73)

This report brings together previously unpublished statistical summaries from the 1970 census and current population estimates compiled in order to determine the political subdivisions covered under the 1975 amendments to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, (Public Law 94-73). Included are (1) data summaries on the citizen population of voting age for minority language groups of 400 or more in any county or equivalent or in minor civil divisions in New England, Michigan, or Wisconsin; (2) percent of these populations illiterate (less than a fifth grade education); and (3) November 1, 1972 estimates of the citizen voting-age population of political subdivisions together with votes cast in the 1972 Presidential election and percent casting votes.

Tables 1 and 2 list those political subdivisions covered by Titles II and III of the Act amendments, respectively, together with the pertinent data used to make the determinations. In order to provide the reader with comparable data for areas not covered by the amendments, table 3 presents data on language minority and illiteracy for all voting-age language minorities in each political subdivision of 400 or more language minority and table 4 contains voting-age summaries for all political subdivisions.

The information on the number of votes cast was obtained from Scammon, Richard M., *America Votes 10*, Election Research Center, Washington, D.C. or from individual State offices of the Secretaries of State. Data on language minority groups, citizenship, and illiteracy were obtained from special tabulations from the 1970 census.

COVERAGE UNDER THE ACT AMENDMENTS

The 1975 Amendments to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Public Law 94-73 require the Director of the Bureau of the Census to make certain determinations as to which States or political subdivisions of States fall under the purview of the legislation.

1. Under Title II of the Act amendment, the Bureau was required to determine those States and political subdivisions:

- a. where more than 5 percent of the citizens of voting age were members of a single-language minority, and
- b. where less than 50 percent of the citizens of voting age voted in the Presidential election of 1972.

In addition, the Attorney General has the responsibility for determining which of the specified subdivisions conduct "English only" elections (i.e., have test or device).

2. Under Title III of the Act amendment, the Congress mandated the Bureau to determine those States and political subdivisions:

- a. where more than 5 percent of the citizens of voting age were members of a single-language minority, and
- b. where the illiteracy rate for citizens of voting age for the specified language minority was greater than the national rate (4.6 percent).

If the above factors were present, the State or political subdivision was covered by the Act. Under Title II, if an entire State meets the qualifications for a specific language minority, all of the political subdivisions come under the provisions of the Act for that minority. Under Title III, if an entire State qualifies for coverage for a specific language minority, the political subdivisions with more than 5 percent of their citizen population in that language minority come under the Act (irrespective of illiteracy level).

Political subdivisions for the purposes of the Act have been defined by the Department of Justice as counties or independent cities except for the following: cities and towns in New England; cities and townships in Michigan; cities, villages, and towns in Wisconsin; election districts in Alaska; and parishes in Louisiana.

Language minority group is defined as any one of the following: Spanish heritage, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and American Indian, and in Alaska, Native Alaskan (Eskimos and Aleuts and American Indians as a group). The legislation defines illiteracy rates as the percentage of the citizen population 18 years and over completing less than 5 years of school.

Spanish heritage as defined in the 1970 census represents persons of "Spanish language" in all States except eight.¹ In five Southwestern States (Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and California) "heritage"

¹Persons of Spanish language comprise persons of Spanish mother tongue and all other persons in families in which the head or wife reported Spanish as his or her mother tongue. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population*, Supplementary Report, PC(S1)-30, *Persons of Spanish Ancestry*.

covers persons of Spanish language plus persons of Spanish surname. In New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania "heritage" constitutes those persons of Puerto Rican birth or parentage. Data for the other language minorities were obtained from the census question on race.

METHODOLOGY FOR DETERMINING COVERAGE

The estimates of the citizen population of voting age for counties in November 1972 were based on: (1) estimates of the resident population for July 1, 1972 and 1973 published in *Current Population Reports*, Series P-26, interpolated to November 1972; and (2) independent estimates of the population under 18 years by Component Method II for July 1, 1972 and 1973 interpolated to November 1972.² The estimated population under 18 was then deducted from the total to provide an estimate of the voting-age population for each county. The estimates were then adjusted to an independent estimate of the voting-age population for each State consistent with estimates published for States in *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, Nos. 539 and 518. As a final step, the 1970 census count of aliens of voting age was deducted to provide estimates of citizens of voting age. These estimates were then used as the denominator relative to the number of votes cast in the 1972 Presidential election to obtain a figure for the percentage voting in each political subdivision.

The estimates of the citizen population of voting age for areas below the county level (towns, townships, cities, or villages) were accomplished by interpolating between the 1970 census and the July 1, 1973 estimates published in individual State reports in *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, Nos. 546 through 595 for the total population of places, and then by (1) assuming the same proportion of the population in ages 18 and over as in 1970, and (2) adjusting the sum of the areas in each county to the independent county estimates 18 years and over for November 1972 estimated as indicated above.

These derived percentages of citizens voting were used in making the determinations under Title II as to which political subdivisions had less than 50 percent of the citizen population of voting age voting in the Presidential election of November 1972.

In calculating the percentages of language minority citizen populations and their illiteracy rates, 1970

²For a description of this methodology see *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, No. 520 and 437.

census special tabulations from the 5-, 15-, and 20-percent samples were used in conjunction with the data from the 100-percent file.

Since citizenship was only available from the 5-percent sample the proportion of adult citizens in the language groups who were "illiterate" had to originate from this source. In order to improve the reliability of the estimates, citizenship rates determined from the 5-percent sample were applied to population totals from the 15- and 20-percent samples and/or 100-percent counts, to take advantage of the greater reliability of the larger samples and complete count.

For the Spanish population however, citizenship tabulations were available only for Spanish origin or descent. Citizenship rates based on this population were applied to the Spanish heritage population available in the 15-percent sample (except for New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, since persons of Puerto Rican birth or parentage are all citizens).

Determinations based upon the "improved" point estimates³ results are relatively more reliable than those based solely on 5-percent data. It should be noted that such estimates are still subject to sampling error, however.

RELATED REPORTS

Estimates of the resident voting-age population of States and counties as of November 1, 1960, by race, were published in *Current Population Reports*, Series P-23, No. 14, together with votes cast and percent voting in those areas in 1960 and 1964. Estimates of the resident voting-age population of States for the general elections of 1960 through 1974 are contained in Series P-25, No. 526. Race and age detail are also shown in that report for 1974.

Related data from the Current Population Survey on reported voter registration and voting in the elections of November 1972 were published in *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 253.

ROUNDING OF ESTIMATES

The estimates of the citizen voting-age population for November 1972 have been rounded to the nearest hundred, independently. Percentages are based on unrounded numbers.

³See appendix A for a fuller discussion of the improved estimate methodology. A detailed documentation of the estimation procedure and variance methodology is available on request to Chief, Statistical Methods Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233.