

# LANGUAGE ACCESS METRICS REPORT

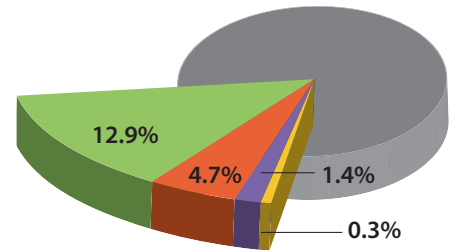
The Judicial Council Language Access Services Program—comprising the Language Access Implementation unit and the Court Interpreters Program unit—works with the Language Access Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness and the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel to develop policy and support branch efforts to achieve and maintain access to justice for California’s limited-English-proficient and deaf or hard of hearing court users. This report summarizes California data, as of June 30, 2021, including statewide efforts to make comprehensive language access a reality in the courts.

## Language Access in California

Language access allows limited-English-proficient (LEP) individuals access to a wide range of services. As defined by the U.S. Department of Justice, LEP individuals do not speak English as their primary language and may have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

In California, the most diverse state in the country:

- Over 200 languages are spoken;
- Approximately 44 percent of households speak a language other than English; and
- Nearly 7 million Californians (19 percent) report speaking English “less than very well.” (See figure at right.)



- Spanish
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Other Indo-European
- Other Languages

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015)

**Primary Language of Californians Who Speak English “Less Than Very Well”**

## Language Access Plan Implementation—2020 Highlights

Spring	Summer	Fall
Council approval of the <i>2020 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study</i>	Growth of annual appropriation of court interpreter services to approximately \$130 million	Launch of the optional Court Interpreter Data Collection System interpreter portal

## Language Services During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the normal operation of court systems around the globe. The following data and information inform how the pandemic has affected the delivery of language services in the California courts and how the courts have responded.



In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, courts leveraged videoconferencing platforms to conduct court services.

(See Table 1.) The use of video remote interpreting (VRI), as well as telephonic interpreting, was critical from March to December 2020 to provide access to justice for LEP court users, with an enormous 1,692 percent increase in remote services.

During 2020, the number of telephonic and VRI interpreter services increased exponentially.

**Table 1: Video Remote Interpreting: Number of Interpretations by Method, 2020\***

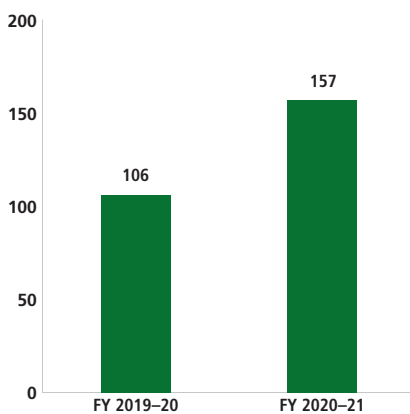
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
In person	36,273	32,682	21,114	3,641	5,750	15,850	22,768	21,985	23,806	28,046	28,708	27,440
Telephonic	91	85	78	146	161	408	543	446	532	819	923	1,195
VRI	34	20	172	654	891	1,338	1,839	2,123	2,215	2,859	2,855	3,285
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,398</b>	<b>23,797</b>	<b>21,364</b>	<b>4,441</b>	<b>6,802</b>	<b>3,596</b>	<b>25,150</b>	<b>24,554</b>	<b>26,553</b>	<b>31,724</b>	<b>32,486</b>	<b>31,920</b>

\* The data reporting for July through December 2020 is incomplete; the numbers may increase slightly in future reporting. Source: Judicial Council Court Interpreter Data Collection System, fiscal year (FY) 2020–21.

## Translations

The Judicial Council has master agreements with two translation vendors—Avantpage and Prisma—for translation services. Copies of the master agreements are available at [www.courts.ca.gov/procurementservices.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/procurementservices.htm).

Since 2019, the Judicial Council Language Access Services Program has assisted in translating forms, vital documents, and online information into multiple languages. As the figure below shows, the number of court forms that were translated increased from 106 in FY 2019–20 to 157 in FY 2020–21 (as of May 2021). The languages vary, depending on the type of document and/or information being translated and include most of the top 10 languages in the state, primarily Chinese, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese. Program staff continue to assist in translation of materials to better serve the public.



**Increase in Number of Translated Court Forms**

## Civil Expansion

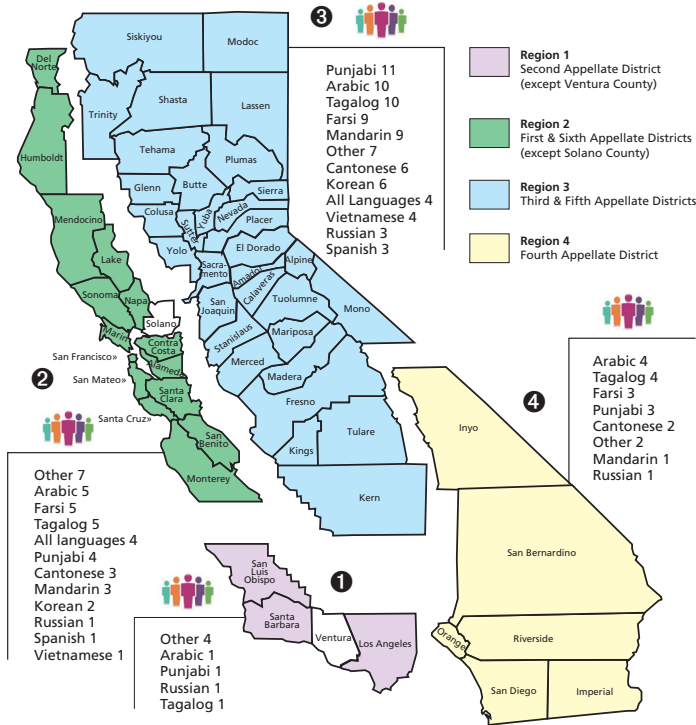
Over the past five years, the California courts have made significant progress to provide interpreters in civil case types following the priority order dictated by Evidence Code section 756. As of June 2020, all 58 courts indicated that they were able to provide interpreters under all eight priorities. The languages provided and the estimated interpreter coverage for each priority vary by court. Recent information gathered regarding each court's estimated coverage will assist the Judicial Council with funding and other targeted efforts designed to help all 58 courts reach full expansion.

## Need for Interpreters

The Judicial Council Language Access Services Program conducts a statewide survey of the courts annually to gather information on current language services provided, trends in local court language needs, and innovations used to meet those needs. The survey identifies the top languages for which recruitment of interpreters is needed from the four interpreter bargaining regions (see figure on page 3).

Efforts are underway for the Judicial Council to develop a more robust statewide recruitment initiative to increase the pool of qualified interpreters and bilingual staff and to assist near-passers of the Bilingual Interpreting Exam (BIE).

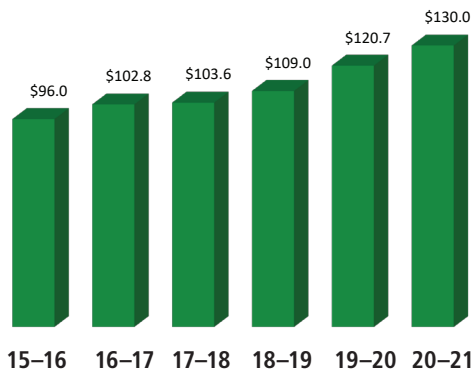
Identified Current Interpreter Needs



Note: The graphic shows the number of courts, by region, that indicated they need more interpreters in the languages shown. The Other language category includes nondesignated languages and Indigenous languages of Mexico and Central America.

Growth of the Court Interpreter Fund

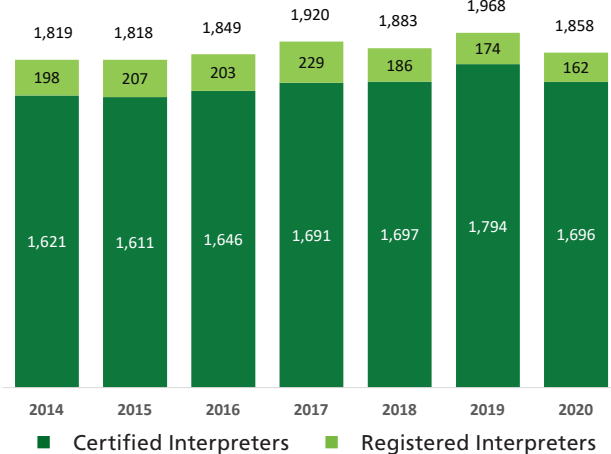
- In recent years, the annual appropriation for court interpreter services has grown from \$96 million in FY 2015–16 to \$130 million in FY 2020–21. (See figure below.)
- For the past few years, the state appropriation has fallen short in providing the courts with enough funding for full reimbursement of their reported allowable court interpreter expenditures.
- The expansion of interpreter services for civil matters and increased costs in mandated cases have led to shortfalls that require ongoing resources.



Annual Appropriation on Interpreter Funding, per Fiscal Year

Court Interpreter Pool

- As of June 2021, 1,858 certified and registered court interpreters—by far the largest court interpreter workforce in the nation—are on the Judicial Council’s Master List. (See figure below.)
- The Master List ([www.courts.ca.gov/35273.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/35273.htm)) allows courts and members of the public to search for court certified, registered, and enrolled interpreters who are in good standing with the Judicial Council.
- Interpreters on the Master List have passed the required exams and officially applied with the Judicial Council. Application requirements include submitting an application to the Judicial Council, paying an annual fee of \$100, and taking the online “Interpreter Orientation: Working in the California Courts” course.
- Of those 1,858 court interpreters, 1,696 are certified and 162 are registered. (See figure below.)



Number of Certified and Registered Court Interpreters (2014–2020)

Note: In California 1,858 interpreters are credentialed—certified or registered or both—in at least one language. Some interpreters hold multiple credentials in multiple languages. The total number of certifications and registrations held by this interpreter workforce is 2,123.

**FAST FACTS**

California has the largest interpreter workforce in the nation.

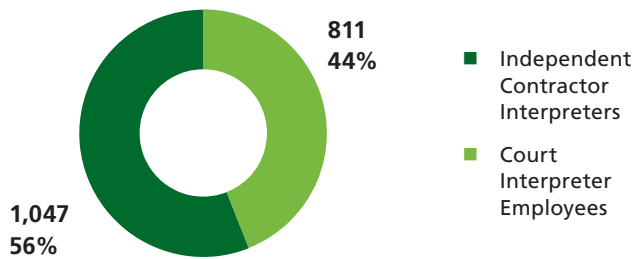
**Table 2: Number of Certified Court Interpreters for California’s Top 10 Most Frequently Interpreted Spoken Languages\***

Language <sup>†</sup>	2017	2018	2019	2020	+/-
Spanish	1,373	1,367	1,398	1,336	-62
Vietnamese	53	55	59	58	-1
Mandarin	66	72	79	79	0
Cantonese	29	28	30	28	-2
Korean	60	60	61	55	-6
Punjabi	3	3	3	3	0
Russian	39	35	42	43	+1
Arabic	8	8	7	7	0
Farsi	1	10	10	10	0
Tagalog	4	4	5	6	+1

\* The top 10 most frequently interpreted spoken languages, ranked in this table, are from the *2020 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study*.

† There are currently 55 court-certified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters in California. The other certified languages are Armenian (Eastern) (16 interpreters), Armenian (Western) (3), Khmer (Cambodian) (8), and Portuguese (4).

**Number of Interpreters, by Employment Status\***



\* For fiscal year 2019–20, employees accounted for 78.4 percent of court interpreter expenditures, and contractors accounted for 21.6 percent of expenditures.

Source: *Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2019–20*.

**Table 3: Data on Interpreters of Top Three Interpreted Languages**

	Spanish	Vietnamese	ASL
Certified	1,336	58	55
Court Employees	670	26	10
Contractors	666	32	45
Average Age	56	59	62

**Table 4: Number and Percentage of Court Interpreters (Certified or Registered), by Age Span**

Age Span	Number of Interpreters*	Percentage of Interpreters
< 25	1	0.05
25–34	67	3.61
35–44	255	13.72
45–54	438	23.57
55–64	523	28.15
65–74	435	23.41
75–84	112	6.03
85+	10	0.54
No birth date provided	17	0.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,858</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* In California 1,858 interpreters are credentialed—certified or registered or both—in at least one language. Some interpreters hold multiple credentials in multiple languages. The total number of certifications and registrations held by this interpreter workforce is 2,123.

**Table 5: Number of Recent Passers of Bilingual Interpreting Exam Required for Qualification as a Certified Interpreter**

Language	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Spanish	45	47	56	23	34	0
Vietnamese	3	4	2	4	2	0
Mandarin	2	4	8	6	0	0
Farsi	0	1	9	0	0	0
Cantonese	2	0	1	3	0	0
Russian	2	1	0	2	4	0
Punjabi	1	0	0	0	0	0
Eastern Armenian	1	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>0</b>

The Court Interpreters Program (CIP) suspended all in-person interpreting testing in 2020 to comply with health and safety mandates related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the summer of 2021, CIP gradually resumed court interpreting testing for the Written Examination, Oral Proficiency Examination, and BIE. In 2021, administration of the BIE was staggered over several weeks because of prohibitions on large gatherings and was limited to 200 candidates in four of the state’s most interpreted languages (Spanish,

Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Korean). For 2022, CIP plans to administer the BIE for all spoken certified languages for which there is an exam and continue administration of the Written Examination and Oral Proficiency Examination for the registered languages. The administrations will continue to follow health and safety mandates related to the pandemic.

## Interpreter Usage

The Judicial Council's Language Access Implementation (LAI) unit prepares interpreter usage reports for the courts.

Consistent with the direction of the Judicial Council, LAI works directly with the courts to collect interpreter usage data in previously mandated case types, domestic violence case types, and the newly expanded civil case types. The reports are based on data entered in the Court Interpreter Data Collection System or provided by courts from their own internal systems.

- ▶ There were 766,805 statewide interpretations in FY 2018–19.
- ▶ Total interpretations in Spanish were approximately 665,415—approximately 85 percent of the statewide total.
- ▶ Total other-than-Spanish interpretations were 101,390.
- ▶ Some 27 percent of the total interpretations took place in Los Angeles County; Orange County had the second most, with 7 percent.

## Web Viewing Data

Table 6 shows the number of page views of the Court Interpreters Program and Language Access webpages for the past three years.

**Table 6: Number of Page Views (as of December 2020)**

Webpage	2018	2019	2020
Court Interpreters Program	76,257	64,376	45,124
Language Access	8,711	7,024	6,932
Language Access Toolkit	2,431	2,358	2,104

## Resource Links

Judicial Council of California  
[www.courts.ca.gov](http://www.courts.ca.gov)

Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts  
[www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CLASP\\_report\\_060514.pdf](http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CLASP_report_060514.pdf)

Language Access  
[www.courts.ca.gov/languageaccess.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/languageaccess.htm)

Language Access Toolkit  
[www.courts.ca.gov/lap-toolkit-courts.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/lap-toolkit-courts.htm)

Multilingual Materials and Resources for LEPs  
[www.courts.ca.gov/42863.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/42863.htm)

Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness  
[www.courts.ca.gov/accessfairnesscomm.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/accessfairnesscomm.htm)

Court Interpreters Program  
[www.courts.ca.gov/programs-interpreters.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/programs-interpreters.htm)

Language Need and Interpreter Use Study  
[www.courts.ca.gov/documents/2020-Language-Need-and-Interpreter-Use-Study-Report-to-the-Legislature.pdf](http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/2020-Language-Need-and-Interpreter-Use-Study-Report-to-the-Legislature.pdf)

## Contact Information

**Judicial Council of California**  
 Court Interpreters Program  
 Email: [courtinterpreters@jud.ca.gov](mailto:courtinterpreters@jud.ca.gov)

Language Access Implementation  
 Email: [lap@jud.ca.gov](mailto:lap@jud.ca.gov)



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
 OF CALIFORNIA

OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS DIVISION  
 CENTER FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN & THE COURTS