

E23

**FACT SHEET:
PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES IN FAMILIES
IN WHICH SPANISH IS SPOKEN IN 1980**

- Dorothy Waggoner, Ph.D.
April, 1984

According to the 1980 Census, 14 million people in the United States lived in families in which Spanish is spoken. In addition, 1.4 million people reported speaking Spanish at home but did not live with family members. These 15.4 million people constituted seven percent of the total U.S. population, or nearly one person in fifteen in the country.

There were 4.2 million school-aged children in families in which Spanish is spoken. They constituted nearly nine percent of the total school-age population, or one child in eleven.

People in Spanish-speaking families and those speaking Spanish not in family groups constituted 45 percent of the total language minority population identified in the 1980 Census. More than half the total estimated language-minority children were from Spanish-speaking homes.

Language minority populations in the United States are growing, and the fastest growing is the Spanish-language minority. It has increased by over 45 percent since 1976. The Spanish language minority is a young group. In 1980, about one-third of people aged five and older in Spanish-speaking families were school-age children. In contrast, about 23 percent of the total population aged five and older were school age in 1980.

Spanish-speaking families are relatively homogeneous compared to other language-minority families. In about half of all language-minority families, all family members speak the home language at home. This is true in nearly two-thirds of Spanish-speaking families. Among children in these Spanish-speaking families, about seven of ten speak their home language at home, as compared with 56 percent of children in language-minority families in general.

National Council of La Raza, Office of Research, Advocacy and Legislation
Twenty F Street, N.W., Second Floor, Washington, DC 20001



Data on language-minority children and adults from the 1980 Census will form the basis for further study to determine how many have limited proficiency in the English language skills--including reading and writing, as well as speaking and understanding English--needed to succeed in school, obtain and hold a job, and otherwise achieve their potential in the mainstream, English-speaking society. Based upon a previous study in which language-minority children were tested with an objective measure of English proficiency, it is estimated that as many as three million children from Spanish-speaking homes need special help in school which takes account of their language background and lack of English proficiency.

Data on children and adults in language minority homes will be published by the Bureau of the Census in a special report on the language characteristics of the U.S. population in 1980. The data result from combining responses to the 1980 Census language questions by family. The attached chart summarizes some of these data.

ESTIMATED U.S. POPULATION IN 1980, BY AGE AND FAMILY LANGUAGE OR LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME

| Family language or language spoken at home | Total | Under 5 ^{1/} | 5-17 | 18 and older |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| Total | 226,361,000 | 16,114,000 | 47,494,000 | 162,753,000 |
| With English family language and English only spoken ^{2/} | 191,724,000 | 13,552,000 | 39,460,000 | 138,712,000 |
| With non-English family language or non-English language spoken at home | 34,637,000 | 2,562,000 | 8,034,000 | 24,041,000 |
| In families in which NEL spoken | 31,126,000 | 2,562,000 | 7,948,000 | 20,616,000 |
| NEL spoken at home but not living with family members | 3,511,000 | -- | 86,000 | 3,425,000 |
| With Spanish family language or Spanish spoken at home | 15,548,000 | 1,537,000 | 4,237,000 | 9,774,000 |
| In Spanish-speaking families | 14,173,000 | 1,537,000 | 4,164,000 | 8,472,000 |
| Spanish spoken at home but not living with family members | 1,375,000 | -- | 73,000 | 1,302,000 |
| With other non-English family language or other NEL spoken at home | 19,088,000 | 1,024,000 | 3,797,000 | 14,267,000 |
| In other NEL-speaking families | 16,952,000 | 1,024,000 | 3,784,000 | 12,144,000 |
| Other NEL spoken at home but not living with family members | 2,136,000 | -- | 13,000 | 2,123,000 |

^{1/} Children counted by language of parents.

^{2/} Includes adults with non-English mother tongues who no longer speak them and lived in all-English families in 1980.

NOTE: Detail may not add to total because of rounding.

SOURCE: 1980 Census; data from subject report in press.