

Understanding Language Barriers

- What does it mean to be “limited English proficient” (LEP)?
- LEP correlation with poverty
- LEP effect on ability to receive services
- Particular challenges with interpretation of legal terminology in pro bono cases

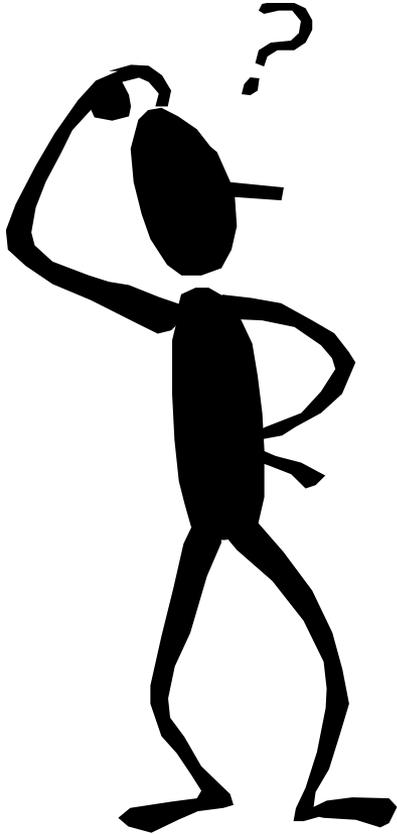
What does it mean to be LEP?

“Limited English Proficient”

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.



What does it mean to be LEP?



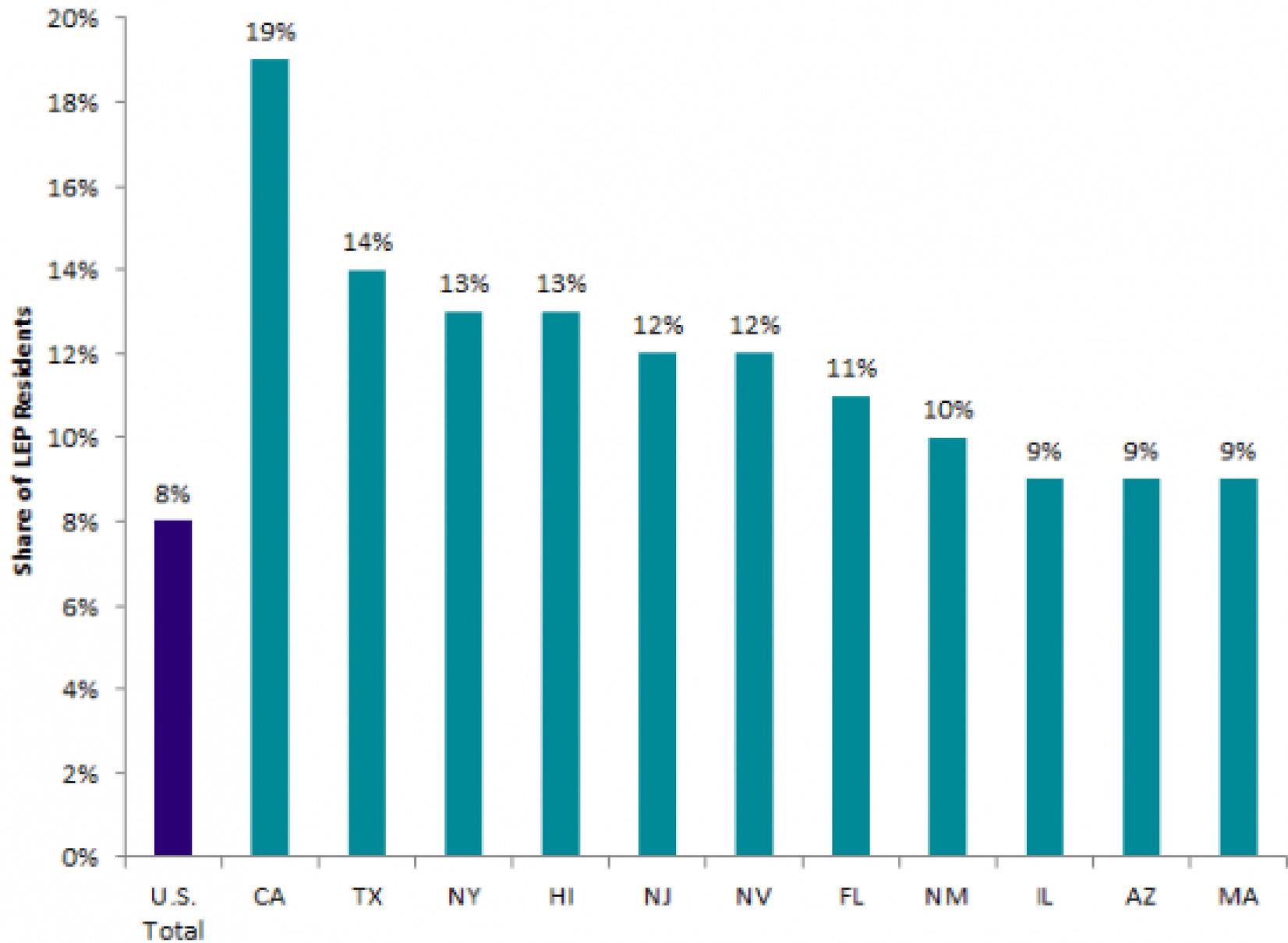
- Inadequate Access to Justice
- Increased Vulnerability

The Changing Face of America



- Over 60 million people, over 20% of the U.S. population ages 5 years+ speaks a language other than English at home.
- In 2013, there were over 25 million LEP individuals in the U.S.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) (2009-2013 data)



Source: Migration Policy Institute tabulation of data from US Census Bureau 2013 ACS

- 19% (almost 7 million!) of CA population is LEP



- LEP – speaks English less than “very well”
- 44% (approx. 15 million) speak a language other than English at home
- Over 200 languages spoken in CA
- 40% of Latinos and 59% of Asians are foreign born

Access to Justice?



“7 million Californians cannot access the courts without significant language assistance, cannot understand pleadings, forms or other legal documents, and cannot participate meaningfully in court proceedings without a qualified interpreter.”



- Language Barriers to Justice in California; California Commission on Access to Justice; September 2005.

Language in Los Angeles County

- In Los Angeles County, 3 million are LEP (25% of total population)
- 54% speak a language other than English at home
- 4.7 million Latinos (48%) | 44% foreign-born
- 1.5 million APIs (15%) | nearly 2/3 foreign-born
- 39% of APIs cannot read or speak English well
 - Some of the highest rates of linguistic isolation (households w/ no one 14+ who speaks English very well)

Source: Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA, A Community of Contrasts: AANHPIs in LA County (2013)

Linguistic Isolation and Poverty

- LA County has almost a 14% rate of linguistic isolation
- Impact on linguistically isolated households:
 - Difficulty accessing medical/social services
 - Limits employment and schooling opportunities
- LEP individuals more likely to live in poverty
 - As of 2013, 25% of LEP individuals in households with annual income below official federal poverty line

Sources:

- *U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) (2011-2015 data)*
- *Paul Siegel, Elizabeth A. Martin, and Rosalind Bruno. Language Use and Linguistic Isolation: Historical Data and Methodological Issues. Pp. 167-190 in Statistical Policy Working Paper 32: 2000 Seminar on Integrating Federal Statistical Information and Processes. April 2001*
- *Migration Policy Institute tabulation of data from US Census Bureau 2013 ACS*

Legal Terminology and Pro Bono

- Interpreting well is difficult!
- Scarce resources = may not be possible to engage professional interpreter for pro bono matter
- Challenges
 - Volunteer interpreters
 - “Literal translation” of terms of art (e.g., food stamps)
 - Difficulty using legal terms with ease
 - Client may not be familiar with legal terms
 - Pro bono attorney may also not be accustomed to using legal terms in pro bono context

*Thanks to Joann Lee at LAFLA for sharing content on slides re LEP and interpretation.