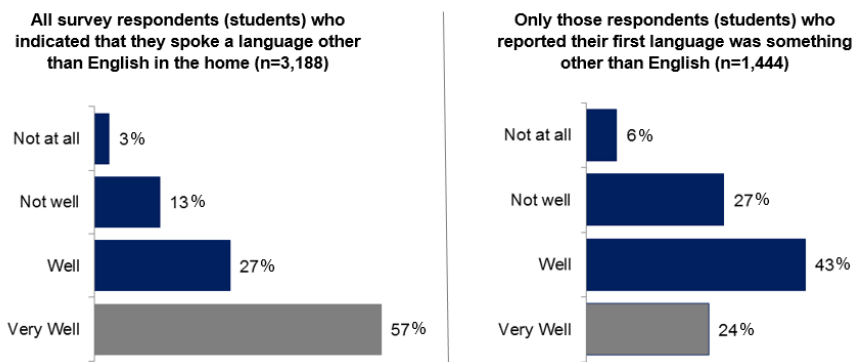


Gaining a Better Understanding of ELL Students: How Well Do Parents Speak English

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Percentage of Respondents who Reported Speaking More than One Language at Home



A random sample of students who took the ACT® test in April 2016 was invited to participate in an online survey about their English Language Learner (ELL) status (N = 52,500). As part of this initiative, students were also asked how well they think their parents speak English. A total of 10,336 students responded.

Other recent ACT Research on ELL students includes:

- Moore, R. and Wilkinson, T. (2017). *Gaining a Better Understanding of ELL Students: How Well Do Parents Speak English*. Iowa City, IA: ACT.
- Moore, R. and Wilkinson, T. (2017). *Understanding How to Measure ELL: Does the Way the Question Is Asked Impact the Answer?* Iowa City, IA: ACT.

¹ A comparison between “very well” and all other categories was conducted by the US Census and therefore replicated here for general comparisons.

Key Takeaways

- Approximately 43% of students who indicated that they spoke a language other than English in the home reported that their parents speak English less than very well.¹
- Among students who reported that their first language was something other than English, this percentage was higher (76%). Comparing this finding with those from other surveys is problematic, due to study design differences. For example, it was found in the 2015 American Community Survey that 41% of survey respondents who spoke a language other than English in the home did so less than “very well.” The difference in our findings and ACS’s could be related to 1) what was asked in the surveys (how well respondents think their parents speak English vs. how well respondents speak a language other than English) and 2) the samples surveyed (high school students vs. individuals older than four years). ■

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