

About the American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a continuously collected survey administered by the U.S. Census Bureau. It provides estimates of demographic and housing characteristics each year. This issue of *MetroStats* highlights demographic findings from the latest ACS release, which summarizes data collected during the 2009-2013 period.

The American Community Survey five-year data provides information for all cities and townships in the region as well as census tracts.

The numbers presented in this report are the Census Bureau's estimates based on surveys of nearly 102,000 housing units and 254,000 people across the Twin Cities region. The estimates are subject to error and may overstate or understate actual values.

[Read more about the American Community Survey on the U.S. Census Bureau's website.](#)

Download the latest American Community Survey data from our website: <http://metro council.org/data>

This report was written by Matt Schroeder and Krysten Lynn Ryba-Tures of the Regional Policy and Research team at the Metropolitan Council. For more information, please contact us:

research@metc.state.mn.us

Key findings

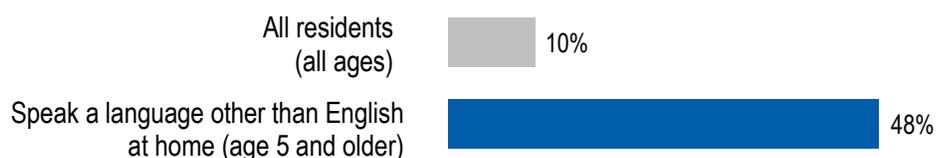
- Over 400,000 residents of the Twin Cities region (one of every seven residents age 5 and older) speak a language other than English at home, according to the latest American Community Survey (2009-2013).
- Among New Americans and their families, almost a third (32%) speak Spanish at home. Other language groups with a large presence in the region include African languages, Hmong, Vietnamese, Chinese and Russian.
- Just over a third (38%) of the residents who speak a language other than English at home were born in the U.S.; another quarter (27%) were naturalized U.S. citizens during 2009-2013.

New Americans and their families live throughout the region

[The racial and ethnic diversity of the Twin Cities region is increasing rapidly](#)—in fact, one in every four residents of the region was a person of color in 2013. A large source of this growing racial and ethnic diversity in the region is New Americans.

Definitions of New Americans vary—some may be individuals who immigrated to the U.S. after being born in another country. However, our analysis sought a more inclusive definition that better reflects first- and second-generation Americans. This report examines residents who reported speaking a language other than English at home, regardless of where they were born, their current citizenship status or their level of English proficiency (see Appendix on page 8). Applying this definition to the most recent American Community Survey data, there are over 400,000 individuals, age 5 and older, whom we consider to be New Americans living in the Twin Cities region during 2009-2013. This is a considerable increase since 2000 (+48%) compared to overall population growth (+10%; see Figure 1).

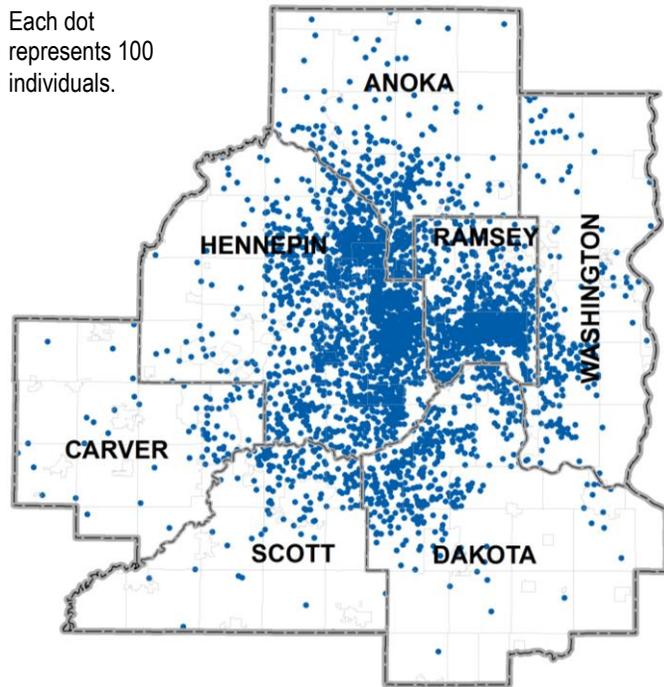
Figure 1. Growth in population by language spoken at home since 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census (Summary File 3) and 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Region-wide, about one in every seven residents age 5 and older speak a language other than English at home. Ramsey and Hennepin counties show a higher proportion of New American residents (21% and 17% respectively) than other counties in the region. However, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, New Americans and their families live across the Twin Cities region.

Figure 2. Residents (age 5 and older) who speak a language other than English at home, 2009-2013

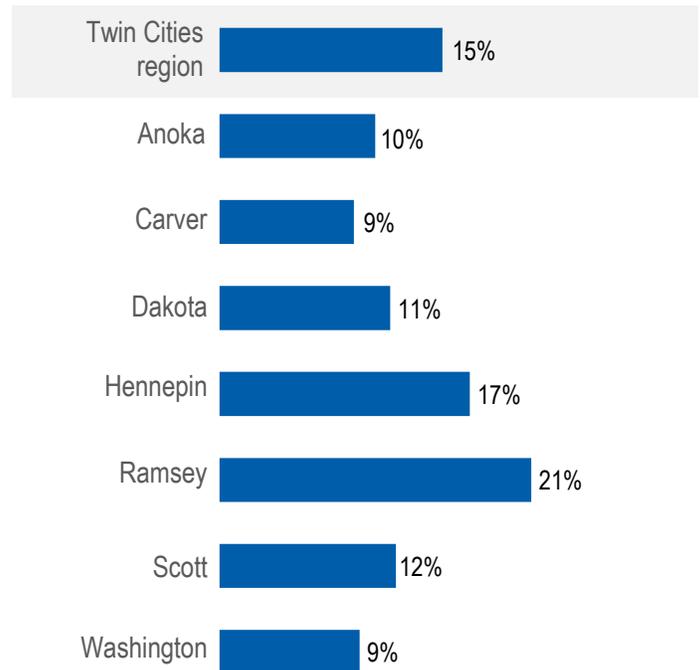


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

During 2009-2013, just over a third (38%) of New Americans in the Twin Cities region were born in the U.S., another 35% were born outside of the U.S. and were not citizens, and 27% were born outside the U.S. and reported naturalized citizenship.

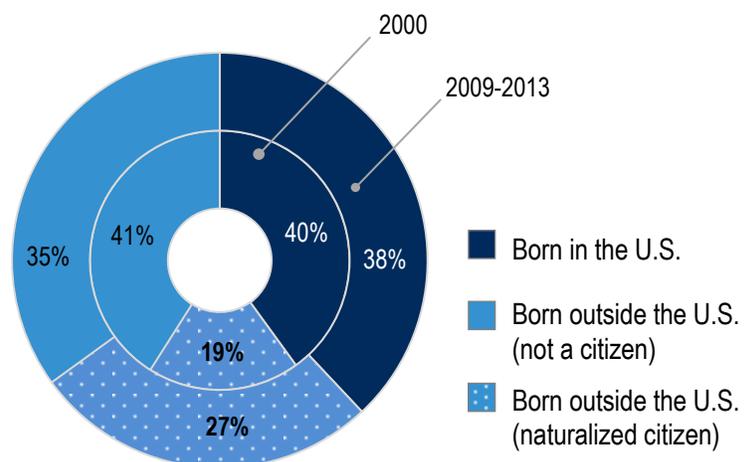
These proportions were similar for New Americans living in the region in 2000, with the exception of naturalized citizens, who became a larger share of the New American population in 2009-2013 (increase to 27% from 19%). This may partially be due to the fact that most New Americans (53%) living in the Twin Cities region today arrived in the U.S. prior to 2000, giving them the time needed to complete the process of naturalization.

Figure 3. Percentage of residents (age 5 and older) who speak a language other than English at home, 2009-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

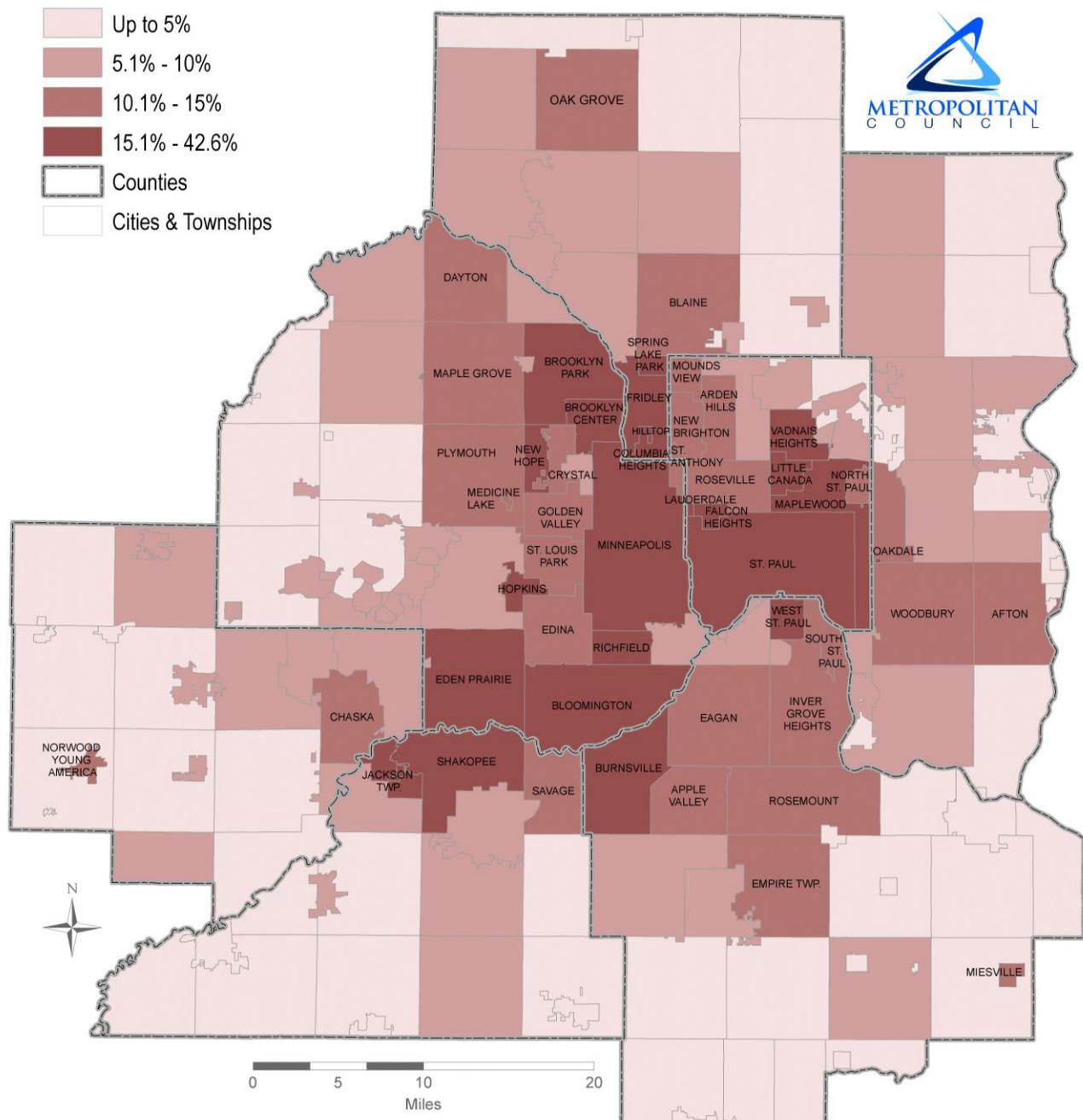
Figure 4. Residents who speak a language other than English at home by nativity and U.S. citizenship status



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 5% Public Use Microdata Sample and 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Figure 5 shows the percentage of New American residents by city. Twenty-one cities and townships are in the highest category, representing areas that are at or exceed the regional average of 15% of residents speaking a language other than English at home. The highest share of New Americans in the region (43%) is located in one of the region’s smallest cities: Landfall, where a large manufactured housing park is located. The city of Lauderdale, where a large number of college and graduate students who attend the University of Minnesota and Luther Seminary live, has the second-highest percentage (29%). Brooklyn Center (28%), Richfield (27%), Saint Paul (27%), Brooklyn Park (26%), Columbia Heights (26%), Hilltop (26%), Hopkins (24%) and Jackson Township (22%) are the rest of the top 10 based on percentage.

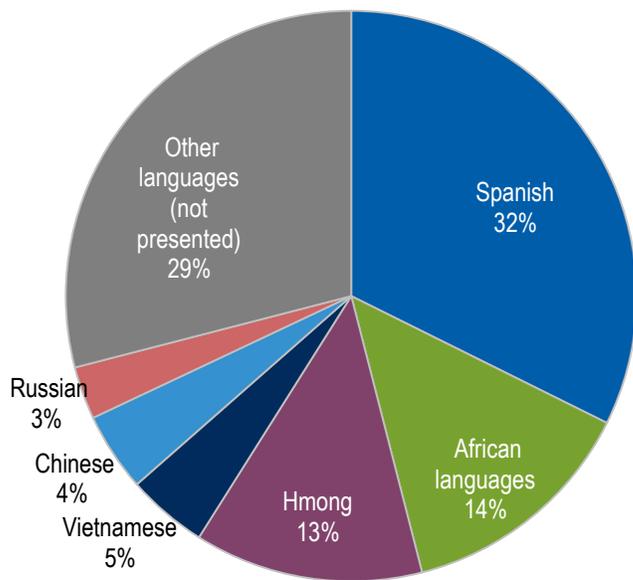
Figure 5. Percentage of residents (age 5 and older) speaking a language other than English at home by cities and townships, 2009-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Languages spoken by New Americans living in the Twin Cities region

Figure 6. New Americans by language spoken at home, 2009-2013



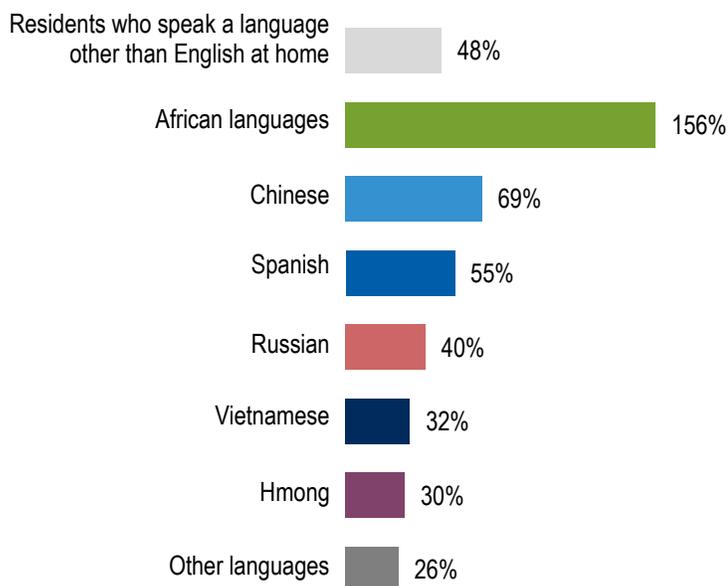
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Over 400,000 residents (age 5 and older) in the Twin Cities region spoke a language other than English at home during 2009-2013. So which languages *do* they speak at home?

The American Community Survey estimates provide 39 categories of languages spoken at home. We looked at the nine language groups with at least 10,000 speakers and selected six for our analysis (see Appendix on page 8). Seventy-one percent of New Americans in the Twin Cities region speak one of the six language groups presented in Figure 6. The largest group is New Americans who speak Spanish at home (32%), followed by residents who speak an African language at home (14%) and those who speak Hmong at home (13%).

Within most of these language groups, at least half of New Americans also report speaking English “very well.” The exception is New Americans who speak Vietnamese, where 40% report speaking English “very well.”

Figure 7. Growth in the number of residents (age 5 and older) by language spoken at home since 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census (Summary File 3) and 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Although about a third (32%) of New Americans speak Spanish at home—the largest group by far—they did *not* experience the most growth over the past decade (Figure 7). The number of residents speaking an African language at home increased by 156% between 2000 and the 2009-2013 time period, exceeding the growth in New Americans overall and any other language group. New Americans who speak Chinese at home were the second fastest-growing group (69%) since 2000, followed by Spanish-speaking residents (55%) and Russian-speaking residents (40%). While Hmong-speaking residents were the third largest group of New Americans overall during 2009-2013, the increase in the number of Hmong speakers since 2000 was comparatively low (30%).

The next section provides specific information on the New Americans in each of these six language groups.

Residents who speak Spanish at home

During 2009-2013, over 129,000 residents (age 5 and older) in the Twin Cities region spoke Spanish at home. The cities with the highest number of Spanish-speaking New Americans were Minneapolis (about 30,000) and Saint Paul (about 19,000), followed by Richfield, Bloomington and Burnsville. Over half (53%) of these New Americans report speaking English “very well.”

Forty-seven percent of residents who speak Spanish at home were born in the U.S. Of these, most (about two-thirds) were born in Minnesota.

Fifty-three percent of the Spanish-speaking New Americans were born outside the U.S., with 8% reporting naturalized citizenship. The top countries of origin for the region’s Spanish speakers born outside the U.S. include Mexico (69%), El Salvador (8%) and Ecuador (7%). Half (50%) of these residents came to the U.S. in the year 2000 or after, and another 33% arrived in the U.S. between 1990 and 1999.

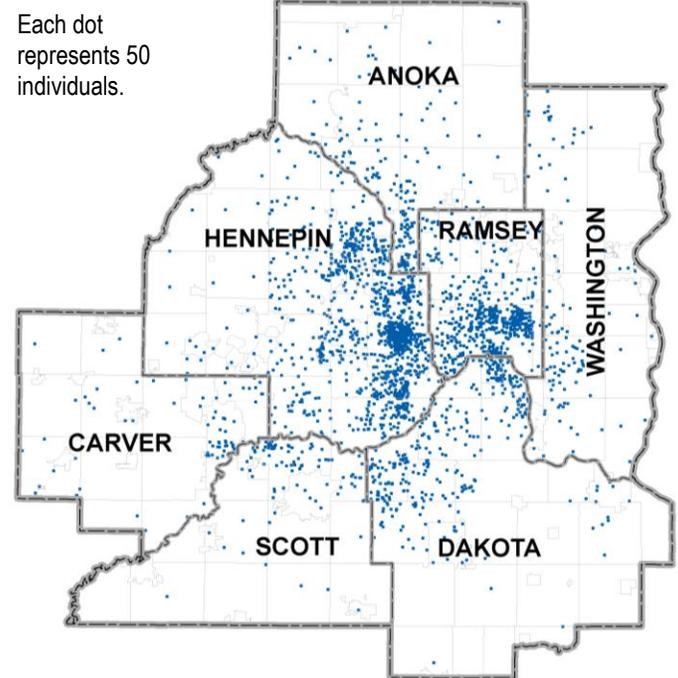
Residents who speak an African language at home

During 2009-2013, over 54,000 residents (age 5 and older) in the Twin Cities region spoke an African language at home. The cities with the highest number of New Americans who speak an African language at home were Minneapolis (about 15,000) and Saint Paul (about 10,000), followed by Brooklyn Park, Burnsville and Bloomington. Over half (59%) of these New Americans report speaking English “very well.”

Sixteen percent of residents who speak an African language at home were born in the U.S. Of these, most (71%) were born in Minnesota.

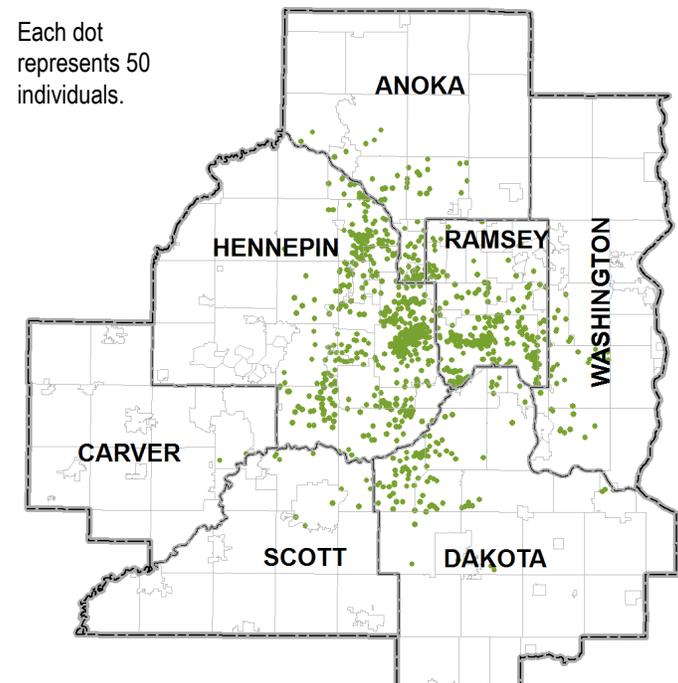
Eighty-six percent of the residents who speak an African language at home were born outside the U.S., with 40% reporting naturalized citizenship. The top countries of origin include Somalia (38%), Ethiopia (25%), Kenya (11%) and Nigeria (8%). Sixty-three percent of these New Americans born outside the U.S. immigrated in the year 2000 or after.

Figure 8. Residents (age 5 and older) who speak Spanish at home, 2009-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Figure 9. Residents (age 5 and older) who speak an African language at home, 2009-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Residents who speak Hmong at home

During 2009-2013, over 51,000 residents (age 5 and older) in the Twin Cities region spoke Hmong at home. The cities with the highest number of Hmong-speaking New Americans were Saint Paul (about 23,000), followed by Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, Maplewood and Brooklyn Center. Over half (54%) of these New Americans report speaking English “very well.”

Forty-seven percent of residents who speak Hmong at home were born in the U.S. Of these, about 62% were born in Minnesota, 20% in California, and 10% in Wisconsin.

Fifty-three percent of the Hmong-speaking New Americans were born outside the U.S., with 34% reporting naturalized citizenship. The top countries of origin for the region’s Hmong speakers born outside the U.S. include Laos (63%) and Thailand (33%). Seventy-six percent of these residents came to the U.S. before the year 2000, many during the 1980s.

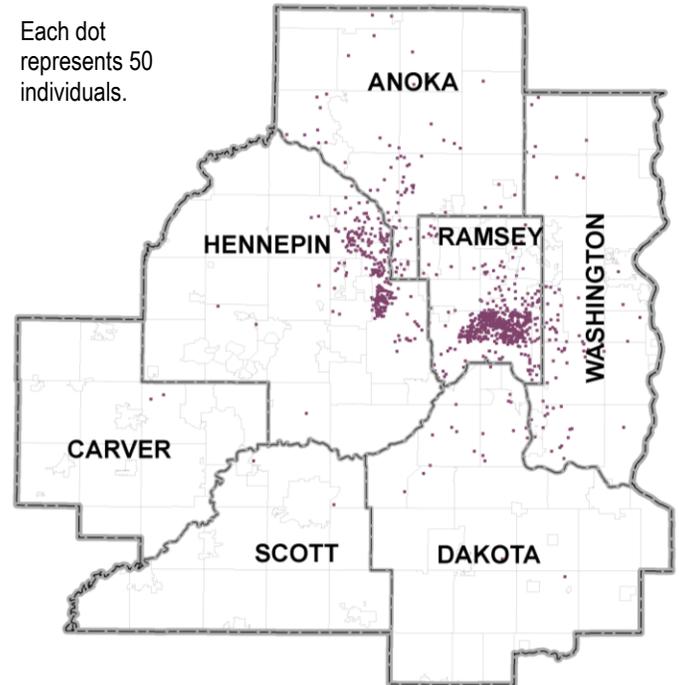
Residents who speak Vietnamese at home

During 2009-2013, over 18,000 residents (age 5 and older) in the Twin Cities region spoke Vietnamese at home. The cities with the highest number of Vietnamese-speaking New Americans were Brooklyn Park (about 3,000) and Saint Paul (about 2,000), followed by Minneapolis and Bloomington. Forty percent of these New Americans report speaking English “very well.”

Twenty-two percent of residents who speak Vietnamese at home were born in the U.S.—the majority (83%) in Minnesota.

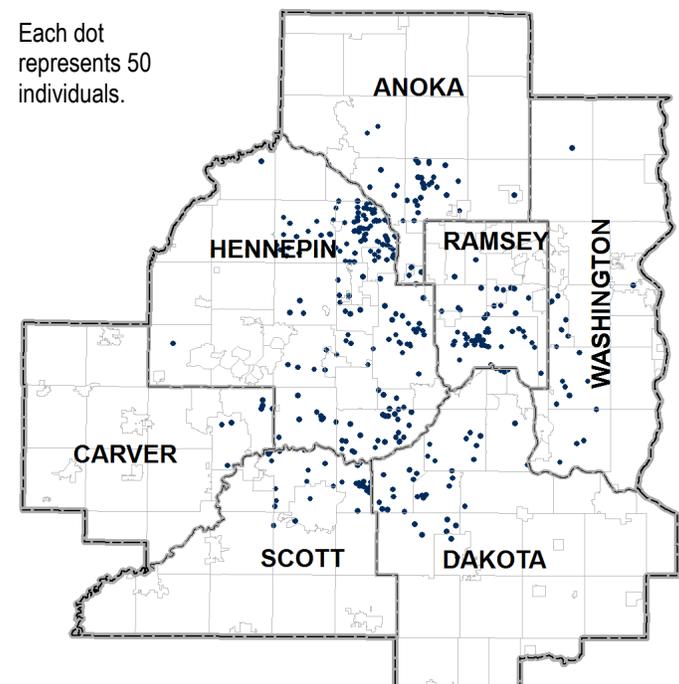
Seventy-eight percent of the Vietnamese-speaking New Americans were born outside the U.S., with 58% reporting naturalized citizenship. Nearly all (96%) of the region’s Vietnamese speakers born outside the U.S. were born in Vietnam. Seventy-four percent of these residents came to the U.S. before the year 2000. The largest cohort (40%) immigrated between 1990 and 1999.

Figure 10. Residents (age 5 and older) who speak Hmong at home, 2009-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Figure 11. Residents (age 5 and older) who speak Vietnamese at home, 2009-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Residents who speak Chinese at home

During 2009-2013, over 17,000 residents (age 5 and older) in the Twin Cities region spoke Chinese at home. The cities with the highest number of Chinese-speaking New Americans were Minneapolis (about 3,000)—many near the University of Minnesota campus—followed by Saint Paul and Woodbury. Fifty-eight percent of these New Americans report speaking English “very well.”

Twenty-three percent of residents who speak Chinese at home were born in the U.S.—the majority (73%) in Minnesota.

Seventy-seven percent of the Chinese-speaking New Americans were born outside the U.S., with 38% reporting naturalized citizenship. Of the region’s Chinese speakers born outside the U.S., the top countries of origin were China (62%) and Taiwan (18%). Sixty-six percent of these residents came to the U.S. before the year 2000.

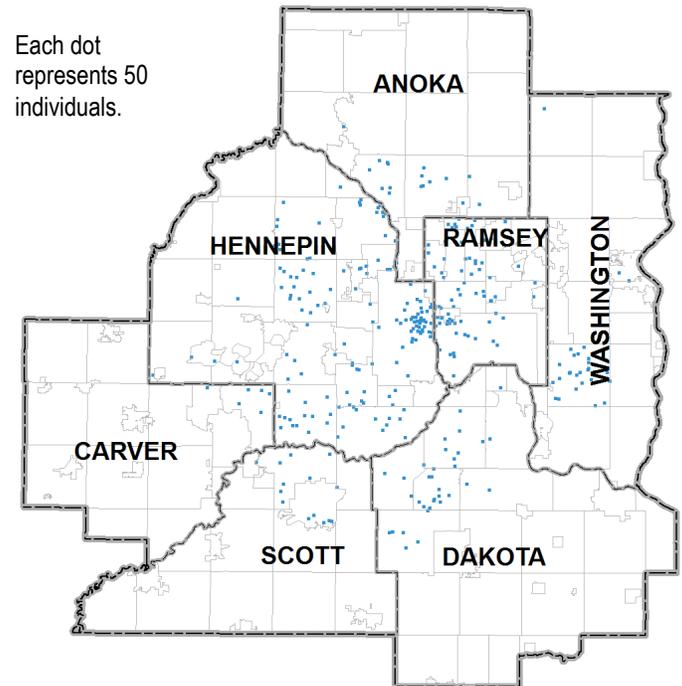
Residents who speak Russian at home

During 2009-2013, over 11,000 residents (age 5 and older) in the Twin Cities region spoke Russian at home. The city with the highest number of Russian-speaking New Americans was Maple Grove (just over 1,000), followed by Minneapolis and Plymouth. Fifty-one percent of these New Americans report speaking English “very well.”

Thirteen percent of residents who speak Russian at home were born in the U.S., the lowest share of the groups analyzed. Of those born in the U.S., over half (58%) were born in Minnesota.

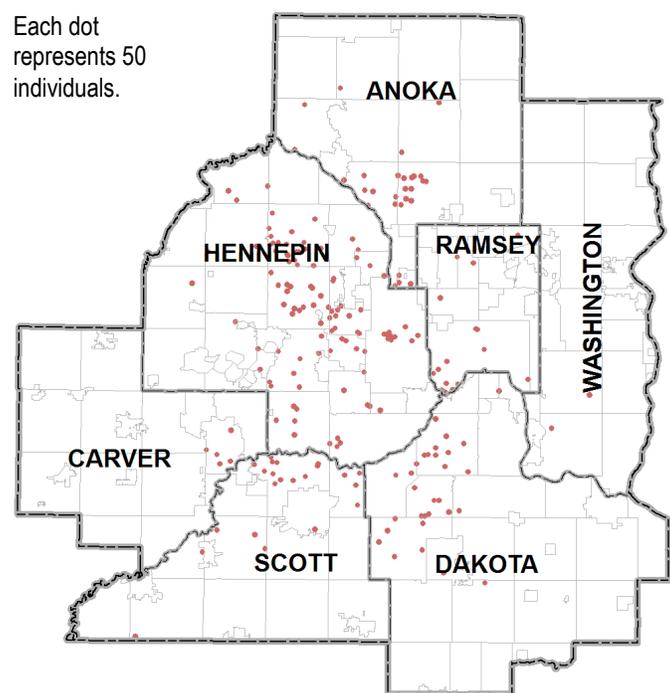
Eighty-seven percent of the Russian-speaking New Americans were born outside the U.S., with 60% reporting naturalized citizenship. Of Russian speakers born outside the U.S. living in the region, the top countries of origin were Russia (34%), Ukraine (20%) and Belarus (19%). The largest wave of Russian immigration (53%) was during the 1990s, and an additional 34% came to the U.S. in the year 2000 or after.

Figure 12. Residents (age 5 and older) who speak Chinese at home, 2009-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Figure 13. Residents (age 5 and older) who speak Russian at home, 2009-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Appendix: Selecting language groups of New Americans

We used the 2009-2013 American Community Survey summary file to identify the region's most common languages spoken at home other than English. Nine languages or language families had at least 10,000 people speaking them at home. Using the Census Bureau's classification, they are: Spanish (with an estimated 130,600 speakers across the Twin Cities region), various African languages for which the Census Bureau does not release detailed summary data (54,800 speakers), Hmong (51,900 speakers), Vietnamese (18,300 speakers), Chinese (17,900 speakers), Russian (12,000 speakers), French (11,400 speakers), and German (11,400 speakers).

We excluded German and French speakers from this analysis because the vast majority (more than 80%) of them also report speaking English very well. For the other languages with at least 10,000 speakers, no more than 59% of speakers reported speaking English very well. A category labeled "Other Asian languages" also has 17,200 speakers in the region, but it is so racially and ethnically diverse – ranging from Turkey and the former Soviet Union to India and the southeastern Asian peninsula – that an analysis of it would obscure more than it reveals.

The final list of six languages – Spanish, Hmong, African languages, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Russian – includes more than 70% of the region's residents who speak a language other than English at home.