



# Improving Language Access in the Electoral Process for California's Latinos

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# California's Latino Population and Electorate

The strength and vitality of California's democracy depends on the full political engagement of the state's Latino electorate.



- The California Department of Finance has projected that this year, Latinos will be the state's largest population group, comprising 39% of the overall population.
- Latinos account for one out of every four (26.9%) of California's eligible voters.

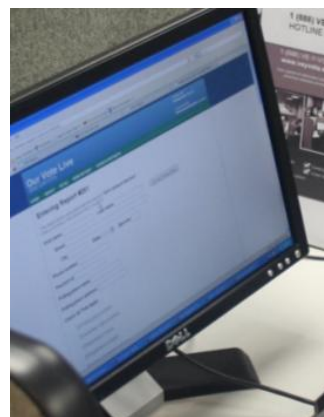
Language assistance throughout the electoral process is critical to ensure full participation:

- 1.2 million Latino adult U.S. citizens in California are not yet fully proficient in English, and they account for one of every five (22%) of the state's eligible Latinos.
  - More than one out of four of these Latinos (26%) are native-born, and 74% are naturalized citizens.
- California faces challenges in meeting the demand for English language learning instruction, and school districts are reducing their adult education programs.
- In Election 2012, California callers to the *VE-Y-VOTA* hotline reported problems with obtaining translated materials or language assistance from election officials or pollworkers.

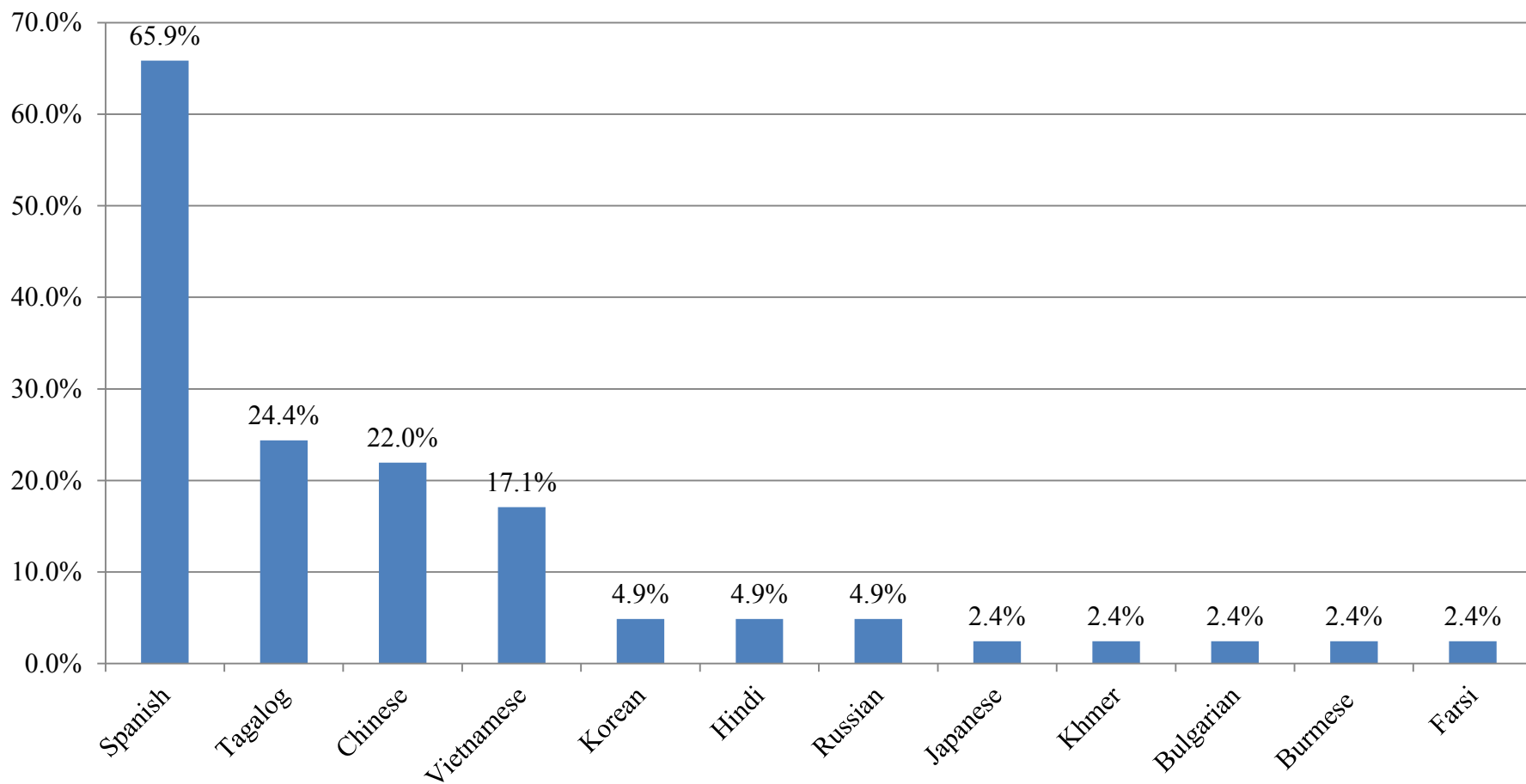


Latinos need basic information about the election process.

- In Election 2012, 94% of the 7,153 California calls to the 888-VE-Y-VOTA hotline were about the fundamentals of voter registration and casting ballots.
- 61% were inquiries about registration: uncertainty about registration status, how or where to register, how to change address on the voter rolls.
- 33% were inquiries about basic voting matters: polling place location, poll site hours, early voting, obtaining a sample ballot, or absentee voting.



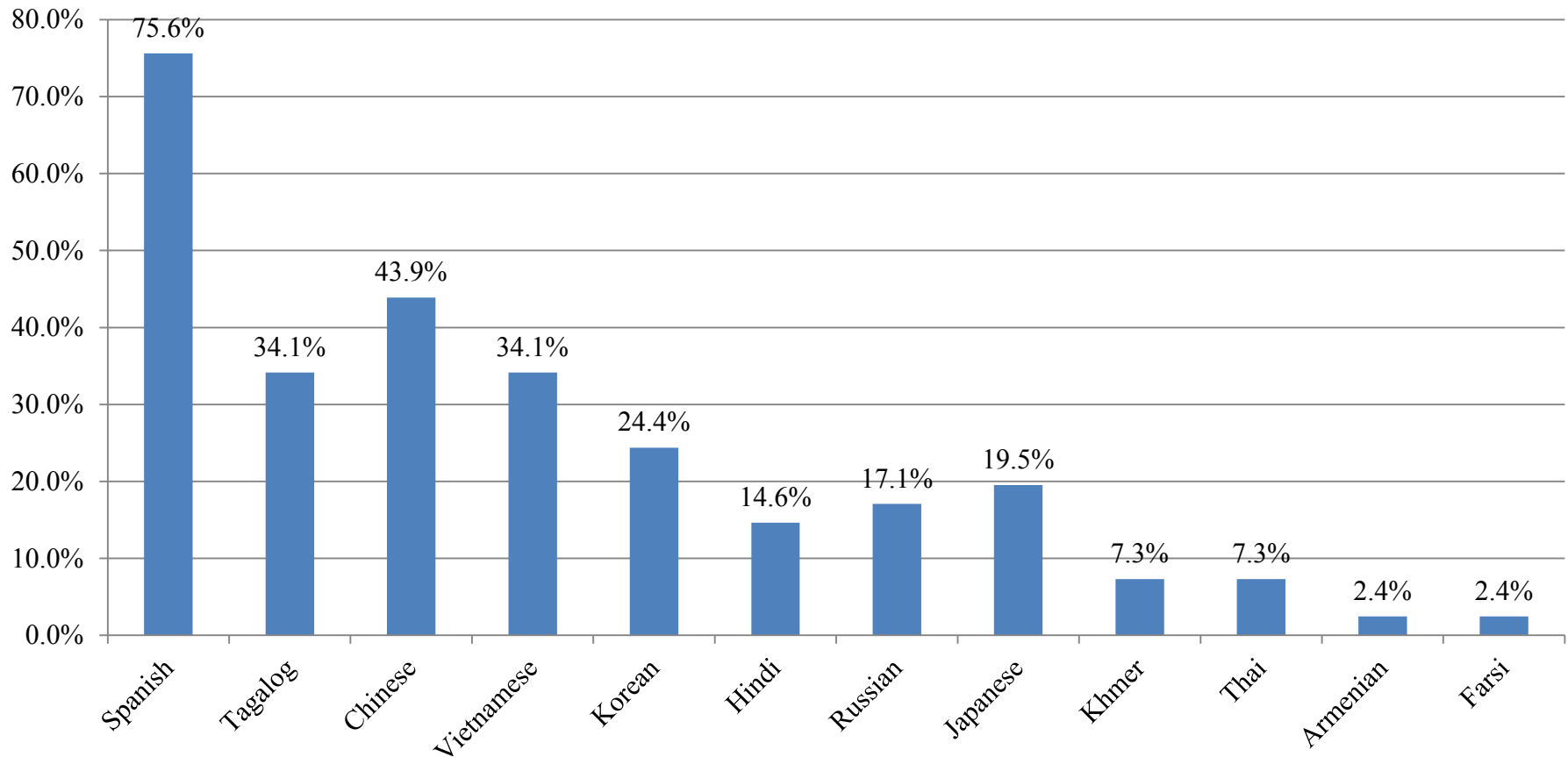
## Percentage of Jurisdictions with at Least One Full-time Election Worker Fluent in Identified Language



- Only one-third of the respondents have a “bilingual coordinator.”
- Among the 14 respondents who reported having a bilingual coordinator, they used one or more coordinators fluent in the following languages:

Spanish	14
Chinese	9
Vietnamese	8
Filipino/Tagalog	6
Hindi	3
Korean	3
Japanese	2
Russian	2
Thai	2
Khmer/Cambodian	1

## Percentage of Jurisdictions with at Least One Part-time Election Worker Fluent in Identified Language





## California Language Assistance Survey –Preliminary Findings

Top 10 types of written bilingual material provided by respondents:

<b>Type of Bilingual Written Material Provided</b>	<b>Number Providing</b>
Sample ballots	31
Voter's rights or other information pamphlets	30
Instructions on using the voting machine or ballot	28
Polling place signs	27
Voter registration materials	27
Early voting or mail-in voting materials	25
Provisional ballot envelopes	25
Instructions on provisional ballots	25
Vote-by-mail ballots	25
Election Day information	24





## California Language Assistance Survey –Preliminary Findings

Other types of written bilingual material provided by respondents:

<b>Type of Bilingual Written Material Provided</b>	<b># Providing</b>
Internet or web-based information	23
Ballots	22
Publicity regarding polling place locations	22
Poll worker badges indicating language spoken	20
Communications from elections office	19
Polling place signs indicating languages spoken by poll workers	16
Election day forms	16
Poll worker recruitment	15
Check-in information	13
Election results	8
Voter purges or list maintenance	5



## California Language Assistance Survey –Preliminary Findings

- Nearly half (19 respondents) of the 41 respondents reported that they do not consult with outside language minority stakeholders regarding their language programs. Of the 22 who do consult with these stakeholders, the top types of groups they consult with:

<b>Community Group Consulted</b>	<b># Consulting that Group</b>
Community organizations	17
Community working group	16
Ethnic media outlets	13
Schools	10
Civil rights groups	9
Churches	8
Clubs	7
County elections office	2

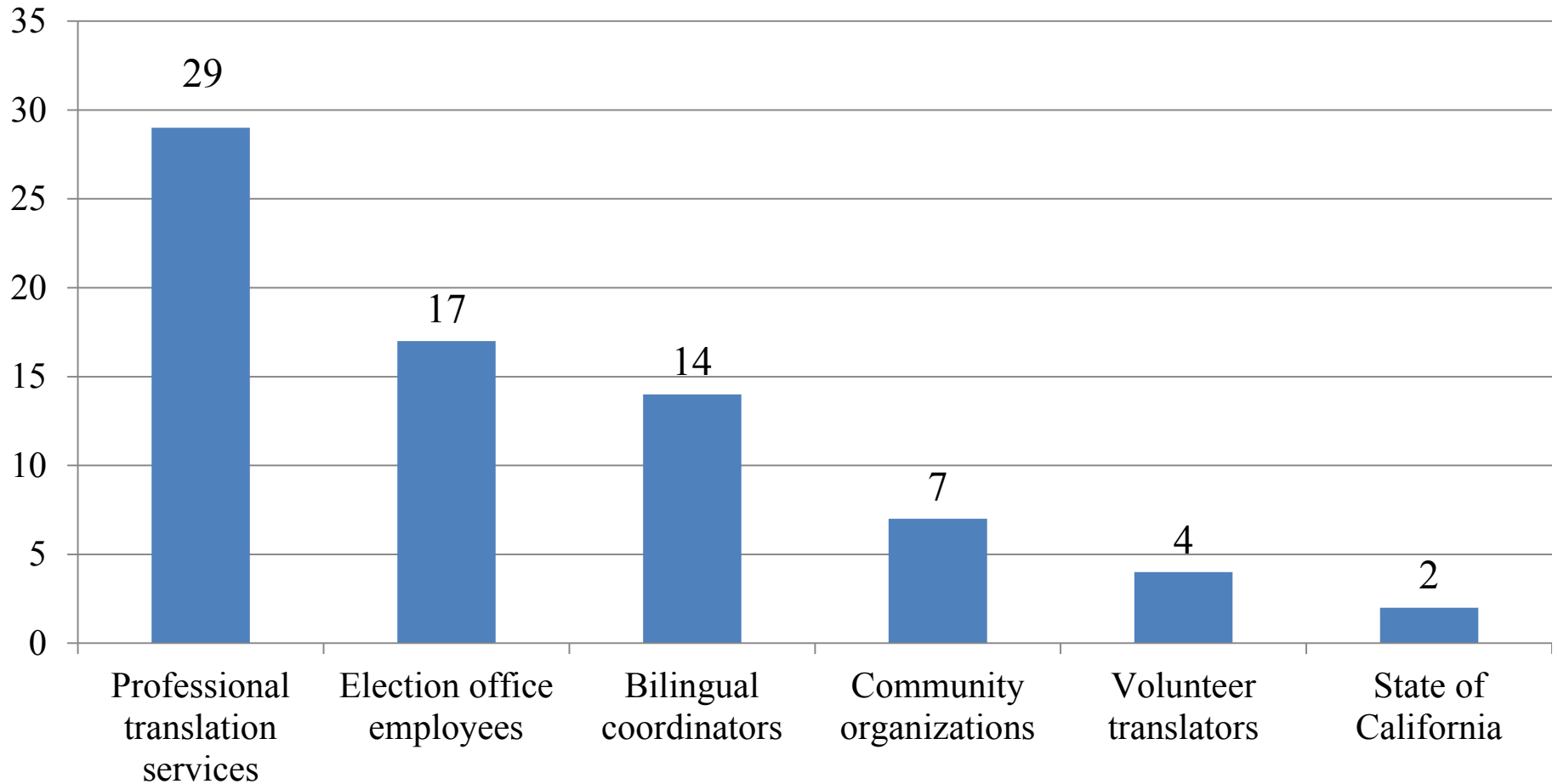


## California Language Assistance Survey –Preliminary Findings

- Bilingual telephone assistance is provided through several different methods among the 23 respondents who reported it was available:

<b>Method of Bilingual Telephone Assistance</b>	<b># Using that Method</b>
Election worker fluent in covered language(s)	19
Phone calls directed to volunteer fluent in covered language(s)	16
Separate phone number for covered language(s)	8
Voice mail message box available in covered language(s) and message is returned by fluent speaker	7
Phone directory available for covered language(s)	6
Calls directed to outside vendor	3

## Methods of translation for written materials



According to Secretary of State and federal determinations, 56 of California's 58 counties are required to provide some kind of Spanish-language assistance for the electoral process.

Best practices include:

- Consult with community groups and stakeholders familiar with needs of Latino voters for all aspects of language assistance program.
- Orange County utilizes a “mirrored” website where Spanish-language and English-language topics are generally covered in same format: <http://www.ocvote.com> and <http://www.ocvote.com/es/>.
- Both the City and County of Los Angeles have staff members with appropriate language skills and cultural competency who are responsible for pollworker recruitment and training:
  - City of Los Angeles provides translated pollworker training materials.
  - Los Angeles County supplements in-person pollworker training with YouTube videos.



Jurisdictions should use a broad variety of strategies to educate and reach Latino voters:

- Partner with Spanish-language media (PSA's and earned media have been utilized by California election officials).
- Both the City and County of Los Angeles conduct voter registration and education throughout the Latino community:
  - Fairs, festivals, sporting events
  - Convenings or events of other government entities (Neighborhood Councils, Business Improvement Districts, naturalization ceremonies)
- Los Angeles County trains community organizations on voter registration.
- The City of Los Angeles produces voter education YouTube videos.



## Best Practices: Bring Election Officials Together with Community Stakeholders

- Several California jurisdictions have formal groups which bring together election officials with “hands on” responsibility for election administration, and representatives of community groups:
  - Los Angeles County: County Voter Outreach Committee
  - City of Los Angeles: LA Votes Committee
  - Orange County: County Election Working group
- Election official/stakeholder groups are particularly effective at:
  - Providing guidance on translation, pollworker training and recruitment
  - “Troubleshooting” election administration problems.
  - Assisting community groups with coordinating their efforts and using their resources more effectively.
  - Providing a foundation to expeditiously resolve problems which arise on Election Day.



# PCEA Recommendations



- States should survey and audit polling places to determine their accessibility
- Jurisdictions should provide bilingual poll workers to any polling place with a significant number of voters who do not speak English
- Election authorities should establish advisory groups for voters with disabilities and for those with limited English proficiency.
- Election authorities should make every effort through their own websites and traditional communication outlets (especially through non-English language media) to reach these voters.