The population of Massachusetts is composed of individuals from many ethnic groups, including sizable numbers of first-generation Americans. As such, the distribution of English-speaking ability is an important demographic characteristic. Especially for older individuals, the ability to communicate in English may have implications for access to services and resources that may contribute to their quality of life.

The distribution of English-speaking ability among Massachusetts seniors was very similar to that for the United States as a whole in 2007. In this age group, 84% of Massachusetts residents spoke English only with the other 16%—representing almost 138,000 older individuals-speaking a language other than English at home. Most of these individuals speak English as well, but about 10% report that they do not speak English "very well." About 3% Massachusetts seniors do not speak English at all (Figure 1).
Of the 16% of Massachusetts seniors who speak a language other than English at home, the vast majority speak an Indo-European language apart from Spanish (11%) such as, German, Italian or Greek (Figure 2).

Figure 2: MA Language Spoken at Home, Age 65 and Older

Figure 3: US Language Spoken at Home, Age 65 and Older

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