



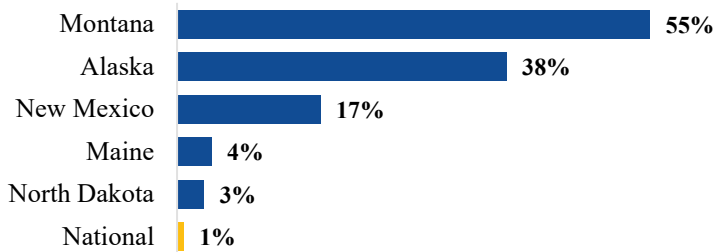
# Office of English Language Acquisition English Learners Who Are American Indian/Alaska Native

## Number of English Learners Who Are American Indian/Alaska Native: School Year 2021–22

In school year (SY) 2021–22, there were 41,617 English learners (ELs) who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN). In addition, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) serves 4,177 English learners who are AI/AN.<sup>1</sup>



## Five States With the Highest Percent of English Learners Who Are American Indian/Alaska Native: School Year 2021–22

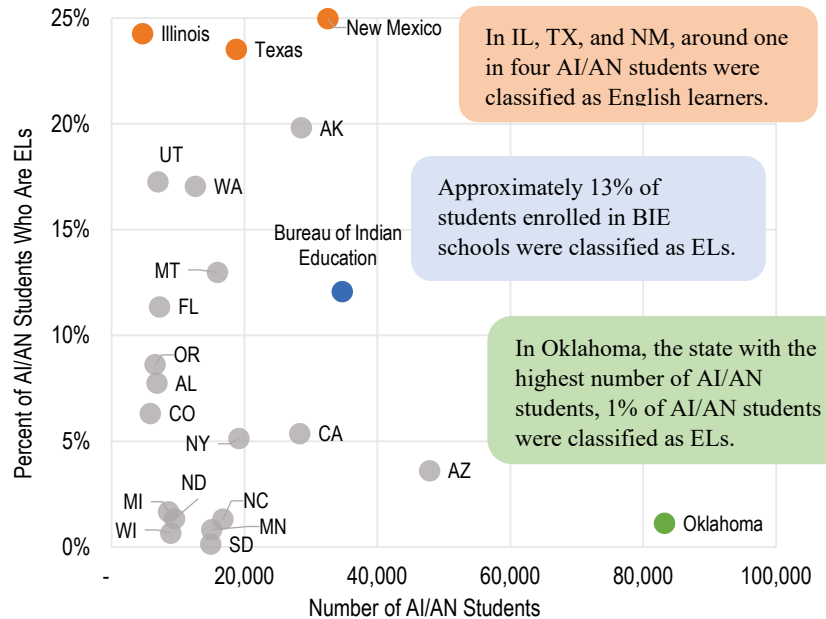


Nationally, fewer than 1% of ELs are AI/AN; however, this percentage varies by state. In SY 2021–22, Montana had the highest percentage of EL students who are AI/AN (55%), followed by Alaska (38%).

## Percent of American Indian/Alaska Native Students Who Were Identified as English Learners: School Year 2021–22

In SY 2021–22, 9.2% of the nation’s 453,000 AI/AN students were classified as ELs.<sup>2</sup> However, the rates of EL classification of AI/AN students varied widely by state.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike most other ELs, under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, AI/AN students may be identified as ELs even if their native language is English but they “come from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact” on their English language development.<sup>4</sup> Some states have identification policies specific to AI/AN students, including Montana, North Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Data in FS141 include a breakdown of the counts of EL students by state, and data for Bureau of Indian Education schools are included as a separate row of data.

<sup>2</sup> The “percent of AI/AN students who are EL” data points reflect an author calculation of the number of AI/AN EL students divided by the total number of AI/AN students enrolled.

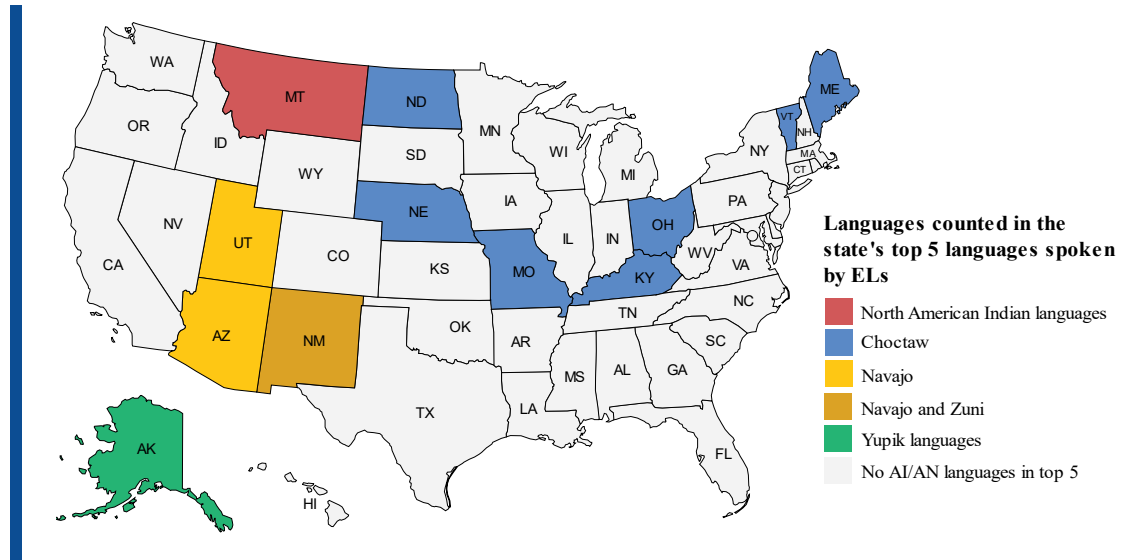
<sup>3</sup> Figure includes only states where there were at least 1,000 AI/AN students who are English learners.

<sup>4</sup> Section 8101(20) of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, 20 U.S.C. §7801 (20)

<sup>5</sup> Mentions of specific policies are designed to provide clearer understanding and are not meant as endorsements from the U.S. Department of Education. For more information about state identification policies for AI/AN students, see the following publication: Umansky, I. M., Itoh, T., & Carjuzaa, J. (2023). Indigenous students and English learner identification: A fifty-state policy review. *Educational Policy*, 37(7), 1989-2025. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048221134697>

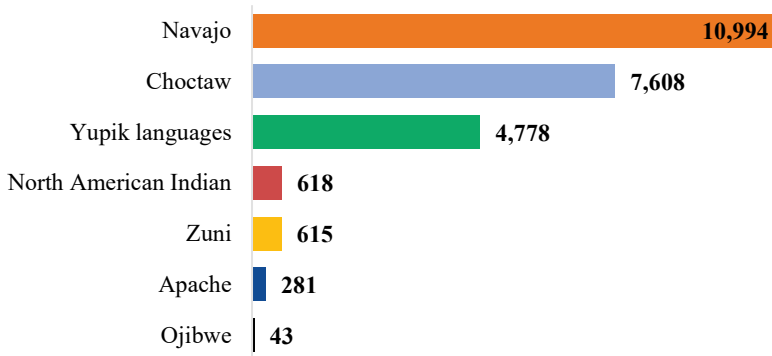
## States Reporting American Indian/Alaska Native Languages as One of the Top Five Languages Spoken by English Learners: School Year 2021–22

Twelve states, plus the BIE, counted at least one AI/AN language within the top five languages spoken by ELs. New Mexico counted two languages, Navajo and Zuni, among the top five. BIE counts four languages, Navajo, North American Indian languages, Apache, and Ojibwe, within the top five languages spoken by ELs.



### Number of English Learners Who Speak an American Indian/Alaska Native Language in the Bureau of Indian Education and States Where an Indigenous Language Was in the Top Five Languages: School Year 2021–22

The AI/AN languages spoken by most ELs in SY 2021–22 were Navajo, Choctaw, and Yupik languages.



### Resources on Serving English Learners Who Are American Indian/Alaska Native

Research highlights unique considerations for identifying and serving AI/AN EL students.<sup>6,7</sup> The Research Education Laboratory (REL) Southwest developed practitioner-oriented resources to better serve AI/AN EL students, including a training series for teachers and a guide on using culturally responsive practices to support American Indian English learners' success.<sup>8,9</sup>

Source for all figures: FS141 – DG678, U.S. Department of Education, *EDFacts*. Retrieved from ED Data Express.

Additional source for scatterplot: Data on the number of AI/AN English Learners came from *EDFacts* FS141 – DG678. Data on the total number of AI/AN students was retrieved from the Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey," 2020–21 v.1a.

<sup>6</sup> Stoker, G., Arellano, B., & Lee, D. H. (2022). English language development among American Indian English learner students in New Mexico (REL 2022–135). U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences. Regional Educational Laboratory. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/ediabs>

<sup>7</sup> Umansky, I., Porter, L., Moreno, E., & Pierson, A. (2021). Alaska Native students as English learner students: Examining patterns in identification, classification, service provision, and reclassification (REL 2021–088). U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences. Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/northwest/pdf/REL\\_2021088.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/northwest/pdf/REL_2021088.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [REL Resource | Evidence Review and Training on Instructional Practices for American Indian English Learner Students \(ed.gov\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Culturally Responsive Practices to Support American Indian English Learners' Success \(ed.gov\)](#)