



The Humanities in Our Lives

LANGUAGES AS SERVICE

Multiple programs exist across the federal government to invest in the pipeline of qualified linguists, some of which are targeted at youth so as to encourage long sequences of language learning. The State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Defense Department’s Defense Language National Security Education Office, and the Education Department’s International and Foreign Language Education office (IFLE) host the majority of these programs.

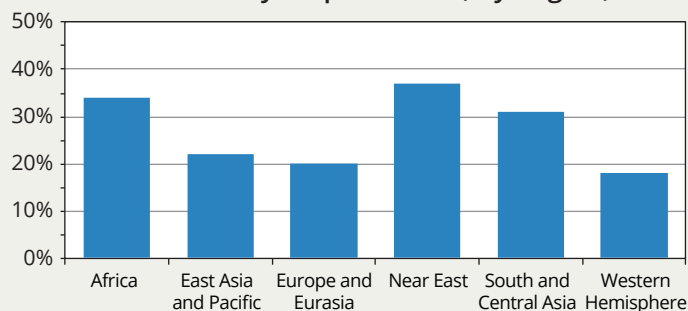
MULTILINGUALISM IN PUBLIC SERVICE

The U.S. government has long recognized that knowledge of other world languages is vital to the national interest for purposes of diplomacy, national security, and economic growth.

KEY FACTS

- In 2016, the State Department required language proficiency for 44% of its 10,111 overseas foreign service officer positions, of which 23% were filled by staff without the requisite proficiency levels.
- Over one million individuals have participated in U.S. State Department exchange programs, including 565 current or former heads of government and 97 current or former members of the U.S. Congress.

Percentages of Overseas Language-Designated Positions Filled by Foreign Service Officers Who Did Not Meet Proficiency Requirements, by Region, 2016



INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

The **Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS)** program of the IFLE provides academic year and summer fellowships at institutions of higher education. In the most recent FLAS alumni survey, fellows had studied 95 languages, of which 60 were “critical need” languages. Upon completion of the program, 60% indicated that knowledge of another world language was required in their current job, and 68% attributed their advanced language proficiency to the fellowship.

The **National Language Service Corps (NLSC)**, launched in 2007, is a voluntary civilian corps of U.S. citizens with proficiency in languages other than English that provides linguistic expertise and resources to U.S. communities and government agencies when called upon. To date, the NLSC has enrolled nearly 10,000 members, representing over 400 languages and assisting both routine assignments and disaster relief efforts, including during the earthquakes in Nepal in 2015 and in Haiti in 2010.

The Humanities in Our Lives series (#HumInOurLives) highlights the many and diverse forms of humanities activities in the nation, and key facts about the health of the field.



For more on the broad trends that mark American engagement with various forms of the humanities, visit humanitiesindicators.org or email humanitiesindicators@amacad.org.

