

# Changes in Languages Spoken in the U.S.

A geographic analysis of the languages spoken at home in the U.S.  
over a decade: 2006-2010 to 2017-2021

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# Background

## 1850–1930

European immigrants brought with them an influx of non-English European languages to the U.S. (Gibson & Jung 2006).

•e.g., German, Yiddish, Polish, Swedish, French, etc.

## 1970

Immigration levels rose again after 1970, primarily from Latin America and Asia, reviving linguistic diversity (Gibson & Jung 2006; Rumbaut & Massey 2013).

## 1930–1970

Immigration to the U.S. halted and linguistic diversity began to fade (Massey 1995; Veltman 1983).

## Today

In the U.S., the most widely spoken language is English; 78% of the population spoke a language other than English at home and 22% spoke a language other than English (US Census Bureau 2021).

# Our Prior Work

- In 2017-2021, Spanish was the most widely spoken language other than English, followed by Chinese, French, and Tagalog (U.S. Census Bureau 2023).
- Between 2006-2010 and 2015-2019, Arabic was the fastest growing language in the ten most spoken non-English languages, and German was the fastest declining language (Hernandez, Dietrich, and Bauman 2022).

# This Study

This paper will answer the following questions:

1. How much has the population of persons who spoke a language other than English changed over the last decade?
2. How much has the population of persons who spoke for select non-English languages changed over the last decade?
3. How has the population of non-English-speakers changed among states?

# Data and Methods

- American Community Survey (ACS) 2006-2010 and the 2017-2021 5-year files.
- Analyses limited to the population aged 5 years and older.
- Descriptive statistics: People who spoke a language other than English and specific non-English language speakers.
- State-level analysis: Percentage change of people who spoke a language other than English and specific non-English language speakers.

Refer to <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/design-and-methodology.html>

# Ten of the Top Languages Other Than English Spoken at Home: 2017-2021

<b>Language</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>% Tot Pop</b>
Spanish <sup>1</sup>	41,157,140	13.3
Chinese	3,460,422	1.1
French <sup>2</sup>	2,078,267	0.7
Tagalog	1,723,342	0.6
Vietnamese	1,528,461	0.5
Arabic	1,305,000	0.4
Korean	1,085,969	0.3
Russian	984,024	0.3
Hindi	875,078	0.3
German	871,275	0.3
Total Population (5+)	310,302,360	

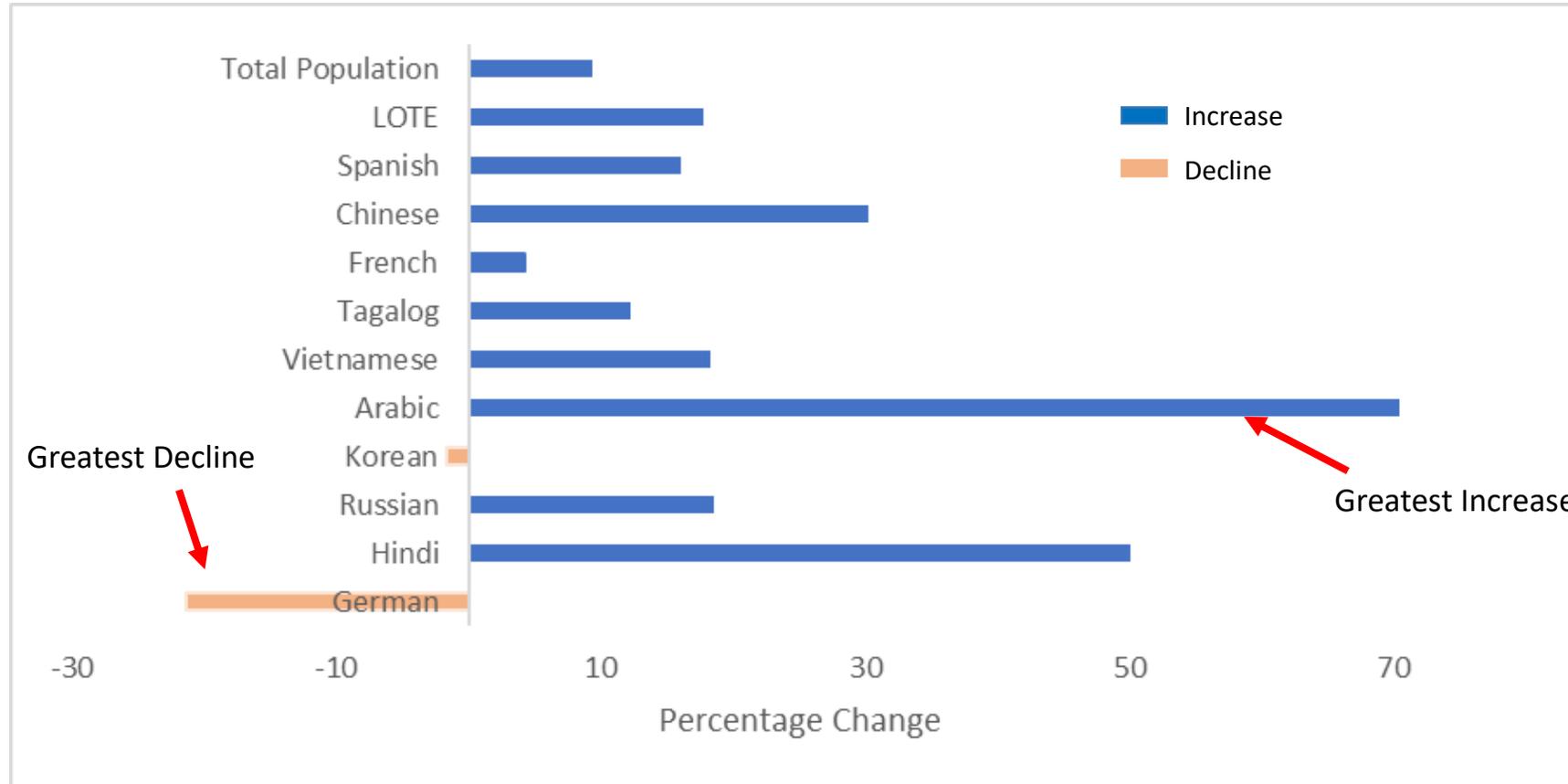
<sup>1</sup>Includes Spanish Creole

<sup>2</sup>Cajun, Creole, and Haitian

Note: Hindi and German are not significantly different

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, table B16001

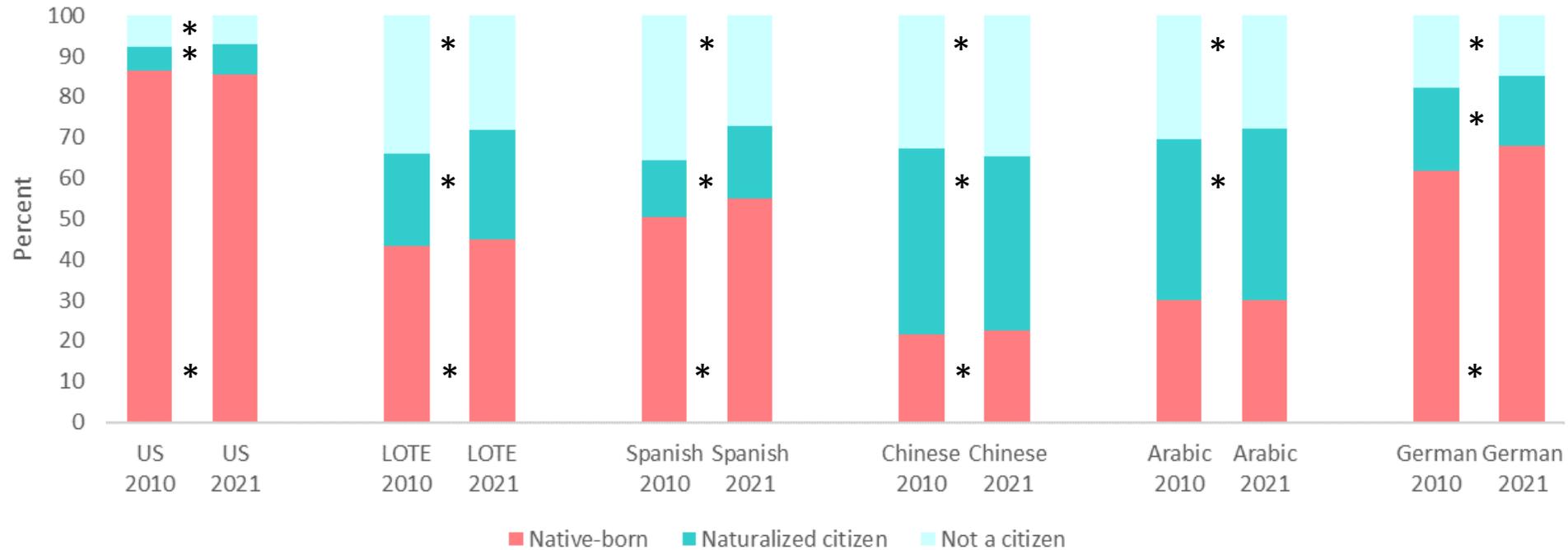
# Percentage Change for Top 10 Languages Spoken at Home in the United States: 2006-2010 to 2017-2021



Note: French includes Cajun, Creole, and Haitian

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, table B16001

# Nativity Status by Language Speakers Compared to the U.S. Population Aged 5 and Older: 2006-2010 and 2017-2021



Note: "LOTE" refers "to Language Other Than English"

\* p < 0.10, significant difference in nativity status for specific language between 2010 and 2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

# Foreign-Born Characteristics Comparisons by Language Speakers Aged 5 and Older: 2006-2010 and 2017-2021

- Years lived in US: In both 2006-2010 and 2017-2021, foreign-born German speakers had more years of residency in the US than for foreign-born speakers of the other three selected languages.
- Age of entry into the US:
  - 2006-2010—German speakers were **older** than speakers of the other three selected languages.
  - 2017-2021—German speakers were **older** than Spanish and Arabic speakers but **younger** than Chinese speakers.

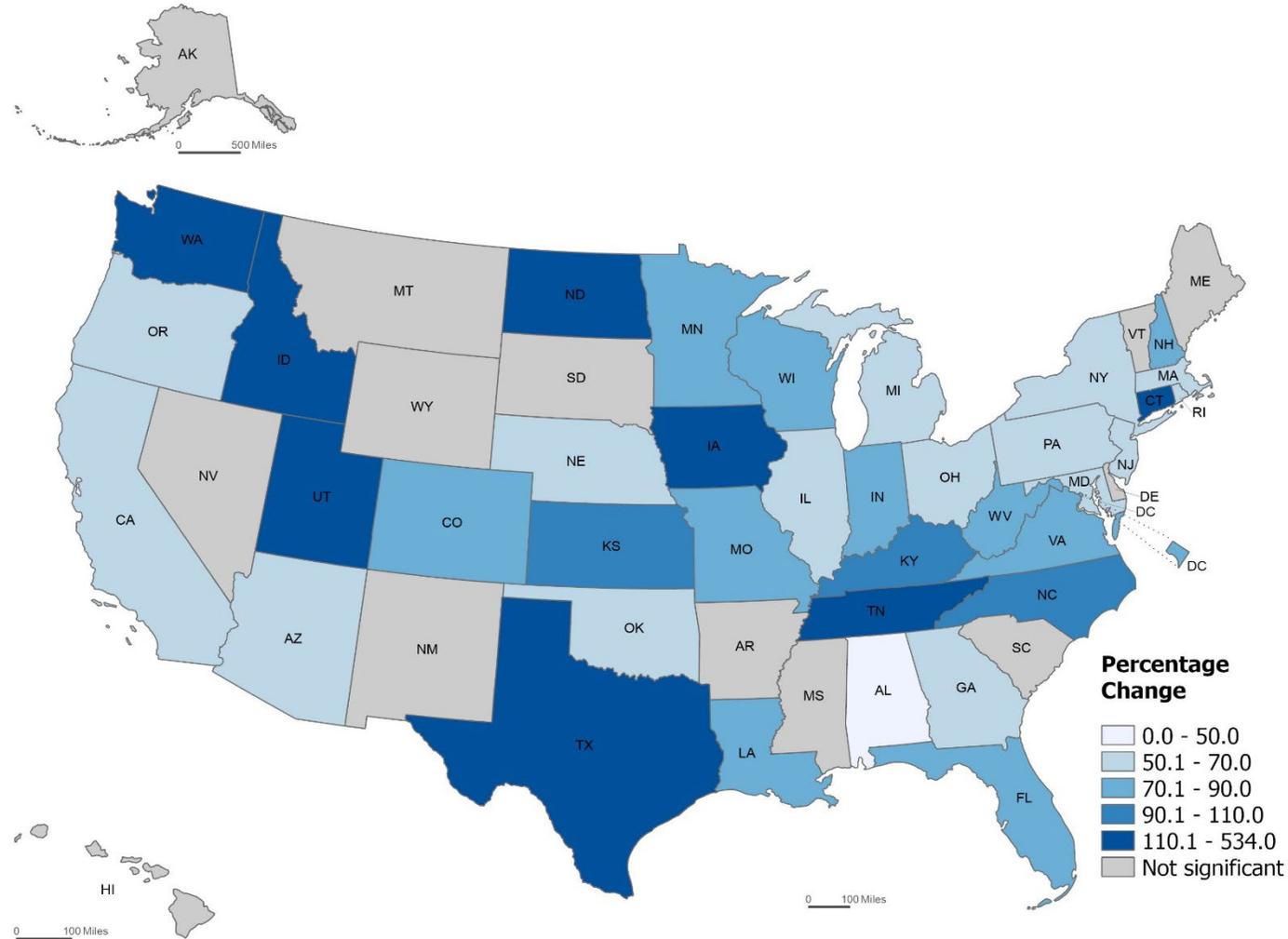
# Summary of State-Level Change by Type of Non-English Language Spoken

	<b>LOTE</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Arabic</b>	<b>German</b>
<b>Growth</b>	44	43	40	38	0
<b>No Significant Change</b>	3	1	11	13	11
<b>Decline</b>	4	7	0	0	40

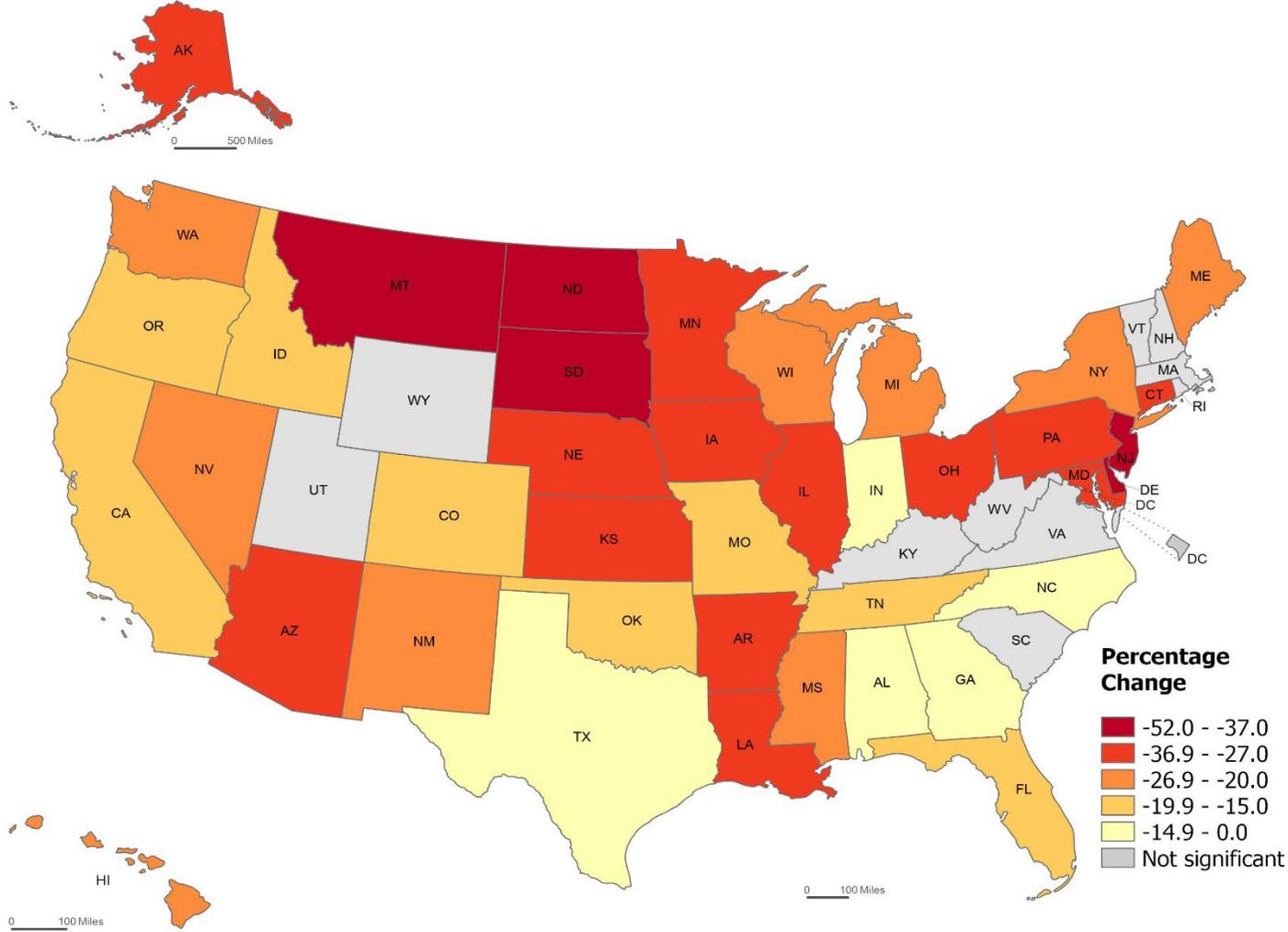
Note: Analysis includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

# Percentage Change of People Who Speak Arabic at Home in the United States: 2006-2010 to 2017-2021



# Percentage Change of People Who Speak German at Home in the United States: 2006-2010 to 2017-2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

# Conclusion

- The number of persons who spoke a language other than English grew 17.7 percent between 2006-2010 and 2017-2021.
- Eight of the top ten languages in 2017-2021 grew over the last decade.
  - Arabic speakers had the greatest *increase*, while German speakers had the greatest *decline*.
- The number of Spanish speakers changed the most across state populations with growth occurring in the 43 of states compared to the other three selected languages.

# Contact Information

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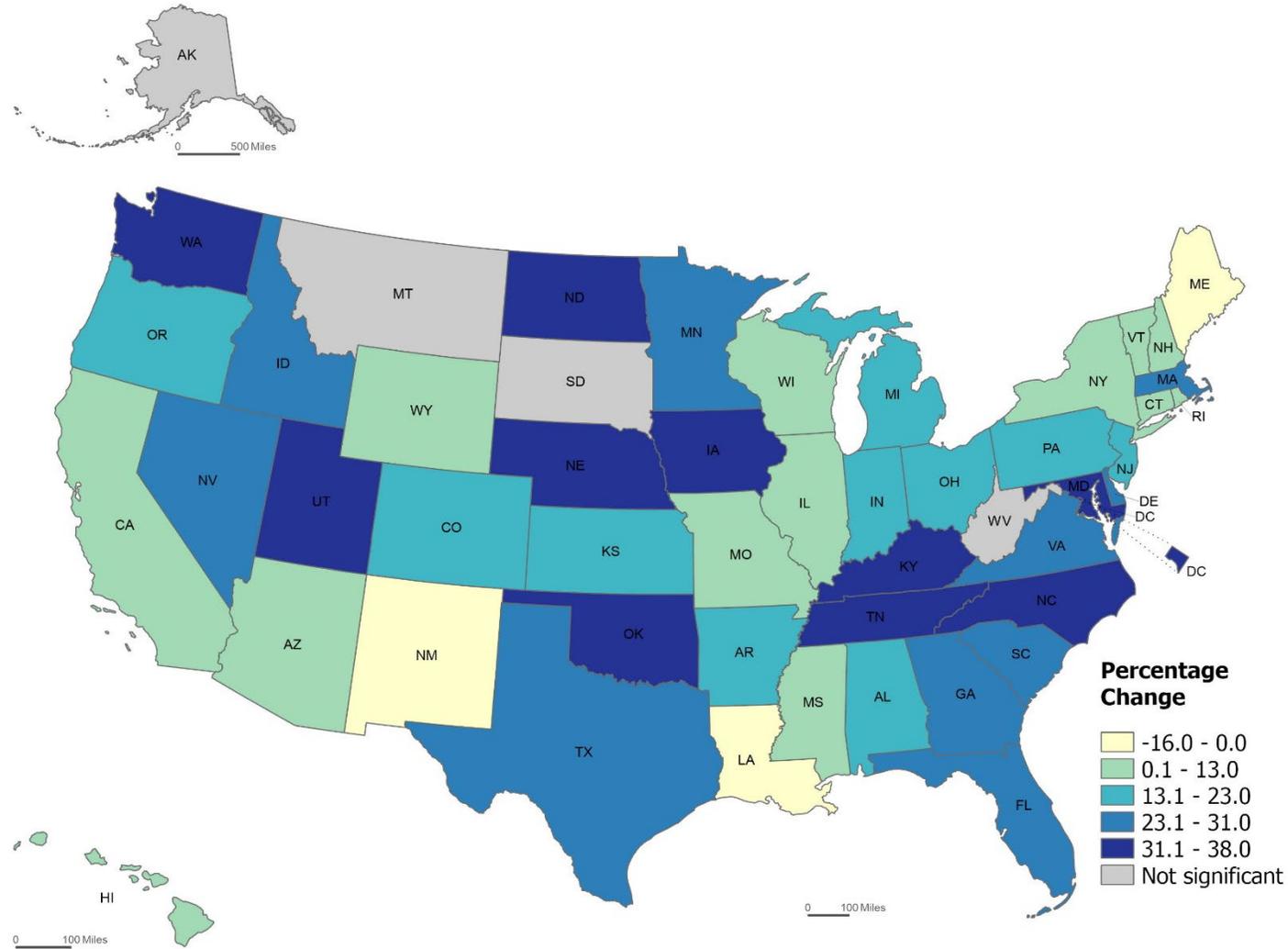
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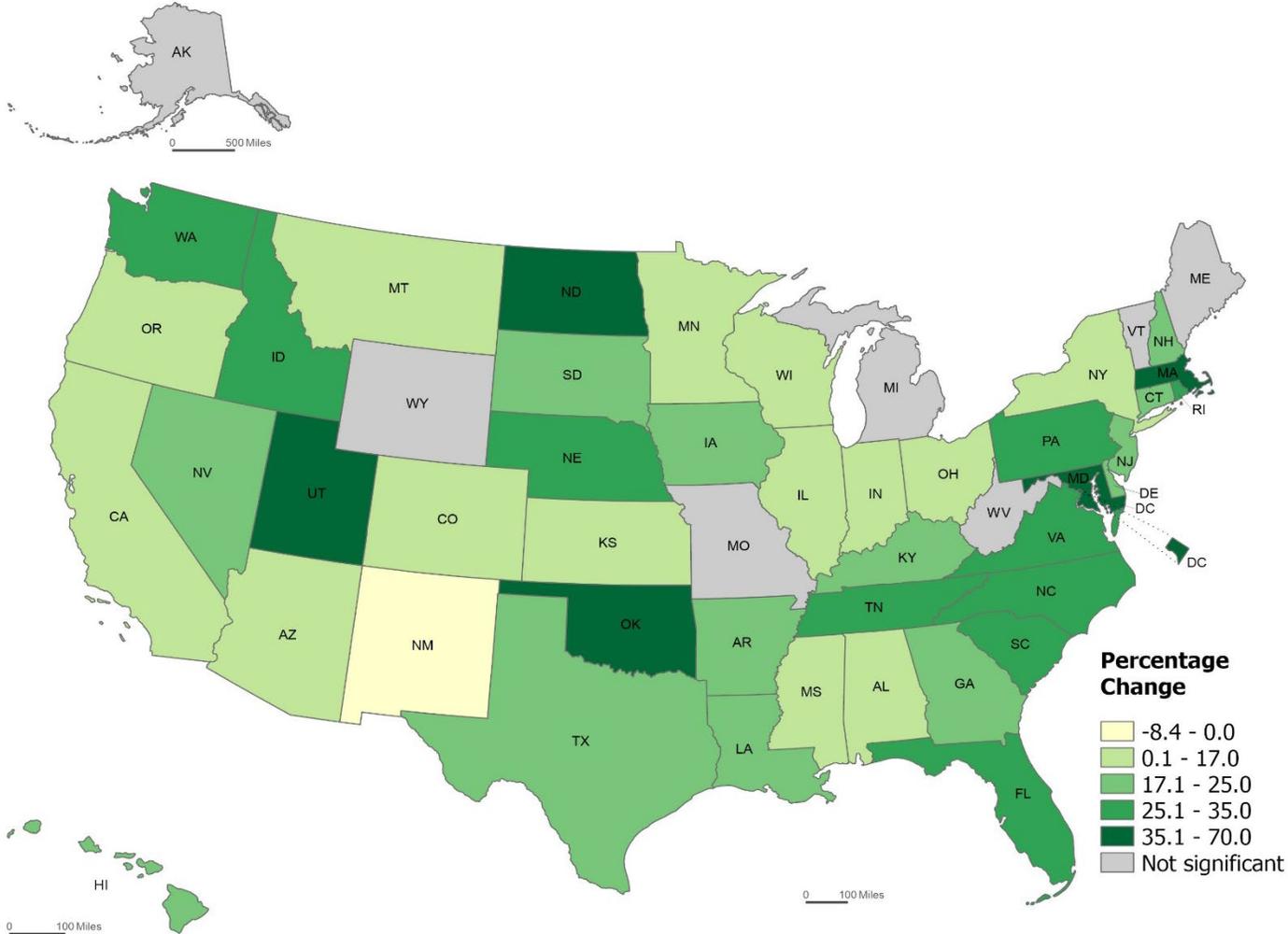
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# Percentage Change of People Who Spoke a Language Other Than English at Home in the United States: 2006-2010 to 2017-2021

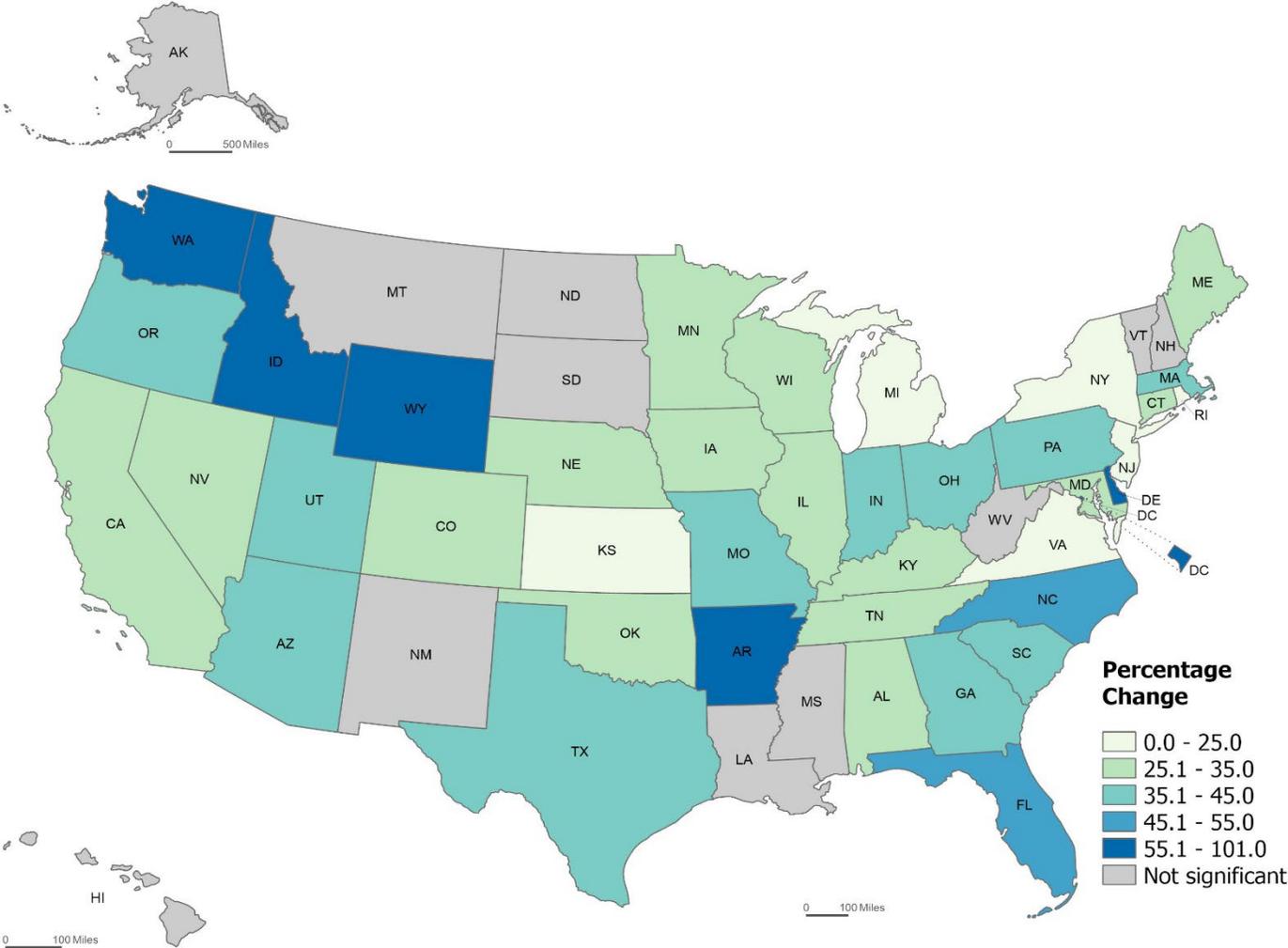


# Percentage Change of People Who Speak Spanish at Home in the United States: 2006-2010 to 2017-2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

# Percentage Change of People Who Speak Chinese at Home in the United States: 2006-2010 to 2017-2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-years estimate