



Labeling Bilinguals: A Systematic Review of Participant Profiles in Research Involving Bilingual Children



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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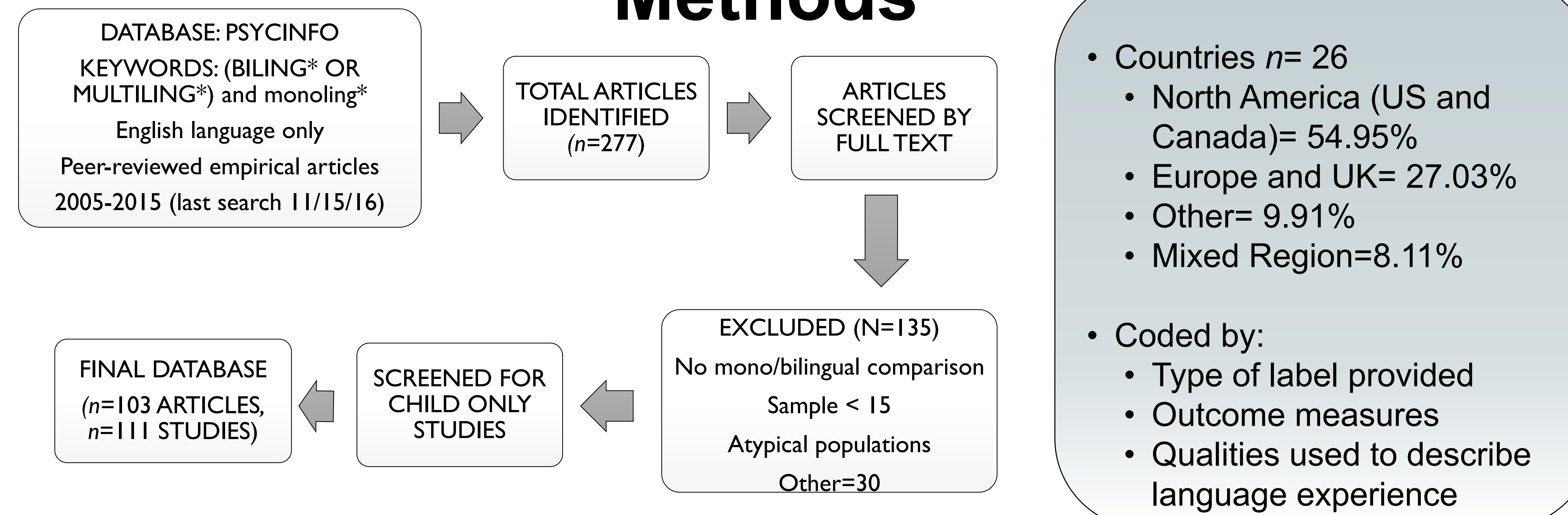
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Background

- Research investigating the language and cognitive consequences of diverse language experiences has focused on measuring group differences between bilinguals and monolinguals.
- While reporting group differences is prevalent, there is substantial variation in how researchers label and describe monolingual and bilingual participant characteristics across studies (Karlsson et al., 2015).
- Given that language experience is not categorical in nature, variations in participant characteristics make comparisons and syntheses across studies challenging (Luk & Bialystok, 2013).
- This study documents the variations in participant characteristics across studies adopting a group comparison strategy. We expect qualitative differences in the descriptions of *both* monolingual and bilingual participants. Furthermore, we expect researchers interested in different outcomes to report different qualities of bilingual experience.

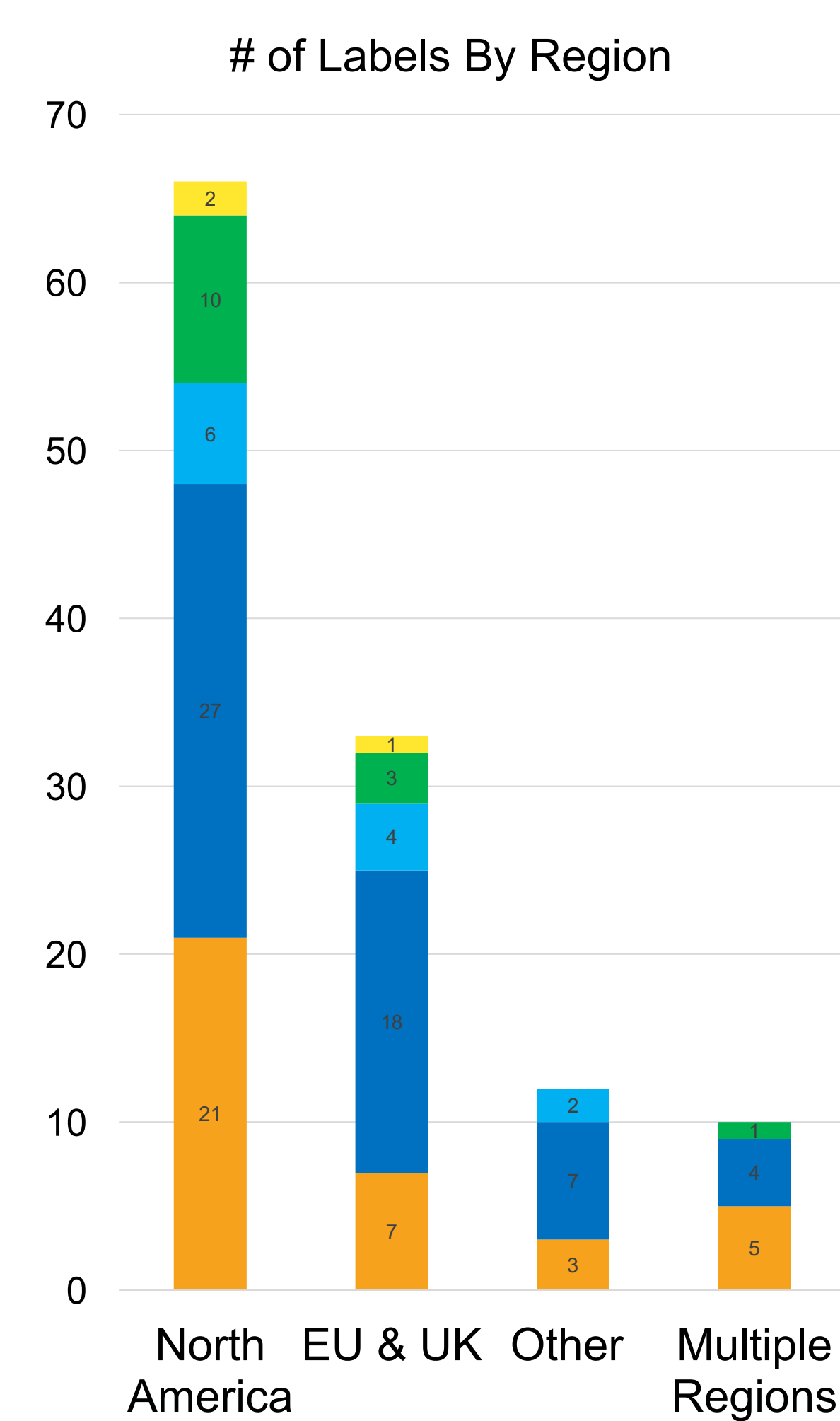
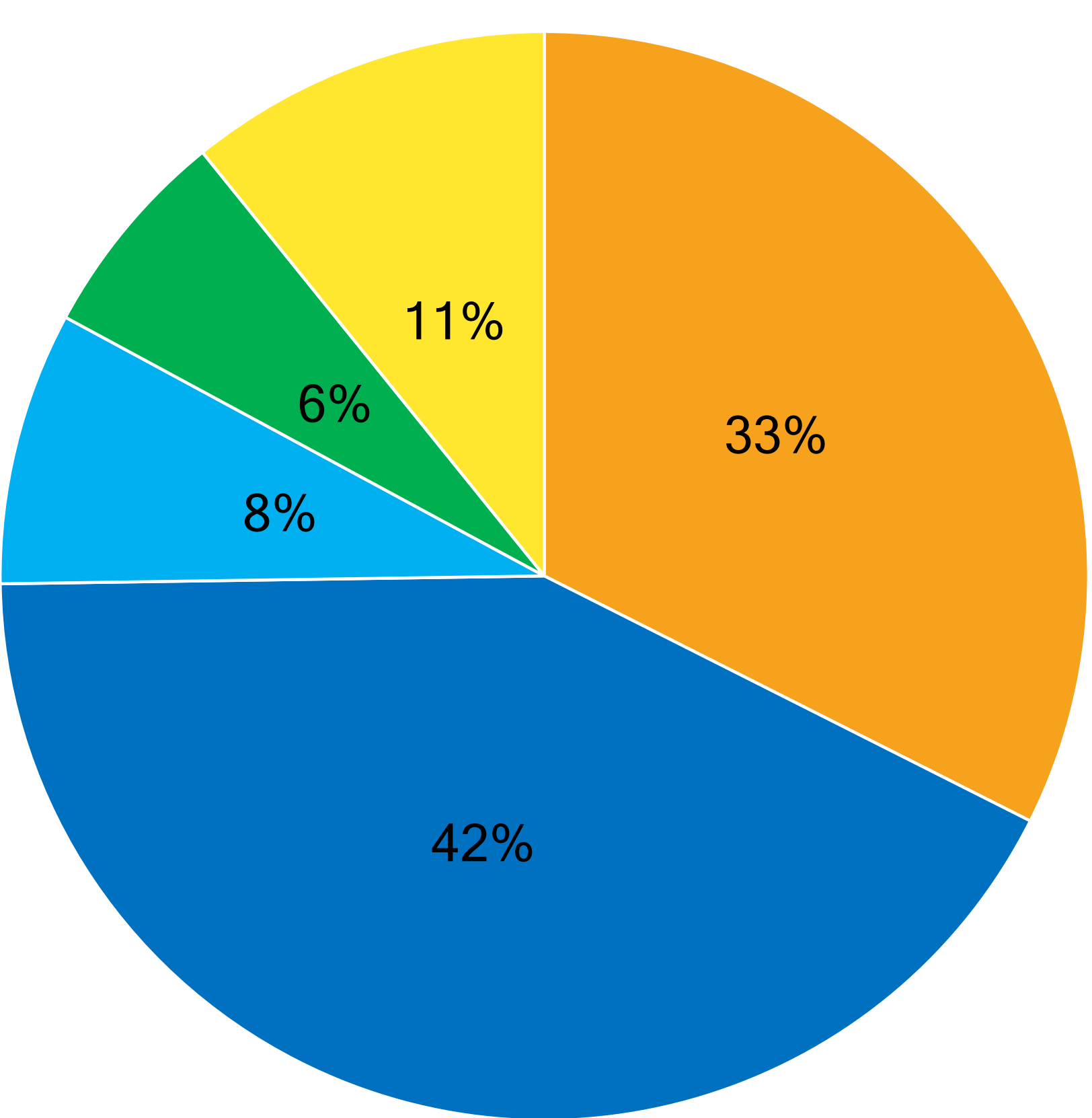
Methods



Label Coding

Label	Examples
Bilingual Only	Bilingual
Language Pair Only	Tagalog-English Bilingual, Mandarin-English bilingual, French-English Bilingual
Learning Only	Bilinguals in English language instruction, Bilinguals in Bilingual Preschool, English Language Learners
History Only	2-Month-Old Bilingual, Early Bilinguals
Other	Emergent bilingual Zulu-English, Sylheti-English Sequential Bilingual, French-English Simultaneous Bilingual, Successive bilingual Turkish-speaking children

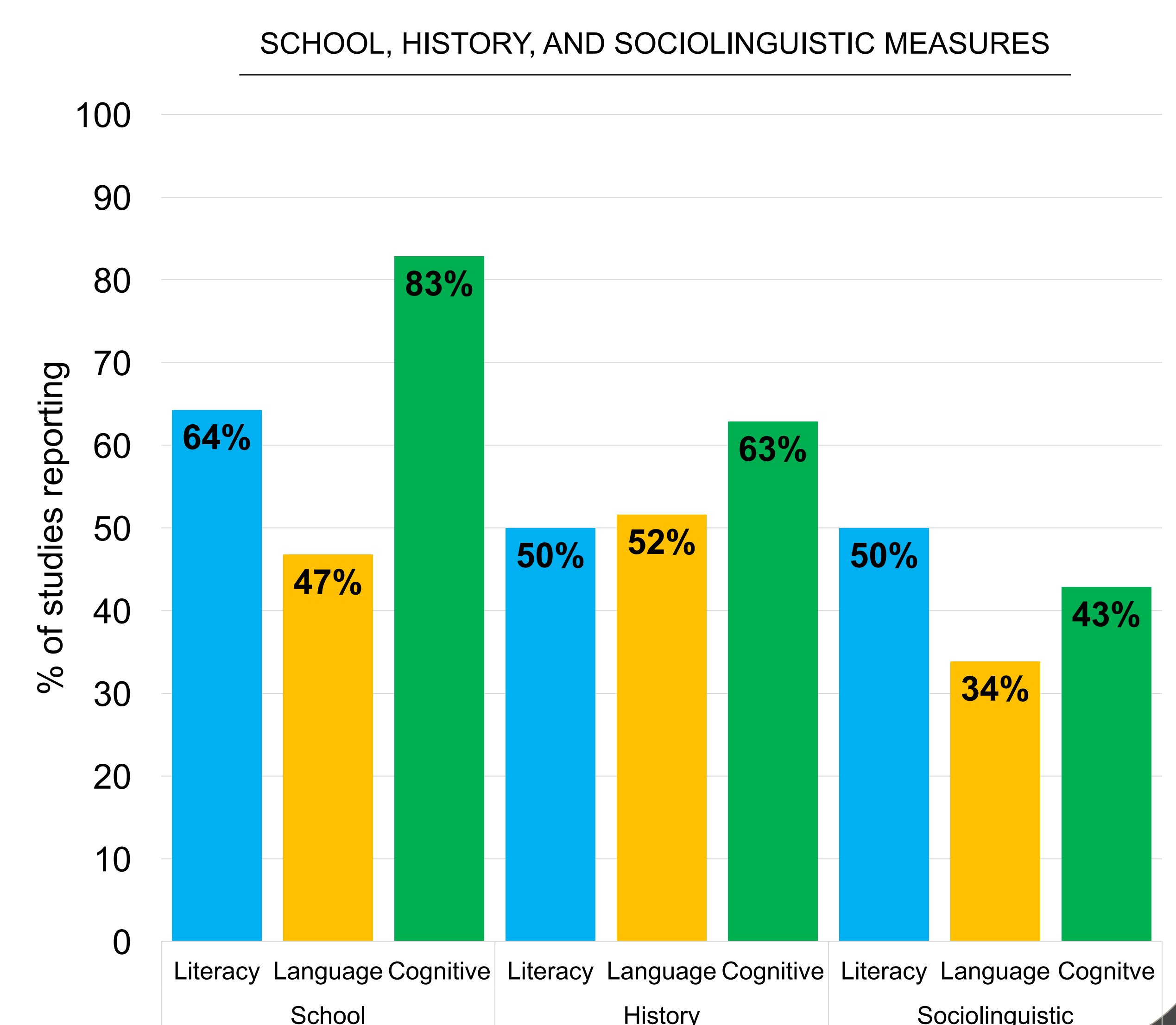
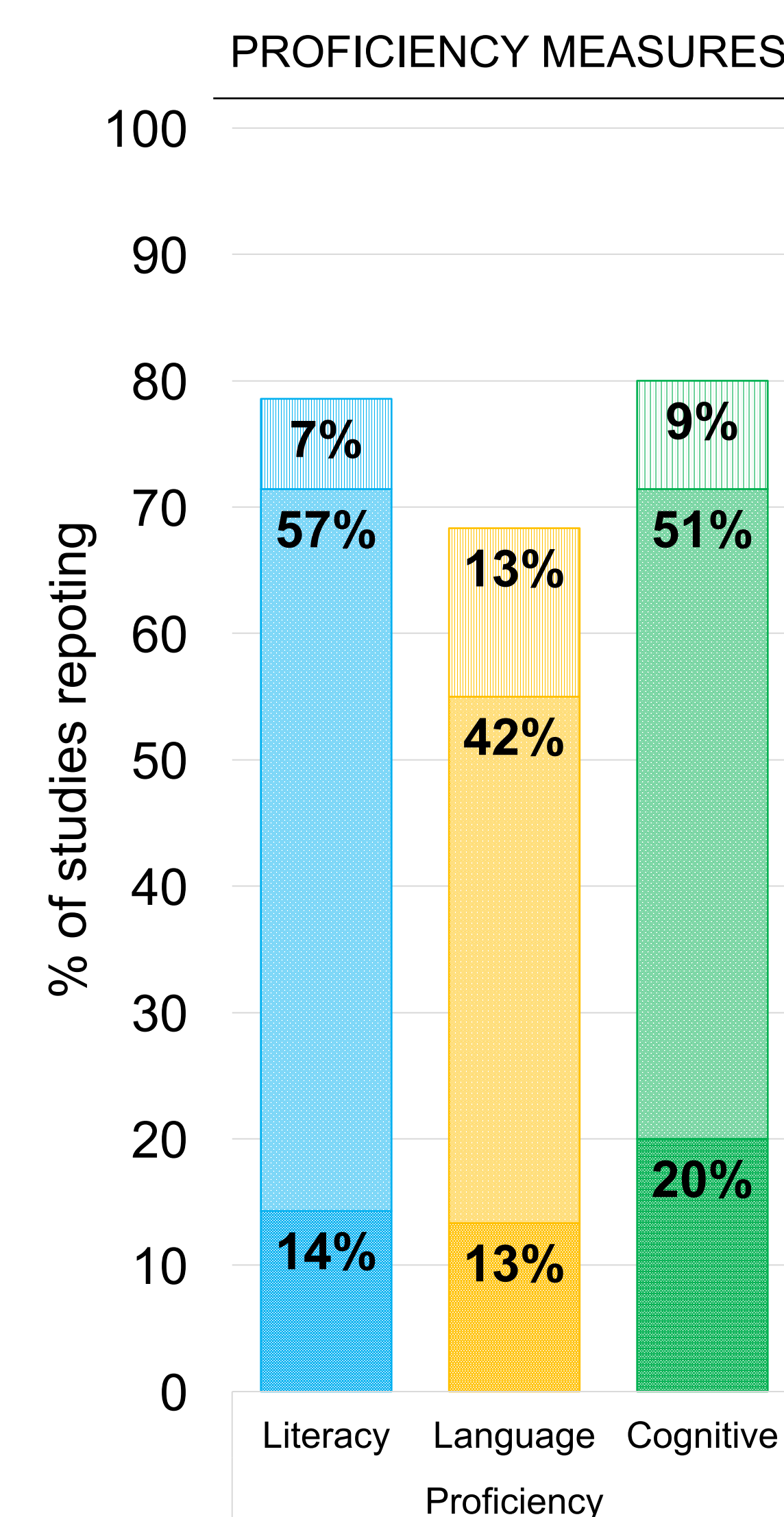
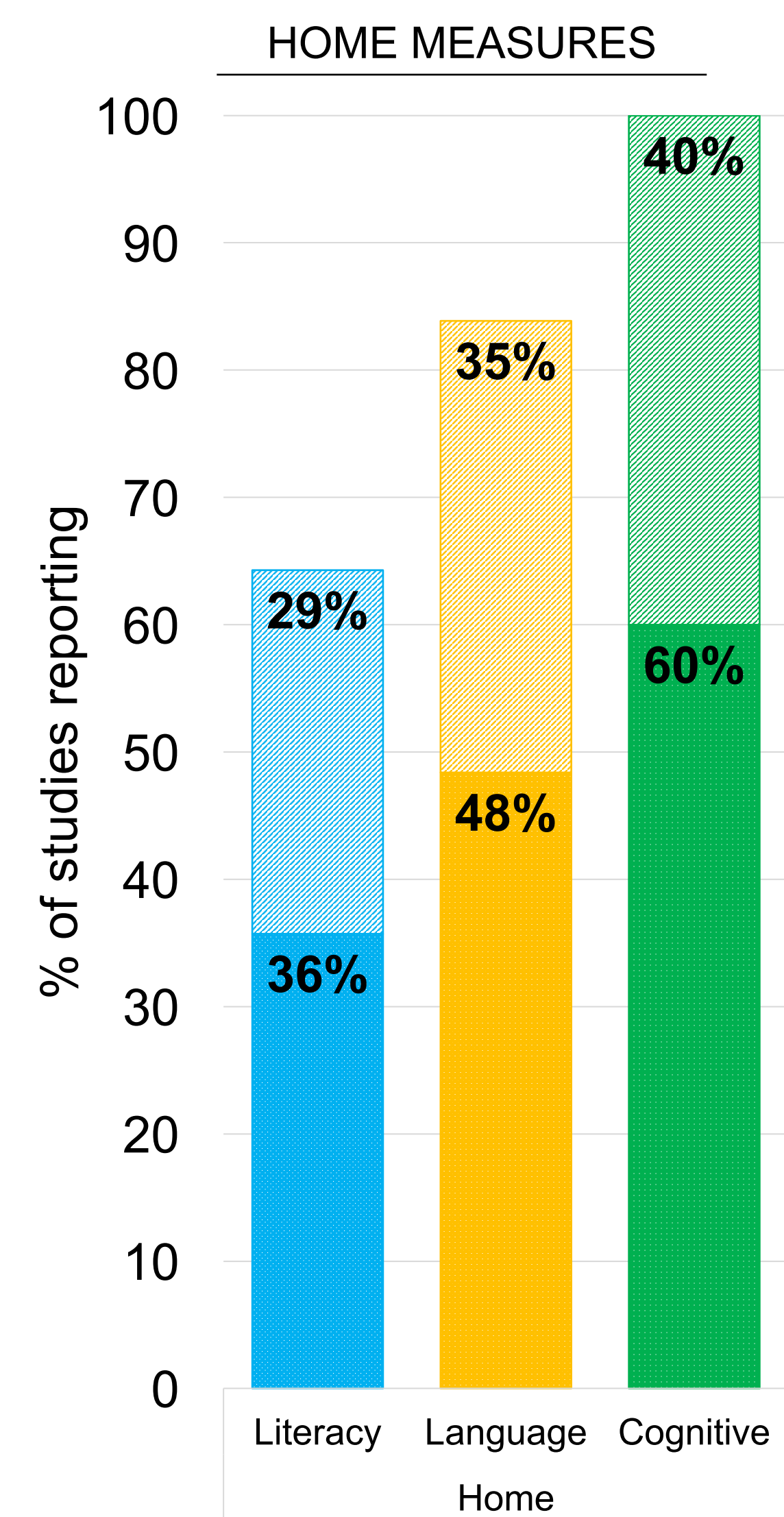
- Bilingual Only
- Language Pair Only
- Learning Only
- History Only
- Other



Qualities and Outcome Coding

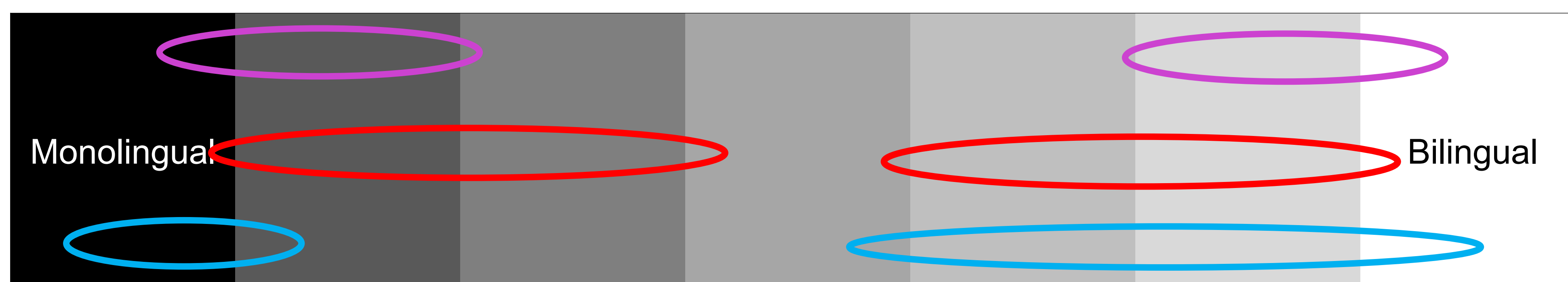
Outcome	Example	%
Literacy	• Reading Comp. • English Spelling • Vocabulary Depth	13%
Language	• Morphological / Phonological Awareness • Lexical Retrieval	56%
Cognitive	• Inhibitory Control • Cognitive Flexibility • Verbal Short Term Memory	32%

Quality	Examples	%
Home	Categorical: All the children were exposed to French from at least one parent (Keith & Nicoladis, 2013). Gradient: The primary caregivers of the children were administered a screening questionnaire to ensure that the language interactions with the target child in the family context were at least 75% Turkish (Messer, Leseman, Boom, & Mayo, 2010).	86%
Proficiency	Subjective: Speaking and comprehension proficiency were assessed via parental report on a 0-10 scale where 0 was no proficiency and 10 was perfect proficiency (Souza, 2013). Objective: To measure vocabulary in English, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT; Dunn & Dunn, 1997) was administered to the children (Keith & Nicoladis, 2013).	89%
School	In both classes, English and French were the only languages used. The Class 1 teacher used French almost exclusively, whereas the other teachers used a mixture of French and English (Mady, 2014).	72%
History	Both parents were first-generation immigrants from Russia, who speak predominantly standard colloquial Russian with their children. All children acquired Russian as their first language from birth (Klassert, 2014).	56%
Sociolinguistic Context	The schools were located in a large city and an adjacent town in the province of Québec, Canada. Québec is the only Canadian province where French is the majority language (Jubenville, Sénéchal, & Malette, 2014).	39%



Labels Used Across Studies

Bilingual children were (a) exposed to both English and French from birth or before 8 months of age and (b) generally exposed to each of these two languages for a minimum of 30% of the time. ... Monolingual children were (a) exposed only to English or to French from birth and (b) generally exposed to English or to French for a minimum of 90% of the time from birth to the present day (Nguyen, & Astington, 2014).



The Turkish-Dutch group consisted of 60 children with Turkish as their native language, learning Dutch as a second language. The Dutch group consisted of 67 children from predominantly Dutch-speaking homes with Dutch as their first and strongest language (Messer, Leseman, Boom, & Mayo, 2010).

Bilingual children were recruited through local French language schools. Monolingual children were recruited through local birth announcements. Monolingual children were considered eligible participants if their parents indicated at the time of recruitment that their child spoke only English (Morton, & Harper, 2007).

Discussion

- Differentiation between monolinguals and bilinguals is regional and related to the outcomes of interest.
- Sociolinguistic context was the least likely quality to be reported (39%), though studies that included samples from multiple regions were more likely to report this (56%).
- To enable cross-study comparisons and syntheses, greater transparency and consistency in the reporting of different qualities of language experience is critical.
- Life experiences cannot be filtered down and made categorical to fit parameters of research. Future research is encouraged to report on multiple qualities relevant to language usage in children to facilitate cross-study comparisons and syntheses, as well as to advance our understanding of bilingualism as a dynamic developmental experience.

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