

The Dual Language Immersion Advantage: Boosting Proficiency for Native Spanish-Speaking ELL Students

In recent years, Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs have emerged as a beacon of promise for English Language Learners (ELL), particularly native Spanish-speaking students. The RISE Proficiency and Demographics reports for the 2023 and 2024 school years highlight a compelling narrative: DLI programs are fostering academic success for EL students in Utah. This article reviews the data, comparisons, and implications of these findings, shedding light on the transformative potential of DLI education.

Data Highlights: SY 2023 vs. SY 2024

The RISE Proficiency and Demographics reports compare the performance and characteristics of native Spanish-speaking ELL students enrolled in DLI programs to their peers in non-DLI settings. While both groups face challenges unique to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the data reveals significant differences in academic outcomes.

Academic Performance

DLI students consistently outperform their non-DLI peers, showcasing the effectiveness of immersion-based instruction.

- **Language Proficiency:** ELL DLI students demonstrate higher proficiency levels in English attributed to structured, immersive learning environments that emphasize both linguistic and cognitive development.
- **Academic Performance:** Across multiple subjects, ELL DLI students score higher on standardized assessments, reflecting the cognitive benefits of dual language education, such as improved problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

The DLI Advantage for EL Students

1. Enhanced Bilingual Proficiency

DLI programs' dual language focus equips EL students with robust bilingual skills, opening doors to greater academic and professional opportunities. For native language-speaking EL students, these programs build on their existing language foundation while reinforcing English acquisition.

2. Academic Growth

The cognitive benefits of bilingual education are well-documented, and the data reinforces this. DLI students outperform their peers in ELA, math and science assessments. This suggests that immersion fosters a deeper understanding of material and strengthens overall academic performance.

Addressing Challenges and Expanding Access

While the data underscores the success of DLI programs, it also highlights areas for improvement:

- **Expanding Access:** Providing additional resources by expanding DLI programs to targeted schools to help bridge student performance gaps.
- **Inclusivity:** Ensuring that DLI programs are accessible to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is essential.

Looking Ahead

The RISE reports for 2023 and 2024 affirm the value of DLI programs in fostering academic and linguistic excellence for native Spanish-speaking EL students. As Utah continues to refine its educational strategies, expanding the reach and inclusivity of DLI programs will be pivotal in ensuring all students, regardless of background, can benefit from the promise of dual language immersion education.

By leveraging the strengths of DLI programs and addressing demographic disparities, Utah has the opportunity to set a national example for supporting EL students. The data speaks for itself: DLI works, and its positive impact is a testament to the power of immersion-based education to transform lives and communities.

RISE Proficiency and Demographics: DLI vs. Non-DLI Native Spanish-speaking ELL Students (SY 2023)

T&L

2025-01-07

It is important to interpret the findings of this report with caution, considering the following limitations:

Demographic differences exist between the DLI and non-DLI native Spanish-speaking student populations. Non-DLI students exhibit higher rates of special education needs, which encompass a broad spectrum of learning differences. Moreover, DLI programs often attract families with higher levels of parental involvement and resources. This potential selection bias limits the generalizability of findings related to native Spanish-speaking English language learners.

Furthermore, the complex interplay of factors such as parental education, special education needs, and socioeconomic factors may influence student outcomes in ways that are not fully captured in this report. Further research, specifically within the context of Utah's educational landscape, is needed to comprehensively assess the impact of DLI programs on native Spanish-speaking student achievement and to explore the nuanced relationships between these demographic factors.

Figure 1. Demographic Profiles of DLI and Non-DLI Native Spanish-speaking Students

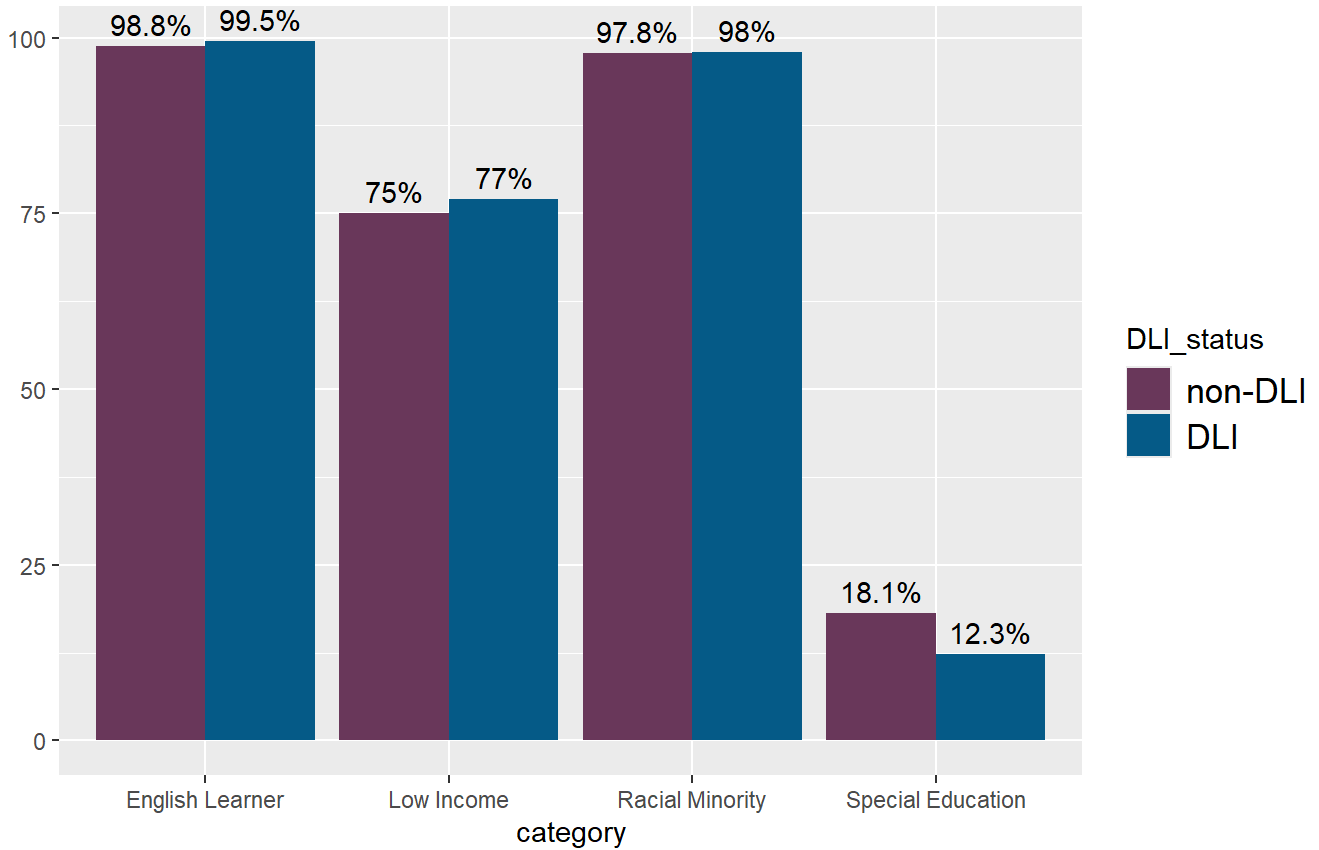


Figure 2. Grade 3 RISE Proficiency

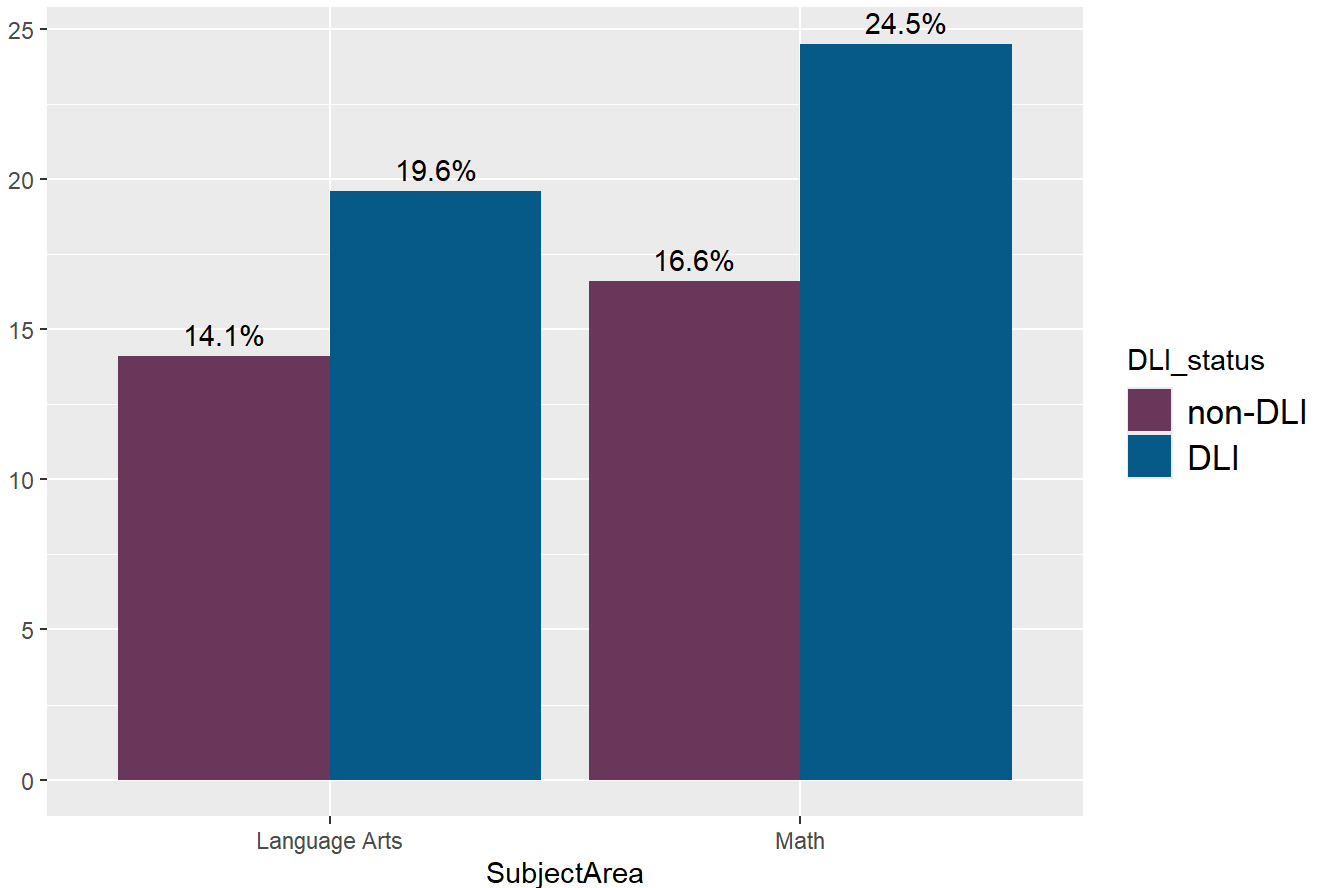


Figure 3. Grade 4 RISE Proficiency

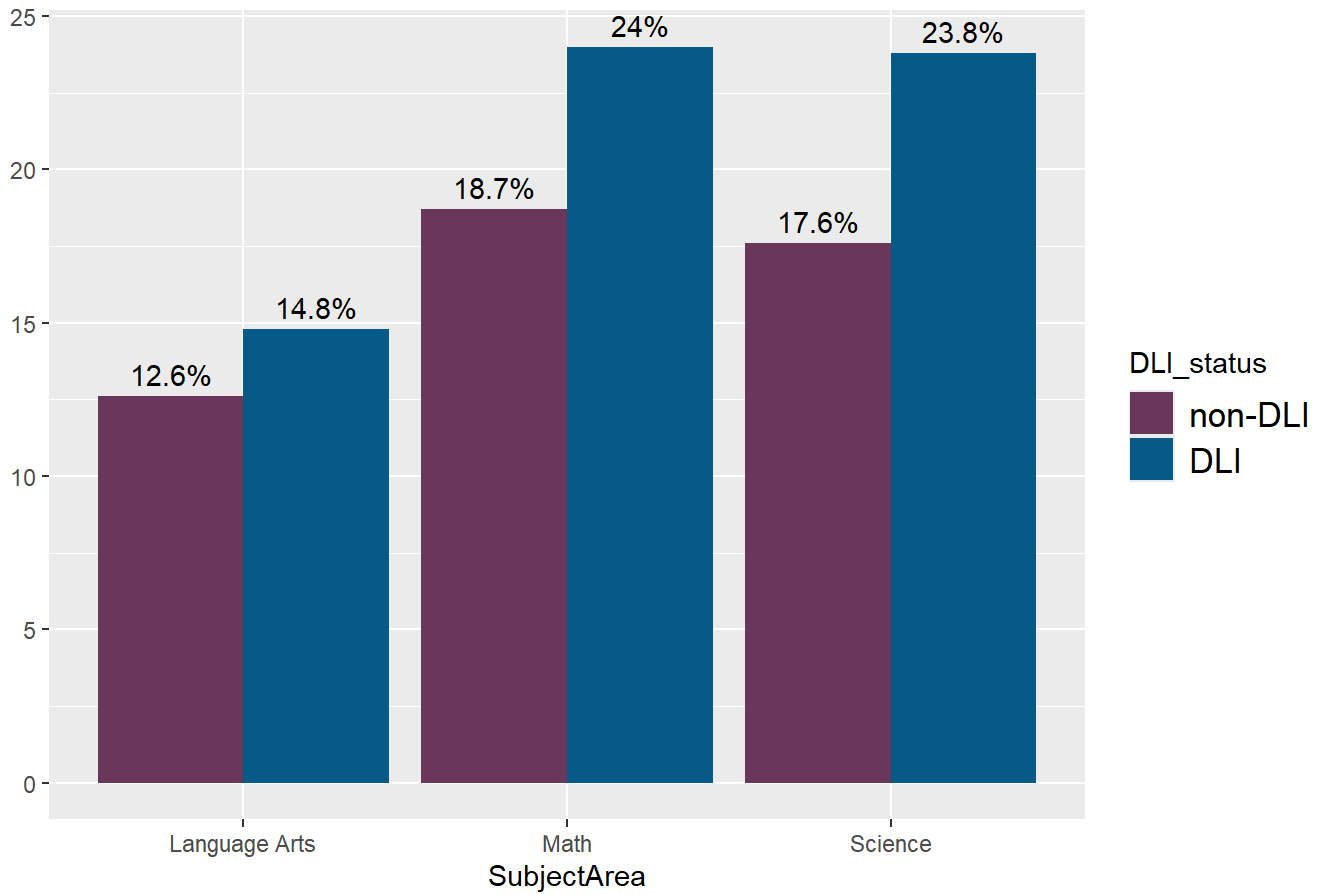


Figure 4. Grade 5 RISE Proficiency

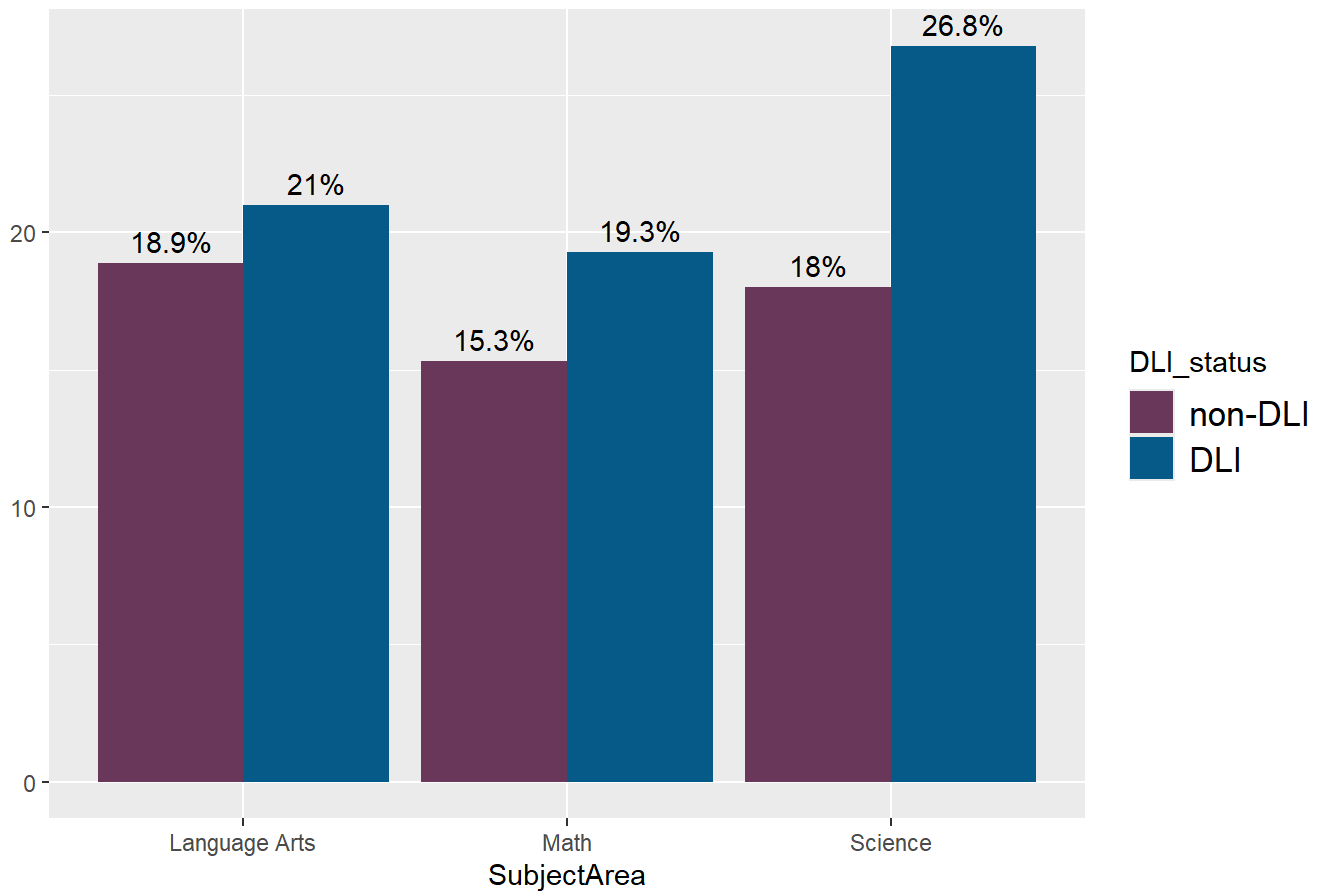


Figure 5. Grade 6 RISE Proficiency

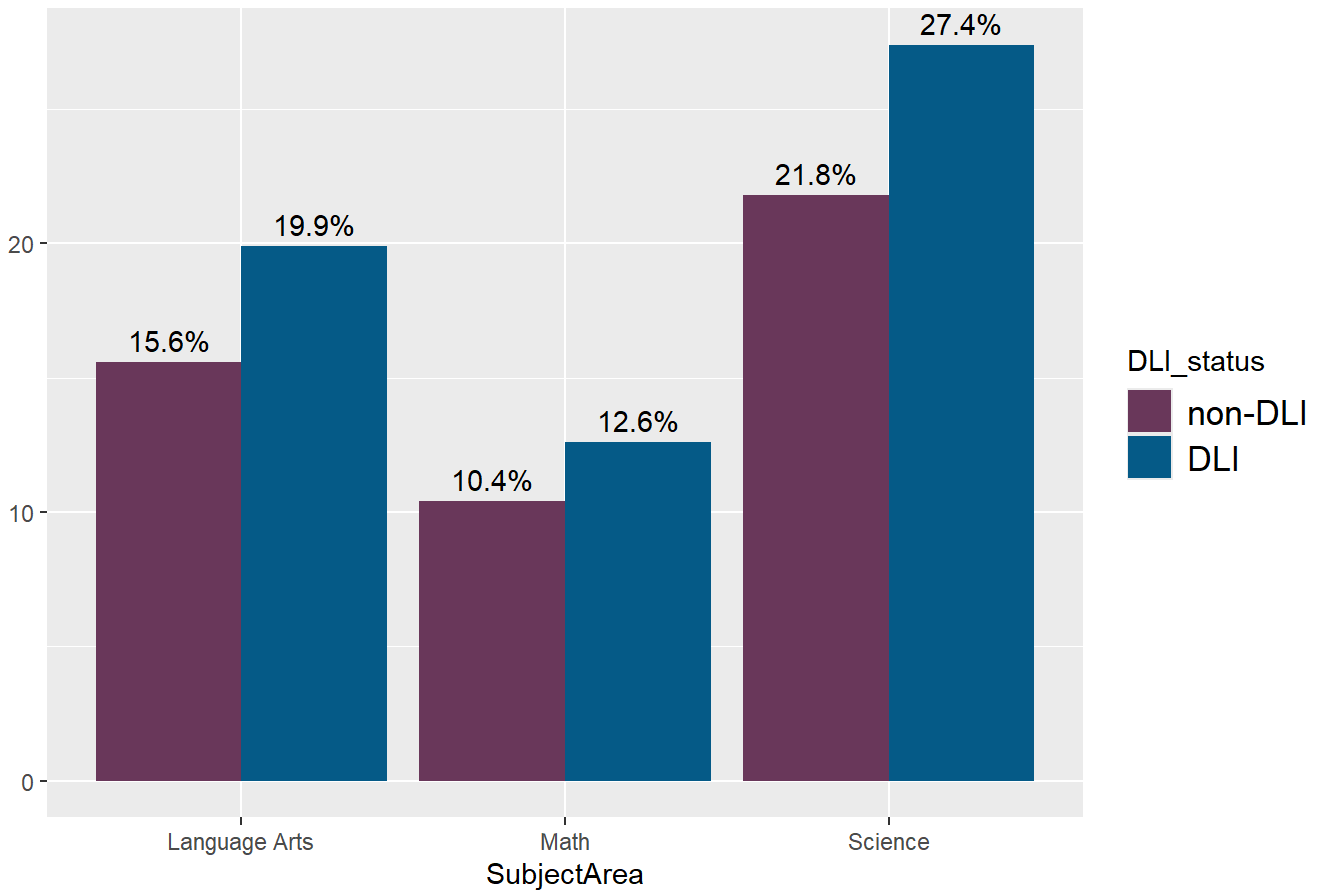


Figure 6. Grade 7 RISE Proficiency

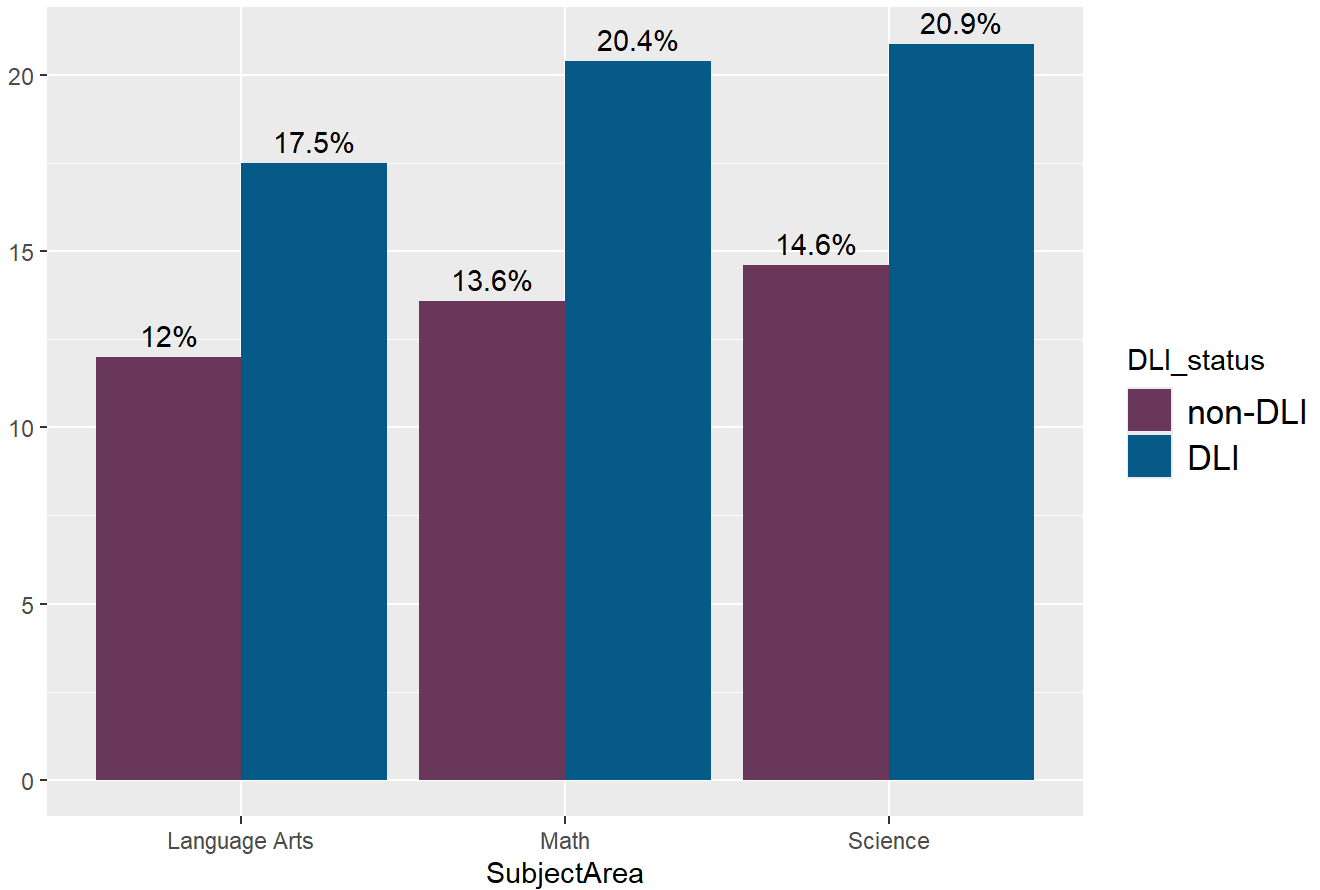
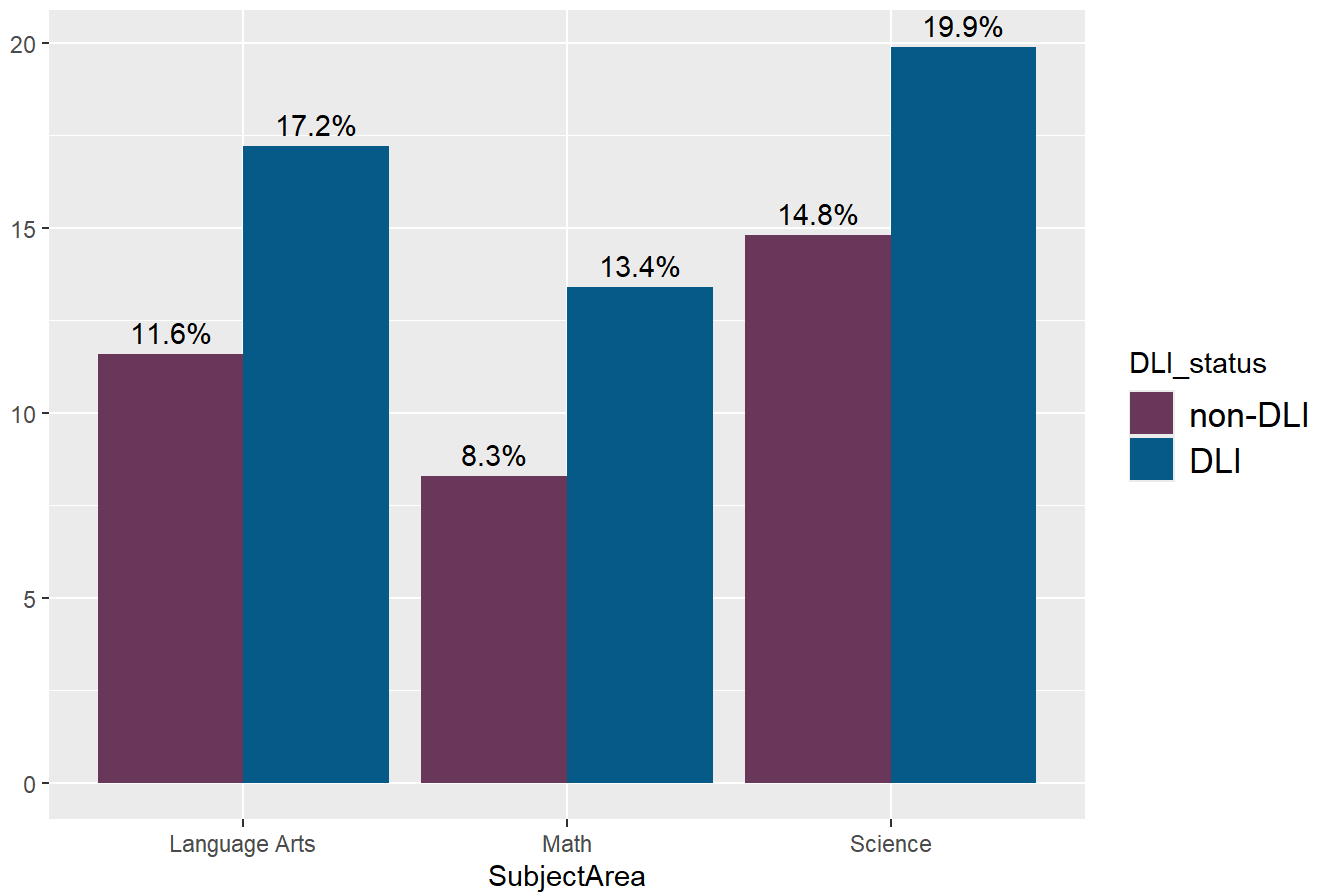


Figure 7. Grade 8 RISE Proficiency



RISE Proficiency and Demographics: DLI vs. Non-DLI Native Spanish-speaking ELL Students (SY 2024)

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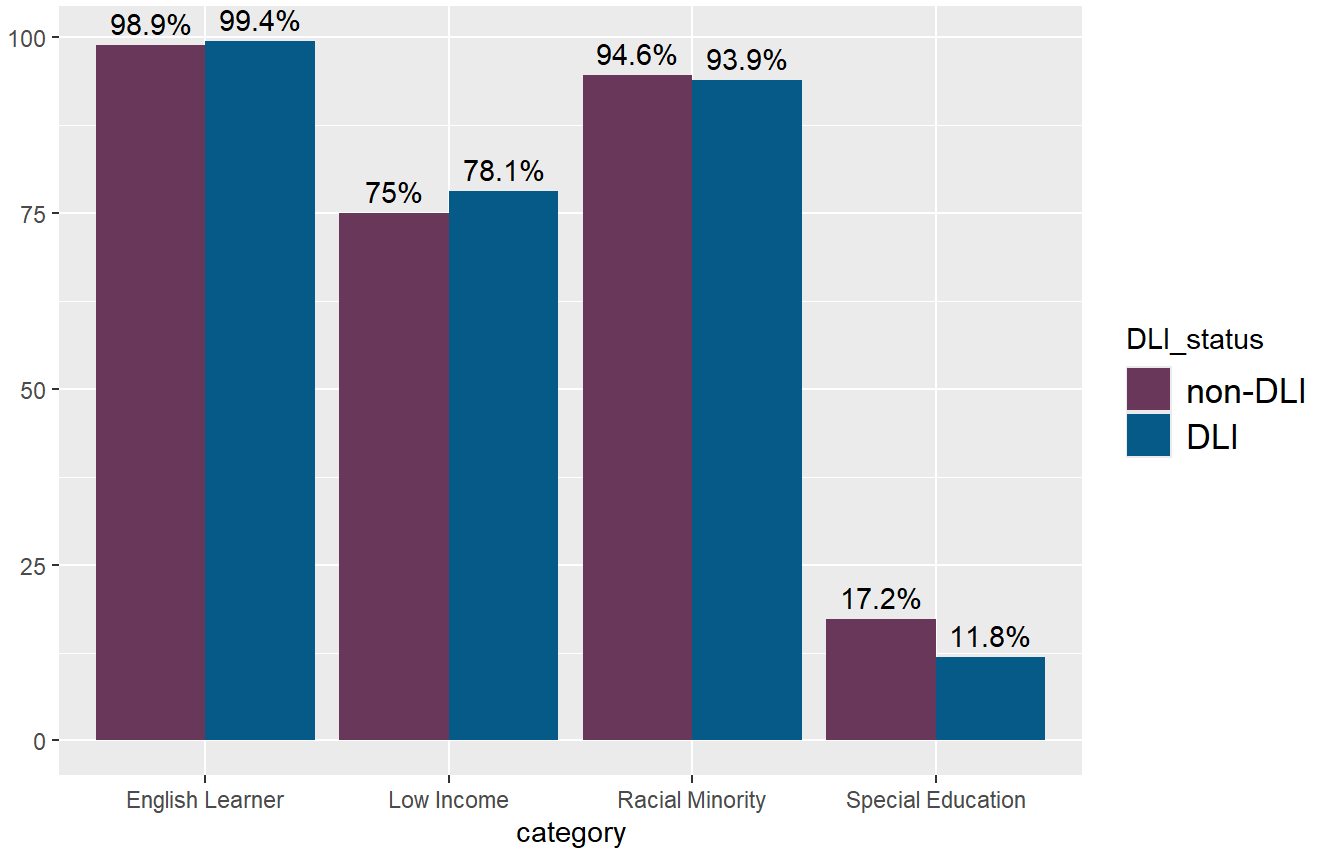


Figure 2. Grade 3 RISE Proficiency

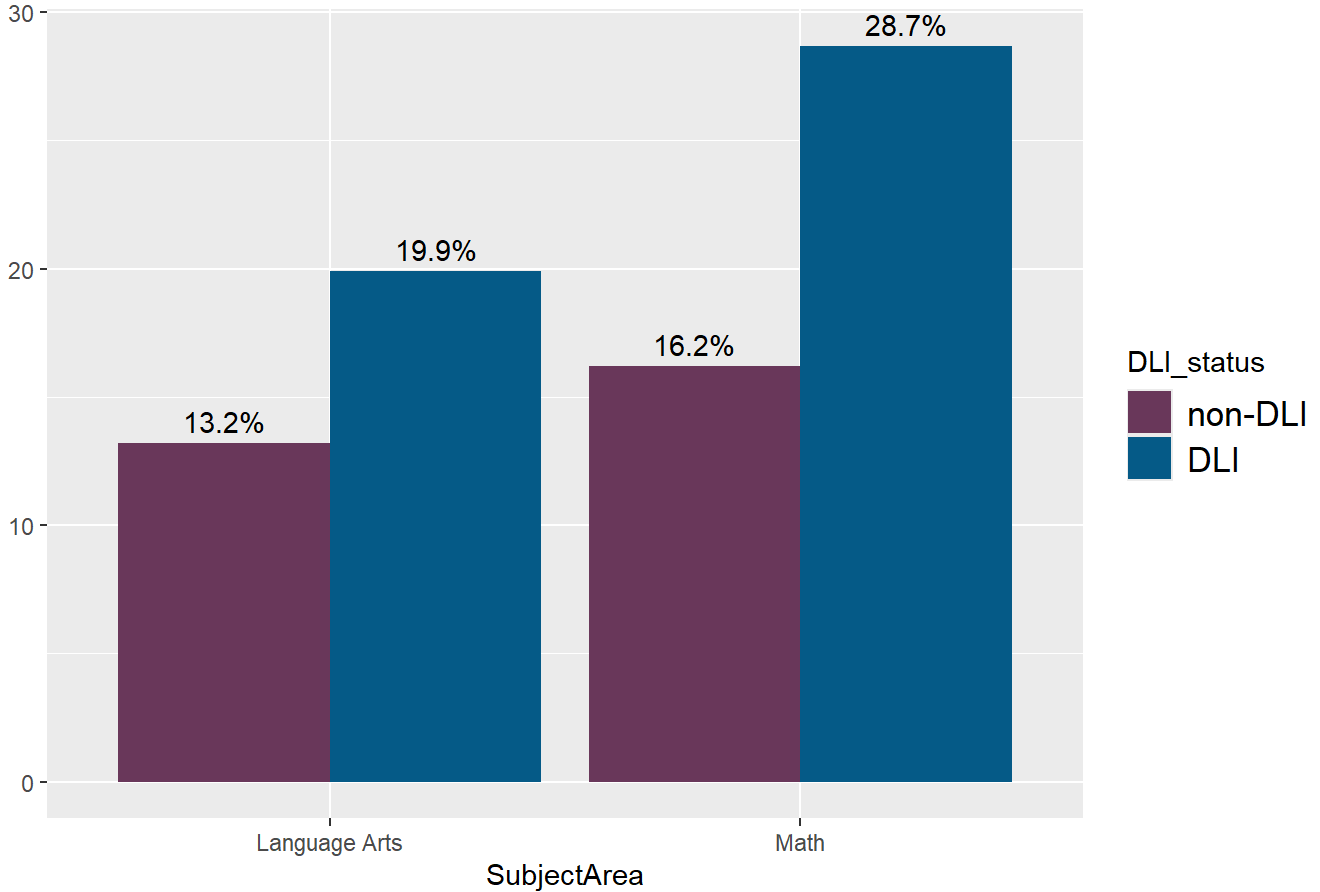


Figure 3. Grade 4 RISE Proficiency

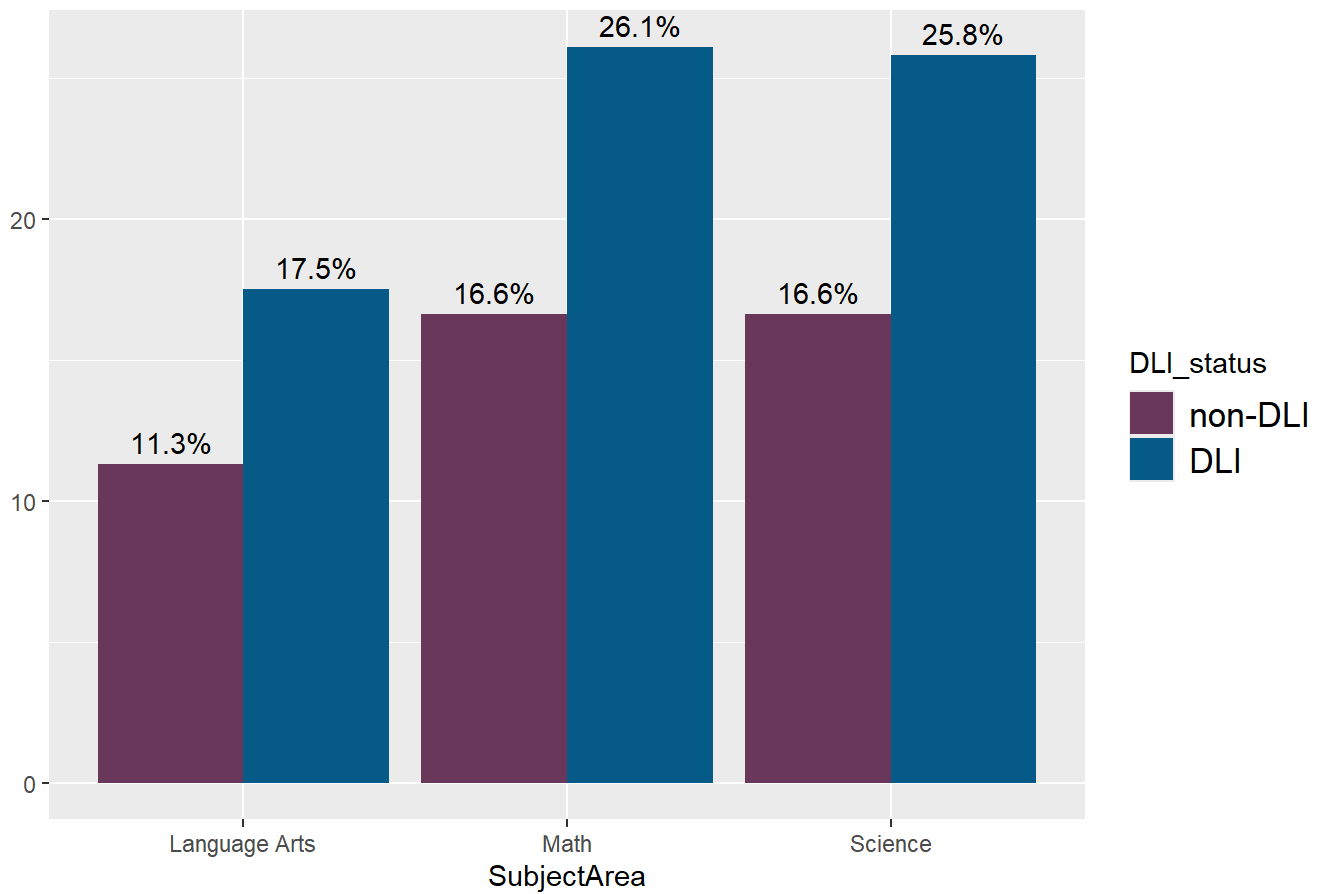


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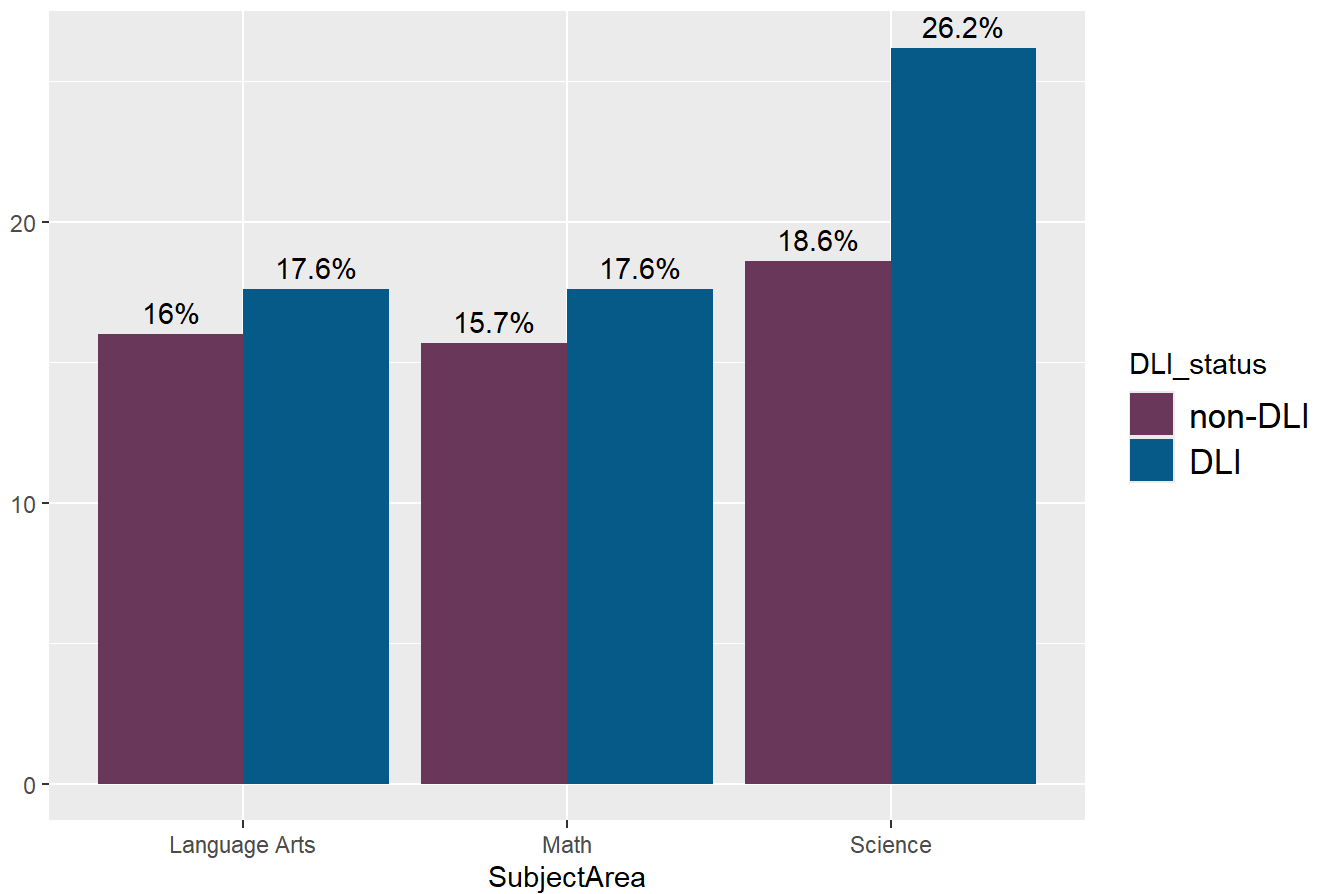


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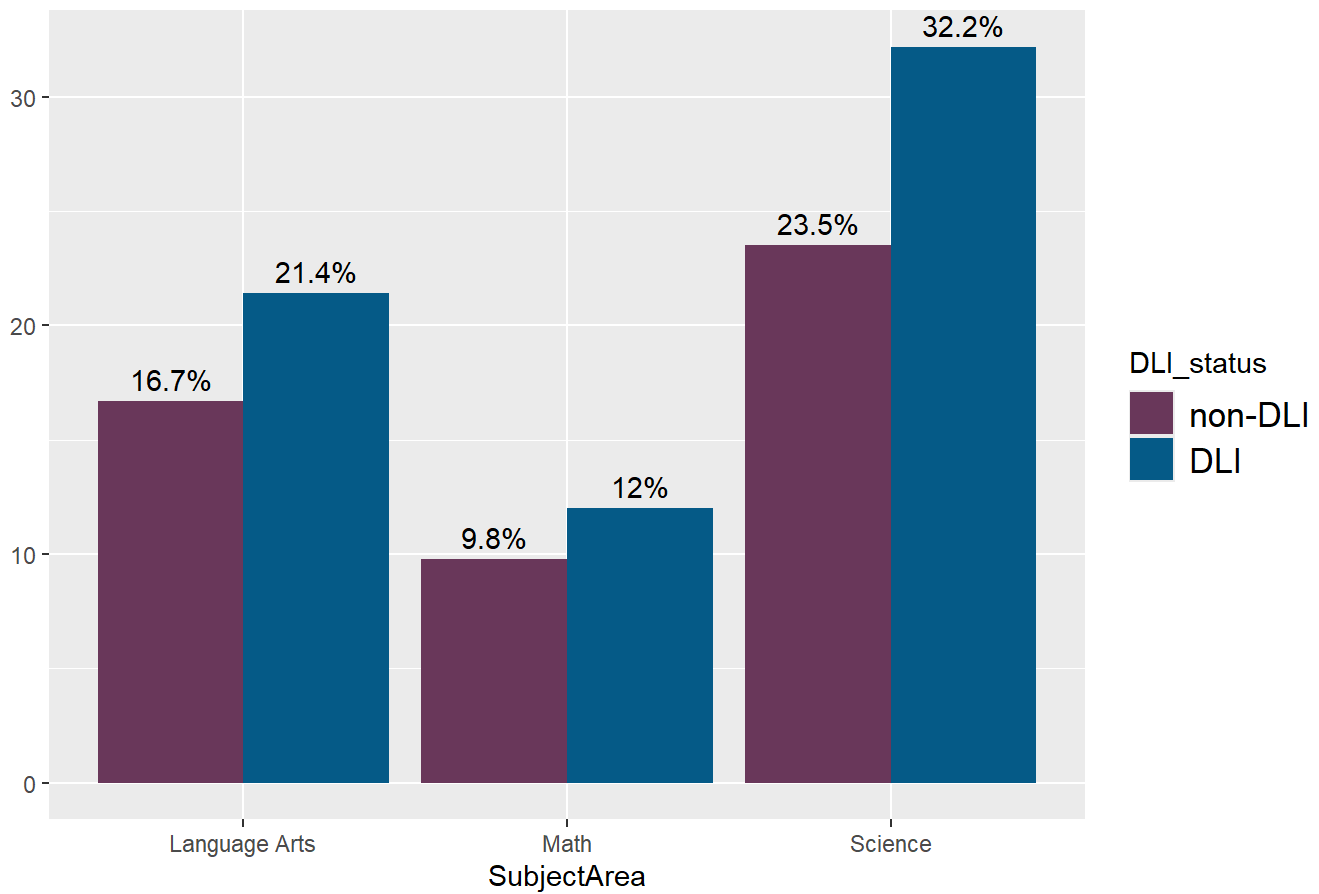


Figure 6. Grade 7 RISE Proficiency

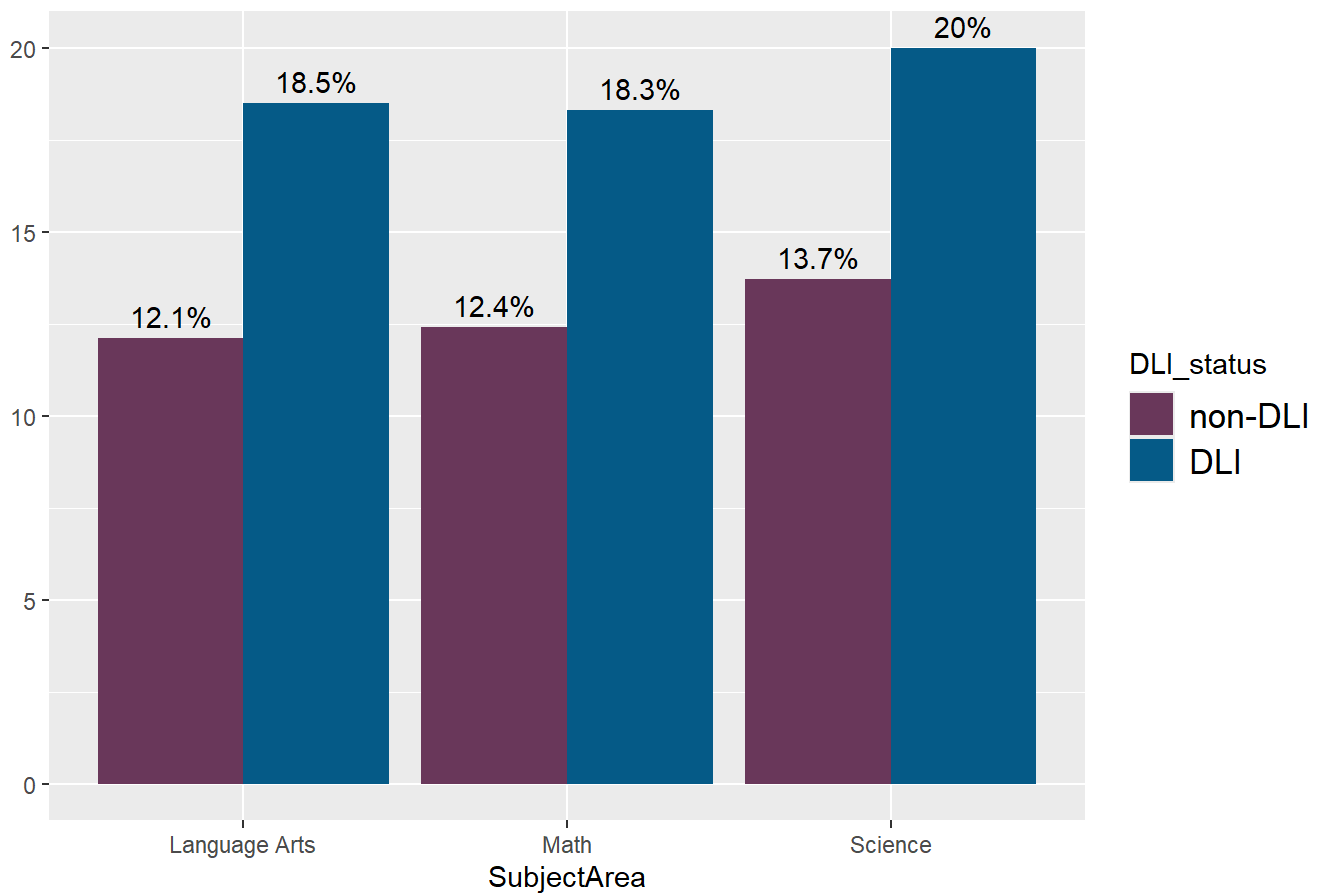


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