

Knowledge of French, 1996

Abstract

This map shows the percentage of the Canadian population with knowledge of French. In the 1996 Census, knowledge of French was determined by a question about the ability to conduct a conversation in one or both languages. It should be noted that this question measured language knowledge rather than actual use of language.

Despite the decline in the proportion of persons with French as a mother tongue or home language, the proportion of French speakers remained fairly stable (around 32%) between 1951 and 1996. The number of persons able to conduct a conversation in French nearly doubled during this period, rising from 4.5 million to 8.9 million. In Quebec, as well as in the other provinces and territories, except Saskatchewan, the proportion and number of persons in the population who know French has grown continuously since 1961 (Figure 1 below).

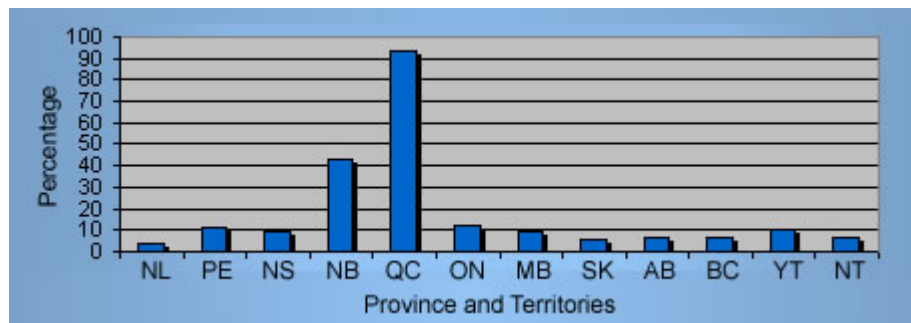


Figure 1. Population with Knowledge of French, Provinces and Territories, 1996

Source: Canada. Statistics Canada. 1996 Census.

Persons who know French are concentrated in Quebec. In 1996, some 75% of them lived in that province. However, since 1961 the concentration has declined. The decline is attributed to the increase in bilingualism among non-Francophones and has occurred despite the marked increase in the number of French speakers in the Quebec population. Over twenty-five years—that is, between 1971 and 1996—the proportion of the population outside Quebec able to speak French among people with a mother tongue other than French rose from 4% to 7%. The popularity of second-language programmes (immersion or regular courses) in English-language schools has contributed to this increase.

In all provinces, except Saskatchewan, an increase was observed in the number and proportion of persons able to conduct a conversation in French between 1991 and 1996.

The text for Official Languages is based on the following publication:

Marmen, Louise and Jean-Pierre Corbeil. Languages in Canada: 1996 Census. New Canadian Perspectives Series. Ottawa: Canadian Heritage, and Statistics Canada, 1999. Catalogue number: CH3-2-8/1999.

Mapping Notes

The data presented on the map layers were derived from the 1996 Census and were based on either the 288 census divisions (CD) or 5984 census subdivisions (CSD) for which data are released. The choropleth mapping technique is limited in use when displaying data for the large areas in the northern and rural regions, which contain small populations and are therefore, overemphasized. To view the population figures of a specific CD or CSD on a map, press the "Get Statistics" button and select the area of interest.

When comparing information between maps, it is important to understand that each map layer is based on a unique set of data. The class intervals used have been generated to represent the unique information on each map. As a result, the maps cannot be directly compared to each other. The individual maps, together with the supporting map text are the best sources for content comparison.

Note that in choropleth technique, areas are completely shaded and only one such layer can be viewed at a time.

At the time the census division boundaries were defined, Nunavut had not yet been designated as an official territory. It is therefore not referenced on the maps.

Definitions of underlined terms

Census Division : Census Division (CD) is the general term applied to areas established by provincial law which are intermediate geographic areas between the municipality and the province levels. Census divisions represent counties, regional districts, regional municipalities and other types of provincially legislated areas. In Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, provincial law does not provide for these administrative geographic areas. Therefore, census divisions have been created by Statistics Canada in cooperation with these provinces for the dissemination of statistical data. In the Yukon Territory, the census division is equivalent to the entire Territory. (Source: 1996 Census Dictionary, Statistics Canada)

Census Subdivision (CSD) : Census subdivision is the general term applying to municipalities (as determined by provincial legislation) or their equivalent (for example, Indian reserves, Indian settlements and unorganized territories). In Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and British Columbia, the term also describes geographic areas that have been created by Statistics Canada in cooperation with the provinces as equivalents for municipalities for the dissemination of statistical data. According to the national hierarchy, census subdivisions add together to form census divisions. The CDs form provinces and territories. Two additional levels are defined in the national hierarchy to facilitate special data analysis. A special aggregation of census subdivisions called census consolidated subdivision (CCS) provides a level of geography between the CSD and CD which facilitates data analysis. In the rural context, the CCS is a grouping of smaller municipalities, usually contained within a larger municipality. For instance, a town located within a surrounding township will be grouped together with the township to form a CCS. In urban areas, CCSs are formed by contiguous groupings of CSDs. A principal user of the CCSs is the Census of Agriculture. (Source: 1996 Census Dictionary, Statistics Canada)

Choropleth map : A thematic map in which areas are coloured or shaded to create darker or lighter areas in proportion to the density or a particular characteristic of the theme subject in that area.

Map Sources

Knowledge of French

Statistics Canada. 1996 Census of Population (20% sample data).

References

Canada. Statistics Canada. 1998. 1996 Census Dictionary. Ottawa.
(<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/92-351-u/4064723-eng.htm>)

Canada. Statistics Canada. 1997. 1996 Census: Mother tongue, home language and knowledge of languages. The Daily, Tuesday December 2. Ottawa.
(<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/971202/dq971202-eng.htm>)

Marmen, Louise and Jean-Pierre Corbeil. 1999. Languages in Canada: 1996 Census. New Canadian Perspectives Series. Catalogue number: CH3-2-8/1999. Ottawa: Canadian Heritage, and Statistics Canada.
(<http://www.pch.gc.ca/offlangoff/perspectives/english/census96/census96.pdf>)

Related Web sites (1999 – 2009)

Federal Government

Canadian Heritage. Official Languages. Bilingualism in Canada

http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/lo-ol/biling/hist_e.cfm

A chronology of key events charting the course of Canada's bilingualism since Confederation.

New Canadian Perspectives

<http://www.pch.gc.ca/offlangoff/perspectives/english/index.html>

Various on-line articles relating to Canada's Official Languages from the series entitled New Canadian Perspectives. Look for the link to "Languages in Canada: 1996 Census" by Louise Marmen and Jean-Pierre Corbeil.

Statistics Canada. 1996 Census of Population

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/info/census96.cfm>

