

Knowledge of English, 1996

Abstract

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

While about 17% of the population of Canada speak both English and French, most Canadians speak only one or the other. Some, mostly immigrants, speak neither of the official languages. The percentage of the population able to speak English grew between 1951 and 1996 both inside and outside Quebec. In 1996, 98% of people living outside Quebec and 43% of Quebecers were able to conduct a conversation in English (Figure 1 below).

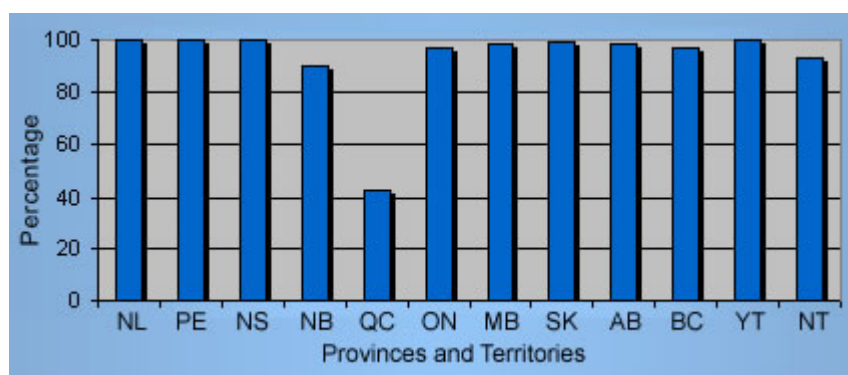


Figure 1. Population with Knowledge of English, Provinces and Territories, 1996
Source: Canada. Statistics Canada. 1996 Census.

Both the number and the percentage of Canadians able to speak English rose between 1991 and 1996. During this five-year period, numbers of English speakers increased in all provinces except Newfoundland (where there was a 3% decrease in the size of the provincial population), and the percentages able to conduct a conversation in English increased in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. Declines in percentages of English speakers in the populations of Ontario and British Columbia were largely due to the arrival of new immigrants who were unable to speak English. Despite this decline, the number of English speakers in each of the provinces actually increased. The most significant increase was in Ontario, home of 43% of Canada's English speaking population-where 621 000 English speakers joined the population in the five-year period.

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 English

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>

