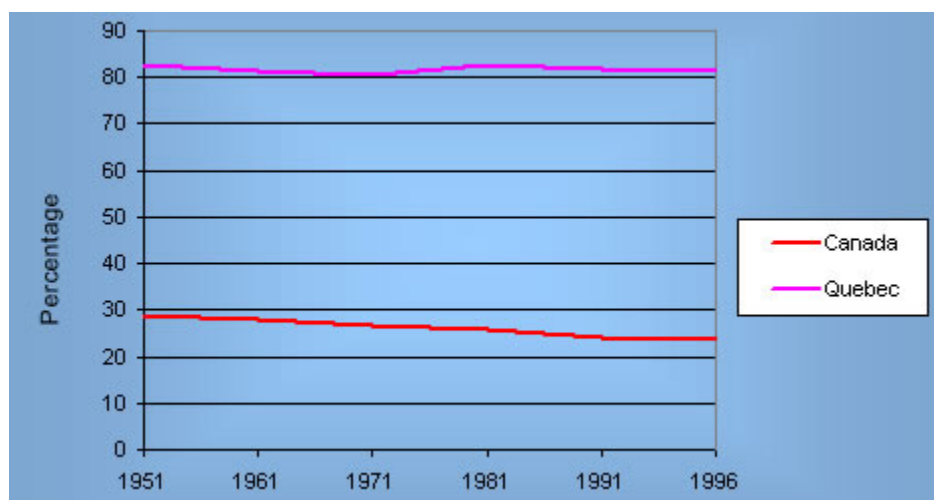


## Mother Tongue (French), 1996

### Abstract

This map shows the percentage of the Canadian population whose mother tongue was French. The 1996 Census defines mother tongue as the first language a person learned at home in childhood and still understood at the time of the census. The 1996 Census showed that 8.9 million Canadians could conduct a conversation in French (31%), 6.4 million spoke French most often at home (23%) and 6.7 million had French as their mother tongue (24%).

Although the number of people with French as their mother tongue (Francophones) has continued to increase in Canada, their proportion has declined over the last forty-five years. Between 1951 and 1996, the number of Francophones rose from 4.1 million to 6.7 million, but the proportion of Francophones in the population fell from 29% to 24% (Figure 1 below).



**Figure 1.** Percentage of Population with French Mother Tongue, Canada and Quebec, 1951 to 1996

**Source:** Canada. Statistics Canada. Census of Canada, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 1996.

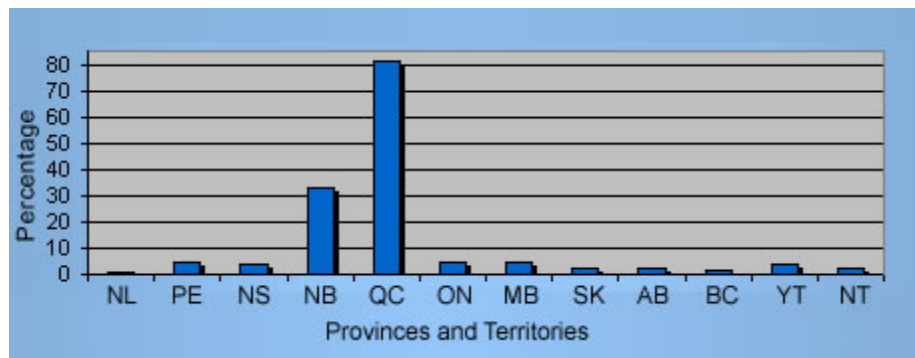
The proportional decline is largely explained by the heavy immigration of people whose mother tongue was a language other than French. For example, of the 1 039 000 immigrants enumerated in the 1996 Census as having arrived in Canada over the previous five years, only 3% had French as a mother tongue.

Outside Quebec, children of parents with a French mother tongue sometimes learn English rather than French in early childhood. The transmission of French mother tongue is not assured, particularly when one of the parents has English as a mother

tongue. The size and proportion of the Francophone population are affected by this phenomenon.

Quebec is the only province in which the majority of the population has French as its mother tongue. In 1996, 86% of Francophones in Canada lived in Quebec. They accounted for 82% of the Quebec population.

The situation of Francophones varies widely from province to province. Quebec is the province with the highest proportion of persons whose mother tongue is French, followed by New Brunswick. It is in the latter province and in Ontario that more than three-quarters (76%) of Francophones living outside Quebec are found. New Brunswick had 242 000 francophones in 1996, representing 33.2% of its population, compared with 34.0% in 1991 and 33.8% in 1971. In Ontario, there were about 500 000 francophones, accounting for 4.7% of its population, down from 5.0% in 1991 and 6.3% in 1971. Since its entry into Confederation in 1949, Newfoundland's provincial population has always had the smallest proportion and lowest number of Francophones (Figure 2 below).



**Figure 2.** Population with French Mother Tongue, Provinces and Territories, 1996

**Source:** Canada. Statistics Canada. 1996 Census.

Between 1991 and 1996, the population with French as its mother tongue and the proportion of the Canadian population made up by that group has fallen in all provinces, except Quebec and British Columbia. In these two provinces, the number of Francophones has grown while their proportion has decreased. Only in the Yukon has both the number and the proportion of Francophones in the population increased.

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.

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## 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.

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## Map Sources

### Mother Tongue (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](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>

