

**NHS in Brief**

# Language use in the workplace in Canada



**National Household Survey (NHS), 2011**



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Published by authority of the Minister responsible for  
Statistics Canada

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### Standard symbols

The following symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| .              | not available for any reference period   |
| ..             | not available for a specific reference period  |
| ...            | not applicable   |
| 0              | true zero or a value rounded to zero   |
| 0 <sup>s</sup> | value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded |
| <sup>p</sup>   | preliminary  |
| r              | revised  |
| x              | suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the <i>Statistics Act</i>                                   |
| E              | use with caution   |
| F              | too unreliable to be published   |
| *              | significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)   |

### Box: National Household Survey

This is the second release of data from the National Household Survey (NHS). Roughly 4.5 million households across Canada were selected for the NHS, representing about one-third of all households.

This *NHS in Brief* article, together with the article [Commuting to work](#), Catalogue no. 99-012-X2011003, complements the analytical document [Portrait of Canada's Labour Force](#), Catalogue no. 99-012-X2011002.

Further information on the National Household Survey can be found in the [National Household Survey User Guide](#), Catalogue no. 99-001-X. Specific information on the quality and comparability of NHS data on language of work can be found in the [Languages Reference Guide, National Household Survey](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011007.

### Close to 99% of workers in Canada report using English or French at work

Based on new data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 98.7% of workers in Canada reported using English or French at work either most often or on a regular basis ([Table 1.a](#)).

More specifically, English was used at work by 84.7% of the population, of which 76.9% used it most often, 1.7% used it equally with French, and 6.1% used it on a regular basis as a second language. In the case of French, 25.3% of the population reported using it at work, of which 20.1% used it most often, 1.7% equally with English, and 3.5% on a regular basis as a second language.

The situation was similar at the time of the 2006 Census of Population, with 85.0% of the population having reported using English at work and 25.7% reported using French ([Table 1.b](#)).

In Quebec, in 2011, 93.9% of the population reported using French (81.7% most often, 6.6% on a regular basis and 5.5% equally with English). As for English, 39.2% reported using it at work, including 12.0% most often, 21.7% on a regular basis and 5.5% equally with French.

At the time of the 2006 Census, French was reported as the language of work by 94.3% of Quebec workers. Compared with 2006, Quebec workers were somewhat less likely to report using French or English most often at work in 2011 and more likely to report speaking these two languages equally at work.

In all provinces outside Quebec, English largely dominates as the language of work, with 98.4% of the population reporting using it in 2011. French is used at work by 4.6% of the population, including 1.5% most often, 2.5% on a regular basis and 0.6% equally with English. This proportion is similar to that of persons who reported using a language other than English or French at work, namely 4.7% of the population, 1.5% of which use it most often, 2.6% on a regular basis and 0.6% equally with an official language. These are practically the same proportions as at the time of the 2006 Census.

Of all of the languages other than English or French used at work, the family of Chinese languages ranked first in 2011. The number of responses mentioning the use<sup>1</sup> of a Chinese language most often or on a regular basis at work was approximately 224,000, or 27.8% of the nearly 807,760 references to a non-official language.<sup>2</sup>

1. This refers to the number of responses rather than the number of people because close to 10,000 workers reported using more than one language other than English or French at work (non-official language).

2. Statistics Canada will be conducting more detailed analyses of the use of languages other than English or French at work in the near future.

## Language use in the workplace in Canada

**Table 1.a Use of English, French and other languages at work, most often or on a regular basis, Canada, Quebec and Canada outside Quebec, 2011**

Language used at work	Canada		Quebec		Canada outside Quebec	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
<b>Most often<sup>1</sup></b>						
English	14,717,005	76.9	531,660	12.0	14,185,345	96.5
French	3,836,710	20.1	3,619,060	81.7	217,655	1.5
English and French equally	328,580	1.7	244,515	5.5	84,065	0.6
Other language only	251,015	1.3	31,755	0.7	219,265	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,133,310</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,426,990</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14,706,330</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>On a regular basis<sup>2</sup></b>						
English	1,166,180	6.1	958,715	21.7	207,460	1.4
French	666,165	3.5	292,710	6.6	373,460	2.5
Other	446,025	2.3	63,230	1.4	382,795	2.6

1. The category 'English' includes the single responses 'English' and the multiple responses 'English and other.' The category 'French' includes the single responses 'French' and the multiple responses 'French and other.' The category 'English and French equally' includes the responses 'English and French' and 'English, French and other.'

2. The categories 'English', 'French' and 'Other' include all responses with mention of any of these languages.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

**Table 1.b Use of English, French and other languages at work, most often or on a regular basis, Canada, Quebec and Canada outside Quebec, 2006**

Language used at work	Canada		Quebec		Canada outside Quebec	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
<b>Most often<sup>1</sup></b>						
English	14,150,925	76.8	536,875	12.6	13,614,050	96.2
French	3,730,025	20.3	3,502,840	82.1	227,185	1.6
English and French equally	263,320	1.4	194,525	4.6	68,795	0.5
Other language only	273,825	1.5	32,720	0.8	241,105	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,418,095</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,266,960</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14,151,135</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>On a regular basis<sup>2</sup></b>						
English	1,234,235	6.7	991,440	23.2	242,795	1.7
French	731,085	4.0	326,215	7.7	404,870	2.9
Other	504,135	2.7	69,210	1.6	434,925	3.1

1. The category 'English' includes the single responses 'English' and the multiple responses 'English and other.' The category 'French' includes the single responses 'French' and the multiple responses 'French and other.' The category 'English and French equally' includes the responses 'English and French' and 'English, French and other.'

2. The categories 'English', 'French' and 'Other' include all responses with mention of any of these languages.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

### Close to 14% of Canadian workers report using at least two languages at work

In 2011, 2.65 million people (13.9%) reported using more than one language at work. At the time of the 2006 Census, 2.76 million people (15%) reported doing so.

Of all census metropolitan areas (CMAs) in the country, the Quebec part of the Ottawa - Gatineau CMA has the largest proportion of workers reporting using at least two languages at work (58.4%). It is followed by the CMAs of Montréal (47.5%), Moncton (36.7%), Sherbrooke (28.7%), Ottawa - Gatineau (Ontario part) [27.9%] and Greater Sudbury (23.2%). In these CMAs, the two languages are predominantly English and French.<sup>3</sup>

### Official language use in the main contact regions between the language groups

The CMAs where the highest proportions of use of at least two languages at work are observed are located in regions of frequent contact between the various language groups, generally in Quebec and in regions of Ontario and New Brunswick close to the Quebec border.

Use of English and French at work varies substantially within these CMAs both as languages used most often and on a regular basis, and as the main language ([Table 2.a](#)).

In 2011, French was the main language of work of 71.8% of workers in the Montréal CMA. If use of French equally with English (8.6%) and use of French on a regular basis as a second language (10.1%) are included, French is used at work by 90.5% of the population of this CMA.

At the time of the 2006 Census, 91.2% of the Montréal population reported using French at work ([Table 2.b](#)). However, compared with the 2006 Census, workers were less likely in the 2011 NHS to report using English or French most often and slightly more likely to report using these two languages equally.

On Montréal Island, where most workers for whom English is the first official language spoken are located, French is used less often. In 2011, French was used most often by 59.5% of workers. Another 10.7% of the population reported using that language equally with English and 14.5% reported using it on a regular basis.<sup>4</sup> At the time of the 2006 Census, workers were less likely to report using English and French equally (8.7%).

In the Ottawa - Gatineau CMA, French was used most often at work by 19.9% of workers in 2011, while 5.1% reported using it equally with English and another 18.3% used it on a regular basis. These proportions vary substantially depending on whether the workers live on the Quebec or Ontario side, with French being used much more by workers from the Quebec Outaouais.

In the four CMAs, workers were slightly more likely to report using English and French equally in their work in 2011 than they were at the time of the 2006 Census.

3. By comparison, the Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary CMAs had respectively 8.7%, 10.3% and 4.5% of their workers using more than one language at work, mostly English and a language other than French.

4. This refers to workers who live on the island and not to all workers who work there.

## Language use in the workplace in Canada

**Table 2.a Proportion of the population of workers by languages used most often or on a regular basis at work, Moncton, Montréal, Ottawa - Gatineau and Greater Sudbury census metropolitan areas (CMAs), 2011**

Language used at work	Moncton	Montréal			Ottawa - Gatineau			Greater Sudbury
		Total – CMA	Island	Rest of the CMA	Total – CMA	Ottawa	Gatineau	
<b>Most often<sup>1</sup></b>								
English	77.5	18.8	28.4	10.0	74.5	89.3	31.5	91.5
French	16.7	71.8	59.5	82.9	19.9	6.1	60.0	5.5
English and French equally	5.7	8.6	10.7	6.7	5.1	4.0	8.1	2.9
Other	0.1	0.9	1.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>On a regular basis<sup>2</sup></b>								
English	10.5	27.4	26.9	27.8	10.9	4.1	30.8	2.9
French	20.2	10.1	14.5	6.1	18.3	18.1	18.9	16.5
Other	0.4	2.3	3.5	1.2	1.5	1.7	0.9	0.9

1. The category 'English' includes the single responses 'English' and the multiple responses 'English and other.' The category 'French' includes the single responses 'French' and the multiple responses 'French and other.' The category 'English and French equally' includes the responses 'English and French' and 'English, French and other.'

2. The categories 'English,' 'French' and 'Other' include all responses with mention of any of these languages.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

**Table 2.b Proportion of the population of workers by languages used most often or on a regular basis at work, Moncton, Montréal, Ottawa - Gatineau and Greater Sudbury census metropolitan areas (CMAs),<sup>1</sup> 2006**

Language used at work	Moncton	Montréal			Ottawa - Gatineau			Greater Sudbury
		Total – CMA	Island	Rest of the CMA	Total – CMA	Ottawa	Gatineau	
<b>Most often<sup>2</sup></b>								
English	78.2	19.8	29.4	10.3	75.0	89.5	31.9	91.2
French	17.7	72.2	60.5	83.8	20.4	6.7	61.0	6.1
English and French equally	4.1	7.1	8.7	5.5	4.1	3.2	7.0	2.6
Other	0.0	0.9	1.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>On a regular basis<sup>3</sup></b>								
English	11.7	29.6	28.8	30.4	11.9	5.0	32.5	3.5
French	22.5	11.9	16.6	7.2	20.5	20.4	20.7	19.4
Other	0.3	2.7	4.1	1.3	1.6	0.9	1.9	0.7

1. In this table, the 2006 statistics for the census metropolitan areas correspond to the 2011 geographical boundaries.

2. The category 'English' includes the single responses 'English' and the multiple responses 'English and other.' The category 'French' includes the single responses 'French' and the multiple responses 'French and other.' The category 'English and French equally' includes the responses 'English and French' and 'English, French and other.'

3. The categories 'English,' 'French' and 'Other' include all responses with mention of any of these languages.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

## Additional information

Additional information on language of work can be found in the [NHS Data Tables](#), Catalogue nos. 99-012-X2011026 through 99-012-X2011029, the [NHS Profile](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X, as well as in the [NHS Focus on Geography Series](#), Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011005.

For details on the concepts, definitions, universes, variables and geographic terms used in the 2011 National Household Survey, please consult the [National Household Survey Dictionary](#), Catalogue no. 99-000-X. For detailed explanations on concepts and for information on data quality, please refer to the reference guides on the [2011 National Household Survey \(NHS\)](#) website.

## Note to readers

**Random rounding and percentage distributions:** To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2011 National Household Survey while maintaining the quality of the results, a random rounding process is used to alter the values reported in individual cells. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the sum of the individual values, since the total and subtotals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentage distributions, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.

Due to random rounding, estimates and percentages may vary slightly between different 2011 National Household Survey products, such as the analytical documents and various data tables.

**Comparability between estimates from the 2006 Census long form and the 2011 National Household Survey estimates:** When comparing estimates from the 2006 Census long form and estimates from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) users should take into account the fact that the two sources represent different populations. The target population for the 2006 Census long form includes usual residents in collective dwellings and persons living abroad whereas the target population for the NHS excludes them. Moreover, the NHS estimates are derived from a voluntary survey and are therefore subject to potentially higher non-response error than those derived from the 2006 Census long form.

## Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Jean-Pierre Corbeil, of Statistics Canada's Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, with the assistance of staff members of Statistics Canada's Census Subject Matter Secretariat, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Geography Division, Census Operations Division, Dissemination Division and Communications Division.