

Canada's Changing Language Realities and the Challenge of Bilingualism

Part 1

Montreal increasingly trilingual (Gatineau most officially bilingual region in Quebec and city in Canada)

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Highlights

-While elsewhere in Canada the objective of substantially increasing bilingualism seems improbable, in the Montreal region three languages are being more common for an important share of the region's youth notably its growing allophone population acquiring both English and French. The 2006 census revealed that the level of official bilingualism amongst persons whose mother tongue is neither English nor French represented 50.2% of the Montreal population and thus it is fair to assume the majority of the city's allophones are trilingual. Given the substantial growth of this group in Montreal the rate of trilingualism has increased from 16.5% in 2001 to 18% in 2006 with some 660 000 Montrealers knowing three languages. In fact some 94 000 Montrealers report knowledge of four languages representing nearly 3% of the metropolitan region's population. In Canada some 2 million persons report knowledge of three languages representing some 6.4% of the population compared to 5.9% in 2001.

-In 2006 Montrealers between the ages of 20 and 39 some one in four report knowledge of three languages.

-Montreal is the most bilingual metropolitan area in the country, it is Gatineau that is Quebec's most bilingual region and city in Canada. As Gatineau is part of the Ottawa-Gatineau metropolitan region its level of bilingualism as a city does not get the same notoriety as Montreal which is a CMA (in part three we will explore the evolution of bilingualism by age cohort in Gatineau compared to Ottawa, Ontario).

-Armenians are the most bilingual Montrealers and expanded their lead on first place since 2001 over Italians in second and Dutch in third. Montreal's most English unilingual groups are Twi, Tamil and Bengali. Montreal's most French unilingual are Lingala, Creole and Laotian. Montreal's allophones that know neither official language are most likely to be Cantonese, Cambodian and Punjabi.

The results of the 2006 census revealed that many young English-speaking Canadians outside of Quebec struggle with the acquisition of French as a second language. Just prior to the release of the census data, the PM appointed former New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord to look at the condition of official language minorities and knowledge of official languages. Already Lord has described as unrealistic the target of one in two young English Canadians outside of Quebec able to speak French. While elsewhere in Canada the objective of substantially increasing bilingualism seems improbable, in the Montreal region three languages are being more common for an important share of the region's youth notably its growing allophone population acquiring both English and French. The 2006 census revealed that the level of official bilingualism amongst persons whose mother tongue is neither English nor French represented 50.2% of the Montreal population and thus it is fair to assume the majority of the city's allophones are trilingual. Given the substantial growth of this group in Montreal the rate of trilingualism has increased from 16.5% in 2001 to 18% in 2006 with some 660 000 Montrealers knowing three languages. In fact some 94 000 Montrealers report knowledge of four languages representing nearly 3% of the metropolitan region's population. In Canada some 2 million persons report knowledge of three languages representing some 6.4% of the population compared to 5.9% in 2001.

Knowledge of at least three languages in Canada and selected Cities, 2006

	Total – Number of non-official languages known	Total- Number Of Trilingual or more	%
Canada	31 241 030	2 026 000	6.4
Montréal	3 588 520	659 850	18.3
Toronto	5 072 075	534 190	10.5
Ottawa	1 117 120	112 771	10.2
Vancouver	2 097 960	193 320	9.2
Calgary	1 070 295	60 135	5.6
Edmonton	1 024 825	45 750	4.4
Winnipeg	686 035	29 560	4.3
Moncton	124 055	2 230	1.9
Regina	192 435	3 655	1.8
Halifax	683 450	8 305	1.2

As observed below in 2006 Montrealers between the ages of 20 and 39 some one in four report knowledge of three languages.

Knowledge of at least three languages in Montreal by age cohort, 2006

Montreal	Total – Number of non-official languages known	Total- Number Of Trilingual or more	%
5 and under	190 255	9 625	5.0
5-9	198 755	21 555	10.8
10-14	231 795	35 855	15.4
15-19	223 545	52 385	23.4
20-24	236 090	60 005	25.4
25-29	256 545	64 325	25.1
30-34	248 280	67 865	27.3
35-39	264 135	69 510	26.3
40 to 44 years	302 440	63 145	20.9

As observed below while Montreal is the most bilingual metropolitan area in the country, it is Gatineau that is Quebec's most bilingual region (in part three we will explore the evolution of bilingualism by age cohort in Gatineau compared to Ottawa, Ontario).

Knowledge of English and French in selected cities, 2006

	Total Knowledge of languages	English and French	2006 %
Gatineau	281 650	175 855	62
Montréal	3588520	1861930	52
Moncton	124 055	58 195	47
Ottawa-Gatineau CMA	1 117 120	496 025	45
Sherbrooke	183635	72 895	40
Ottawa, Ontario	835 170	320 175	38
Quebec City	704 185	232 535	33
Calgary	1070295	84085	7.8
Vancouver	2097960	162790	7.7
Edmonton	1024825	77950	7.6
Winnipeg	686035	74885	11
Halifax	683450	44875	6.5
Toronto	5072075	418505	8
Regina	192435	11800	6.1

Montreal's most bilingual allos

Armenians are the most bilingual Montrealers and expanded their lead on first place since 2001 over Italians in second and Dutch in third.

Knowledge of English and French for allophone groups in Montreal, 2006

Geography: Montréal	Total – Knowledge of official languages	English and French	%
Armenian	14970	11525	77.0
Italian	120140	86900	72.3
Dutch	2115	1520	71.9
English	425635	298715	70.2
Czech	1455	970	66.7
Slovak	1205	815	67.6
Romanian	24555	16570	67.5
Serbian	1485	970	65.3
Ukrainian	4850	3130	64.5
Hebrew	4080	2565	62.9
Polish	14830	9135	61.6
Croatian	2065	1270	61.5

Montreal's most English unilingual groups are Twi, Tamil and Bengali.

Knowledge of English only for allophone groups (and anglophones) in Montreal, 2006

Geography: Montréal	%
Akan (Twi)	55.3
Tamil	52.2
Bengali	51.8
Urdu	49.4
Japanese	48.9
Gujarati	48.7
Yiddish	47.9
Mandarin	47.1
Panjabi (Punjabi)	46.2
Korean	43.8
Hungarian	36.7
English	29.4

Montreal's most French unilingual are Lingala, Creole and Laotian.

Knowledge of French only for allophone groups (and francophones) in Montreal, 2006

Geography: Montréal	French only	%
Lingala	1355	68.3
Creoles	25360	59.6
French	1218355	52.3
Swahili	395	37.8
Spanish	35615	39.5
Lao	1570	41.3
Turkish	1845	33.7
Arabic	31725	32.4
Khmer (Cambodian)	2250	29.7
Vietnamese	6225	26.8
Bulgarian	1130	23.9
Portuguese	8865	30.2
Romanian	5820	23.7

Montreal's allophones that know neither official language are most likely to be Cantonese, Cambodian and Punjabi.

Knowledge of neither English nor French for allophone groups (and francophones) in Montreal, 2006

Geography: Montréal	Neither English nor French	%
Turkish	810	14.8
Cantonese	1975	21.0
Khmer (Cambodian)	1175	15.5
Mandarin	1005	14.6
Yiddish	1115	13.6
Punjabi (Punjabi)	1800	15.3
Tamil		12.1
Vietnamese	2705	11.6
Gujarati	685	11.6
Dravidian languages	1395	11.5
Bengali	995	10.5