

Bilingualism in Canada: Definitely, Maybe?

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Highlights :

- Some 47% of Canadians believe that it is important to speak both English and French.
- Some three-quarters of Canadians would like to either learn a new language or improve their command of an existing one.
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Canadians believe they already know or have sufficient command of the language(s) they need.
- Some 41% of Canadians believe that they cannot take the time to learn or improve their command of another language.
- Seventy-six percent of Canadians believe that learning a second language helps them understand other cultures.
- Some 82% of Canadians agree that learning a language helps you get a better job.

Part 1

Importance of Speaking a Second Language

On Tuesday March 4th Statistics Canada will release the 2006 census data on language used in the workplace. The release comes against the backdrop of a flurry of debate around the situation of the French language in Montreal and contested observations about the value of bilingualism. Perhaps the most controversial were remarks by PQ leader Pauline Marois who proposed that all Quebecers should be bilingual and suggested a number of measures to achieve that end. A Leger Marketing Survey commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies at start of the month of February, 2008 reveals that a majority of Quebecers agree upon the importance of bilingualism and particularly upon the need for bilingualism to enhance one's economic standing.

1. It is important for Canadians to speak both English and French

Some 47% of Canadians believe that it is important to speak both English and French.

On the basis of gender women are slightly more likely to agree that it is important for Canadians to speak both English and French (49%) than men (45%).

Gender

	Total	Man	Woman
TOTAL AGREE	47%	45%	49%
Strongly agree	24%	22%	25%
Somewhat agree	24%	24%	24%
TOTAL DISAGREE	49%	51%	47%
Somewhat disagree	24%	24%	23%
Strongly disagree	25%	26%	24%
DK/ No Answer	4%	4%	4%

On the basis of language the vast majority of Francophone respondents believe that it is important to speak both English and French (81%) compared to 38% of Anglophone and 37% of Allophone respondents in Canada.

Language

	French	English	Other
TOTAL AGREE	81%	38%	37%
Strongly agree	46%	16%	20%
Somewhat agree	36%	22%	16%
TOTAL DISAGREE	15%	59%	57%
Somewhat disagree	10%	28%	26%
Strongly disagree	5%	31%	31%
DK/ No Answer	3%	3%	6%

On a regional basis respondents from Quebec were the most likely to agree that it is important to speak both English and French (82%) compared to respondents from British Columbia who were the least likely to agree with the statement (19%).

Province

	Martimes	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
TOTAL AGREE	54%	82%	41%	32%	32%	19%
Strongly agree	22%	51%	17%	11%	15%	8%
Somewhat agree	32%	31%	24%	21%	17%	11%
TOTAL DISAGREE	41%	13%	56%	63%	68%	78%
Somewhat disagree	23%	8%	29%	26%	28%	32%
Strongly disagree	18%	5%	27%	36%	40%	45%
DK/ No Answer	5%	5%	3%	5%	0%	4%

On the basis of their level of education respondents with a university education were more likely to agree that it is important to speak both English and French (59%) than respondents only with a college (46%) or elementary/secondary school (39%) education.

Education

	Elem/sec	College	Univ.
TOTAL AGREE	39%	46%	59%
Strongly agree	21%	22%	28%
Somewhat agree	18%	24%	30%
TOTAL DISAGREE	56%	52%	40%
Somewhat disagree	26%	23%	22%
Strongly disagree	30%	28%	17%
DK/ No Answer	4%	3%	1%

2. I would like to either learn a new language or improve your command of an existing one

Some three-quarters of Canadians would like to either learn a new language or improve their command of an existing one.

On the basis of gender there are no considerable differences in those who would like to either learn a new language or improve their command of an existing one.

Gender

	Total	Man	Woman
TOTAL AGREE	75%	74%	75%
Strongly agree	38%	37%	39%
Somewhat agree	37%	37%	37%
TOTAL DISAGREE	21%	22%	19%
Somewhat disagree	10%	10%	11%
Strongly disagree	10%	12%	8%
DK/ No Answer	5%	4%	6%

On the basis of language Francophones were most likely to agree they would like to either learn a new language or improve their command of an existing one (84%), followed by Allophones (77%) and than Anglophones (70%).

Language

	French	English	Other
TOTAL AGREE	84%	70%	77%
Strongly agree	43%	33%	45%
Somewhat agree	41%	37%	33%
TOTAL DISAGREE	12%	25%	18%
Somewhat disagree	6%	12%	9%
Strongly disagree	6%	13%	9%
DK/ No Answer	5%	5%	5%

On a regional basis Canadians from Quebec were the most likely to agree that they would like to either learn a new language or improve their command of an existing one (84%) while Canadians from the prairie provinces were the least likely to agree with the statement (61%),

Province

	Martimes	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
TOTAL AGREE	65%	84%	71%	61%	79%	77%
Strongly agree	35%	47%	36%	30%	45%	23%
Somewhat agree	30%	37%	35%	31%	34%	53%
TOTAL DISAGREE	29%	10%	24%	32%	19%	19%
Somewhat disagree	16%	5%	12%	13%	11%	11%
Strongly disagree	14%	5%	12%	18%	9%	8%
DK/ No Answer	5%	6%	5%	7%	2%	4%

On the basis of education Canadians with a university education were the most likely to agree they would like to either learn a new language or improve their command of an existing one (85%) followed by Canadians with a college education (74%). Canadians with only an elementary/ secondary education were the least likely to agree with the statement (68%).

Education

	Elem/sec	College	Univ.
TOTAL AGREE	68%	74%	85%
Strongly agree	35%	32%	48%
Somewhat agree	33%	42%	38%
TOTAL DISAGREE	27%	22%	13%
Somewhat disagree	12%	12%	7%

Strongly disagree	15%	9%	6%
DK/ No Answer	5%	4%	2%

3. I already have know or have sufficient command of the language(s) I need

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Canadians believe they already know or have sufficient command of the language(s) they need.

On the basis of gender male respondents were more likely to agree that they already know or have sufficient command of the language(s) they need (75%) than female respondents (68%).

Gender

	Total	Man	Woman
TOTAL AGREE	72%	75%	68%
Strongly agree	37%	40%	34%
Somewhat agree	35%	35%	34%
TOTAL DISAGREE	24%	21%	28%
Somewhat disagree	18%	16%	20%
Strongly disagree	6%	5%	8%
DK/ No Answer	4%	4%	4%

On the basis of language 87% of Francophone respondents believe they already know or have sufficient command of the language(s) they need compared to 65% of Anglophone respondents. This is the case of 74% of Allophone respondents.

Language

	French	English	Other
TOTAL AGREE	87%	65%	74%
Strongly agree	52%	30%	38%
Somewhat agree	35%	35%	36%
TOTAL DISAGREE	9%	32%	20%
Somewhat disagree	7%	22%	18%
Strongly disagree	2%	10%	2%
DK/ No Answer	4%	3%	6%

On a regional basis Quebecers were the most likely to agree that they already know or have sufficient command of the language(s) they need (86%) compared to British Colombians who were the least likely to agree with the statement (61%).

Province

	Martimes	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
TOTAL AGREE	76%	86%	67%	66%	69%	61%
Strongly agree	41%	55%	32%	30%	28%	26%
Somewhat agree	35%	31%	35%	37%	41%	35%
TOTAL DISAGREE	21%	9%	29%	25%	31%	36%
Somewhat disagree	12%	8%	22%	19%	21%	25%
Strongly disagree	8%	1%	6%	5%	10%	12%
DK/ No Answer	4%	5%	4%	9%	0%	3%

Seventy-four percent of respondents with an elementary/secondary and college education believe that they already know or have sufficient command of the language(s) they need compared to 70% of respondents with a university education.

Education

	Elem/sec	College	Univ.
TOTAL AGREE	74%	74%	70%
Strongly agree	39%	40%	32%
Somewhat agree	35%	34%	38%
TOTAL DISAGREE	22%	24%	29%
Somewhat disagree	15%	18%	23%
Strongly disagree	7%	5%	6%
DK/ No Answer	4%	3%	1%

4. I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language

Some 41% of Canadians believe that they cannot take the time to learn or improve their command of another language.

On the basis of gender 46% of male respondents say that they cannot take the time to learn or improve their command of another language compared to 36% of female respondents.

Gender

	Total	Man	Woman
TOTAL AGREE	41%	46%	36%
Strongly agree	11%	14%	8%
Somewhat agree	30%	31%	28%
TOTAL DISAGREE	52%	48%	56%
Somewhat disagree	34%	32%	35%
Strongly disagree	19%	16%	21%

DK/ No Answer	7%	6%	8%
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On the basis of language Anglophone respondents were the most likely to agree that they cannot take the time to learn or improve their command of another language (45%) followed by Allophone respondents (43%). Francophone respondents were the least likely to agree with the statement (29%).

Language

	French	English	Other
TOTAL AGREE	29%	45%	43%
Strongly agree	5%	13%	11%
Somewhat agree	23%	31%	31%
TOTAL DISAGREE	65%	49%	49%
Somewhat disagree	37%	32%	34%
Strongly disagree	27%	17%	15%
DK/ No Answer	7%	7%	8%

On a regional basis British Columbians were the most likely to say that they cannot take the time to learn or improve their command of another language (56%) while Quebecers were the least likely to agree with the statement (28%).

Province

	Martimes	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
TOTAL AGREE	46%	28%	42%	43%	40%	56%
Strongly agree	21%	7%	11%	13%	8%	14%
Somewhat agree	25%	21%	31%	29%	32%	42%
TOTAL DISAGREE	48%	65%	51%	50%	52%	37%
Somewhat disagree	25%	35%	36%	31%	32%	30%
Strongly disagree	23%	30%	15%	19%	20%	7%
DK/ No Answer	6%	8%	7%	7%	8%	8%

On the basis of education 45% of Canadians with an elementary/ secondary school education and 44% of Canadians with a college education say that they cannot take the time to learn or improve their command of another language. This is the case of 34% of Canadians with a university education.

Education

	Elem/sec	College	Univ.
TOTAL AGREE	45%	44%	34%
Strongly agree	12%	14%	8%
Somewhat agree	32%	31%	26%
TOTAL DISAGREE	48%	49%	62%

Somewhat disagree	30%	35%	37%
Strongly disagree	18%	14%	24%
DK/ No Answer	7%	7%	4%

5. Learning a second language helps you understand other cultures

Seventy-six percent of Canadians believe that Learning a second language helps them understand other cultures.

Male respondents are slightly more likely to agree that Learning a second language helps them understand other cultures (78%) compared to female respondents (75%).

Gender

	Total	Man	Woman
TOTAL AGREE	76%	78%	75%
Strongly agree	35%	35%	34%
Somewhat agree	42%	43%	41%
TOTAL DISAGREE	19%	18%	20%
Somewhat disagree	12%	11%	12%
Strongly disagree	8%	7%	8%
DK/ No Answer	4%	3%	5%

On the basis of language Allophone respondents are the mostly likely to agree that learning a second language helps them understand other cultures (86%) followed by Francophone respondents (81%). This is the case of 72% of Anglophone respondents.

Language

	French	English	Other
TOTAL AGREE	81%	72%	86%
Strongly agree	39%	29%	47%
Somewhat agree	42%	43%	39%
TOTAL DISAGREE	16%	24%	9%
Somewhat disagree	13%	14%	4%
Strongly disagree	3%	10%	5%
DK/ No Answer	4%	4%	5%

On a regional basis Albertans were the mostly likely to agree that Learning a second language helps them understand other cultures (83%) compared to respondents from the Prairie Provinces who were the least likely to agree with the statement Learning a second language helps them understand other cultures

Province

	Martimes	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
TOTAL AGREE	73%	81%	73%	72%	83%	79%
Strongly agree	28%	42%	32%	33%	38%	32%
Somewhat agree	46%	39%	41%	39%	45%	47%
TOTAL DISAGREE	19%	14%	23%	23%	17%	17%
Somewhat disagree	9%	11%	13%	17%	9%	10%
Strongly disagree	10%	3%	10%	7%	7%	8%
DK/ No Answer	8%	5%	4%	5%	1%	3%

On the basis of education 85% of Canadians with a university education believe that Learning a second language helps them understand other cultures. This is the of 76% of Canadians with a college education and 71% of Canadians with an elementary/ secondary education.

Education

	Elem/sec	College	Univ.
TOTAL AGREE	71%	76%	85%
Strongly agree	25%	32%	49%
Somewhat agree	46%	44%	36%
TOTAL DISAGREE	25%	20%	13%
Somewhat disagree	16%	12%	7%
Strongly disagree	9%	8%	6%
DK/ No Answer	4%	4%	1%

6. Learning a language helps you get a better job

Some 82% of Canadians agree that learning a language helps you get a better job.

On the basis of gender there are no differences between those who agree that learning a language helps you get a better job.

Gender

	Total	Man	Woman
TOTAL AGREE	82%	82%	82%
Strongly agree	40%	39%	40%
Somewhat agree	43%	43%	42%
TOTAL DISAGREE	14%	15%	14%
Somewhat disagree	8%	8%	8%
Strongly disagree	6%	7%	5%

DK/ No Answer	3%	3%	4%
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On the basis of language Francophones were the most likely to agree that learning a language helps you get a better job (90%) followed by Allophones (83%). This is the case of 79% of Anglophones.

Language

	French	English	Other
TOTAL AGREE	90%	79%	83%
Strongly agree	55%	30%	49%
Somewhat agree	34%	49%	34%
TOTAL DISAGREE	6%	18%	12%
Somewhat disagree	5%	11%	4%
Strongly disagree	2%	7%	8%
DK/ No Answer	4%	3%	5%

On a regional basis respondents from Quebec were the most likely to strongly agree that learning a language helps you get a better job (60%) compared to respondents from other provinces where this view was strongly held by approximately one-third of respondents.

Province

	Martimes	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
TOTAL AGREE	78%	89%	80%	77%	88%	77%
Strongly agree	33%	60%	37%	25%	36%	24%
Somewhat agree	45%	29%	43%	52%	52%	53%
TOTAL DISAGREE	17%	6%	17%	18%	12%	19%
Somewhat disagree	5%	4%	9%	13%	9%	10%
Strongly disagree	12%	2%	8%	5%	2%	8%
DK/ No Answer	5%	5%	2%	5%	0%	4%

On the basis of education respondents with a university education were the most likely to agree that learning a language helps you get a better job (90%) followed by respondents with an elementary/secondary school education (80%). This is the case of 79% of respondents with a college education.

Education

	Elem/sec	College	Univ.
TOTAL AGREE	80%	79%	90%
Strongly agree	35%	38%	48%
Somewhat agree	46%	41%	42%
TOTAL DISAGREE	16%	19%	8%

Somewhat disagree	9%	10%	5%
Strongly disagree	7%	8%	3%
DK/ No Answer	3%	3%	2%

Custom Tabulations

Total Sample	Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: / It is important for Canadians to speak both English and French			
I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	5,4%	4,5%	6,0%	25,3%
Somewhat agree	14,3%	31,8%	40,9%	28,5%
Somewhat disagree	35,4%	42,6%	36,2%	28,8%
Strongly disagree	42,6%	18,2%	11,7%	12,1%
I don't know / I prefer not answering	2,3%	2,9%	5,0%	5,3%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Total Sample	Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: / I would like to either learn a new language or improve your command of an existing one			
I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	7,5%	4,5%	11,8%	36,4%
Somewhat agree	19,5%	32,7%	44,7%	24,6%
Somewhat disagree	35,0%	44,6%	28,9%	13,6%
Strongly disagree	36,5%	14,9%	7,9%	21,2%
I don't know / I prefer not answering	1,5%	3,2%	6,6%	4,2%

Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
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French	Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: / I would like to either learn a new language or improve your command of an existing one			
I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	5,7%	1,5%	7,3%	17,9%
Somewhat agree	17,1%	22,8%	34,1%	28,6%
Somewhat disagree	31,6%	52,1%	36,6%	14,3%
Strongly disagree	44,1%	21,2%	14,6%	35,7%
I don't know / I prefer not answering	1,5%	2,3%	7,3%	3,6%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

English	Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: / I would like to either learn a new language or improve your command of an existing one			
I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	8,0%	6,9%	13,5%	45,0%
Somewhat agree	22,4%	41,2%	50,0%	21,2%
Somewhat disagree	38,0%	38,5%	25,0%	13,8%
Strongly disagree	30,0%	10,3%	4,2%	15,0%
I don't know / I prefer not answering	1,6%	3,1%	7,3%	5,0%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Allophone	Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: : / I would like to either learn a new language or improve your command of an existing one			
I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	13,6%	12,0%	25,0%	33,3%
Somewhat agree	22,7%	28,0%	37,5%	16,7%
Somewhat disagree	31,8%	40,0%	37,5%	16,7%
Strongly disagree	29,5%	12,0%		33,3%
I don't know / I prefer not answering	2,3%	8,0%		
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

French	Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: It is important for Canadians to speak both English and French			
I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	69,2%	30,9%	36,6%	28,6%
Somewhat agree	21,7%	53,7%	36,6%	10,7%
Somewhat disagree	6,1%	10,0%	19,5%	14,3%
Strongly disagree	2,3%	4,6%	7,3%	42,9%
I don't know / I prefer not answering	,8%	,8%		3,6%
Total				

English	Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: It is important for Canadians to speak both English and French			
I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	31,2%	7,9%	4,2%	2,5%
Somewhat agree	33,2%	28,9%	12,5%	5,0%
Somewhat disagree	19,6%	35,7%	46,9%	13,8%
Strongly disagree	15,6%	26,1%	35,4%	78,8%
I don't know / I prefer not answering	,4%	1,4%	1,0%	
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Other	Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following: It is important for Canadians to speak both English and French			
I cannot take the time to learn or improve my command of another language	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	40,9%	20,0%		
Somewhat agree	29,5%	40,0%		
Somewhat disagree	15,9%	12,0%	37,5%	16,7%
Strongly disagree	11,4%	28,0%	62,5%	83,3%
I don't know / I prefer not answering	2,3%			
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%