



News Release

Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick
Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities

The Language Situation in New Brunswick: Worrying Trends and Some Encouraging Signs

Moncton, February 11, 2021 – Action on several fronts is necessary to mitigate or reverse some worrying trends relating to official languages in New Brunswick, particularly when it comes to the French-language community. These are the conclusions of a study conducted by the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick.

“Despite the existing legislative and constitutional protections that exist in New Brunswick, it is concerning to see the decline of French, which is the minority language in our province,” noted Shirley MacLean, Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick. “The *Official Languages Act* recognizes that under the Canadian Constitution, the province has the authority to advance the equality of status of both official languages. This report contains important findings that can serve to influence public policy to increase equality between our two linguistic communities.”

The report, entitled [The Language Situation in New Brunswick: Worrying Trends and Some Encouraging Signs](#), provides a snapshot of the situation of official languages and the linguistic minority in New Brunswick based on the themes and the data included in the Census Program. The latest available census data is from 2016.

“This study seeks to answer the following question: ‘What is the state of New Brunswick’s two official languages?’” stated Éric Forgues, Executive Director of the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities. “The report explores several variables, including people’s private and public use of the languages, their knowledge of the languages, and individual bilingualism. It also reviews the situation of the province’s minority Francophone community and the factors that influence its sustainability, such as linguistic assimilation, the transmission of French, migration, and immigration.”

The report touches on seven main themes:

The evolution of the official languages: stability of English, but the slow decline of French

We continue to witness the slow decline in the relative weight of the French-language community. The percentage of New Brunswickers whose mother tongue is French reached a low of 31.9% in 2016, compared to 33.8% in 1971, while the percentage of people whose mother tongue is English has remained stable at approximately 65% of the population since 1971.

The languages used at home and their transmission: anglicization on the rise, but encouraging signs for French

Fewer than nine in 10 Francophones (86.8%) spoke their mother tongue most often at home compared to almost all Anglophones (98.5%). However, Francophones in mixed couples, particularly mothers, are

increasingly passing on French to their children. It is now more than half (52.8%) of children with Francophone mothers in mixed couples who have French as their mother tongue, up from 43.8% in 2001.

The vitality of official languages: the gap between English and French continues to widen

There were 7% more people who spoke English most often at home in 2016 than there were English mother-tongue speakers in the province. However, there were 11% fewer people who spoke French most often at home than people whose mother tongue was French.

Individual bilingualism has stagnated for more than a decade

Nearly 250,000 people declared themselves bilingual (English-French) in New Brunswick in 2016, one-third (33.9%) of the province's population. The bilingualism rate has been stagnating at 33% in New Brunswick for about 15 years. Francophones accounted for two-thirds (66.7%) of bilingual New Brunswickers in 2016, while Anglophones accounted for almost one-third (29.0%).

Official languages in the workplace

The use of English in the New Brunswick workplace has been steadily increasing since 2001 (+1.3 percentage points), while the use of French has slightly decreased (-0.3) compared to 2001. In 2016, 89.0% of New Brunswickers spoke English at least regularly at work, compared to 36.7% who spoke French.

Migration of Francophones and Anglophones in Canada: deceptive appearances

Anglophone migration rates were about twice as high as those of Francophones between 2011 and 2016. For example, 5.5% of the Anglophone population, but only 2.7% of Francophones in the province had left New Brunswick during this period.

Immigration and official languages

In New Brunswick, the recent surge in immigration helped push the provincial immigration rate up from 3.1% in 2001 to 4.6% in 2016. In 2016, immigration rates in the two official language communities were 5.5% for the Anglophone majority, but only 2% for the Francophone minority. In 2016, 91.8% of the province's foreign-born population knew English, compared to only 24.8% who knew French.

Full report: [The Language Situation in New Brunswick: Worrying Trends and Some Encouraging Signs](#)

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