



**PERT** PROVINCIAL  
EMPLOYMENT  
ROUNDTABLE

**CENSUS 2021 Update:  
A brief review of the latest data on  
employment among Québec's English  
speakers**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A review of the most recent census data on the employment situation of Québec's English-speaking communities reveals that English speakers continue to experience significant challenges in Québec's labour market. Despite a high rate of labour force participation and increases in educational attainment, English speakers in most regions of Québec face higher unemployment rates, lower median incomes and higher rates of poverty compared to the French-speaking majority. This report provides an overview of key labour market characteristics for Québec's English-speaking communities based on data from the 2021 Census.

### Key findings:

- Québec's English-speaking population has increased since the last census. There are now 1,253,578 individuals who identify as English speakers, representing 14.9% of Québec's population (previously 13.8% in the last census).
- The unemployment rate for English speakers in Québec has increased. English speakers face an unemployment rate of 10.9%, 4 percent higher than French speakers' 6.9%. This difference has doubled since the 2016 Census, when the gap was 2%.
- English speakers continue to earn lower incomes compared to French speakers across the province: English speakers have an after-tax median income that is \$2,800 lower than French speakers and a median employment income that is \$5,200 less than French speakers. The gap in median employment income between English and French speakers has widened significantly; English speakers have a median employment income that is \$5,200 less than French speakers, previously \$2,648.
- The provincial poverty rate for English speakers is 10%, which is almost twice as high as the poverty rate for French speakers (5.8%).
- English speakers continue to have high educational attainment levels, and the level of educational attainment among English speakers has increased. As of 2021, approximately 86% of the English-speaking population in Québec have at least a secondary-level education. This is an increase from the last census (83.9%). French speakers' education levels have also increased; 81.6% of French speakers have at least a secondary level education, which is an increase from the last census (previously 79.8%).
- The top 4 industries for English-speaking workers have remained the same. 'Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services'; 'Retail'; 'Healthcare and Social Assistance'; and 'Manufacturing' remain the top industries for English speakers across Québec. However, the 'Professional, Scientific and Technical Services' industry is now the leading industry for English speakers in Québec (previously the fourth leading industry), with 11.4% of Québec's English speakers working in this industry (previously

9.5%). However, this growth is not evenly distributed – 80% of English speakers in this industry are based in the Montréal region.

- There are 699,015 English speakers in Québec's labour force. English speakers now make up 15.8% of the total labour force (previously 14.3%). English speakers also have a higher labour force participation rate (66.6%) compared to French speakers (64%).
- English speakers face other challenges in the labour market: they are more likely to work a temporary position, work fewer average weeks, and are more likely to work part-time compared to French speakers. These are all lead indicators for labour market precarity.<sup>1</sup>
- Regional disparities within the English-speaking community persist – the regions with the highest unemployment rates for English speakers are Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (18.7%), Côte-Nord (17.9%), and Montréal (11.6%). English speakers have significantly higher unemployment rates than French speakers in Côte-Nord (11.1% gap), Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (8% gap), and Nord-du-Québec (5% gap).
- English speakers in manufacturing regions such as Montérégie and Laurentides that are close to metropolitan areas tend to have similar labour force characteristics as those living in urban regions.

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<sup>1</sup> May B. 'PRECARIOUS WORK: UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK IN CANADA' Report of the Standing Committee, House of Commons Canada.  
<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/HUMA/Reports/RP10553151/humarp19/humarp19-e.pdf>

# INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a brief review of the latest data on the employment situation of English speakers in Québec. The data provided is based on the 2021 Canadian census, which provides the most comprehensive and updated information on the labour force characteristics of linguistic minority communities across Canada. The sections covered are population, labour force, unemployment, income, industry, temporary employment, work activity, education, and COVID benefits. A brief discussion of the unemployment gap and labour market precarity in English-speaking communities is provided at the end.

## POPULATION

As of 2021, the province of Québec has a total population of 8,406,905, of whom 1,253,578 are English speakers. The English-speaking population makes up 14.9% of the total population, while French speakers make up 84.1%.<sup>2</sup> The proportion of English speakers in Québec has grown compared to 2016, when English speakers made up 13.8% of the population.

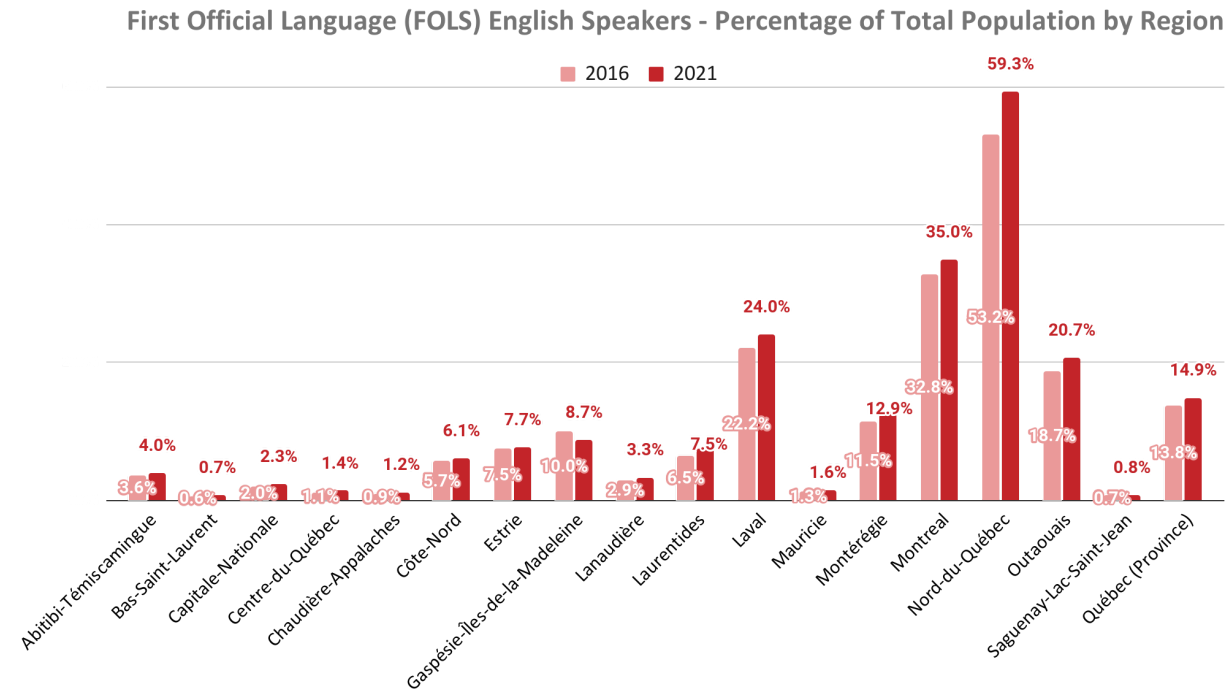
The following figure shows the number of English speakers as a percentage of the total population in each region and Québec.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> English speakers and French speakers in this profile are classified according to Statistics Canada's definition of First Official Language Spoken (FOLS). Individuals who speak both English and French as their first official language are evenly divided among English and French speakers. This is done to provide a more accurate portrait of the Anglophone and Francophone population in Québec. FOLS designation is a derived concept, taking into account a person's knowledge of Canada's two official languages, their mother tongue, and their home language (i.e. the language they speak most often at home).

<sup>3</sup>Percentage of Total Population is calculated by taking the total number of English speakers in the geography and dividing it by the total number of people in the geography's whole population.

## Population of English speakers as a percentage of the total population (First official language spoken, administrative regions)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2016 & 2021)

Populations of English speakers have generally grown in 16 out of the 17 regions of Québec since the last census, with the exception of Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine where there has been an 11.9% reduction in the size of the English-speaking population by 2021. Montréal saw the most increase in the number of English speakers, with 69,953 additional English speakers in the region in 2021, a growth of 11.2% from 2016.

In terms of English-speaking population growth rate, Bas-Saint-Laurent leads the regions with a 35.9% population growth, due to an addition of 388 people to its small English-speaking population, which is now 1,468 English speakers. The French-speaking population also saw growth in 15 out of the 17 regions, excluding Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec where there was a decrease in the number of French speakers of 3,285 and 1,338, respectively.

### Changes in populations of English speakers and French speakers (First official language spoken, administrative regions)

Administrative Region	English Speakers		French Speakers	
	2021	Change from 2016	2021	Change from 2016
Québec (Province)	1,253,578	155,658	7,074,328	279,050
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	5,763	608	139,823	1,900
Bas-Saint-Laurent	1,468	388	194,888	6,035
Capitale-Nationale	17,568	3,358	728,218	35,025
Centre-du-Québec	3,488	913	242,418	11,048
Chaudière-Appalaches	5,058	1,303	421,863	17,175
Côte-Nord	5,303	128	81,803	-3,285
Estrie	25,808	2,708	306,468	20,718
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	7,738	-1,048	80,763	1,423
Lanaudière	17,488	3,273	505,253	34,240
Laurentides	47,013	9,458	581,448	42,690
Laval	104,520	13,405	321,325	9,788
Mauricie	4,213	983	264,038	10,928
Montréal	203,700	33,785	1,359,595	63,193
Montréal	692,113	69,953	1,243,478	14,425
Nord-du-Québec	27,065	3,725	16,415	-1,338
Outaouais	83,125	12,550	315,945	11,320
Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	2,153	183	270,598	3,768

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2016 & 2021).

## LABOUR FORCE

Québec now has 4,435,465 individuals in the labour force, an increase from 4,255,500 in the 2016 census<sup>4</sup>. These increases are reflected among the linguistic communities with a 15% increase in the number of English speakers but only a 2.3% increase in the number of French speakers in the labour market. There are now 699,015 English speakers in Québec's labour market, making up 15.8% of the labour market.<sup>5</sup> There are 3,721,250 French speakers in the labour market, making up 83.9%.

<sup>4</sup> Labour Force refers to the total sum of the Employed and Unemployed people in the population.

<sup>5</sup> Labour force share is calculated here by taking the total number of English speakers in the geography's labour force and dividing it by the total number of individuals in the geography's labour force. Working-age population share is calculated by taking the total number of English speakers that are aged 15 to 64 in the geography and dividing it by the total number of English speakers in the whole population aged 15 to 64 in the geography.

Within the English-speaking population, the majority of working-age English speakers are within the labour force. Of the 864,445 English speakers who represent 16.3% of Québec's working-age population, 15.8% are in Québec's labour force.

Montréal has the highest number of English speakers who are in the labour market with 394,160 English-speaking workers, representing 36.4% of the region's total labour force. The proportion of English speakers in the labour force has increased in all of the regions except Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, where it decreased by 3,435 English speakers, from 8.7% in 2016 to 8.3% in 2021.

Labour force participation<sup>6</sup> remains high among English speakers. The labour participation rate of English speakers in Québec is 66.6%, an increase from 65.2% in the last census. Laval reported the highest labour force participation rate for English speakers at 70.6%. Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, and Mauricie have the lowest labour force participation rates across Québec, irrespective of the linguistic community. In Montréal, Laurentides and Côte-Nord, English speakers and French speakers have similar labour force participation rates.

#### Changes in Labour force populations for English speakers and French speakers (First official language spoken, administrative regions)

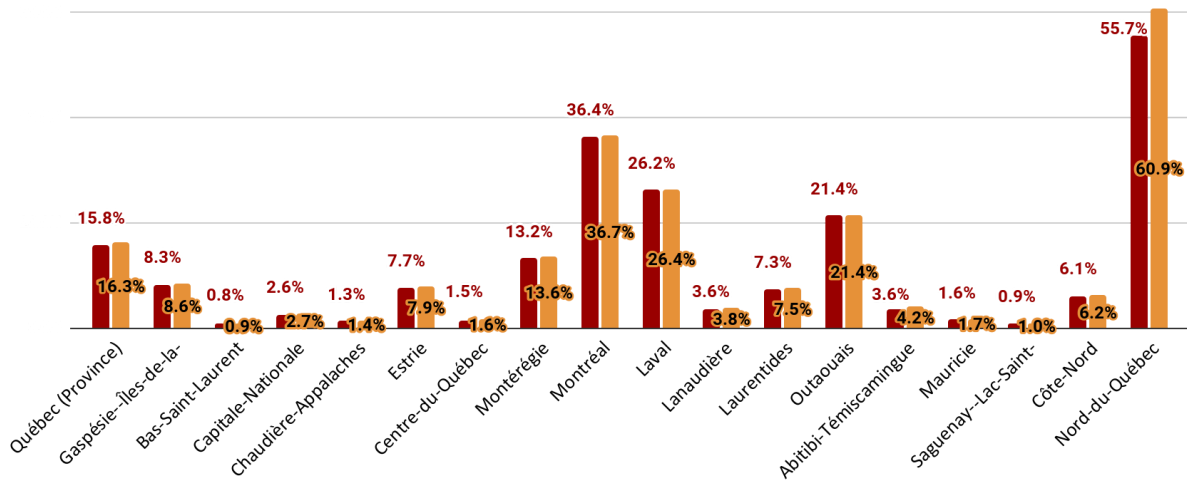
Administrative Region	English Speakers		French Speakers	
	2021	Change from 2016	2021	Change from 2016
Québec (Province)	699,015	90,962	3,721,250	84,267
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	2,685	217	72,030	92
Bas-Saint-Laurent	778	188	92,503	-1,457
Capitale-Nationale	10,380	1,822	391,100	7,797
Centre-du-Québec	1,908	533	124,778	3,123
Chaudière-Appalaches	3,038	893	224,663	3,258
Côte-Nord	2,668	48	40,858	-2,242
Estrie	13,045	1,865	155,980	8,265
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	3,435	-220	37,845	-285
Lanaudière	9,885	1,752	261,850	11,402
Laurentides	24,493	4,805	308,993	15,970
Laval	61,018	7,515	170,153	715
Mauricie	2,023	453	125,243	2,123
Montérégie	111,373	18,218	727,018	19,598
Montréal	394,160	46,202	679,710	14,437
Nord-du-Québec	11,478	285	9,083	-1,175
Outaouais	45,403	6,188	166,308	1,938
Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	1,250	197	133,150	727

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2016 & 2021)

<sup>6</sup> Labour force participation rate is calculated as the ratio of the total number of people in a geography's labour force to the total population aged 15 and over in the geography.

## English-speaking Labour Force of Québec by Region (2021)

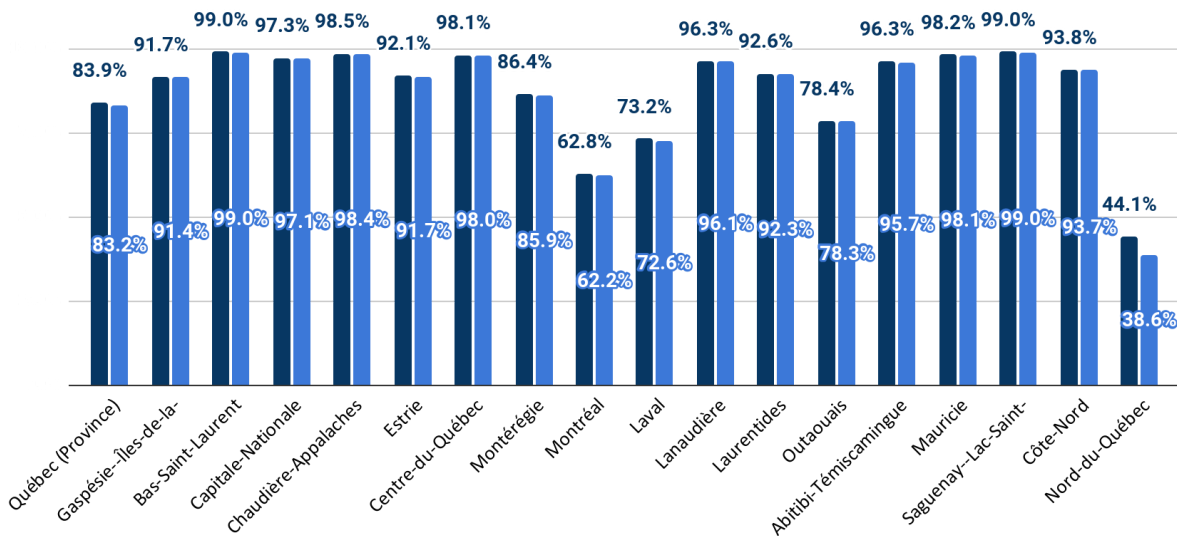
■ Labour Force Share (% of total labour force) ■ Working-Age Population Share (% of total population)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

## French-speaking Labour Force of Québec by Region (2021)

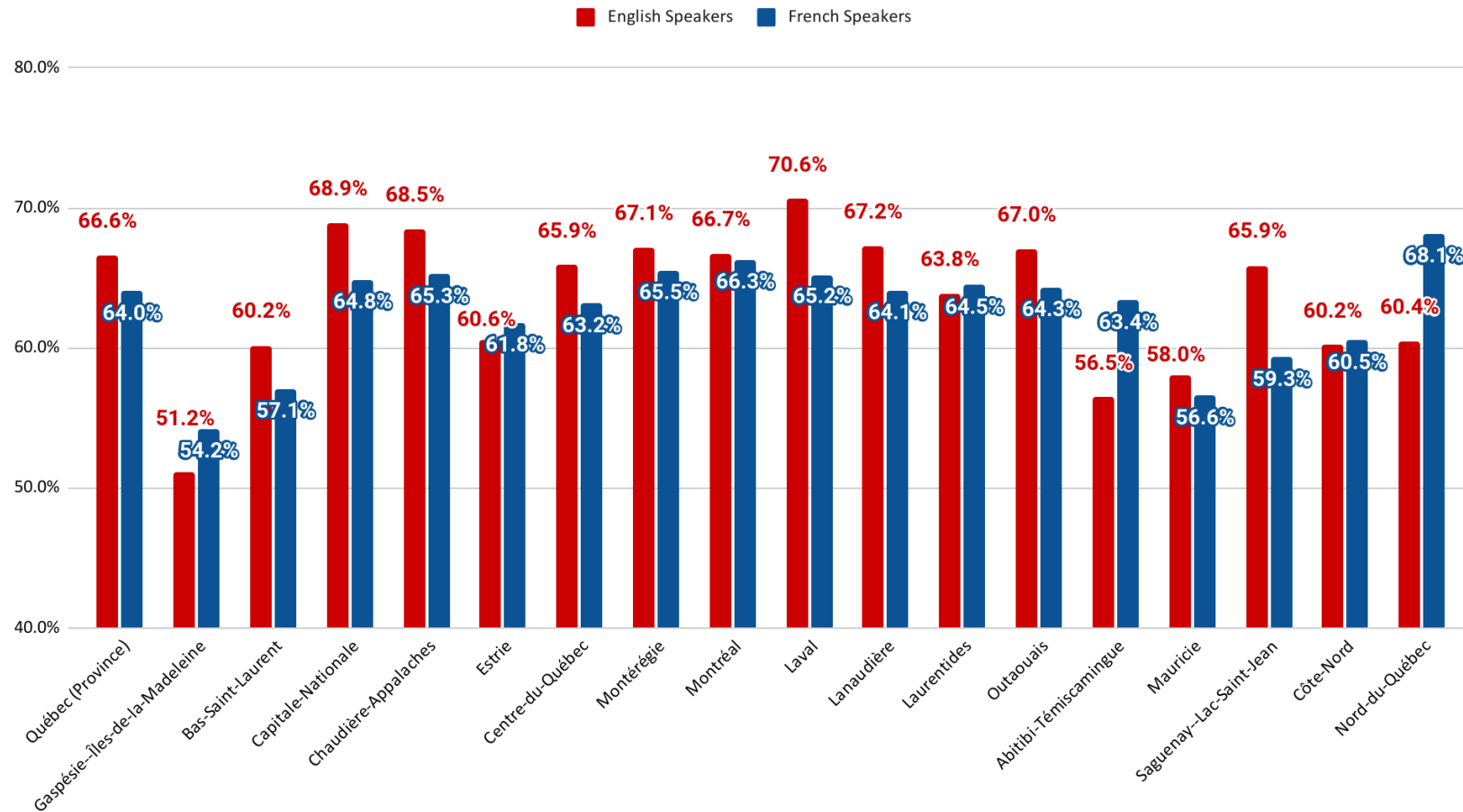
■ Labour Force Share (% of total labour force) ■ Working-Age Population Share (% of total population)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)



### Labour Force Participation Rate of Québec by Region (2021)



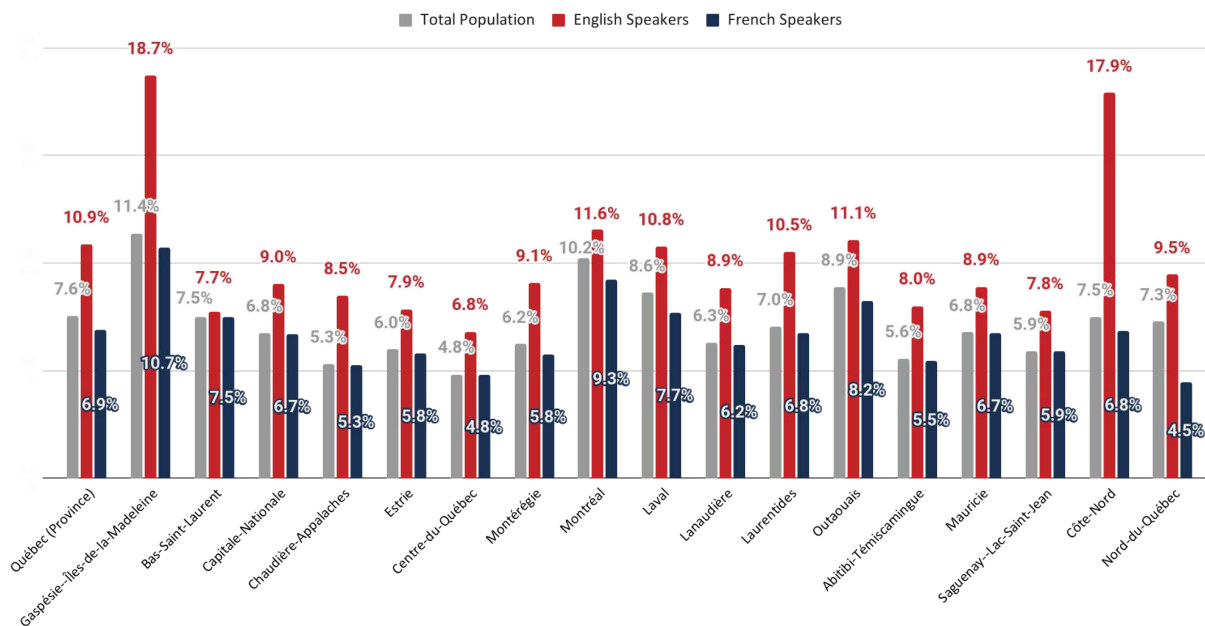
Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment among English speakers has increased. There are 75,913 unemployed English speakers in Québec’s workforce, bringing the unemployment rate to 10.9% among the English-speaking population. This is a two percent increase since the last census when English speakers faced an unemployment rate of 8.9%. English speakers now face an unemployment rate that is 4 percent higher than the French-speaking population’s unemployment rate of 6.9% (255,993 workers).

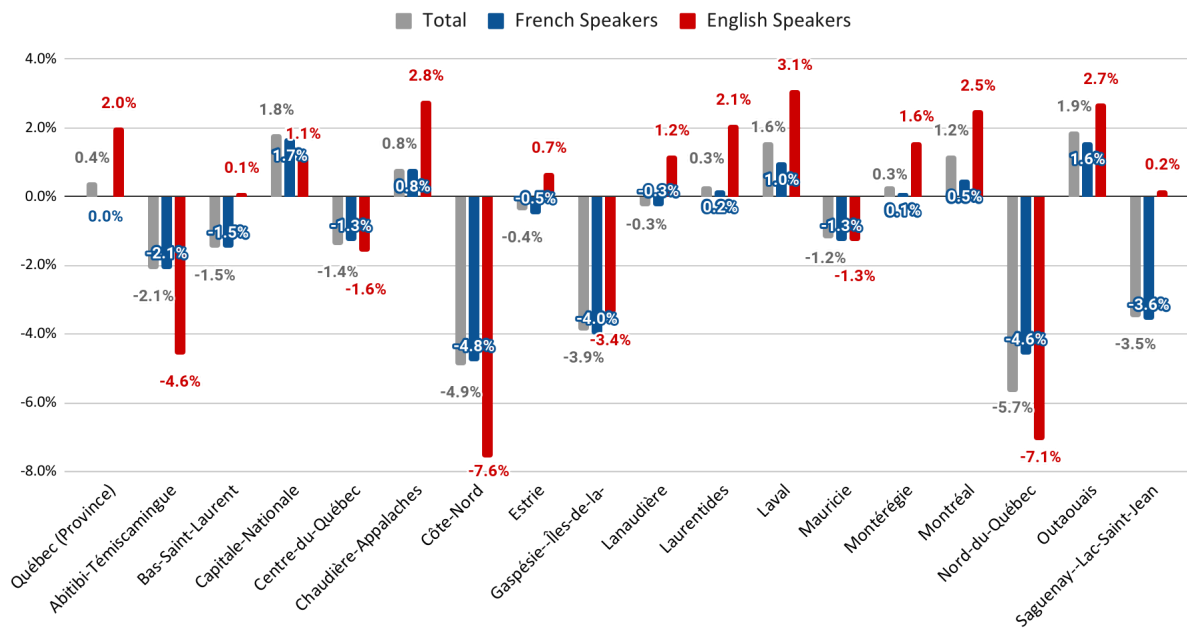
Across the regions, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine has the highest unemployment rate among English speakers, at 18.7%, followed closely by Côte-Nord with 17.9%, and Montréal with 11.6%. Unemployment rates among French speakers are generally below 10% across all regions except in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine where French speakers experience an unemployment rate of 10.7%. High unemployment rates among English speakers in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Côte-Nord are a continuing trend – in the 2016 Census, English speakers in these regions had the highest unemployment rates in Québec.

Unemployment Rate of Québec by Region (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

### Unemployment Rate Comparison between 2021 and 2016 (2021 % minus 2016 %)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2016 & 2021)

## Changes in Unemployment Rates for English speakers and French speakers (First official language spoken, administrative regions)

Administrative region	Unemployment rate for total population			Unemployment rate for English Speakers			Unemployment rate for French Speakers		
	2021	2016	Change	2021	2016	Change	2021	2016	Change
Québec (Province)	7.6%	7.2%	0.4%	10.9%	8.9%	2.0%	6.9%	6.9%	0.0%
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	5.6%	7.7%	-2.1%	8.0%	12.6%	-4.6%	5.5%	7.6%	-2.1%
Bas-Saint-Laurent	7.5%	9.0%	-1.5%	7.7%	7.6%	0.1%	7.5%	9.0%	-1.5%
Capitale-Nationale	6.8%	5.0%	1.8%	9.0%	7.9%	1.1%	6.7%	5.0%	1.7%
Centre-du-Québec	4.8%	6.2%	-1.4%	6.8%	8.4%	-1.6%	4.8%	6.1%	-1.3%
Chaudière-Appalaches	5.3%	4.5%	0.8%	8.5%	5.7%	2.8%	5.3%	4.5%	0.8%
Côte-Nord	7.5%	12.4%	-4.9%	17.9%	25.5%	-7.6%	6.8%	11.6%	-4.8%
Estrie	6.0%	6.4%	-0.4%	7.9%	7.2%	0.7%	5.8%	6.3%	-0.5%
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	11.4%	15.3%	-3.9%	18.7%	22.1%	-3.4%	10.7%	14.7%	-4.0%
Lanaudière	6.3%	6.6%	-0.3%	8.9%	7.7%	1.2%	6.2%	6.5%	-0.3%
Laurentides	7.0%	6.7%	0.3%	10.5%	8.4%	2.1%	6.8%	6.6%	0.2%
Laval	8.6%	7.0%	1.6%	10.8%	7.7%	3.1%	7.7%	6.7%	1.0%
Mauricie	6.8%	8.0%	-1.2%	8.9%	10.2%	-1.3%	6.7%	8.0%	-1.3%
Montréal	6.2%	5.9%	0.3%	9.1%	7.5%	1.6%	5.8%	5.7%	0.1%
Montérégie	6.2%	5.9%	0.3%	9.1%	7.5%	1.6%	5.8%	5.7%	0.1%
Montreal	10.2%	9.0%	1.2%	11.6%	9.1%	2.5%	9.3%	8.8%	0.5%
Nord-du-Québec	7.3%	13.0%	-5.7%	9.5%	16.6%	-7.1%	4.5%	9.1%	-4.6%
Outaouais	8.9%	7.0%	1.9%	11.1%	8.4%	2.7%	8.2%	6.6%	1.6%
Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	5.9%	9.4%	-3.5%	7.8%	7.6%	0.2%	5.9%	9.5%	-3.6%

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2016 & 2021)

Further analysis of unemployment in the province reveals differences among the regions. Compared to 2016, the unemployment rates in 2021 have notably dropped in some regions. Although English speakers in resource-oriented economies such as Côte-Nord, Nord-du-Québec, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine continue to face higher unemployment rates than French speakers, unemployment rates in these regions have decreased since the last census. The unemployment rate of English speakers in the Côte-Nord region decreased by 7.6% from 25.5% in 2016 to 17.9% in 2021. A similar trend is seen in the total population's unemployment rate for Côte-Nord, which dropped by 4.9% from 12.4% in 2016 to 7.5% in 2021.

While there have been some improvements in the unemployment rates for English speakers in some resource-oriented regions, the opposite trend is observed among the urban regions of Montréal, Laval, Montérégie and Outaouais. Compared to 2016, the biggest increase in English speakers' unemployment rate is recorded in the Laval region, with a 3.1% increase. Although these percent changes are small, it is important to note that these regions have proportionally larger shares of the English-speaking population in the province, and the increase in

unemployed English speakers in these areas likely contributes to the widening unemployment gap observed between the English and French speakers at the provincial level.

## INCOME

The 2021 Census data on income levels reveals that English speakers in Québec earn lower median after-tax incomes compared to French speakers as well as the total population.<sup>7</sup> English speakers earn a median after-tax income of \$34,000, which is \$2,800 less than French speakers' median after-tax income of \$36,800. Comparing employment income reveals an even wider income gap, where English speakers earn only \$32,000 on a median level compared to French speakers' \$37,200 median employment income, indicating a \$5,200 gap.

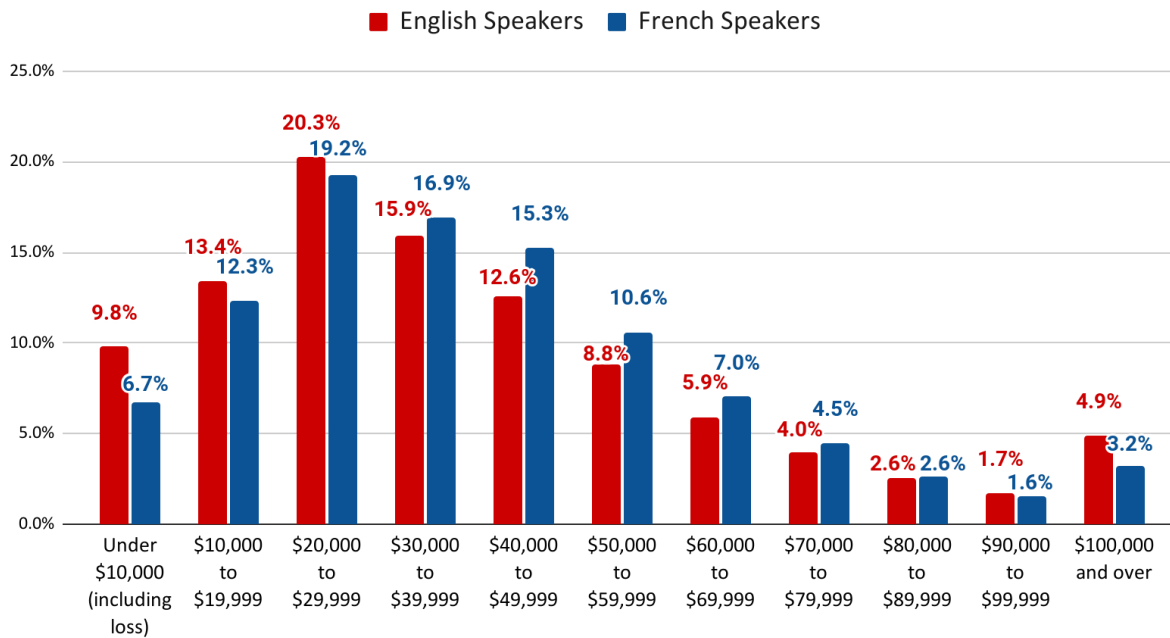
Income Statistics - Province of Québec (2021)			
Income Variable	Total Population	English Speakers	French Speakers
Median after-tax income (\$)	\$36,400	\$34,000	\$36,800
Average after-tax income (\$)	\$41,840	\$43,080	\$42,000
Median employment income (\$)	\$36,000	\$32,000	\$37,200
Average employment income (\$)	\$46,240	\$48,720	\$46,240

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

An examination of average incomes among the official language communities shows that English speakers have higher average incomes and employment incomes compared to French speakers. The high average incomes and low median incomes among English speakers indicate the likelihood of outliers within the English-speaking community who earn significantly higher incomes, skewing our overall understanding of how English speakers are faring. The graph below shows the income distribution of English-speaking and French-speaking Quebecers, showing a higher prevalence of low-income and high-income earners among English speakers:

<sup>7</sup> The income data pertains to individuals who speak only English or only French as their first official language. Individuals who speak both official languages were not distributed among English and French speakers. This is due to limitations on the income data available in the Census.

### After-Tax Income Distribution of Québec (2021)

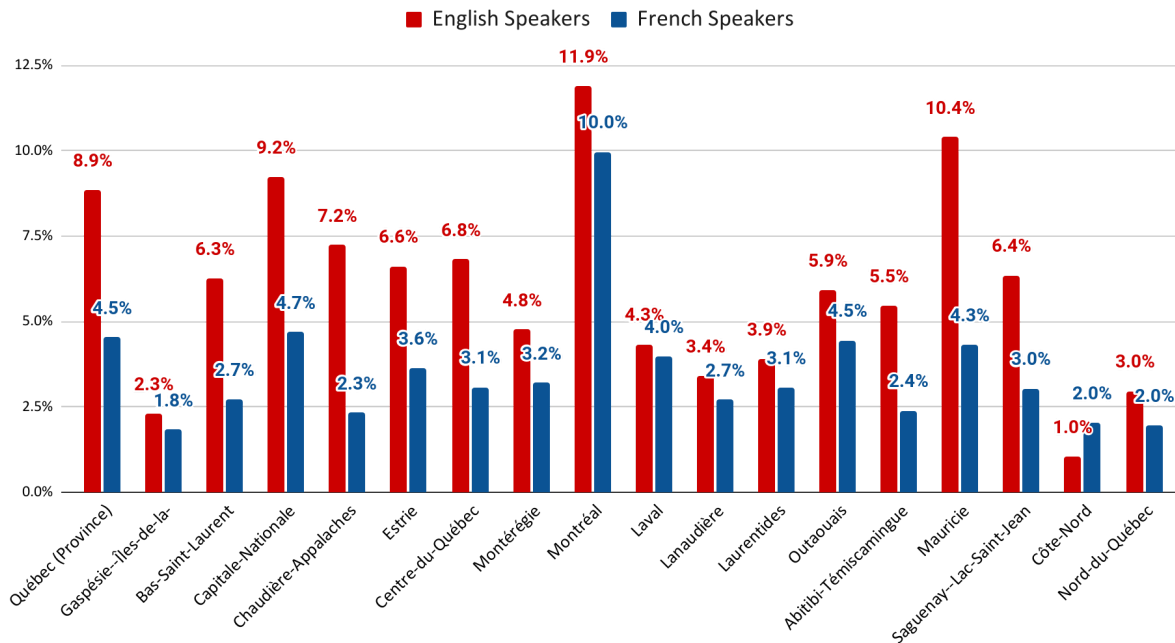


Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

Data on low-income earners within the linguistic groups demonstrates that English speakers are also twice as likely to live under the low-income cutoff (LICO)<sup>8</sup> compared to French speakers; 8.9% of Québec’s English-speaking population live under the LICO threshold, compared to 4.5% of French speakers. In 16 out of 17 regions, a higher proportion of English speakers are found to be under the LICO threshold compared to French speakers, with the exception of Côte-Nord.

<sup>8</sup> LICO refers to Low-Income Cut-Offs, the thresholds below which individuals would likely have devoted a larger share of their income than average to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing. In 2020, the LICO threshold for a 3-person family in Québec was \$33,433 in large urban areas (population 500,000 or more) and \$21,871 in rural areas.

Percentage of Population under Low-Income Cutoff (LICO) in Québec by Region (2021)

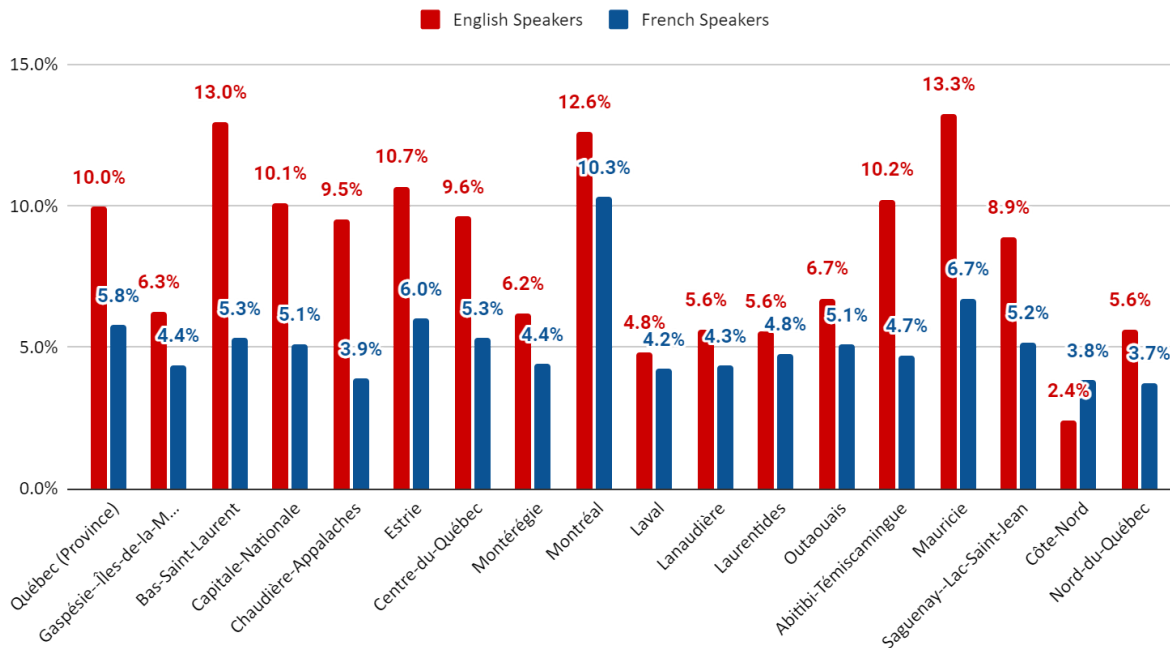


Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

Data on poverty rates reveals that a high proportion of English speakers have income that falls below the poverty line.<sup>9</sup> The provincial poverty rate of English speakers is 10%, which is almost twice as high as the poverty rate of French speakers (5.8%). Among the English-speaking communities, English speakers in Mauricie have the highest poverty rate (13.3%), while English speakers in Côte-Nord have the lowest poverty rate (2.4%).

<sup>9</sup> Poverty rate refers to the percentage of the population whose income falls below the poverty line, which is determined by the Market Basket Measure (MBM) threshold. In 2020, the MBM threshold for Québec was \$19,601 in large urban areas (population 500,000 or more) and \$19,520 in rural areas.

### Poverty Rate (%) in Québec by Region (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

Median income data for Québec’s regions shows that English speakers earn less than French speakers in 15 out of 17 regions, with the exception of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and Chaudière-Appalaches where English speakers are earning higher median incomes than French speakers.<sup>10</sup>

Employment income data shows a similar trend - English speakers across all regions, with the exception of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and Chaudière-Appalaches, earn lower median employment incomes compared to the French-speaking majority. The largest income gap between English speakers and French speakers is recorded in Nord-du-Québec where French speakers earn the highest recorded median employment income in Québec of \$48,400, which is \$19,800 higher than that of English speakers.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Due to the unusual distribution of income among English speakers, we recommend the usage of median income instead of average income to better capture the general income situation of English speakers.

<sup>11</sup> Income gap in this paper refers to income of English speakers minus income of French speakers in respective geographies. Thus, a negative income gap means English speakers are earning lower income than French speakers.

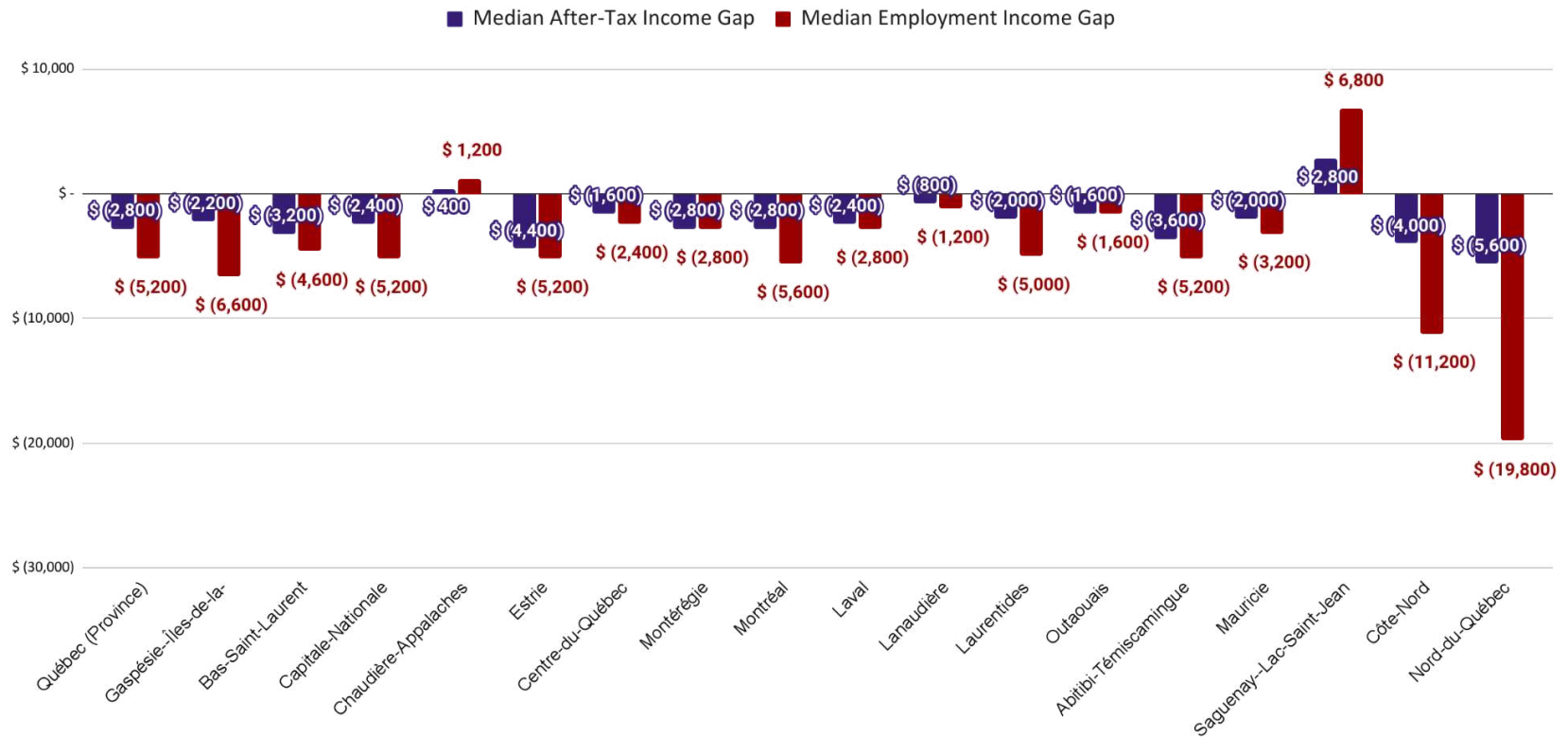


**Median After-tax Income and Median Employment Income of English speakers and French speakers (First official language spoken, administrative regions)**

Administrative Region	English Speakers		French Speakers	
	Median After-Tax Income	Median Employment Income	Median After-Tax Income	Median Employment Income
Québec (Province)	\$ 34,000	\$ 32,000	\$ 36,800	\$ 37,200
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	\$ 31,000	\$ 22,800	\$ 33,200	\$ 29,400
Bas-Saint-Laurent	\$ 30,400	\$ 27,800	\$ 33,600	\$ 32,400
Capitale-Nationale	\$ 36,800	\$ 35,200	\$ 39,200	\$ 40,400
Chaudière-Appalaches	\$ 37,600	\$ 38,800	\$ 37,200	\$ 37,600
Estrie	\$ 30,400	\$ 28,000	\$ 34,800	\$ 33,200
Centre-du-Québec	\$ 32,400	\$ 31,200	\$ 34,000	\$ 33,600
Montérégie	\$ 35,600	\$ 36,400	\$ 38,400	\$ 39,200
Montréal	\$ 32,800	\$ 30,000	\$ 35,600	\$ 35,600
Laval	\$ 34,800	\$ 34,800	\$ 37,200	\$ 37,600
Lanaudière	\$ 36,400	\$ 36,000	\$ 37,200	\$ 37,200
Laurentides	\$ 35,200	\$ 31,000	\$ 37,200	\$ 36,000
Outaouais	\$ 38,400	\$ 40,400	\$ 40,000	\$ 42,000
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	\$ 34,000	\$ 34,800	\$ 37,600	\$ 40,000
Mauricie	\$ 31,600	\$ 28,800	\$ 33,600	\$ 32,000
Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	\$ 38,800	\$ 41,600	\$ 36,000	\$ 34,800
Côte-Nord	\$ 34,800	\$ 28,400	\$ 38,800	\$ 39,600
Nord-du-Québec	\$ 38,400	\$ 28,600	\$ 44,000	\$ 48,400

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

## Income gap between English and French speakers by Region (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

## INDUSTRY

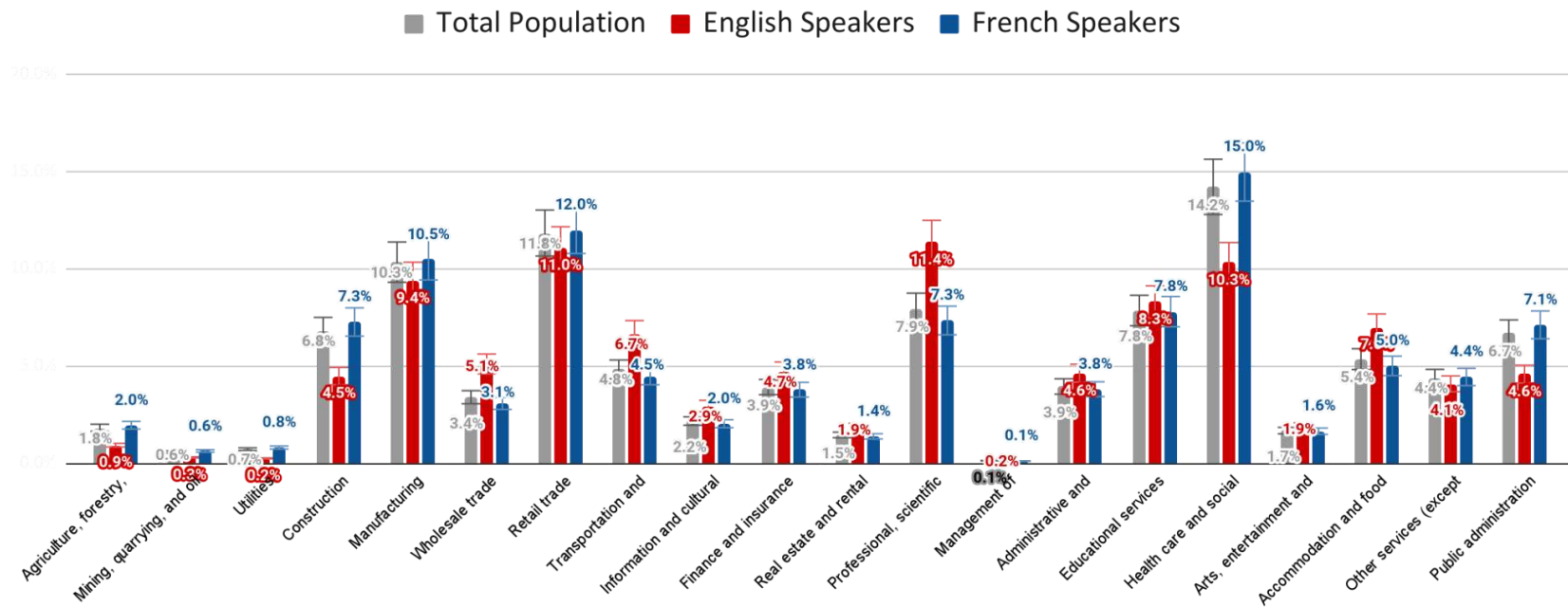
According to the 2021 Census, the top 4 industries where Quebecers are working are 'Healthcare and Social Assistance' (14.2%), 'Retail Trade' (11.8%), 'Manufacturing' (10.3%), and 'Professional, Scientific and Technical services' (7.9%) with an estimated 1,925,745 Quebecers working in these industries. This trend has not changed since 2016, with the total number of workers in these 4 industries remaining roughly the same since 2016, when there were 1,928,250 workers.

However, there have been changes in industry participation for English speakers since the last census. 'Professional, scientific, and technical services' is now the leading industry for English speakers in the province, with 11.4% of English speakers employed in this industry, followed by 'Retail' (11%), 'Healthcare and Social assistance' (10.3%), and 'Manufacturing' (9.4%). In 2016, the top 4 industries for English speakers were 'Retail' (11.3%), 'Manufacturing' (9.6%), 'Healthcare and Social assistance' (9.5%), and 'Professional, scientific, and technical services' (9.5%).

Although 'Professional, Scientific, and Technical services' is now the leading industry for English speakers in Québec, 80% of the English speakers in this industry are located in Montréal, indicating regional differences in the leading industries for English speakers.

English speakers work in various industries across the regions. In urban regions such as Laval and Outaouais, the retail industry is the top industry for English speakers. Montréal is an exception in this group, however, as the latest data shows that the 'Professional, Scientific, and Technical services' industry has overshadowed 'Retail' as the top industry in this region for English speakers. Elsewhere, some common trends can be observed. In northern regions with resource-oriented economies, English speakers are usually found in the 'Healthcare and Social Assistance' industry. Some exceptions are found in Capitale-Nationale and Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, where the majority of English speakers are reported to be working in the public administration industry.

## Industry Structure of Québec (Province) (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

### Leading industries for English speakers in Québec by region (2021)

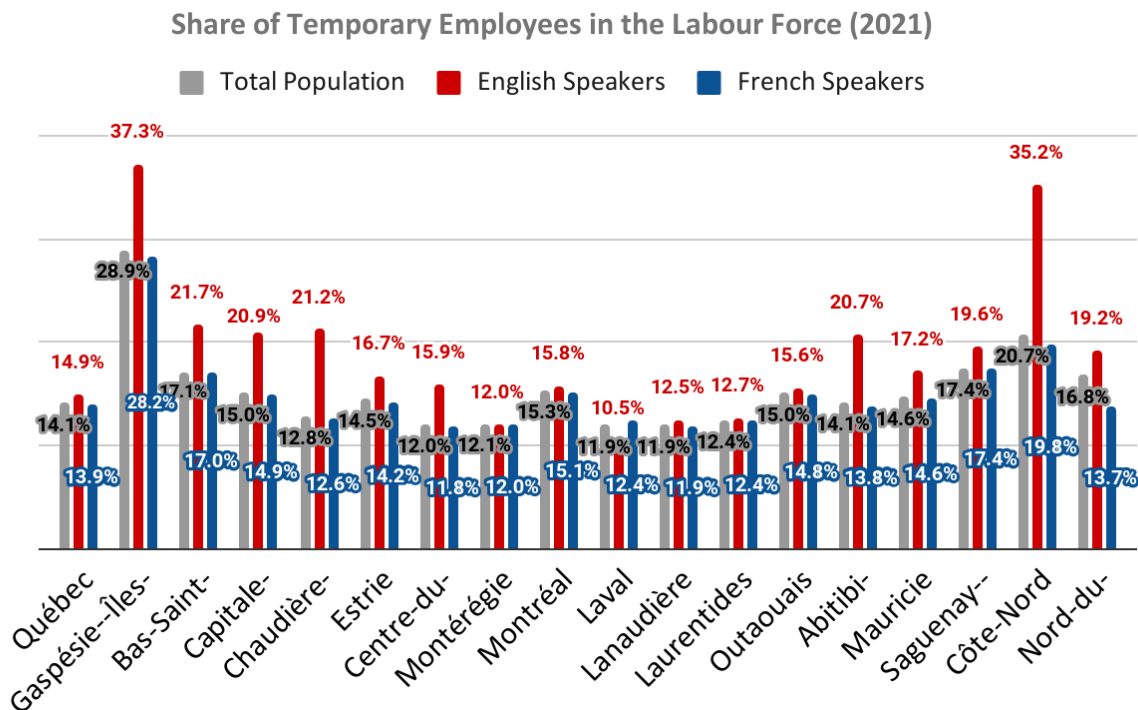
<b>Québec (Province)</b>		<b>Laval</b>	
Professional, scientific and technical services	11.4%	Retail trade	13.9%
Retail trade	11.0%	Manufacturing	10.9%
Health care and social assistance	10.3%	Professional, scientific and technical services	9.0%
<b>Gaspésie--Îles-de-la-Madeleine</b>		<b>Lanaudière</b>	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	17.5%	Manufacturing	11.9%
Health care and social assistance	13.5%	Retail trade	11.8%
Educational services	12.0%	Health care and social assistance	10.6%
<b>Bas-Saint-Laurent</b>		<b>Laurentides</b>	
Manufacturing	23.4%	Retail trade	11.5%
Health care and social assistance	15.7%	Manufacturing	11.1%
Educational services	7.4%	Professional, scientific and technical services	9.8%
<b>Capitale-Nationale</b>		<b>Outaouais</b>	
Public administration	14.1%	Public administration	23.1%
Professional, scientific and technical services	12.9%	Health care and social assistance	10.4%
Educational services	12.1%	Construction	8.9%
<b>Chaudière-Appalaches</b>		<b>Abitibi-Témiscamingue</b>	
Manufacturing	25.8%	Health care and social assistance	15.2%
Retail trade	8.8%	Manufacturing	10.9%
Health care and social assistance	8.3%	Public administration	10.0%
<b>Estrie</b>		<b>Mauricie</b>	
Manufacturing	17.3%	Educational services	12.6%
Educational services	13.2%	Health care and social assistance	11.8%
Health care and social assistance	10.4%	Manufacturing	11.7%
<b>Centre-du-Québec</b>		<b>Saguenay--Lac-Saint-Jean</b>	
Manufacturing	24.1%	Public administration	25.1%
Retail trade	11.2%	Educational services	14.5%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	7.1%	Health care and social assistance	8.8%
<b>Montérégie</b>		<b>Côte-Nord</b>	
Retail trade	11.3%	Health care and social assistance	14.6%
Professional, scientific and technical services	10.7%	Construction	10.4%
Manufacturing	10.6%	Retail trade	10.3%
<b>Montréal</b>		<b>Nord-du-Québec</b>	
Professional, scientific and technical services	13.3%	Health care and social assistance	23.0%
Retail trade	11.0%	Public administration	22.1%
Health care and social assistance	10.4%	Educational services	13.5%

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

## EMPLOYMENT

Data on the share of temporary employees within the linguistic communities shows that there is a higher share of English speakers working temporary jobs compared to French speakers. In the 2021 Census, 104,285 English speakers are reported to be temporarily employed, which is 14.9% of the total English speaker workforce. This is slightly higher compared to 515,500 temporarily employed French speakers making up about 13.9% of the French-speaking workforce.

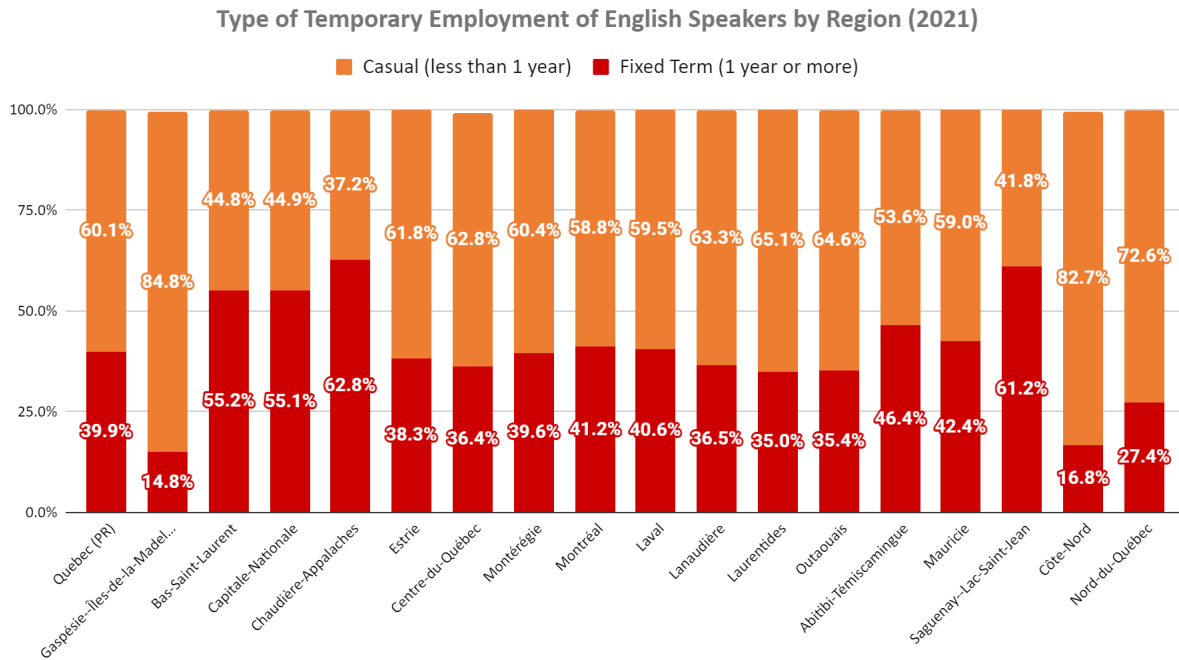
In Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, 37.3% of employed English speakers work temporary jobs, compared to 28.2% of the French-speaking population. Côte-Nord also reported a high share of temporary unemployment among English speakers at 35.2%, which is significantly higher than the French speakers' share of 19.8%. In Montérégie, there are equal proportions of French-speaking and English-speaking temporary workers.



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

A further breakdown of the types of temporary employment among English speakers also shows some interesting findings. At the provincial level, 60.1% of English speakers with temporary jobs work in casual positions with a duration of less than 1 year. In regions such as Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec, there is an even higher prevalence of casual positions lasting under 1 year. In many cases, particularly in resource-oriented economies, temporary work tends to also be seasonal, with individuals

working in industries such as fisheries, forestry and tourism. In Bas-Saint-Laurent, Capitale-Nationale, Chaudière-Appalaches, and Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, the majority of English speakers work fixed-term positions of 1 year or longer.



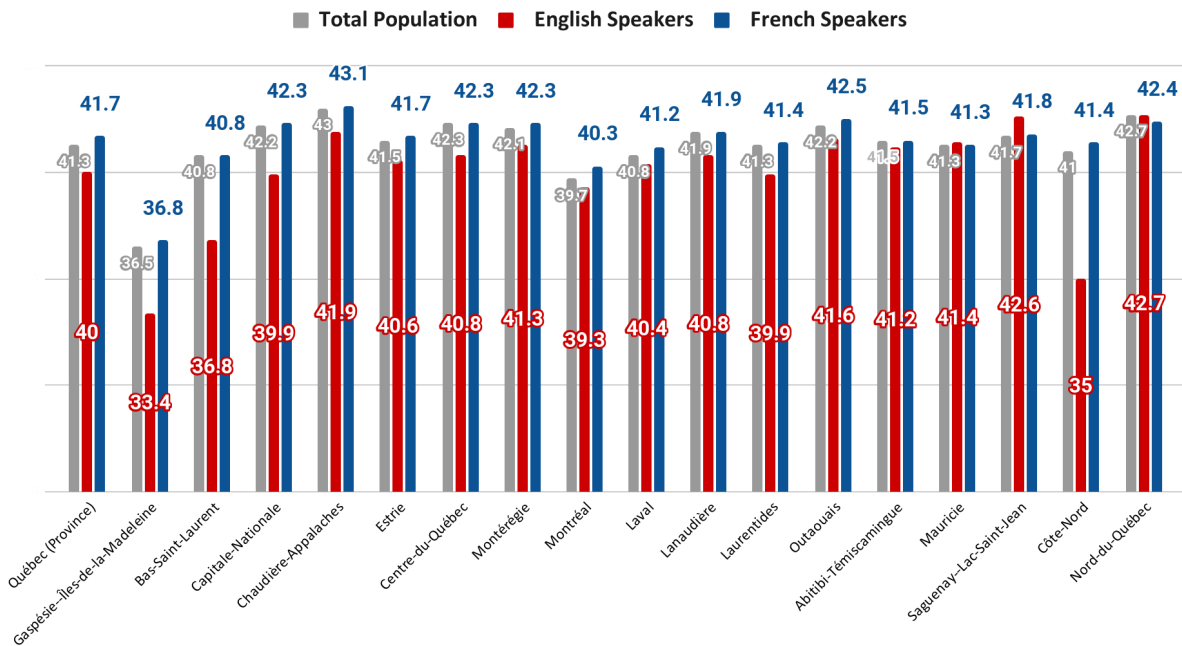
Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

## WORK ACTIVITY

English speakers worked an average number of 40 weeks, which is fewer than French speakers' average of 41.7 weeks. The average number of weeks for both English and French speakers has decreased since the last census.<sup>12</sup> In the 2016 census, English speakers and French speakers worked an average of 42.2 and 42.6 weeks, respectively.

<sup>12</sup> The reference year for this work activity is 2020, in the middle of the COVID pandemic. Therefore, it is expected that work weeks would have been reduced due to public health social restrictions. and this makes the data less comparable between the two Census years.

### Average Weeks Worked in Québec by Region (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

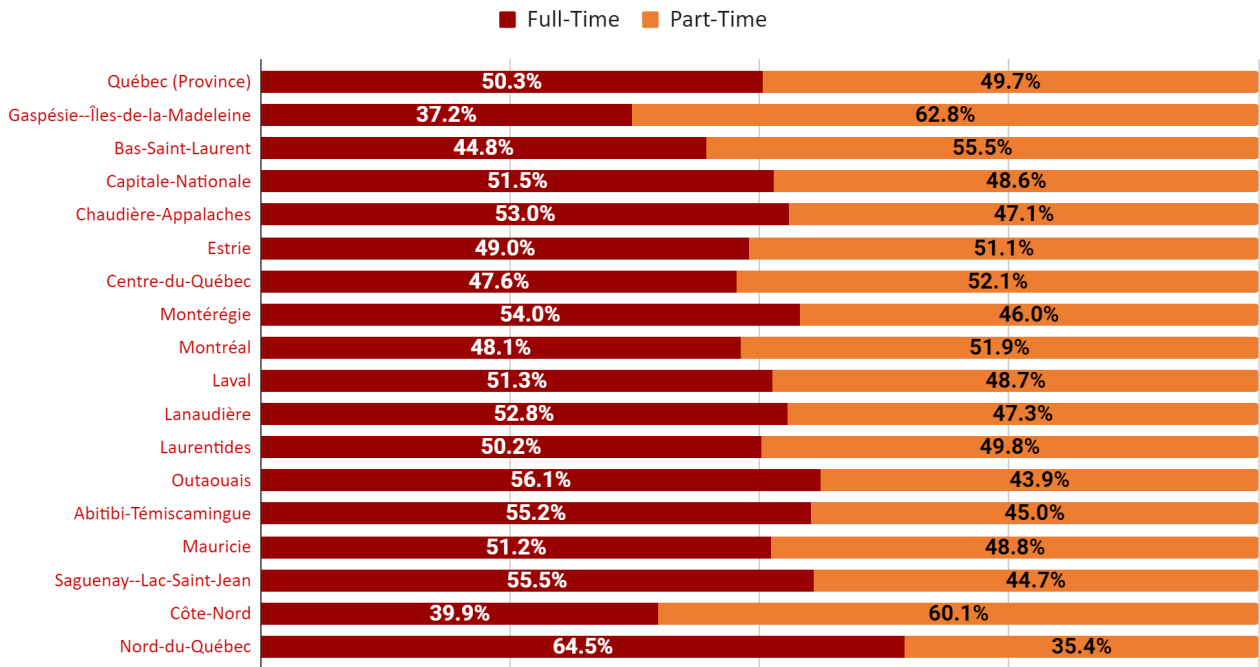
Across the province, French speakers reportedly work more weeks on average than English speakers with the exception of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Nord-du-Québec, and Mauricie, where English speakers work slightly more than French speakers. The largest difference in weeks worked between English and French speakers can be found in the Côte-Nord region where French speakers work 6.4 weeks more than English speakers on average, followed by Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine with a 3.4-week difference between the two linguistic groups.

In 2021, 345,260 English speakers in Québec reported working full-time, making up 50.3% of the total English-speaking workforce, while the remaining workers reported part-time activity (49.7%). On the other hand, 2,011,135 French speakers worked full-time, which accounts for 53.3% of the French workforce, while the remaining 46.7% reported working part-time.

Across most regions, a higher proportion of French speakers reportedly have more full-time work activity than English speakers. Conversely, English speakers are more likely to work part-time. There are some exceptions: in Nord-du-Québec, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, a higher proportion of English speakers worked full-time compared to French speakers.



### Work Activity of English Speakers in Québec by Region (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

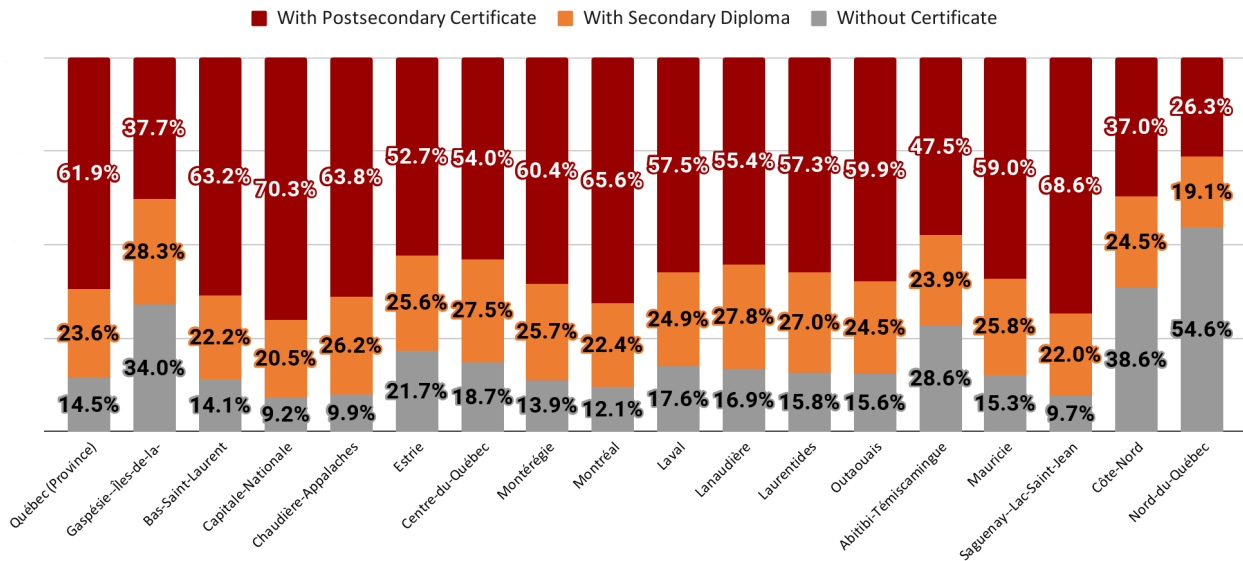
## EDUCATION

Generally, education levels have increased among Quebecers since the last census. Out of a total of 1,049,635 English speakers counted, 14.5% of them do not have a degree or certificate. In contrast, 18.4% of the French-speaking population does not have a degree or certificate.

Approximately 85.5% of English speakers have a minimum of a postsecondary education, compared to 81.6% of French speakers who have a postsecondary education. Capitale-Nationale is found to have the highest percentage of postsecondary educated English speakers, at 70.3%, followed closely by Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean (68.6%) and Montréal (65.6%).

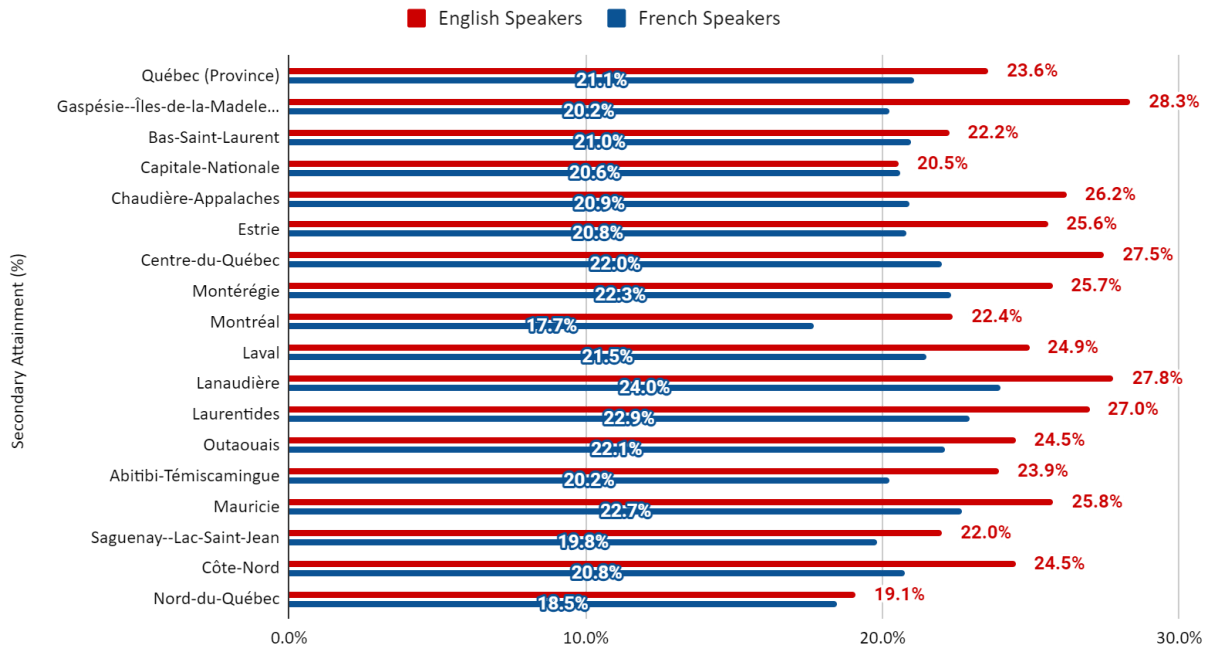
Across the province, Nord-du-Québec has the highest percentage of English speakers with no formal education at 54.6% of the eligible population. This is followed by Côte-Nord (38.6%) and Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (34%).

### Highest Educational Attainment of English Speakers in Québec by Region (2021)



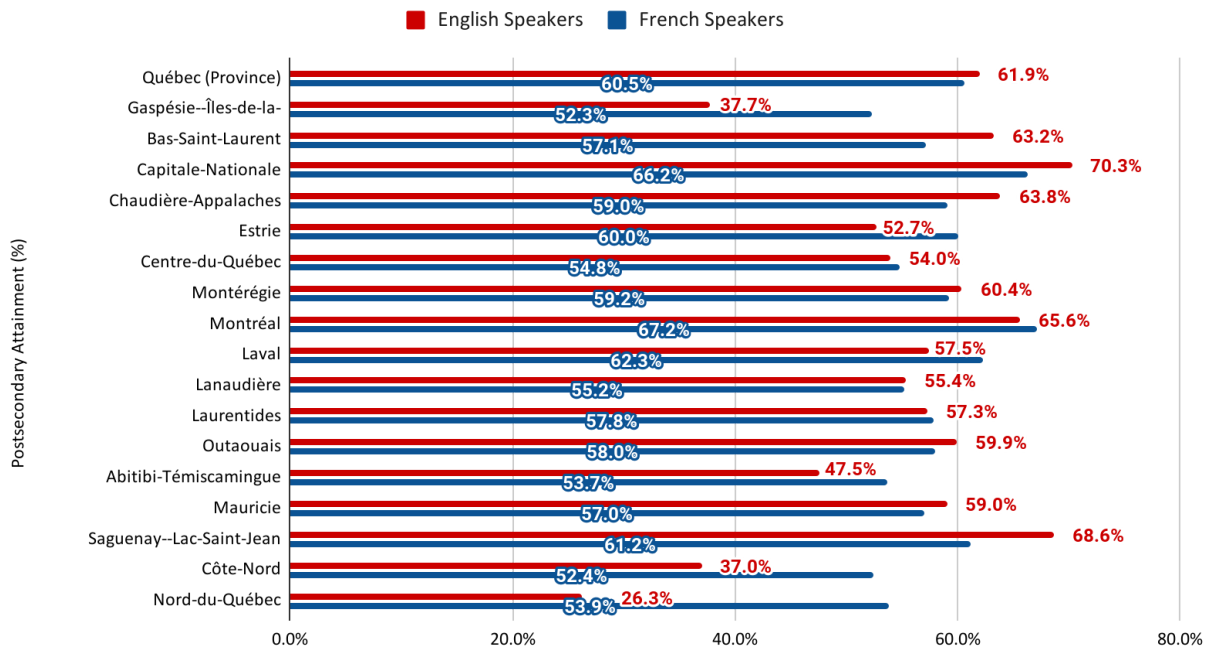
Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

### Secondary (High School) Education Attainment by Region (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

### Postsecondary Education Attainment by Region (2021)



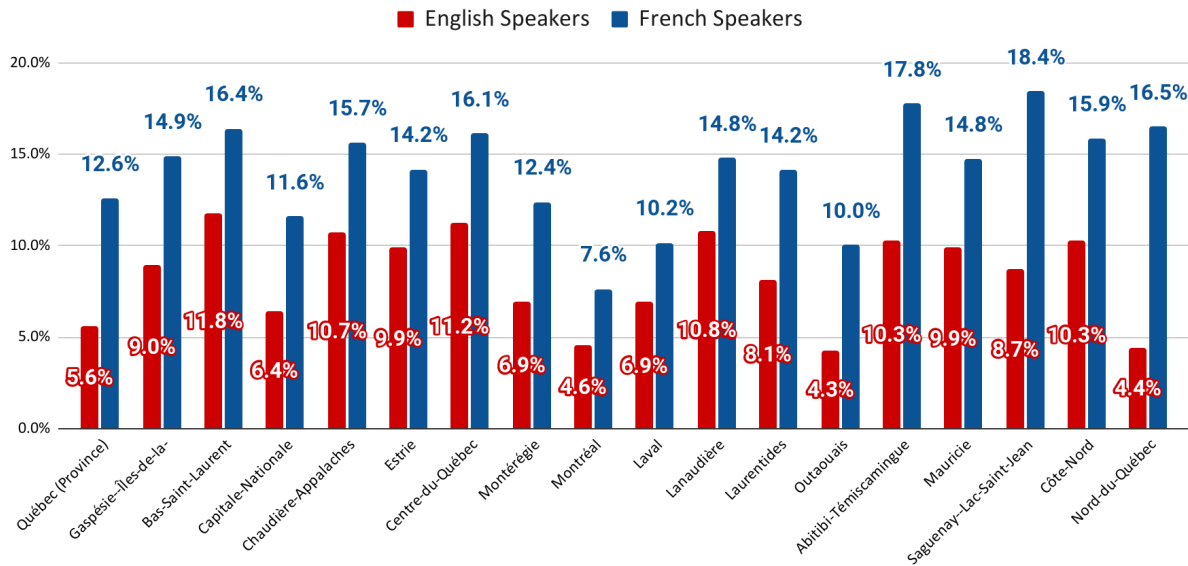
Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

A further comparison of educational attainment shows that English speakers tend to have higher percentages of secondary education attainment compared to French speakers across the regions, as well as on a provincial level. At the postsecondary attainment level, however, the two linguistic groups have a similar share of postsecondary certificate holders among their populations.

When it comes to vocational education, French speakers are more than twice as likely to have an apprenticeship or trade certificate than English speakers (12.6% compared to 5.6%)<sup>13</sup>. Overall, French speakers have higher vocational education attainment levels than English speakers in all of the 17 regions of Québec.

<sup>13</sup> Vocational education refers to trades certificates or diplomas such as pre-employment or vocational certificates and diplomas from brief trade programs completed at colleges, institutes of technology, vocational centres and similar institutions. In the province of Québec, this also includes qualifications from vocational training programs such as the Diplôme d'études professionnelles (DEP)/Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS).

### Vocational Training Attainment by Region (2021)

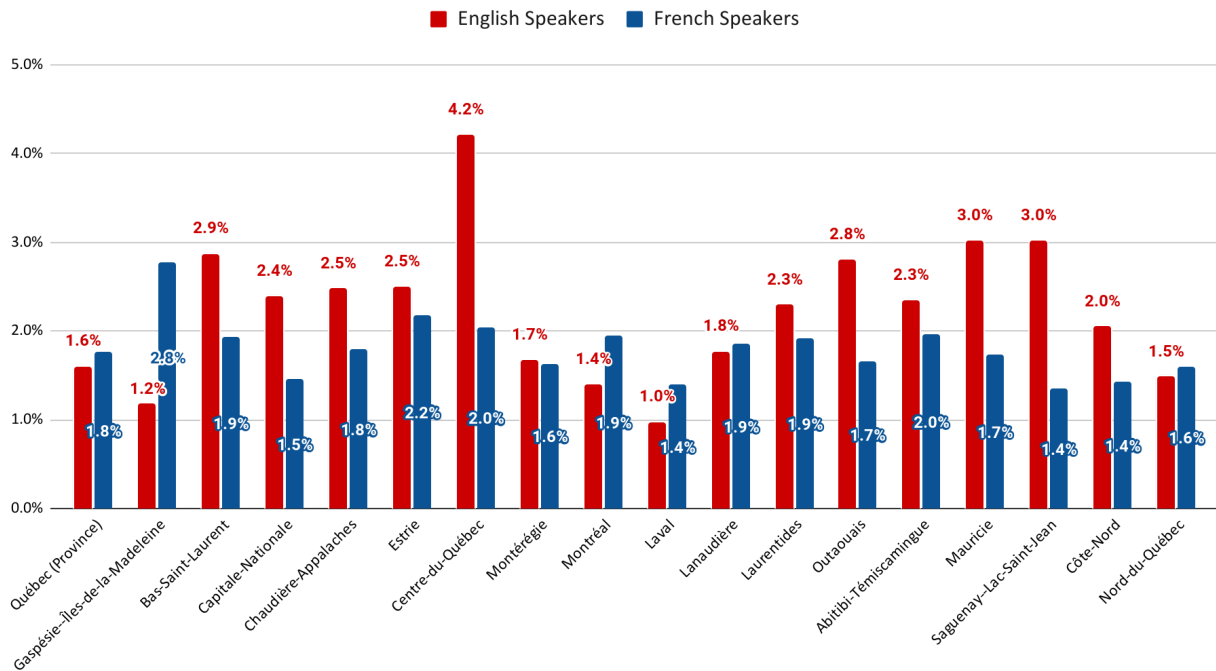


Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

A comparison between the net percent changes in secondary educational attainment between the 2021 and 2016 censuses reveals that French speakers have experienced a slightly higher increase in the proportion of secondary educational attainment compared to English speakers at the provincial level.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 81.6% of French speakers in Québec now have at least a secondary education, which is a 1.8% increase from the 2016 census. English speakers have had an increase of 1.6% in secondary educational attainment. Centre-du-Québec reported the highest percentage increase in education attainment among English speakers (4.2%), while Laval reported the lowest increase (1%).

<sup>14</sup> Net educational attainment is calculated as the percentage difference between the two Census years (2021 & 2016) in the number of people with at least secondary level education in the linguistic community as a proportion of the total population of said linguistic community aged 15 and over in respective geographies.

### Net Percent Changes in Educational Attainment by Region (2021)

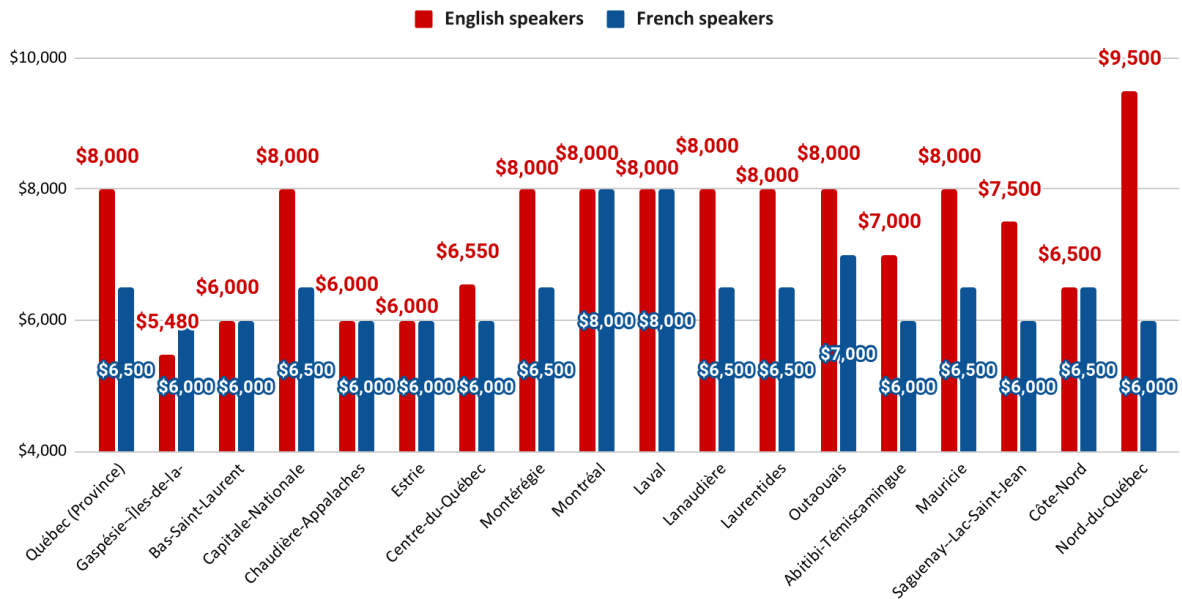


Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

## COVID-19 BENEFITS

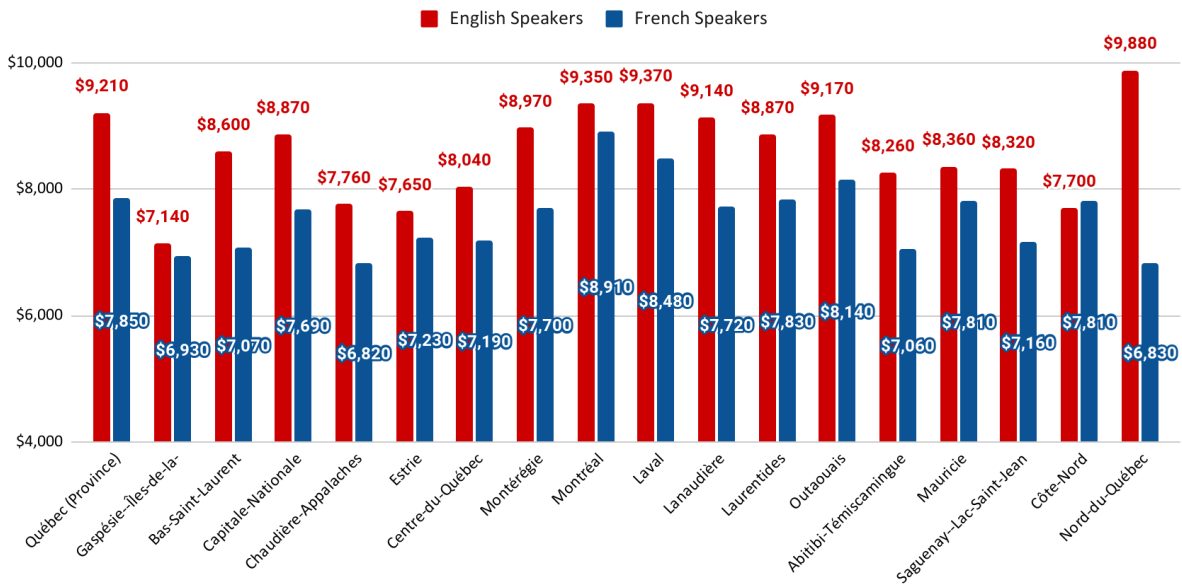
In 2020, the federal government provided recovery benefits to people who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from the 2021 Census indicates that English speakers ended up receiving more COVID-19 benefits compared to French speakers. English speakers in Québec earned, on a median level, \$8000 worth of benefits, which is \$1500 higher than French speakers' median benefits. Across the province, English speakers in most of the regions received \$8000 on a median level which is generally more than French speakers' benefit levels. The largest difference in COVID-19 benefits is noted in the Nord-du-Québec region, where English speakers received \$9500 worth of benefits on a median level compared to \$6000 received by French speakers. Data on the average amount of COVID benefits received also shows that English speakers received higher benefits than French speakers in all of the regions, except Côte-Nord.

### Median COVID-19 emergency and recovery benefits received by Region (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

### Average COVID-19 emergency and recovery benefits received by Region (2021)



Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2021)

## DISCUSSION

The following section will discuss changes in the unemployment gap between English speakers and French speakers, and explore the labour market precarity faced by Quebec's English speakers.

### Changes in Unemployment Gap

According to the latest Census, English speakers in Québec experience an unemployment rate of 10.9%, which is 4 percent higher than that of French speakers. This gap has doubled since 2016, when it was 2 percent. It is unclear what is the main driving force of this widening unemployment gap between the two linguistic groups. Examination of the unemployment rates across the regions reveals that despite high unemployment rates among English-speaking communities, there have been significant drops in the unemployment rates of English speakers in certain regions, namely Côte-Nord, and Nord-du-Québec. Generally, the largest drops in unemployment rates since the last census seem to be among the regions outside of Montréal and Laval.

In 2021, a total of 75,913 English speakers reported unemployment in the province. This is 21,808 higher than the previous number of 54,105 unemployed in 2016. This increase of 21,808 individuals is the primary cause of the 2 percent increase in unemployment among English speakers between 2016 and 2021.

The 4 percent gap in unemployment between English speakers (10.9%) and French speakers (6.9%) deserves further attention. This 4 percent gap amounts to 27,680 English speakers who would otherwise be employed if English speakers had the same unemployment level as French speakers. Further research and employment interventions are needed in order to better understand why this gap has become so large and how to close it.

Among the regions, Montréal saw the highest increase in unemployed English speakers. In 2021, the region reported 45,638 unemployed English speakers, which is a 13,890 increase from 2016. Montréal contributed to more than half of the increase in the unemployed English-speaking population. Secondly, Montérégie, Laval, and Outaouais all follow Montréal in having high increases in unemployment among their English-speaking populations. Given that all of these regions are generally classified as urban-manufacturing economic regions, it is possible that the labour market dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic could have negatively impacted English speakers working in industries that were affected by COVID-19 shutdowns and public health restrictions.

## Changes in unemployment populations for English speakers and French speakers (First official language spoken, administrative regions)

Administrative Region	English Speakers		French Speakers	
	2021	Change from 2016	2021	Change from 2016
Québec (Province)	75,913	21,808	255,993	5,583
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	643	-165	4,063	-1,535
Bas-Saint-Laurent	60	15	6,950	-1,465
Capitale-Nationale	938	265	26,098	7,090
Chaudière-Appalaches	258	135	11,808	1,935
Estrie	1,025	215	9,055	-195
Centre-du-Québec	130	15	5,980	-1,500
Montérégie	10,110	3,100	41,815	1,620
Montréal	45,638	13,890	62,893	4,020
Laval	6,575	2,433	13,115	1,783
Lanaudière	875	253	16,235	-133
Laurentides	2,575	918	20,870	1,498
Outaouais	5,028	1,743	13,718	2,823
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	215	-95	3,940	-1,500
Mauricie	180	20	8,435	-1,430
Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	98	18	7,833	-4,693
Côte-Nord	478	-190	2,788	-2,200
Nord-du-Québec	1,085	-770	405	-525

Source: Provincial Employment Roundtable calculations based on data from Statistics Canada (2016 & 2021)

## Labour Market Precarity

The latest Census data shows that a higher proportion of English speakers in Québec tend to be employed on a temporary and part-time basis compared to the French-speaking population. This is cause for concern given that individuals in short-term temporary work and part-time work are often vulnerable to limited flexible work arrangements and reduced job security, which they would more likely have access to with permanent employment.<sup>15</sup>

In the past two decades, there have been notable increases in temporary and contract work in the Canadian labour market.<sup>16</sup> This type of non-standard work tends to be more insecure than standard employment, often with fewer benefits and more uncertainty about the possibility of

<sup>15</sup> A standard permanent employment is associated with full-time work, good pay, full access to benefits and a high degree of job stability. <https://hillnotes.ca/2020/12/01/understanding-precarious-work-in-canada/> Cahill E., Library of Parliament

<sup>16</sup> Busby, C. et. al. 'Precarious Positions: Policy Options to Mitigate Risks in Non-standard Employment', C.D. Howe Institute, 2 December 2016. [https://www.cdhowe.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Commentary%20462\\_0.pdf](https://www.cdhowe.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Commentary%20462_0.pdf)



future work. The fact that a higher proportion of English speakers are engaging in temporary employment often adds to the vulnerable nature of their employment situation in the labour market.

Low compensation, a common element of non-standard work, is also considered a critical dimension of precarious employment.<sup>17</sup> In most of Québec's regions, English speakers have lower median income than French speakers, and the gaps are considerably wider when comparing employment income. This also suggests that in addition to facing higher uncertainty and lower job stability in the labour market, English speakers have a higher chance of being in precarious employment situations compared to their French counterparts.

## CONCLUSION

In our review of the latest available data on linguistic groups in the labour force, we found that English speakers in Québec tend to have a more vulnerable and precarious employment situation than French speakers.

As of the 2021 Census, English speakers have higher unemployment rates in all of Québec's regions, with Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Côte-Nord leading the highest unemployment rates at 18.7% and 17.9%, respectively. The difference between the unemployment rates of English speakers and French speakers has also increased, from a 2 percent gap to a 4 percent gap, with English speakers having significantly higher unemployment.

A comparison of median after-tax income and employment income also suggests a notable disparity between the two linguistic groups. English speakers earn lower median after-tax incomes and lower median employment incomes than French speakers in 15 out of Québec's 17 regions, with Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and Chaudière-Appalaches reported as the only exceptions where English speakers did not earn less. While the median after-tax income gap between English speakers and French speakers has remained the same since the last census (\$2800 less for English speakers), the employment gap has increased. English speakers now earn \$5200 less in median employment income than French speakers.

English speakers also reportedly had a lower average number of weeks worked and a higher proportion of part-time activity in 2020 compared to French speakers in 14 out of 17 regions. French speakers tend to have a higher rate of full-time activity and are less likely to work temporary positions than English speakers.

Despite increased participation in the labour force, it is clear from the data that English speakers in Québec are still facing significant employment and socioeconomic challenges. And what is even more worrying is that these indicators of labour market vulnerability and precarious employment have worsened since the last census.

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<sup>17</sup> Cranford C et. al. 'Precarious Employment in the Labour Market: A Statistical Portrait' JUST LABOUR vol. 3 (Fall 2003). <https://justlabour.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/justlabour/article/view/164/340>



# PERT

PROVINCIAL  
EMPLOYMENT  
ROUNDTABLE

*Secrétariat aux relations  
avec les Québécois  
d'expression anglaise*

Québec 

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