PERT
PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT ROUNDTABLE

A Snapshot of Poverty Among Québec's English-speaking Communities

Executive Summary

Québec is home to more than 1.2 million English speakers, representing 14.9% of the province's population. Data from the 2021 Census of Canada indicates that English-speaking Quebecers occupy a more precarious economic position than their French-speaking counterparts, experiencing higher rates of poverty and unemployment and earning lower median incomes.

Research conducted by PERT has highlighted some of the specific barriers and challenges English speakers face regarding labour market integration and retention in Québec, including lack of French-language training for the workforce, lack of English-language employability services, lack of English-language vocational training, and lack of wrap-around support services. These employment challenges impact English speakers' labour market outcomes and are associated with higher rates of poverty.[1] Furthermore, many of these challenges, especially lack of wrap-around supports (e.g. housing or food security), can directly contribute to – and result from – poverty.

These findings demonstrate the need for Québec policymakers to employ a linguistic lens when analyzing poverty in Québec and to examine the relationships between language, employment and poverty. Utilizing a linguistic lens to address poverty would allow Québec policymakers to combat the specific disparities faced by linguistic minority communities, advancing to the goal of a poverty-free Québec. In this report, we identify the following challenges facing English-speaking communities concerning poverty and employment:

- The provincial poverty rate for English speakers is 10.0%, almost twice as high as that of French speakers (5.8%).
- Data on low-income earners within the linguistic groups demonstrates that English speakers are twice as likely to live under the low-income cut-off (LICO) compared to French speakers; 8.9% of Québec's English-speaking population live under the LICO threshold, compared to 4.5% of French speakers.
- English speakers experience an unemployment rate of 10.9%, four percentage points higher than French speakers' 6.9%. This difference has doubled since the 2016 census, when the gap was two percentage points.
- English speakers have a median after-tax income $2,800 lower than French speakers and a median employment income $5,200 less than French speakers. The gap in median employment income between English and French speakers has widened significantly over the last five years; it was previously $2,648 in the 2016 census.

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[1] See, for example, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). *Employment and decent work*. United Nations.
https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/employment-and-decent-work.html

About PERT

The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) is a non-profit, multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to address the employment and employability challenges facing Quebec's English-speaking communities. Through our research and the work of our partners, we engage all levels of political decision-makers in developing solutions and ensuring adequate resources to improve the prospects of English-speaking Quebecers in the labour market.

PERT's main pillars:

Stakeholder Engagement
- Foster an environment of engagement and collaboration between different stakeholder groups
- Mobilize resources and other solutions
- Work with governments for the benefit of stakeholders

Research & Policy
- Develop a deeper understanding of the challenges & problems in the employability and employment landscape
- Identify gaps in the data and improve the availability of information
- Develop solutions & policy recommendations

Introduction

In Québec, approximately 526,600 people live in poverty.[2] The province's poverty rate is 6.4%, a drop of 5.9 percentage points since 2015, when it was 12.3%.[3] Québec now has the lowest poverty rate of any province in Canada, and is the only province with a poverty rate below the national average.

Statistics Canada attributes Québec's poverty standing to the province's relatively lower cost of living and related supports, such as subsidized childcare, among other factors.[4] Québec's unique identity and linguistic history have impacted its cultural, political, and socioeconomic development. Historically, Québec has been a national leader in advancing progressive social and economic policies.[5] It was the first province in Canada to introduce poverty reduction legislation and implement a poverty reduction strategy more than 20 years ago.

In 2002 the National Assembly unanimously adopted the *Act to combat poverty and social exclusion* (the 'Act'). This legislation included the implementation of the *National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion*, as well as designated funding and the creation of both a research body and an advisory committee on poverty.

The Act resulted from significant grassroots organizing undertaken by community organizations, faith-based organizations, women's groups, disability associations, trade unions, and individuals. In 1998, a collective of organizations, the Carrefour de pastorale en monde ouvrier de Québec (CAPMO), launched a public consultation and education campaign that lasted more than two years, during which they drafted their own anti-poverty bill, soliciting over 25,000 comments and suggestions from the public. In 2000, they submitted their bill to the government, utilizing it to pressure the government to adopt anti-poverty legislation and propose amendments to that legislation when it was introduced in 2002.[6]

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[2] Statistics Canada. (2022, October 16). *Individual Market Basket Measure poverty status by demographic and economic family characteristics of persons: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts*, (Table: 98-10-0112-01), 2021 Census - 25% Sample Data. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810011201&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.26&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.1&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.1&pickMembers%5B3%5D=4.1

[3] Statistics Canada. (2022, November 9). *Disaggregated trends in poverty from the 2021 Census of Population*. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021009/98-200-X2021009-eng.cfm

[4] Ibid.

[5] Consider, for example, the nationalization of the energy industry and the creation of Hydro-Québec, the creation of the Centres de la petite enfance (CPE) network to deliver low-cost daycare and support parents, especially women, to enter the workforce, and a tuition freeze that aims to make higher education accessible to all.

[6] For more on this, see Vaillancourt, Y., & Aubry, F. (2014). *Research report on the Québec Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, a case of democratic co-construction of public policy [Working Paper]*. http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/poverty-citizenship/demographic-profile/research-report-quebec-act-to-combat-poverty-and-social-exclusion

The consultation process undertaken by the CAPMO has been mirrored by both provincial and federal governments, as well as international bodies, in their development of anti-poverty legislation to acknowledge and address specific groups' heightened vulnerability to poverty.[7] Previous research on poverty in Québec has highlighted several groups that disproportionately experience poverty; these include women, single parents, the elderly, people with disabilities, recent immigrants, and Indigenous communities.[8] However, there has been limited recognition by the Québec government on the relationship between language and the experience of poverty among linguistic minorities.[9] This report therefore approaches the issues of poverty and social exclusion from the perspective of linguistic minority status in Québec, particularly for English-speaking Quebecers, who are one of two Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs) in Canada. The report demonstrates that there is a linguistic dimension to poverty in Québec, and that poverty trends for English speakers mirror the unemployment and income challenges they face in Québec's labour market. We hope that this report can better inform Québec's future policy responses to poverty and support the goal of creating a poverty-free Québec. Preliminary recommendations to advance this goal are provided at the end.

English-speaking Quebecers

There are more than 1.2 million English speakers in Québec, comprising 14.9% of the province's population. In the last four decades, this community has experienced considerable demographic and economic shifts: Québec's English-speaking community is the most diverse official language community in Canada, and includes one-third of Québec's immigrant and visible minority populations.[10] Further, English-speaking Quebecers have experienced an upward trend in their poverty and unemployment levels, as

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[7] See, for example, United Nations. (2018, January 29). *More protection, focus on helping vulnerable groups key to achieving 2030 agenda, speakers stress, as social development commission begins annual session.* https://press.un.org/en/2018/soc4856.doc.htm;

Employment and Social Development Canada. (n.d.). *Tackling poverty together: What it is like to live in poverty in Canada and how the federal government can help*. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/tackling-poverty-together.html;

Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale. (n.d.). *Programs and measures*. Government of Québec. https://www.mtess.gouv.qc.ca/programmes-mesures/index_en.asp

[8] Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale. (2002). *The will to act, the strength to succeed: Policy statement, national strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion.* Government of Québec. https://www.mtess.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/GD_Enonce-de-politique_en.pdf

[9] Prior research and briefs produced by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) discuss poverty in Québec's English-speaking communities. However, the Government of Québec has not considered language as a dimension of poverty in its research, nor in its consultation themes to develop anti-poverty action plans.

[10] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (Forthcoming). *Mapping employment supports for Québec's immigrant and racialized English-speaking communities*.

well as a downward trend in their income levels, such that they have occupied a more precarious economic position than French speakers for more than 30 years.[11]

English-speaking Quebecers are overrepresented in the province's poverty statistics: 10% of the English-speaking community lives in poverty, almost double the 5.8% of French speakers who live in poverty. Of the 449,090 individuals in Québec who live in poverty, 103,240 (23%) are English speakers. Put another way, English speakers make up 14.9% of the population of Québec, but represent almost a quarter of Quebecers living in poverty.

Similarly, English speakers experience a significantly higher unemployment rate (10.9%) than French speakers' 6.9%. Prior research conducted by PERT identified factors that contribute to the high unemployment rate of English speakers, including lack of French language proficiency and French-language barriers,[12] lack of French-language training for the workforce,[13] lack of English-language employability services, lack of English-language vocational training,[14] and lack of wrap-around support services.[15]

Unemployment and underemployment in the English-speaking community are reflected in English speakers' higher poverty rates. Research has found a strong relationship between unemployment/underemployment and poverty,[16] and conversely, that access to quality employment with a secure work environment, benefits, and fair remuneration is effective in lifting individuals out of poverty.[17]

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[11] Official Languages Support Programs Branch. (2011). *A portrait of the English-speaking communities in Québec*.
https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/communaction/en/communities/statistical-profiles/portrait-english-speaking-communities-quebec

[12] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *2021 employment survey of English-speaking Quebecers and organizations*.
https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PERT_MC_Design_SRQEA_CORE_EINR_D5R02_20220823_EN_Web.pdf

[13] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *French-language training for the workforce: A review of French-language training programs for the workforce in Québec*.
https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/FSL-Inventory-Assessment-Report.pdf

[14] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *English-language vocational and technical training in Québec*.
https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/English-Language-Vocational-and-Technical-Training-in-Quebec.pdf

[15] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *2021 employment survey of English-speaking Quebecers and organizations*.
https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PERT_MC_Design_SRQEA_CORE_EINR_D5R02_20220823_EN_Web.pdf

[16] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). *Employment and decent work*. United Nations.
https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/employment-and-decent-work.html

[17] See, for example, Belhadi, B., & Kaabi, F. (2021). The relationship between employment and poverty using fuzzy regression. In G. Betti & A. Lemmi (Eds.), *Analysis of socio-economic conditions: Insights from a fuzzy multi-dimensional approach* (pp. 264-275). Routledge.
https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003053712-17/relationship-employment-poverty-using-fuzzy-regression-besma-belhadj-firas-kaabi;
  OECD. (2009). *OECD employment outlook 2009: Tackling the jobs crisis.*
https://doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2009-en

Methodology

This report draws primarily on quantitative data extracted from the 2021 Census of Canada to examine the variables of unemployment, income, low-income cut-off, and poverty.

While the Census of Canada is the most comprehensive and up-to-date source of linguistically-disaggregated socioeconomic data in Canada and Québec in particular, it is limited in its ability to capture specific issues and faces of poverty, including individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Additionally, the metric that Statistics Canada utilizes to derive poverty rate data, the Market Based Measure (MBM), is not applied on reserves because several factors impact the affordability of goods and services on reserves in a way that the MBM cannot capture. It has also been criticized for its inability to take into account other issues facing First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, including realities of living in remote or Northern communities, the accessibility of culturally appropriate services, and non-income related measures of well-being related to poverty.[18]

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[18] Assembly of First Nations. (n.d.) *Assembly of First Nations Submission: A place to live in dignity for all: Making housing affordable*.

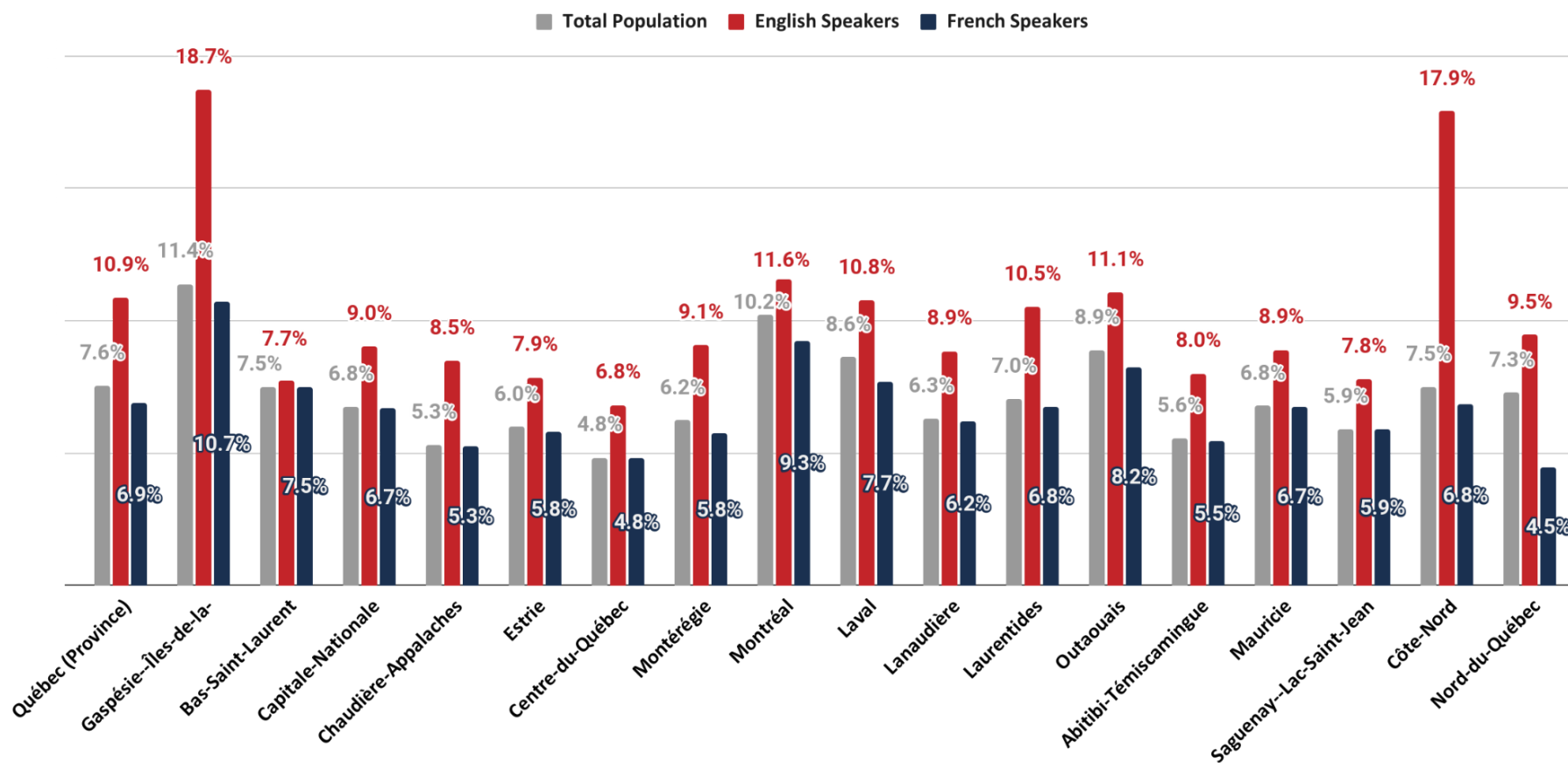# Research Findings on Employment and Poverty among English-speaking Quebecers

PERT analyzed data from the 2021 Census of Canada to understand the employment situation of English speakers across Québec. The results are presented below, according to age, gender, visible minority identity, and immigration status.

Total English-speaking Community

Unemployment

English speakers experience a higher unemployment rate than French speakers in every region of Québec. Across the province, English speakers experience an unemployment rate of 10.9%, a two percentage point increase since the last census when English speakers faced an unemployment rate of 8.9%. English speakers now face an unemployment rate four percentage points higher than French-speakers' 6.9%.

Unemployment Rate of Québec by Region (2021)

Legend: Total Population (grey), English Speakers (red), French Speakers (dark blue)

Region	Total Population	English Speakers	French Speakers
Québec (Province)	7.6%	10.9%	6.9%
Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-	11.4%	18.7%	10.7%
Bas-Saint-Laurent	7.5%	7.7%	7.5%
Capitale-Nationale	6.8%	9.0%	6.7%
Chaudière-Appalaches	5.3%	8.5%	5.3%
Estrie	6.0%	7.9%	5.8%
Centre-du-Québec	4.8%	6.8%	4.8%
Montérégie	6.2%	9.1%	5.8%
Montréal	10.2%	11.6%	9.3%
Laval	8.6%	10.8%	7.7%
Lanaudière	6.3%	8.9%	6.2%
Laurentides	7.0%	10.5%	6.8%
Outaouais	8.9%	11.1%	8.2%
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	5.6%	8.0%	5.5%
Mauricie	6.8%	8.9%	6.7%
Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean	5.9%	7.8%	5.9%
Côte-Nord	7.5%	17.9%	6.8%
Nord-du-Québec	7.3%	9.5%	4.5%

Income

The 2021 census data on income levels reveals that English speakers in Québec earn lower median after-tax incomes compared to French speakers.[19] English speakers earn a median after-tax income of $34,000, $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, a $5,200 gap.

An examination of average incomes in Québec shows that English speakers have higher average incomes and employment incomes than French speakers. The high average incomes and low median incomes among English speakers suggest there are outliers within the English-speaking community who earn significantly higher incomes, skewing our overall understanding of how English speakers are faring.

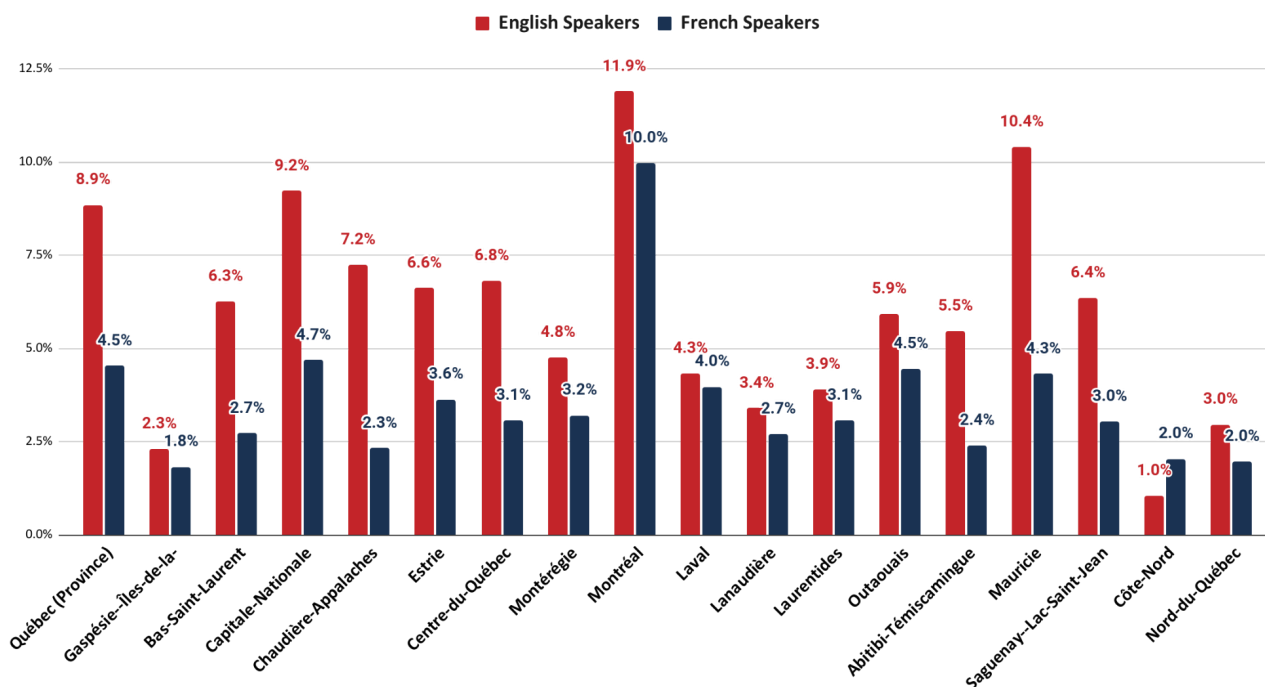**Income statistics - Province of Quebec (2021)**

Variable income	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

[19] 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.

Low-income Cut-off

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)[20] compared to French speakers; 8.9% of Québec's English-speaking population live under the LICO threshold, compared to 4.5% of French speakers.

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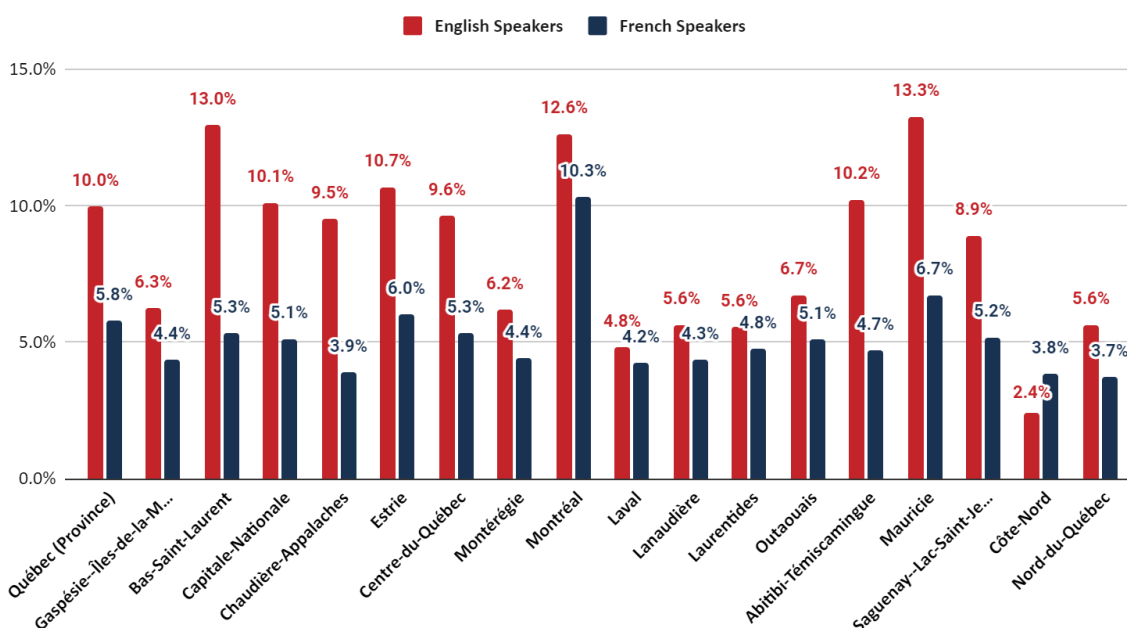
■ English Speakers ■ French Speakers

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[20] 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.

Poverty Rate

Data on poverty rates reveals that a high proportion of English speakers have income that falls below the poverty line.[21] The provincial poverty rate for English speakers is 10%, almost twice as high as that of French speakers (5.8%). The higher rates of poverty experienced by English speakers necessitate the use of a linguistic lens in order to understand and address poverty in Québec.

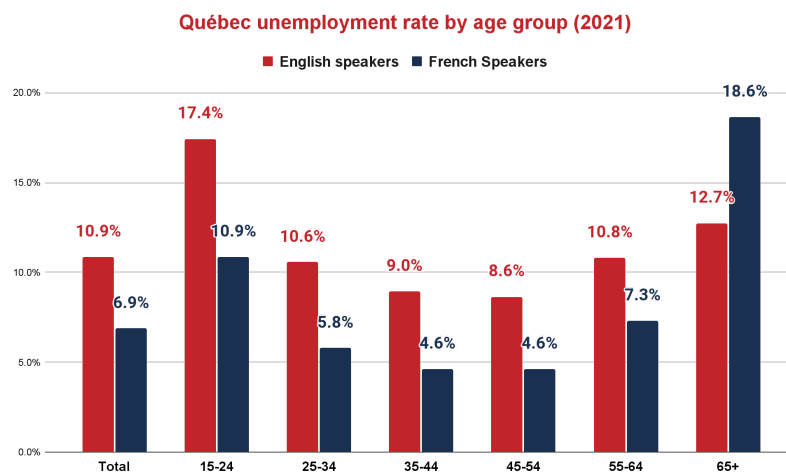**Poverty Rate (%) in Québec by Region (2021)**

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[21] 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.

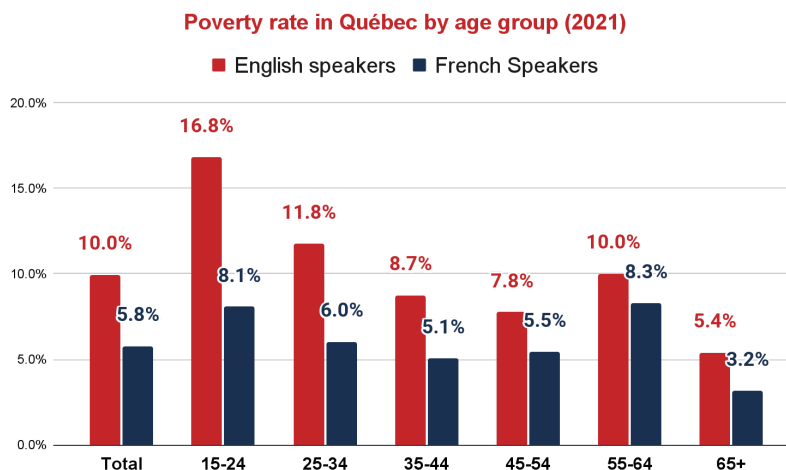# English-speaking Community by Age

Unemployment

Across most age groups, English speakers experience a higher unemployment rate than French speakers. Among English speakers, youth aged 15-24 experience the highest unemployment rate, at 17.4%, followed by individuals aged 65+, with an unemployment rate of 12.7%. In contrast, French speakers aged 65+ have the highest unemployment rate of any age-linguistic group, at 18.6%.

Québec unemployment rate by age group (2021)

Poverty Rate

Across all age groups, English-speaking Quebecers experience a higher poverty rate than French speakers. Individuals aged 15-24, 25-34 and 55-64 experience higher rates of poverty compared to the total population, indicating that youth and mature individuals are more vulnerable to poverty. English-speaking youth experience the highest poverty rates: approximately one-sixth of all English-speaking youth aged 15-24 (16.8%, or 26,305 individuals) live in poverty.
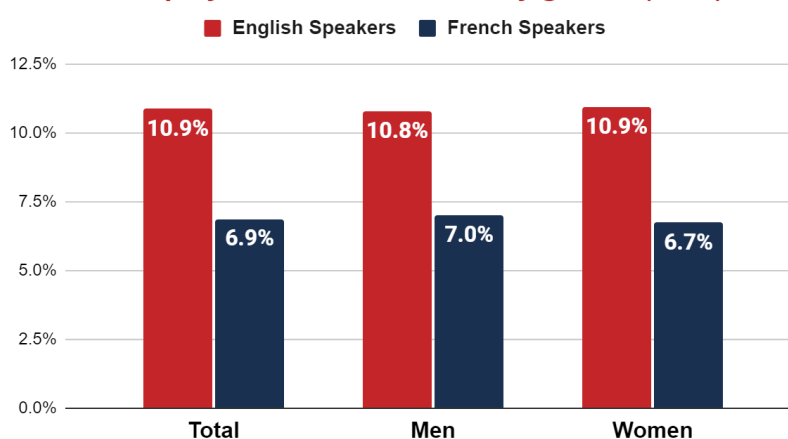
Poverty rate in Québec by age group (2021)

English-speaking Community by Gender

Unemployment

Unemployment rates for English-speaking men and women are comparable: English-speaking women have an unemployment rate 0.1 percentage points higher than men. Among French speakers, women have a slightly lower unemployment rate than men.
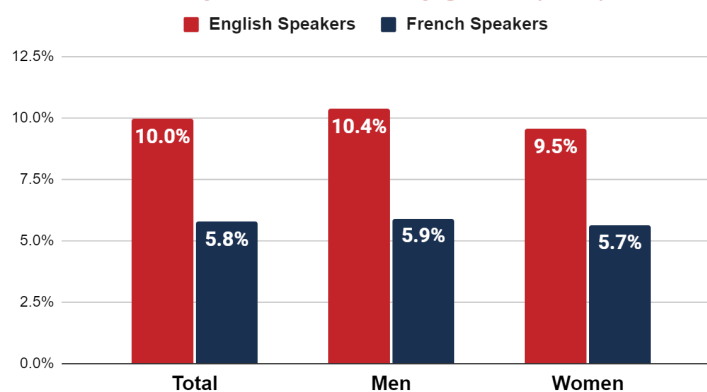
Unemployment rate in Quebec by gender (2021)

■ English Speakers ■ French Speakers

Poverty Rate

Rates of poverty differ between men and women in Québec. Generally, men experience slightly higher rates of poverty than women. English-speaking men have a poverty rate 0.9 percentage points higher than English-speaking women, while French-speaking men have a poverty rate 0.2 percentage points higher than French-speaking women. This indicates some gender disparities in poverty rates.

Poverty rate in Quebec by gender (2021)

■ English Speakers ■ French Speakers

English-speaking Community by Visible Minority Identity

Unemployment

English-speaking visible minorities experience a higher rate of unemployment (12.3%) than both French-speaking visible minorities (10.1%) and English-speaking non-visible minorities (10%). This is broadly consistent across visible minority groups; Arab and Chinese English speakers experience the highest unemployment rates, at 13.9% and 13.4%, respectively.

Unemployment Rate in Québec by Visible Minority Identity (2021)		
	English Speakers	**French Speakers**
Total population	10.9%	6.9%
Total visible minority population	12.3%	10.1%
South Asian	12.4%	11.6%
Chinese	13.4%	11.1%
Black	12.8%	9.2%
Filipino	8.6%	7.9%
Arab	13.9%	11.9%
Latin American	11.0%	9.5%
Southeast Asian	12.8%	9.0%
West Asian	13.1%	13.2%
Korean	12.7%	10.8%
Japanese	12.6%	7.4%
Visible minority, n.i.e.	12.7%	10.1%
Multiple visible minorities	13.0%	10.6%
Not a visible minority	10.0%	6.4%

Poverty Rate

Visible minorities in Québec tend to experience higher rates of poverty than non-visible minorities. Across different visible minority communities, poverty rates are consistently higher among English speakers compared to French speakers. Approximately 15.1% of all English-speaking visible minorities - 55,773 individuals - experience poverty. These individuals account for more than half of all English speakers living in poverty (103,240 individuals).
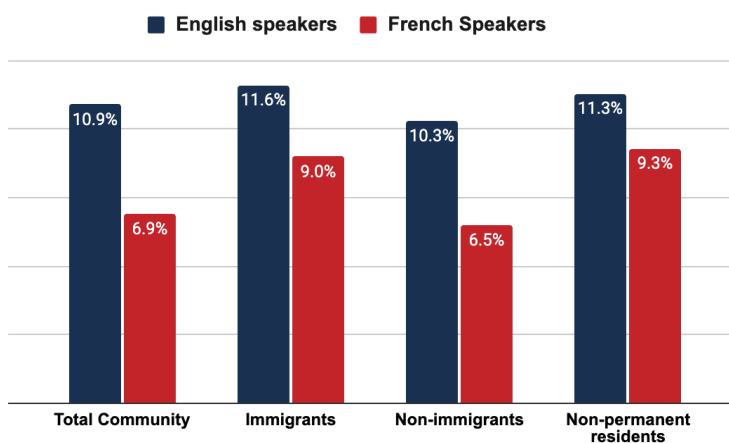
Poverty Rate in Québec by Visible Minority Identity (2021)	English Speakers	French Speakers
Total Population	10.0%	5.8%
Total visible minority population	15.1%	9.9%
South Asian	19.1%	7.7%
Chinese	19.0%	11.0%
Black	12.0%	9.8%
Filipino	6.0%	4.7%
Arab	16.6%	11.3%
Latin American	13.0%	9.5%
Southeast Asian	11.3%	6.1%
West Asian	16.8%	9.2%
Korean	24.2%	13.5%
Japanese	14.0%	9.0%
Visible minority, n.i.e.	11.4%	11.1%
Multiple visible minorities	10.4%	8.8%
Not a visible minority	7.1%	5.3%

English-speaking Community by Immigration Status

Unemployment

English-speaking immigrants[22] in Québec experience a higher unemployment rate (11.6%) than both French-speaking immigrants (9%) and English-speaking non-immigrants (10.3%).

Unemployment Rate in Québec by Immigration Status (2021)

■ English speakers   ■ French Speakers

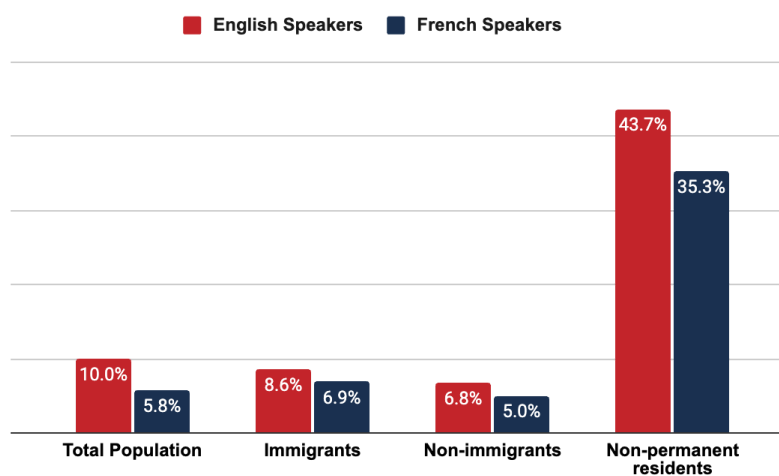|	Total Community	Immigrants	Non-immigrants	Non-permanent residents
English speakers	10.9%	11.6%	10.3%	11.3%
French Speakers	6.9%	9.0%	6.5%	9.3%

Poverty Rate

English-speaking immigrants experience a higher rate of poverty (8.6%) compared to both French-speaking immigrants (6.9%) and English-speaking non-immigrants (6.8%).

English-speaking non-permanent residents[23] experience extremely high poverty rates: 43.7% of English-speaking non-permanent residents (30,588 individuals out of 70,025) live in poverty.

Poverty Rate in Québec by Immigration Status (2021)

■ English Speakers   ■ French Speakers

	Total Population	Immigrants	Non-immigrants	Non-permanent residents
English Speakers	10.0%	8.6%	6.8%	43.7%
French Speakers	5.8%	6.9%	5.0%	35.3%

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[22] In the census, an immigrant is defined as someone who is a landed immigrant or permanent resident.

[23] In the census, a non-permanent resident is someone from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who has a work or study permit or who has claimed refugee status.

Issues

Language-based Disparities

The data extracted from the 2021 census highlights the correlation between linguistic minority identity, heightened economic precarity, and increased rates of poverty in Québec. English speakers experience a poverty rate of 10%, compared to French speakers' 5.8%, and an unemployment rate of 10.9%, compared to French speakers' 6.9%. These disparities are exacerbated within specific sub-groups of the English-speaking community in Québec, including youth, seniors, women, visible minorities, and immigrants.

The data highlights the need to adopt a linguistic lens when seeking to understand factors that contribute to both employment outcomes and poverty, as well as related solutions. Furthermore, this data highlights the need for other forms of linguistic intervention, such as policies and programs, that support English-speaking Quebecers. Previous research by PERT has established that lack of French-language proficiency is a barrier that two-thirds (67%) of English speakers face to labour market entry.[24] Furthermore, there is a shortage of French-language learning programming designed to help English speakers integrate into and succeed in the workforce.[25]

Access to Wrap-around Supports

Multiple reports conducted by PERT have found that lack of access to wrap-around supports and the capacity of individuals to meet their basic needs has impacted not only the employment of English-speaking Quebecers but their ability to participate in employability programming and French-language training.[26]

Wrap-around supports that are needed include food security programs, transportation, housing, childcare, access to physical and mental health care, and the obtention of essential documentation such as birth certificates or driving licenses.

Increased availability of programming that meets these needs, as well as resources that reduce barriers to these programs (such as funding or transit), not only provide English

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[24] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *2021 employment survey of English-speaking Quebecers and organizations*.
https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PERT_MC_Design_SRQEA_CORE_EINR_D5R02_20220823_EN_Web.pdf

[25] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *French-language training for the workforce: A review of French-language training programs for the workforce in Québec*.
https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/FSL-Inventory-Assessment-Report.pdf

[26] See, for example, Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *2021 employment survey of English-speaking Quebecers and organizations*.
https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PERT_MC_Design_SRQEA_CORE_EINR_D5R02_20220823_EN_Web.pdf

speakers with the foundation to pursue employment, employment programming, and French language training in ways that can positively impact their employment outcomes but can also help to lift them out of poverty directly.

Access to English-language Services

PERT research reveals that English-speaking Quebecers suffer from a lack of English-language services in Québec both in regard to employment and other sectors such as health care and social assistance. There is a need for increased English-language programming across these sectors and resources that can help English speakers access current offerings, such as accompaniment services or English-language documentation translations.

Regional Disparities

The 2021 census data, as well as prior research conducted by PERT, establishes that there are significant regional disparities across Québec.[27] Individuals in rural, remote and Northern regions tend to experience higher unemployment rates and earn lower incomes, which are exacerbated within English-speaking communities in the regions. English speakers in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, for example, experience an unemployment rate of 18.7%, compared to French speakers' 10.7%. In Côte-Nord, English speakers' unemployment rate is almost triple that of French speakers (17.9% compared to 6.8%).

Low-income and poverty status data from the 2021 census indicate that English speakers in the regions experience worse outcomes than their French-speaking counterparts, but does not suggest a clear urban/rural divide that sees English speakers in the regions faring worse than English speakers in urban centres. Qualitative data and regional consultation suggest, however, that there may be gaps in the quantitative data. The quantitative data is based upon market conditions and external measures and does not necessarily capture other factors that contribute to increased economic precarity prominent in the regions. For example, individuals living in the regions often have less access to infrastructure and services ranging from public transportation and internet access to post-secondary education.[28]

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[27] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *Employment profile of English speakers in Québec*. https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/PROVINCIAL_PROFILE_QUEBEC.pdf
[28] Provincial Employment Roundtable. (2022). *English-language vocational and technical training in Québec*. https://pertquebec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/English-Language-Vocational-and-Technical-Training-in-Quebec.pdf

Vulnerable Groups

The employment and poverty data presented in this brief highlights that immigrant and racialized communities fare much worse in comparison to their non-immigrant and non-racialized counterparts. English-speaking visible minorities have a poverty rate of 15.1%, compared to French-speaking visible minorities' 9.9%. Non-visible minority English speakers have a poverty rate of 7.1%, and French speakers 5.3%. English-speaking immigrants also experience a poverty rate higher than French-speaking immigrants (8.6% compared to 6.9%), as well as English and French-speaking non-immigrants (6.8% and 5%, respectively). English-speaking non-permanent residents experience extremely high rates of poverty: 43.7% of English-speaking non-permanent residents (30,588 individuals out of 70,025) live in poverty.

Research demonstrates that these groups are more socioeconomically vulnerable and would benefit from employability programming that considers their specific circumstances and any unique barriers they face.[29] For non-permanent residents in particular, there is a need to relax eligibility requirements for government supports such as income, housing and employment programs, which are not always available to non-permanent residents. Additionally, government should support local programs that address poverty and employment challenges within racialized and immigrant communities.

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[29] Joncas, J. A., & Pilote, A. (2021). The role of guidance professionals in enhancing the capabilities of marginalized students: The case of Indigenous women in Canada. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 21*, 405–427. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-021-09474-3

Next Steps

The statistical data outlined in this report identifies key groups that need additional consideration and support in combatting poverty and social exclusion, including English-speaking Quebecers, regional English-speaking communities, and immigrants and visible minorities that speak English as their first official language. Previous research by PERT has identified key issues, such as French-language training, access to English-language services, and access to wrap-around supports, that also impact the labour market integration and, relatedly, the unemployment and poverty status of diverse English-speaking populations.

PERT has identified next steps that align with these research findings and which can be adopted by policymakers and stakeholders to help combat the poverty and social exclusion that English-speaking Quebecers disproportionately face.

Linguistic Lens

1. Adopt a linguistic lens to understand and analyze trends in economic precarity and poverty and advance solutions to combat poverty and social exclusion.
2. Develop and implement a framework to regularly collect linguistic-based data on poverty in Québec.

Global Supports

3. Increase income supports available to low-income Quebecers and those living in poverty; ensure there are no French-language barriers to accessing and enrolling in income support programs.

4. Increase minimum wage from $15.25 to $18.00 an hour to better enable individuals to change their circumstances and exit poverty.[30]

5. Increase government funding for upskilling and reskilling programs, including French-language learning for the workforce and employment programs for in-demand industries. Ensure that these programs are accessible to all individuals, including unemployed, underemployed, and employed individuals.

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[30] See, for example, Centrale des syndicats du Québec. (2023, May 2). *15,25 $ ne permet pas de sortir de la pauvreté: Hausse du salaire minimum.*
https://www.lacsq.org/actualite/1525-ne-permet-pas-de-sortir-de-la-pauvrete/

French-language learning

6. Increase the availability and accessibility of French-language training for the working population.

    a. Improve the quality and availability of French-language learning programs for adults in the workforce, including non-immigrant Quebecers who do not have access to most programs.
    b. Make access to French-language education and training a protected right under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and/or the Charter of the French Language.

7. Increased investment in work-integrated language training programs.

    a. Develop and fund job-specific French-language training programs and French-language job placement programs.

8. Raise awareness of the subsidies available to companies for French-language training of their employees.

9. Develop programs that meet the diverse needs of learners.
    a. Design programs to serve a wide range of learners, including youth, people with disabilities, Quebec-born residents, interprovincial migrants, recent graduates, parents and caregivers..

10. Offer comprehensive support to learners.

    a. Offer free and/or subsidized French-language training to all Quebecers who wish to enter a regulated profession and require profession-specific French-language training.

    b. Extend financial assistance programs to all Quebecers who enroll in French-language vocational training. Financial assistance should cover training time, transportation and childcare costs for participants.

    c. Ensure that Francisation Québec guarantees and implements free French-language training accessible to all adult Quebecers, regardless of age, education, employment status, residency status, level of language proficiency, place of birth or place of residence.

Access to Wrap-around Supports

11. Adopt a holistic approach to access to employment, which understands food security, housing, childcare, transportation, and mental and physical health as necessary precursors to employment.

12. Increase the availability and access to wrap-around supports such as housing, childcare, transportation and low-barrier healthcare for all Quebecers, with dedicated tracks for individuals who are low-income and experiencing poverty.

Community-based Approach

13. Develop closer collaboration between government and community organizations providing basic services such as accompaniment, translation, health information, and employment support.

14. Increase funding for local employment programs and services for English speakers, particularly in the regions outside of Montréal.

Vulnerable Groups

15. Develop targeted programming for specific English-speaking groups who experience higher rates of poverty, including wrap-around supports and employment programs for youth, seniors, visible minority groups and immigrants, and non-permanent residents.

16. Expand current employment and income support programming to ensure that it is accessible to all vulnerable groups, such as non-permanent residents.

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