

## Just How Many of Us English-speaking Quebecers Are There?

In our last blog, we explained the different variables Statistics Canada uses to classify linguistic minority groups. We discussed Mother Tongue; Language Spoken Most Often at Home; and First Official Language Spoken (FOLS). We also described how these variables are employed to use language as a marker of cultural identity (group identity), or to track the use of a language.

Like many community organizations serving English-speaking Quebec, the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) uses FOLS to determine the size of our linguistic minority community. Our diverse community is more accurately reflected with this approach, because FOLS includes non-English mother-tongue speakers who use English as their main language. It also most precisely reflects the population requiring services in English.

The federal government has for years used FOLS to measure Canada's English and French linguistic minority communities. However, it will be moving to a new derived number following the 2021 Census. This change will increase the number of points of federal service required to provide communications in both official languages. We will come back to this subject in a future blog post.

In the 2016 Census, the [population of English-speaking Quebec](#) was enumerated at 1,103,480. That is 13.7 per cent of the province's total population.

Some Quebec political leaders have recently referred to the "historic English community." This term remains undefined. Many provincial governments, including Quebec, have tended to rely on the mother-tongue variable, which under-represents membership in an official language minority community. This is probably done as a way to reduce spending obligations in support of these minority communities. However, it is important to note that critical provincial partners such as the [Secretariat for relations with English-speaking Quebecers](#) use the more accurate FOLS variable. As a result, others including like the [Institut de la statistique du Québec](#) are beginning to use FOLS in some of their analysis.

Whether or not our community is 'in decline' is a matter of the starting point you choose for your analysis. In 1971, English-speaking Quebecers as measured by FOLS made up [15.9% of Quebec's population](#). After the post-1976 exodus, that percentage dropped to 12.9 per cent by 1981. It ultimately fell to a historic low of 11.6 per cent in 2001. However, we have been rebounding since. By 2036, we are [projected to grow](#) to about 17 per cent.

English-speaking Quebecers can be found across the province. In most regions, individual English-speaking communities are experiencing growth. Some, however, are in decline. (Please see table below.)

If you have any questions or comments on this post, please contact [Stephen Thompson](#) or [Andrew Palucci](#).

| <b>Quebec' English-speaking Communities,<br/>by Administrative Region, 1996-2016</b> |             |             |             |             |             |                                   |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Administrative Region</b>   | <b>1996</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2006</b> | <b>2011</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>% change from 1996 to 2016</b> |
| <b>Gaspésie - Iles-de-la-Madeleine</b>   | 10,580      | 9,740       | 9,488       | 9,950       | 8,828       | -16.6%                            |
| <b>Bas-Saint-Laurent</b>   | 933         | 820         | 1,230       | 1,135       | 1,228       | 31.6%                             |
| <b>Capitale-Nationale</b>  | 12,745      | 11,358      | 11,395      | 13,350      | 14,823      | 16.3%                             |
| <b>Chaudière - Appalaches</b>  | 3,340       | 2,390       | 3,680       | 3,800       | 3,985       | 19.3%                             |
| <b>Estrie</b>  | 24,770      | 23,393      | 23,395      | 23,440      | 23,310      | -5.9%                             |
| <b>Centre-du-Québec</b>  | 2,650       | 2,138       | 2,428       | 2,635       | 2,723       | 2.7%                              |
| <b>Montréal</b>  | 135,653     | 129,140     | 143,583     | 159,515     | 170,613     | 25.8%                             |
| <b>Montréal</b>  | 560,813     | 563,940     | 595,910     | 611,005     | 624,998     | 11.4%                             |
| <b>Laval</b>   | 50,713      | 53,388      | 68,460      | 82,078      | 90,980      | 79.4%                             |
| <b>Lanaudière</b>  | 8,850       | 8,213       | 10,065      | 12,400      | 13,988      | 58.1%                             |
| <b>Laurentides</b>   | 31,213      | 30,550      | 33,148      | 36,055      | 37,990      | 21.7%                             |
| <b>Outaouais</b>   | 53,863      | 53,930      | 58,493      | 66,643      | 70,880      | 31.6%                             |
| <b>Abitibi - Témiscamingue</b>   | 6,363       | 5,315       | 5,288       | 5,378       | 5,263       | -17.3%                            |
| <b>Mauricie</b>  | 3,383       | 2,758       | 2,583       | 3,095       | 3,343       | -1.2%                             |
| <b>Saguenay - Lac-Saint-Jean</b>   | 1,795       | 1,760       | 1,875       | 1,798       | 1,975       | 10.0%                             |
| <b>Côte-Nord</b>   | 6,100       | 5,740       | 5,608       | 5,335       | 5,175       | -15.2%                            |

|                        |         |         |         |           |           |       |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| <b>Nord-du-Québec</b>  | 12,080  | 14,385  | 16,945  | 20,645    | 23,390    | 93.6% |
| <b>Quebec</b>          | 925,830 | 918,955 | 994,723 | 1,058,250 | 1,103,478 | 19.2% |
| <b>English % Total</b> | 13.1%   | 12.9%   | 13.4%   | 13.5%     | 13.7%     |       |

Source: J. Pocock Research Consulting, based on data from Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1996-2016. Language variable used is First Official Language Spoken. Multiple responses are distributed equally among declared languages. Administrative Region totals are based on aggregated data of Census Divisions.