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# French in Prince Edward Island, 2001 to 2016

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# French in Prince Edward Island, 2001 to 2016

by **Alejandro A. Páez Silva** and **Émilie Lavoie**

The purpose of this document is to present an overview of the trends observed between 2001 and 2016 for the French language and the official language minority population<sup>1</sup> in Prince Edward Island. To this end, it provides census-based information on the population who reported having French as their mother tongue, French spoken at home or used at work, French as their first official language spoken as well as for those who speak French well enough to sustain a conversation.

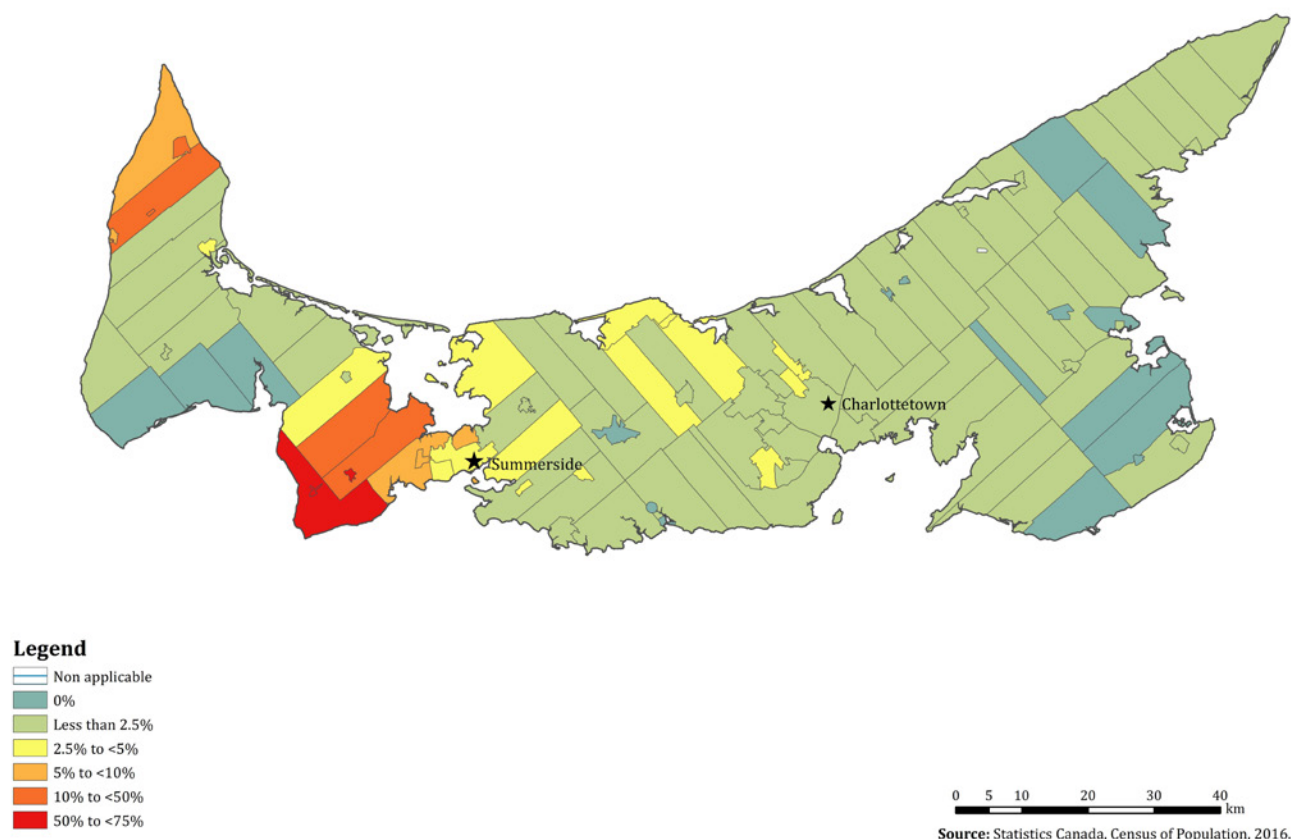
**Table 1**  
**Knowledge of English and French, Prince Edward Island, 2001 to 2016**

	2001		2006		2011		2016		2001 to 2016 growth
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	percent
<b>Total population</b>	<b>133,070</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>133,325</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>137,375</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>139,685</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Official language minority population	5,250	3.9	5,080	3.8	4,670	3.4	4,590	3.3	-12.6
English-French bilingualism	5,155	98.2	5,035	99.1	4,610	98.7	4,465	97.3	-13.4
Rest of the population	127,820	96.1	128,235	96.2	132,710	96.6	135,095	96.7	5.7
English-French bilingualism	10,790	8.4	11,960	9.3	12,490	9.4	13,290	9.8	23.2

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001, 2006, 2016; 2011 National Household Survey.

- In 2016, 17,875 people reported being able to conduct a conversation in French, either exclusively or together with English. As a whole, they represented 12.8% of Prince Edward Island's total population.
  - The number of persons who report being able to conduct a conversation in French, whether exclusively or in combination with English, has increased by 11.4%, or by 1,835 persons over 15 years.
- In 2016, 17,745 people in Prince Edward Island reported being able to hold a conversation in both English and French, up 11.3% since 2001. For the 2016 year, the English-French bilingualism rate stood at 12.7%, up 0.7 percentage points since 2001.
  - In 2016, 97.3% of the official language minority population reported being able to hold a conversation in both English and French. By contrast, this proportion stood at 9.8% for the rest of the population.
  - Among the official language minority population, the proportion of persons that report being able to conduct a conversation in both English and French has decreased by 0.9 percentage points which translates to 690 fewer persons since 2001. By contrast, English-French bilingualism for the rest of the population has increased by 1.4 percentage points amounting to an additional 2,500 persons over the same period.

1. In this document, the official language minority population is defined according to the criterion of the first official language spoken. The 'English-French' category is equally redistributed between the 'French' and 'English' categories.

**Map 1****Official language minority population, census subdivisions, Prince Edward Island, 2016**

- In 2016, the official language minority population numbered 4,590 persons in Prince Edward Island. This figure represented 3.3% of the province's total population. Both in terms of size and proportion, these figures are the lowest levels the province has seen in 15 years.
  - Over the 2001-2016 period, the official language minority population decreased by 12.6% which translates into 660 fewer persons.
  - In 2016, Prince Edward Island's official language minority population was the fourth largest in relative terms (3.3%) from among all provinces and the territories. They were closely followed by Manitoba and Nova Scotia (both at 3.2%).

**Table 2**  
**Selected French language indicators, Prince Edward Island, 2001 to 2016**

	2001		2006		2011		2016		2001 to 2016 growth
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	percent
<b>Total population</b>	<b>133,070</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>133,325</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>137,375</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>139,685</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Official language minority population <sup>1</sup>	5,250	3.9	5,080	3.8	4,670	3.4	4,590	3.3	-12.6
Knowledge of French <sup>2</sup>	16,040	12.1	17,045	12.8	17,155	12.5	17,875	12.8	11.4
French as mother tongue <sup>2</sup>	6,070	4.6	5,825	4.4	5,010	3.6	5,400	3.9	-11.0
French spoken at home <sup>2</sup>	5,190	3.9	5,205	3.9	5,295	3.9	5,590	4.0	7.7
French primarily spoken <sup>3</sup>	2,710	2.0	2,640	2.0	2,400	1.7	2,200	1.6	-18.8
Working population <sup>4</sup>	79,985	100.0	82,405	100.0	85,310	100.0	85,275	100.0	6.6
French used at work <sup>2</sup>	4,015	5.0	4,555	5.5	3,855	4.5	3,910	4.6	-2.6
French primarily used <sup>3</sup>	1,105	1.4	1,055	1.3	1,190	1.4	1,060	1.2	-4.1

1. The official language minority population is defined according to the first official language spoken. The 'English-French' category is equally redistributed.

2. Includes all persons who reported French whether with or without additional languages.

3. Refers to Part A of the language spoken at home and language used at work questions, the language spoken or used most often.

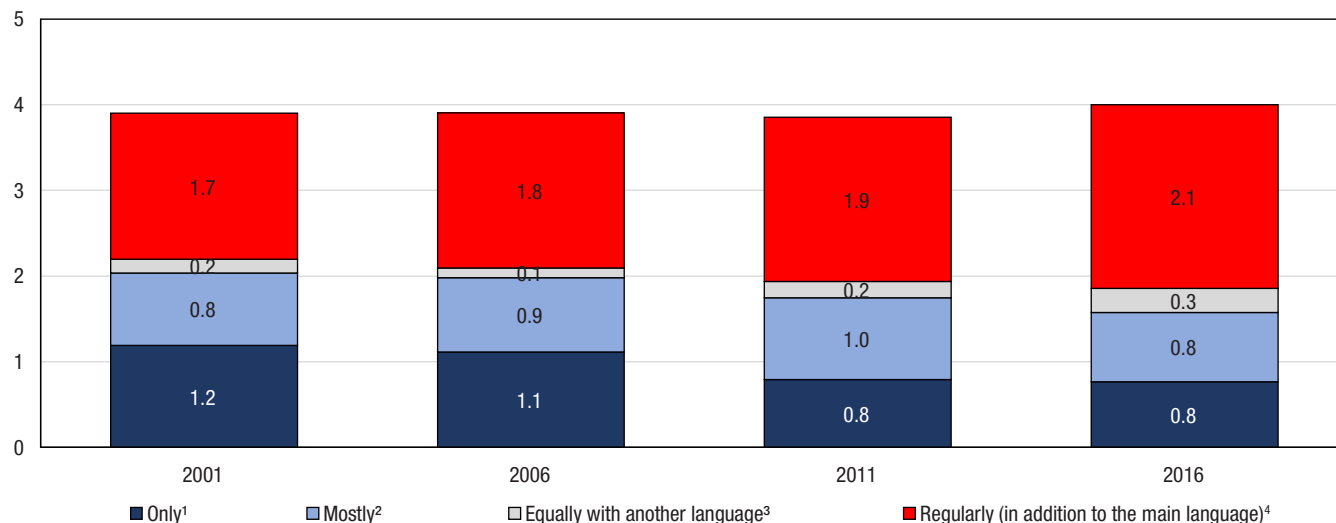
4. Refers to those aged 15 years and over who worked at least once between January 1st, 2015 and Census Day.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001, 2006, 2016; 2011 National Household Survey.

- In 2016, 5,400 people in Prince Edward Island reported having French as their mother tongue<sup>2</sup>, either exclusively or together with another language. At the time, this figure constituted 3.9% of the province's total population.
  - Since 2001, the number of persons who report having French as their mother tongue, either exclusively or together with another language, has decreased by 11.0%, that is, by 670 fewer persons.

**Chart 1**  
**French spoken at home, Prince Edward Island, 2001 to 2016**

percent



1. Includes persons who only speak French most often and no other language regularly.

2. Includes persons who speak French most often and at least one other language regularly.

3. Includes persons who speak French most often equally with another language.

4. Includes persons who speak French regularly in addition to the main language.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001, 2006, 2016; 2011 National Household Survey.

2. In some cases, the number of respondents whose mother tongue is French is higher than the number given for the official language minority population. As part of the logic used to derive the official language minority population based on the first official language spoken variable, those who may have French as their mother tongue but can no longer speak it well enough to hold a conversation are not included. Similarly, for those who can hold a conversation in English and French and have these languages as their mother tongue but speak English most often at home are likewise excluded from the French-language population.

- In 2016, 5,590 people reported speaking French at home at least regularly (most often or as a secondary language). Collectively, they represented 4.0% of Prince Edward Island's total population.
  - ▶ Since 2001, the number of persons who report speaking French at home at least regularly (most often or as a secondary language) has grown by 7.7%, or 400 persons.
    - Over the 2001 to 2016 period, the number of persons who reported speaking primarily<sup>3</sup> French at home fell from 2,710 in 2001 to 2,200 in 2016, an 18.8% decrease.
    - By contrast, over the same period, the number of persons who reported speaking French regularly as a secondary language in addition to the main language at home grew from 2,265 in 2001 to 2,995 in 2016, a 32.2% increase. Further, the number of persons who reported speaking French equally with another language most often at home<sup>4</sup> grew from 215 in 2001 to 395 in 2016.
- In 2016, 3,910 workers reported using French at work at least regularly (most often or as a secondary language), amounting to 4.6% of Prince Edward Island's working population.
  - ▶ In the 15 years since 2001, the number of persons who report using French at work at least regularly (most often or as a secondary language) has decreased by 2.6%.
    - Among workers who use French at work, 1,060 persons reported using primarily<sup>5</sup> French, down 4.1% since 2001. In 2016, these workers constituted 1.2% of Prince Edward Island's working population, a proportion which has remained virtually unchanged since 2001.
    - Between 2001 and 2016, the number of persons who reported using French regularly as a secondary language in addition to the main language at work decreased by 160 workers, down 6.1% since 2001.
    - In contrast to the decline of both primary and secondary use of French at work, the number of persons who reported using French equally with another language most often at work<sup>6</sup> increased from 290 in 2001 to 390 in 2016.

3. Primary use of French at home refers to French spoken exclusively or most often.

4. Includes persons who reported speaking French equally with another language at home with or without additional languages spoken regularly as secondary languages.

5. Primary use of French at work refers to French used exclusively or most often.

6. Includes persons who reported speaking French equally with another language at work with or without additional languages spoken regularly as secondary languages.