



Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages

Commissariat
aux langues
officielles

LINGUISTIC (IN)SECURITY AT WORK

EXPLORATORY SURVEY ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES AMONG
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN CANADA

STUDY REPORT
January 2021



The Commissioner of Official Languages mandated this study report to his office's Policy and Research Directorate and to PRA Inc. The lead researchers and contributors were Robert Talbot, François Dumaine, Nicholas Borodenko, Jeannette Yameogo, Stéphanie Jolette and Véronique Boudreau, and the project benefited from the input and contributions of several other employees of the Office of the Commissioner and of PRA.

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OVERVIEW

Linguistic insecurity has become an important area of concern in recent years for official language minority communities, for young Canadians, for second-language education advocates and, as this study report will help to show, for federal public servants, as well.¹

Linguistic insecurity can be described as a sense of unease, discomfort or anxiety experienced when using or attempting to use one's first language or a second language due to a variety of environmental, perceptual, interpersonal, organizational, cultural and social factors. It can have a negative impact on the individual speaker's confidence or comfort in using the language: for example, it can lead to a feeling that using the language may inconvenience others or that the individual's use of the language is not consistent with established norms and principles. Another negative impact of linguistic insecurity is that it can discourage the use of a language, which can lead to an erosion of capacities, a loss of confidence in one's mastery of the language, and even a loss of one's sense of freedom to use it, including in workplace settings.²

To what extent might Canada's public servants be experiencing linguistic insecurity? And how can we help them to feel more comfortable using both official languages, English and French, in the workplace?

Part of the answer lies in asking federal employees themselves whether they might sometimes feel uncomfortable using English and/or French at work, and if so, why that is and how they think federal institutions can help to address the challenge.

With this in mind, the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada (the Commissioner) mandated his research team, in collaboration with private research firm PRA Inc., to conduct an exploratory survey on the challenge of linguistic insecurity in the federal workplace. One of the Commissioner's main responsibilities is to promote the equality of status and use of English and French in the public service so that federal employees can work—and serve Canadians—in both official languages.

The survey was aimed at federal public servants working in regions where they have a right to work in the official language of their choice and where federal institutions have an obligation to ensure that the work environment is “conducive to the effective use of both official languages,” as stipulated under Part V of the *Official Languages Act*. The regions that are covered by this obligation have come to be known as the [regions of Canada designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes](#), or “Part V regions.”

For the purposes of this report, the Part V regions are grouped into four:

- The National Capital Region, including Ottawa and Gatineau
- The province of New Brunswick
- The bilingual regions within Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
- The bilingual regions within Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)

The survey was conducted online from March 6 to 25, 2019, and attracted great interest. Invitations with an open survey link were sent to federal institutions' Official Languages Champions and Persons Responsible for Official Languages for distribution to employees working in the four regions in their respective departments and agencies. In total, 10,828 survey questionnaires were completed by personnel located in Part V regions from nearly 100 different federal institutions. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (the Office of the Commissioner) and PRA wish to thank the Champions and the Persons Responsible for Official Languages for their support, as well as all of the individuals who generously took the time to participate in this survey.

The questionnaire asked respondents to identify their “first official language,” English or French. For the purposes of this report, “Anglophone” refers to all respondents who selected English, and “Francophone” refers to all respondents who selected French. Respondents were asked about where they work, which language(s) they prefer to work in, their abilities in English and French, and which language(s) their colleagues, supervisors and senior management tend to use. Respondents were then asked whether they had ever felt or would ever feel uncomfortable using English or French in their current job.³ Those who answered “yes” or who were unsure were asked whether they had ever felt or would ever feel uncomfortable asking to be supervised in the language, writing in the language or speaking it at work, and if so, why. Respondents were also asked to provide written comments on how employees could be helped to feel more comfortable using English and French at work. Some demographic and exploratory questions were also asked, and respondents were asked to indicate their interest in possible follow-up discussions.

The survey used a non-probability sample, meaning that the results can be taken only as reflecting the views and experiences of the respondents themselves; they cannot be projected to the target population, and a margin of error cannot be calculated. That being said, the survey sample was very large and provided a wealth of opportunities for analysis.

It is also important to note that the questionnaire did not include employees located outside of Part V regions. Therefore, the survey results are specifically related to Part V regions, which are localities where both official languages are particularly present, not only at work, but also in the broader community. The Office of the Commissioner recognizes that official languages are central to the work of many federal employees across Canada, both in and outside of Part V regions. Therefore, in addition to detailing the survey findings relating to employees working in Part V regions, the study report also includes a section that gives special consideration to employees working outside of Part V regions.

This report is divided into three chapters:

- I. What we heard overall: Key findings from the survey results
- II. What we heard from the regions: Feedback from non-Part V regions and detailed survey results from Part V regions
- III. What we learned and what we need to explore further: Possibilities for linguistic security in the federal workplace and opportunities for further research

The report also includes appendices that provide the following:

- A more detailed breakdown of the survey methodology, scope and limitations
- The complete survey questionnaire

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be of interest to public servants, to federal officials and policy makers (including those who have a particular responsibility to advance the equality and use of English and French within their institutions), to researchers both in and outside of government, and to all Canadians who take an interest in the promotion of official languages in Canadian society.

WHAT WE HEARD OVERALL: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY RESULTS

While the results of the survey varied according to region, some key findings emerged from the overall results (regional findings are detailed in Chapter II). These key findings, including overall challenges and opportunities, will help in identifying possibilities for addressing linguistic insecurity in the federal workplace (discussed in Chapter III).

The key findings from the overall survey results are summarized as follows:

1) Official languages matter to public servants working across Canada.

- Thousands of Anglophone and Francophone public servants from across Canada, both in and outside of Part V regions, wanted to talk about their experiences with official languages.
- Many respondents, including Anglophones and Francophones, wanted more opportunities to use French at work.
- Some Anglophone and Francophone respondents wanted more opportunities to use English at work, especially in offices where French predominates.

2) Linguistic insecurity is a challenge in federal offices in Part V regions.

- French first- and second-language linguistic insecurity was a significant challenge in all regions studied: primarily when it came to speaking but also for writing and for asking to be supervised in that language.
- English first- and second-language linguistic insecurity was present in all regions studied, but it was more prevalent in Quebec.

3) The reasons for first- and second-language linguistic insecurity were different but interrelated.

- Respondents who felt uncomfortable using their first official language were often concerned about inconveniencing others.
- Respondents who felt uncomfortable using their second official language were often concerned about the extra effort involved and about being judged.

1) *Official languages matter to public servants working across Canada*

Thousands of Anglophone and Francophone public servants from across Canada, both in and outside of Part V regions, wanted to talk about their experiences with official languages

Public servants working across Canada, including Anglophones and Francophones, care about the use of official languages in the workplace. This was evidenced by the large number of survey responses. The voluntary survey gathered nearly 11,000 complete responses, significantly exceeding the initial target of 1,000, and this during the busy final month of the fiscal year.

More than 5,000 Anglophones and more than 5,000 Francophones completed the survey questionnaire. Hundreds and sometimes thousands of responses were received from each of the regions studied. The respondents were predominantly female (61%), most were between 35 and 54 years old (59%), and 30% were managing or supervising other individuals. More than 5,000 respondents—roughly half of all respondents—took the time to write comments for the open questions, and more than 2,000 respondents expressed an interest in participating in potential follow-up discussions.

and PRA received correspondence from public servants from all corners of the country expressing a desire to participate in the survey. The current designation of Part V regions, which dates from 1977, did not appear to reflect the needs, realities and values of these public servants.

Many respondents, including Anglophones and Francophones, wanted more opportunities to use French at work

Overall, a significant portion of survey respondents said they would welcome the opportunity to use both official languages—particularly French—more frequently. As indicated in Figure 1, around 40% of both Anglophone and Francophone respondents would like more opportunities to use French at work.

The percentages increased when language environment and ability were considered. Among Anglophones with at least moderate French-language reading, writing and speaking skills and working in English-predominant environments, 53% wanted more opportunities to use French at work. Among Francophones working in English-predominant environments, 70% wanted more opportunities to use French at work. Given that French-language linguistic insecurity was a real issue for many Anglophone and Francophone respondents, the interest expressed by members of both groups to use French more often at work can be seen as encouraging. The challenge is there, but so, too, are the potential means to address it.

The receptive bilingualism of some Anglophones (being able to understand a language without necessarily being able to speak it or to write in it) may also provide potential opportunities for Francophones and Anglophones who wish to use French more often in the workplace. Whereas 61% of Anglophone respondents had at least a moderate ability to speak French, even more (72%) had at least a moderate ability to understand spoken French; and whereas 55% had at least a moderate ability to write in French, still more (78%) had at least a moderate ability to understand written French.

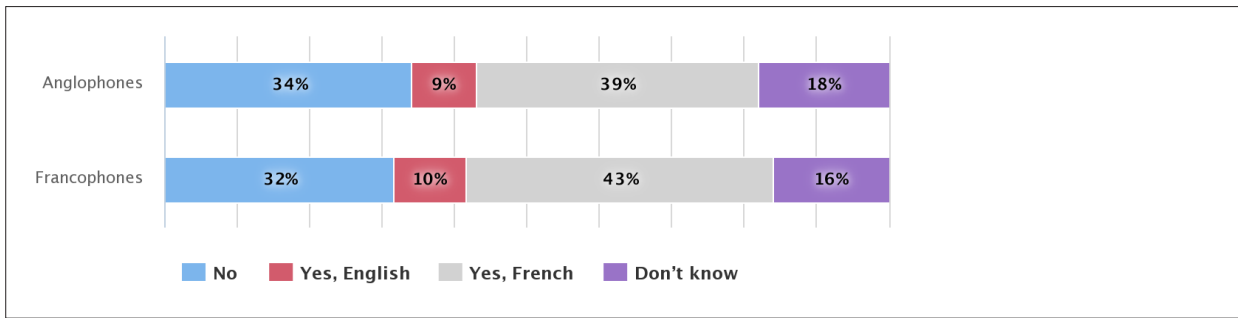
Table 1: Distribution of survey respondents from Part V regions

	Anglophones	Francophones	Total
National Capital Region	85.6% (4,316)	73% (4,223)	78.9% (8,539)
Quebec outside the National Capital Region	5.7% (289)	19.7% (1,142)	13.2% (1,431)
Ontario outside the National Capital Region	3.6% (183)	1.9% (110)	2.7% (293)
New Brunswick	5.1% (255)	5.4% (310)	5.2% (565)
Total	100% (5,043)	100% (5,785)	100% (10,828)

The administration of the survey also showed that public servants working outside of Part V regions are interested in how official languages are used in the workplace. More than 4,000 respondents from federal offices in non-Part V regions attempted to complete the questionnaire, including more than 2,000 from outside of the National Capital Region, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. The Office of the Commissioner

Figure 1. Opportunities to use English or French at work

Question: Would you like to have more opportunities to use English or French at work? (n=5,043 for Anglophones and n=5,785 for Francophones)



(Note: the percentages for Francophones add up to over 100% due to rounding)

Given that Francophone respondents' main reason for potential unease in speaking or writing in French was the perception that colleagues may not be comfortable in that language (see Table 2), a greater awareness of Anglophone colleagues' receptive bilingualism and of the desire of some Anglophone and Francophone colleagues to use French more often could help Francophones to feel more comfortable using French at work. The same could be said for English in instances where Anglophones have experienced unease in the language—in work environments where French predominates, it could be that some Anglophone and Francophone colleagues would like to use English more often.

The 2017 report of the Clerk of the Privy Council, [*The next level: Normalizing a culture of inclusive linguistic duality in the Federal Public Service workplace*](#), also considered the potential of receptive bilingualism:

If all employees understood their second official language (even without necessarily being able to speak or write it), everyone would be able to use the official language of their choice while being assured that they could be understood by their colleagues.

Receptive bilingualism could be leveraged in contexts where employees who are interacting with each other are at a similar level in an organization's hierarchical structure. It is important to note, however, that those in a supervisory or employee service delivery role are still required to use the official language of the employee's choice in Part V regions.

Some Anglophone and Francophone respondents wanted more opportunities to use English at work, especially in offices where French predominates

Among survey respondents, 9% of Anglophones and 10% of Francophones stated that they would like to have more opportunities to use English at work. The percentages increased when language environment and ability were considered. Among Francophones with at least moderate English-language reading, writing and speaking skills and working in French-predominant environments, 35% wanted more opportunities to use English at work. Among Anglophones working in French-predominant environments, 47% wanted more opportunities to use English at work.

**2) Linguistic insecurity is a challenge
in federal offices in Part V regions**

French first- and second-language linguistic insecurity was a significant challenge in all regions studied, primarily when it came to speaking but also for writing and for asking to be supervised in that language

Respondents were asked whether they had ever felt or would ever feel uncomfortable using their first official language in their current job, and those who had at least a minimal knowledge of their second official language were also asked whether they had ever felt or would ever feel uncomfortable using their second official language.

Overall, there were far more respondents who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in French than those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in English, although results sometimes varied by region. Discomfort in speaking French was the most common type of linguistic insecurity cited by respondents, followed by writing in French and then asking to be supervised in French.

Among all Francophone respondents, 44% said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using French at work, and in each region studied the percentage was at least 22%.

Among all Anglophone respondents with at least some French-language ability, 39% said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using French at work, and in each region studied the percentage was at least 39%, except in Quebec outside the National Capital Region, where 16% of Anglophone respondents said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using French at work.

English first- and second-language linguistic insecurity was present in all regions studied, but it was more prevalent in Quebec

Although much less common than French-language linguistic insecurity, linguistic insecurity was experienced in English in all regions by some respondents, who reported that they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in English, primarily in terms of speaking English, followed by writing and then asking to be supervised in English.

Among all Anglophone respondents, 15% said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using English at work, and in each region studied the percentage was at least 8%. In Quebec outside the National Capital Region, 32% of Anglophone respondents said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using English at work.

Figure 2. Francophone respondents' (potential) discomfort using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French or asking to use English/French in your current job?
(n=5,780 for Francophones in English, n=5,784 for Francophones in French)

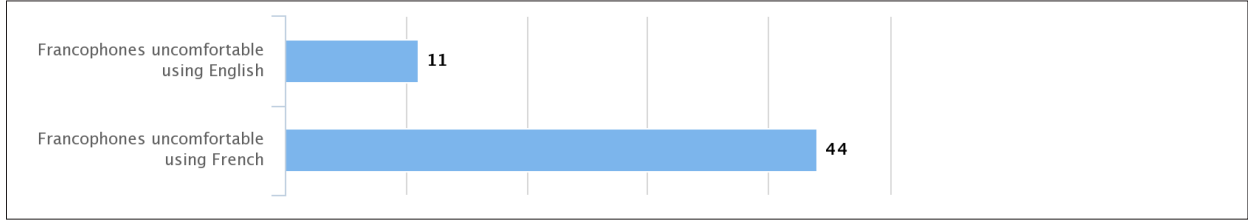
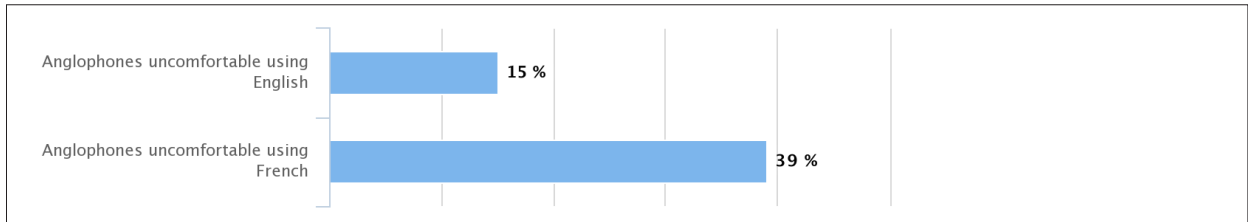


Figure 3. Anglophone respondents' (potential) discomfort using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French or asking to use English/French in your current job?
(n=5,043 for Anglophones in English, n=4,751 for Anglophones in French)



Among all Francophone respondents with at least some English-language ability, 11% said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using English at work, and in each region studied the percentage was at least 2%. In Quebec outside the National Capital Region, 18% of Francophone respondents with at least some English-language ability said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using English at work.

3) *The reasons for first- and second-language linguistic insecurity were different but interrelated*

When respondents reported that they did not feel comfortable using English or French, or if they said they were not sure, they were then asked to specify whether they felt uncomfortable writing in the language, whether they felt uncomfortable speaking it in meetings or in conversations with colleagues, and (for those who indicated a preference for supervision in the language) whether they felt uncomfortable asking to be supervised in the language. Those who reported feeling uncomfortable writing, speaking or asking to be supervised in the language were then asked to explain why.

While linguistic insecurity in French was more common than linguistic insecurity in English, there were notable similarities between respondents' reasons for French first-language discomfort and English first-language discomfort, and between respondents' reasons for French second-language discomfort and English second-language discomfort. Work environment factors were also important for both first- and second-language linguistic insecurity.

Interestingly, the most frequently cited reasons for first- and second-language discomfort appeared to be interrelated. Whereas second-language speakers were more concerned about not being strong enough in the language and about being judged when trying to use it, first-language speakers were more concerned about inconveniencing colleagues (or even supervisors) whom they thought might themselves feel uncomfortable using the language. This suggests that it may be possible to address first- and second-language linguistic insecurity in ways that are complementary and mutually reinforcing (explored in Chapter III).

Respondents who felt uncomfortable using their first official language were often concerned about inconveniencing others

Among Anglophones and Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking, writing or asking to be supervised in their first official language (see Table 2):

- the most frequent explanation was that it would inconvenience colleagues or supervisors who might not be comfortable in the language, or that it would be bothersome or cause trouble;
- for discomfort in speaking or writing, the perception that the language wasn't often used in the workplace and the tendency of colleagues to switch languages were also important factors; and
- for French-language discomfort in writing, a lack of requests from senior management for French-language material was also an important factor.

Table 2: Reasons why Anglophones and Francophones felt uncomfortable in their *first* official language, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable

Table 2a: Reasons why Anglophones and Francophones felt uncomfortable in their *first* official language, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in the language

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones and Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in their first official language*

Anglophones in English	Francophones in French
3% (154)	19% (1,126)

Reasons**	Anglophones in English	Francophones in French
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in the language	38%	74%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	56%	54%
I don't want to bother my supervisor	38%	36%
I didn't know that I had the right to be supervised in the language	9%	8%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	3%	1%
I'm not strong enough in the language	1%	<1%
Other	29%	17%
Don't know	3%	1%

Table 2b: Reasons why Anglophones and Francophones felt uncomfortable in their *first* official language, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in the language

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones and Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in their first official language*

Anglophones in English	Francophones in French
3% (129)	27% (1,126)

Reasons**	Anglophones in English	Francophones in French
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in the language	51%	78%
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in the language	16%	35%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	27%	40%
Senior management doesn't request or expect written material in the language	20%	62%
The language isn't often used where I work	29%	63%
Extra time would be needed for translation	12%	32%
My grammar, vocabulary or spelling might be corrected or judged	5%	5%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	4%	6%
Other	40%	17%
Don't know	3%	<1%

Table 2c: Reasons why Anglophones and Francophones felt uncomfortable in their *first* official language, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking the language in meetings or with colleagues

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones and Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking their first official language in meetings or with colleagues*

Anglophones in English	Francophones in French
7% (377)	37% (2,158)

Reasons**	Anglophones in English	Francophones in French
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in the language	49%	89%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	24%	32%
I don't want to bother others	25%	21%
The language isn't often used where I work	21%	38%
Colleagues tend to just switch to the other language when I try to speak it	31%	34%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	4%	3%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	2%	1%
Other	36%	17%
Don't know	3%	1%

*Note: The percentages of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each situation are based on the total number of respondents who were asked whether they would feel uncomfortable using the language more generally while at work.

**Note: The percentages for each reason given are based on the total number of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each given situation. More than one answer could be selected. The percentages in bold indicate the three most common responses given by the respondent group for each situation.

Respondents who felt uncomfortable using their second language were often concerned about the extra effort involved and about being judged

Among Anglophones and Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking or writing in their second official language (see Table 3):

- the most frequent explanation was that they were out of practice and that it would take extra effort, followed closely by the concern that their ability in the language would be questioned or judged;
- the perception that the language wasn't often used in the workplace was also an important factor; and
- the tendency of colleagues to switch to the other language in meetings and in conversations was an important factor, especially for Anglophones trying to speak French.

Table 3: Reasons why Anglophones and Francophones felt uncomfortable in their *second* official language, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable

Table 3a: Reasons why Anglophones and Francophones felt uncomfortable in their *second* official language, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in the language

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones and Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in their second official language*

Anglophones in French	Francophones in English
1% (53)	1% (34)

Reasons**	Anglophones in French	Francophones in English
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in the language	55%	38%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	26%	59%
I don't want to bother my supervisor	25%	41%
I didn't know that I had the right to be supervised in the language	6%	9%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	23%	24%
I'm not strong enough in the language	23%	3%
Other	17%	21%
Don't know	0%	0%

Table 3b: Reasons why Anglophones and Francophones felt uncomfortable in their *second* official language, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in the language

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones and Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in their second official language*

Anglophones in French	Francophones in English
28% (1,314)	5% (311)

Reasons**	Anglophones in French	Francophones in English
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in the language	18%	9%
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in the language	6%	3%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	3%	5%
Senior management doesn't request or expect written material in the language	20%	7%
The language isn't often used where I work	26%	15%
Extra time would be needed for translation	46%	23%
My grammar, vocabulary or spelling might be corrected or judged	67%	68%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	72%	70%
Other	24%	11%
Don't know	1%	2%

Table 3c: Reasons why Anglophones and Francophones felt uncomfortable in their *second* official language, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking the language in meetings or with colleagues

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones and Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking their second official language in meetings or with colleagues*

Anglophones in French	Francophones in English
34% (1,604)	9% (525)

Reasons**	Anglophones in French	Francophones in English
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in the language	19%	10%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	2%	5%
I don't want to bother others	15%	8%
The language isn't often used where I work	23%	15%
Colleagues tend to just switch to the other language when I try to speak it	42%	13%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	61%	63%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	69%	65%
Other	24%	14%
Don't know	1%	1%

*Note: The percentages of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each situation are based on the total number who were asked whether they would feel uncomfortable using the language more generally while at work.

**Note: The percentages for each reason given are based on the total number of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each given situation. More than one answer could be selected. The percentages in bold indicate the three most common responses given by the respondent group for each situation.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE REGIONS: FEEDBACK FROM NON-PART V REGIONS AND DETAILED SURVEY RESULTS FROM PART V REGIONS

Before discussing potential strategies to address the challenge of linguistic insecurity, it is important to look at the regional perspectives and realities in light of the different language environments and contexts in which federal employees work in different parts of the country.

Feedback from employees outside of Part V regions is presented first, followed by a detailed breakdown of survey data from each of the Part V regions.

1. FEEDBACK FROM EMPLOYEES OUTSIDE OF PART V REGIONS

English and French are used in certain federal workplaces in all provinces and territories both for providing services to the public and as languages of work. In offices outside of Part V regions, co-workers may still use both English and French in their day-to-day operations with each other and with colleagues in different parts of the country (e.g., via conference calls, virtual teams). Moreover, some employees in non-Part V regions have Part V obligations (e.g., individuals working in a departmental head office located in a non-Part V region can have Part V responsibilities toward individuals in a satellite office located within a Part V region).

Early in the development of the survey, the Office of the Commissioner and PRA made the difficult methodological decision to limit eligible respondents to Part V regions in order to ensure that the results reflected the experiences of employees who had the right—and therefore the opportunity and even the expectation—to work in either or both official languages. Federal institutions were asked to circulate the questionnaire only to employees in Part V regions; the questionnaire opened with an explanation that it was intended for Part V regions; and respondents who said that they worked outside a Part V region were screened out early in the survey.

Despite this, 4,044 responses were received from federal public servants in more than 60 different institutions attempting to participate in the survey but who were screened out because they did not work in a Part V region. This included:

- 927 from non-Part V localities within Ontario;
- 873 from non-Part V localities within Quebec; and
- 2,244 from provinces and territories other than Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

The Office of the Commissioner and PRA received dozens of e-mails from federal employees across the country who wanted to participate in the survey. Some were perplexed, as they were under the impression that employees in an office that provided services to the public in both languages also automatically had the right to work in either language. Others were disappointed or even frustrated, explaining that official languages were personally and professionally important to them, that they often worked in both languages, served the public in both languages, and that they interacted with colleagues in both languages in other parts of the country.

Individuals from non-Part V regions who contacted the Office of the Commissioner and PRA directly were invited to provide written responses to the questionnaire's open questions in the official language of their choice. Four of these individuals did so. Their responses illustrated the value that they placed on official languages and the importance of being able to work in both languages. Below are a few examples of their comments:

I enjoy communicating with my co-workers because we often switch language mid-conversation. I'm proud to be fluently bilingual in French and English.

When receiving correspondence and/or e-mails from management, it would be more than helpful if they were bilingual so I don't have to request it be translated to my official language of choice, which I often have to do.

As a manager who works at a non-designated office and is responsible for employees in a designated bilingual office in the [National Capital Region], it would be great if this type of scenario would be considered when discussing [official languages]. Technology changes the landscape of 'regions' and [official languages] must be considered in these scenarios.

We take our roles very seriously when it comes to the [official languages] obligations. We truly exist because of [official languages], yet I wouldn't say that we have the most current training and knowledge required, especially since we are not located in a designated bilingual area. Are we at a disadvantage in a non-designated area when required to provide content in both official languages?

Second-language courses should be available to employees who want to improve their language skills.
[translation]

Many talented Francophone candidates have been refused bilingual positions here (in an English region) simply because their English isn't good enough, but the employer could give them a chance to improve their English through structured training courses.
[translation]

It's important for employees to feel that their manager or supervisor supports them in their using the language of their choice in their workplace and that their manager or supervisor supports and even encourages them to learn a second language.
[translation]

It's worrying to see that a few people in positions of power seem to be able to set a certain tone or example that often has a negative impact on the workplace's linguistic minority. [translation]

While the survey results from Part V regions cannot be extrapolated to non-Part V regions, it is possible that some of the findings could be consistent with realities in these offices. For example, respondents in offices in Part V regions where English predominates were more likely to want to have more opportunities to use their French; it is possible that this could also be the case among bilingual employees outside of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and the National Capital Region, in regions that also tend to have English-predominant work environments. In addition, the possibility that, if employees are made to feel more comfortable using both English and French with their colleagues they might feel more confident using both when interacting with the public (see Figure 56) should be of particular interest in offices outside of Part V regions that have Part IV obligations (communications with and services to the public). These issues merit further study and analysis.

2. DETAILED OVERVIEW OF SURVEY RESPONSES BY REGION

Although the Office of the Commissioner and PRA heard from public servants working in all Part V regions, some regions were better represented than others. (See Table 1 in Chapter I.) Chapter II presents a detailed breakdown of the results for each Part V region and shows the situation and challenges among respondents within each region and how these can be related to the overall results.

Distribution of respondents within each region

The distribution of respondents within each region was as follows:

- National Capital Region: 8,539 respondents

This region includes Ottawa, Ontario, and Gatineau, Quebec. The National Capital Region was considered to be one unit of analysis because of the similarities in the overall work environment in which federal public servants in the two cities operate (it is not unusual, for example, for a government office to move from one side of the Ottawa River to the other). Just over half (51%) of the respondents from the National Capital Region said that English was their first official language, and just under half (49%) said that French was their first official language. Most of the Anglophones (86%) and Francophones (74%) from the National Capital Region worked on the Ottawa side.

- Quebec, outside the National Capital Region: 1,431 respondents

The vast majority of respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region) were in the Montréal area, but there were also respondents in other regions of the province. Less than a quarter (20%) of the respondents from Quebec (outside the National Capital Region) said that English was their first official language: 95% were in Montréal and its metropolitan area, 3% were in Sherbrooke, and the remaining 2% were located elsewhere in the province. Most (80%) respondents from Quebec (outside the National Capital Region) said that French was their first official language: 93% were in Montréal and its metropolitan area, 5% were in Sherbrooke, and the remaining 2% were located elsewhere.

- Ontario, outside the National Capital Region: 293 respondents

The vast majority of respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region) were in the Sudbury area, but there were also respondents in other regions of the province. Nearly two thirds (62%) of the respondents from Ontario (outside the National Capital Region) said that English was their first official language: 81% were in Sudbury, 8% were in Cornwall, 8% were in Sault Ste. Marie, and the remaining 3% were located elsewhere in the province. Over one third (38%) of the respondents from Ontario (outside the National Capital Region) said that French was their first official language: 76% were in Sudbury, 16% were in Cornwall, and the remainder were located elsewhere.

- New Brunswick: 565 respondents

In New Brunswick, 45% of respondents said that English was their first official language, and 55% said that French was their first official language. Because the province as a whole is a Part V region, all respondents from New Brunswick were grouped together. The data therefore does not allow for a further distribution of respondents by city.

Language skills and preferences

The questionnaire asked respondents which language(s) they preferred to use at work (when writing, being supervised, speaking during meetings and chatting with colleagues). It also asked them to rate their skills in both official languages, how they had learned their second official language, what second-language test results they had received (if any), and whether their position was bilingual. Most respondents (71% of Anglophones and 93% of Francophones) had been tested for language proficiency in their second official language, except for Anglophones in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region). In addition, most respondents (54% of Anglophones and 90% of Francophones) were in positions identified as “Bilingual,” except for Anglophones in New Brunswick and in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region).

Self-evaluation of language skills can be a potential indicator of linguistic insecurity. Generally speaking, Francophones had higher second-language test scores and also tended to evaluate their own second-language skills at a higher level than did Anglophones (although in Quebec outside the National Capital Region, it tended

to be the other way around). Interestingly, this trend persisted even among Anglophones and Francophones with the highest test scores (a “C” or an “E”) for speaking their second language; 58% of Francophones and only 38% of Anglophones in that category evaluated their own second-language speaking skills as “excellent” (a score of 5 out of 5). It is also important to point out that both groups reported a stronger ability to understand their second official language compared to their ability to use it, suggesting that “at-level” receptive bilingualism could be leveraged to encourage a more inclusive language environment. With regard to first-language abilities, the overall results of the two language groups’ self-evaluations were similar, although Anglophone respondents were more likely to give themselves a “5” for writing in English (92%) compared to Francophones, who were somewhat less likely to give themselves a “5” for writing in French (79%).

When asked where they had learned their second official language, media and schooling were the most common responses among Francophones who had learned at least some English. Community and home were also very important, especially for Francophones in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region) and in New Brunswick. For Anglophones who had learned at least some French, the education system (basic courses and immersion programs) was the most important, along with federal government training. For Anglophones in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region) community and media were also important. These findings underscore the importance of ensuring access to French second-language education for Anglophones before they enter the public service, and the need for continued access to language learning opportunities and skills retention in the workplace.

When it came to language preferences in the workplace, for Anglophones and Francophones in all regions, “chatting with colleagues” was the situation in which respondents were most likely to prefer using both official languages, suggesting that this might be an optimal medium for encouraging a greater presence for both languages in the workplace.

Among respondents who preferred to use only one language in a given situation, Anglophones and Francophones were both more likely to prefer using their first official language. There were some notable exceptions, however. For example, in both Ontario (outside the National Capital Region) and New Brunswick, there were more Francophones who preferred writing only in English to writing only in French. The higher proportion of Francophones who preferred to work in English (or in “English or French”) in some contexts—relative to Anglophones who preferred to work in French or in “English or French”—was consistent with Francophones having relatively stronger second-language skills. It is also important to note that among Francophone respondents who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable writing in French, those from New Brunswick and Ontario (outside the National Capital Region) were more likely than those from Quebec and the National Capital Region to have stated that they were “out of practice,” that “extra time would be needed for translation,” and that they were concerned that their writing might be “corrected or judged” (see Table 5).

Figures 4 through 35 show the language skills and preferences of each language group and in each region.

Language skills and preferences of Anglophones in the National Capital Region

Figure 4. Language preference for Anglophone respondents in the National Capital Region
Question: What is your language preference for...? (n=4,316)

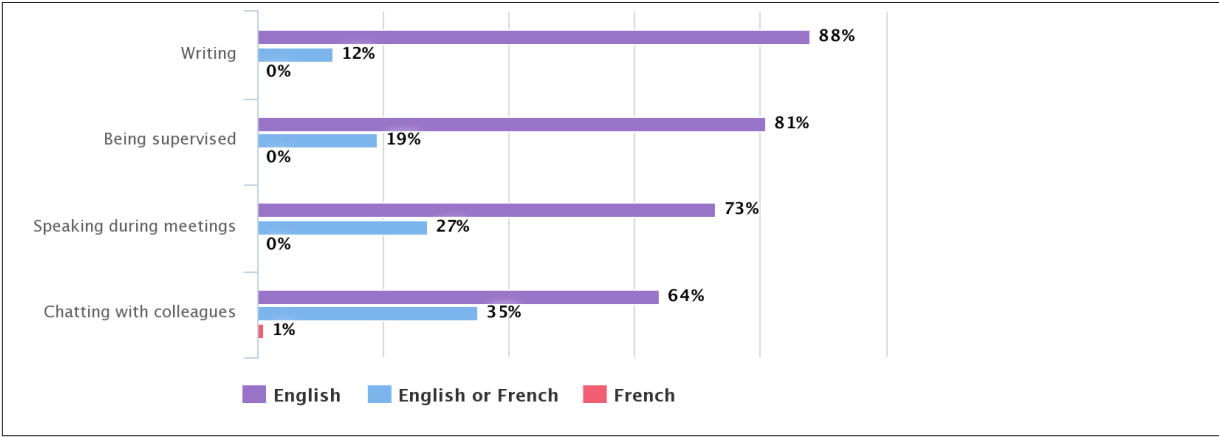


Figure 5. French test results for Anglophone respondents in the National Capital Region
Question: What is the most recent score you received for...? (n=3,137)

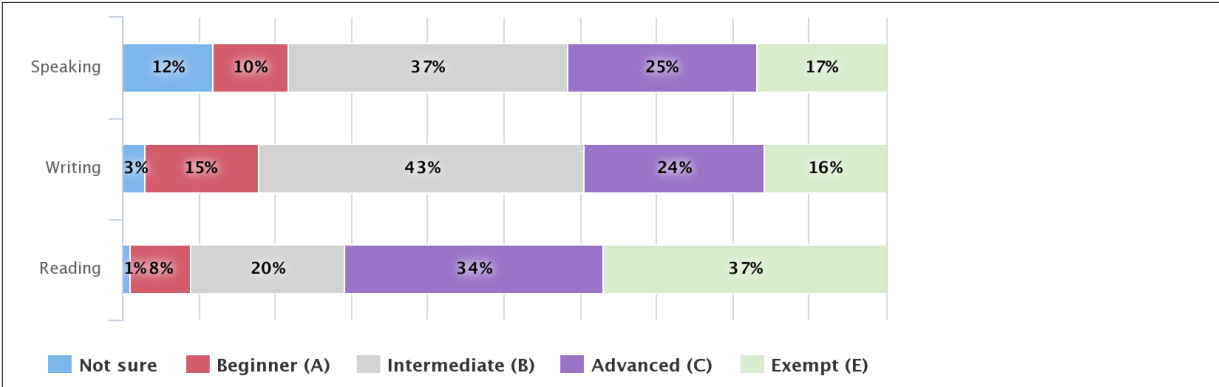


Figure 6. Self-reported French skills for Anglophone respondents in the National Capital Region
Question: How would you rate your French language skills (1 to 5 scale)? (n=4,316)

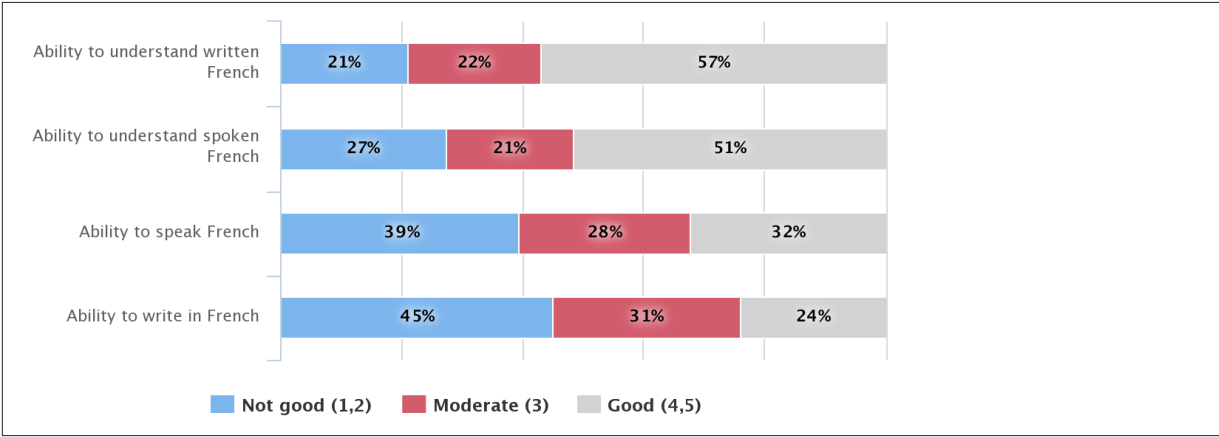
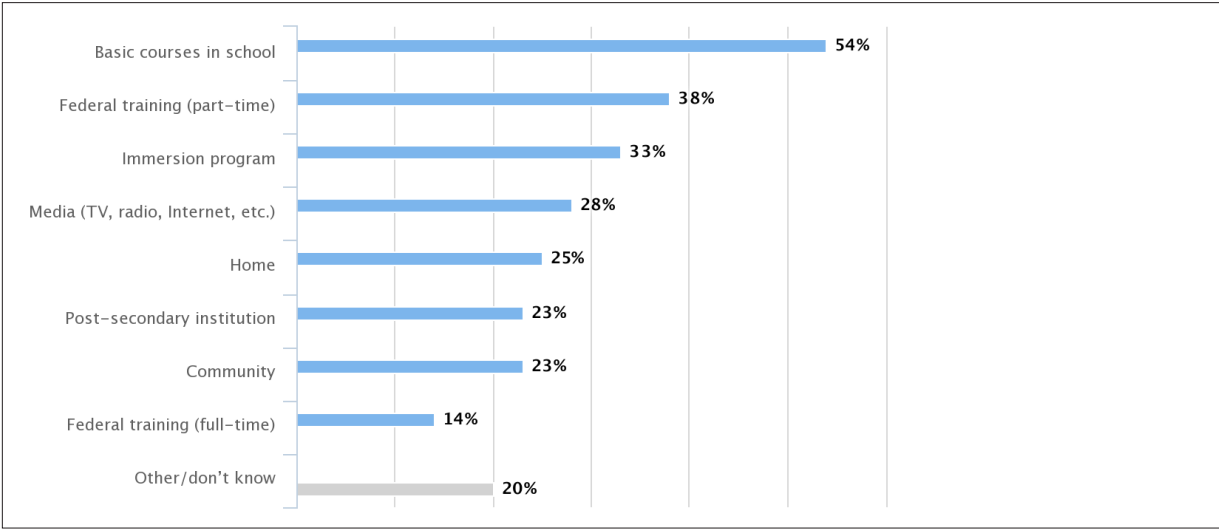


Figure 7. How French was learned by Anglophone respondents in the National Capital Region
 Question: Where did you learn your second official language? (n=4,087 - More than one answer could be selected)



Language skills and preferences of Anglophones in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)

Figure 8. Language preference for Anglophone respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What is your language preference for...? (n=289)

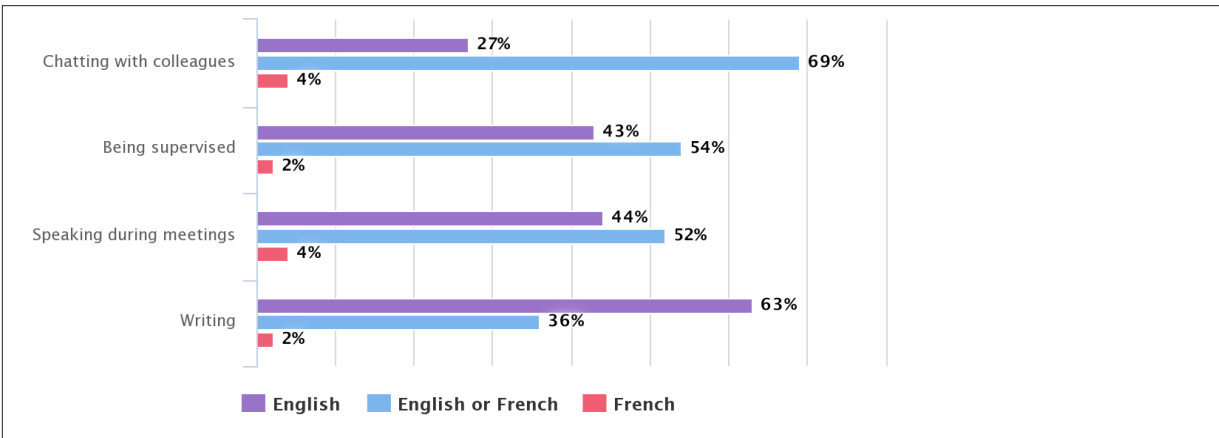


Figure 9. French test results for Anglophone respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What is the most recent score you received for...? (n=243)

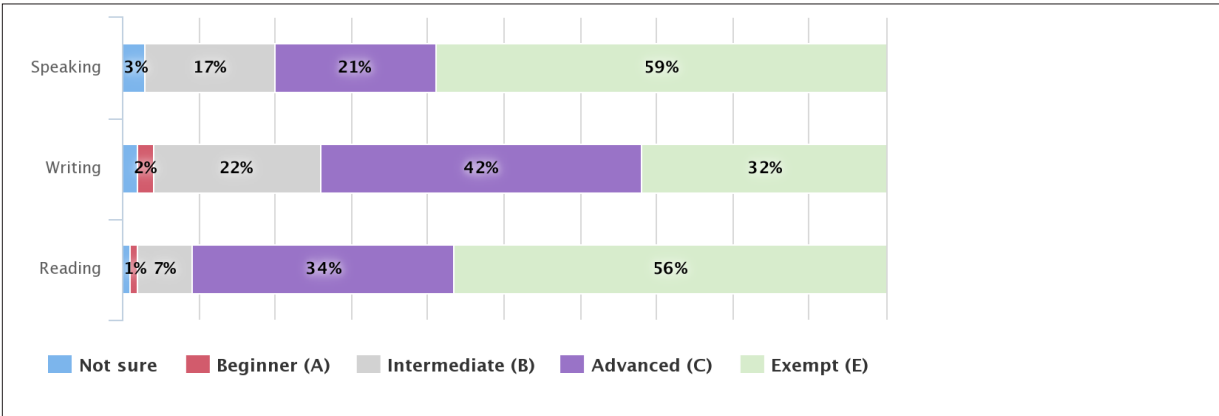


Figure 10. Self-reported French skills for Anglophone respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: How would you rate your French language skills (1 to 5 scale)? (n=289)

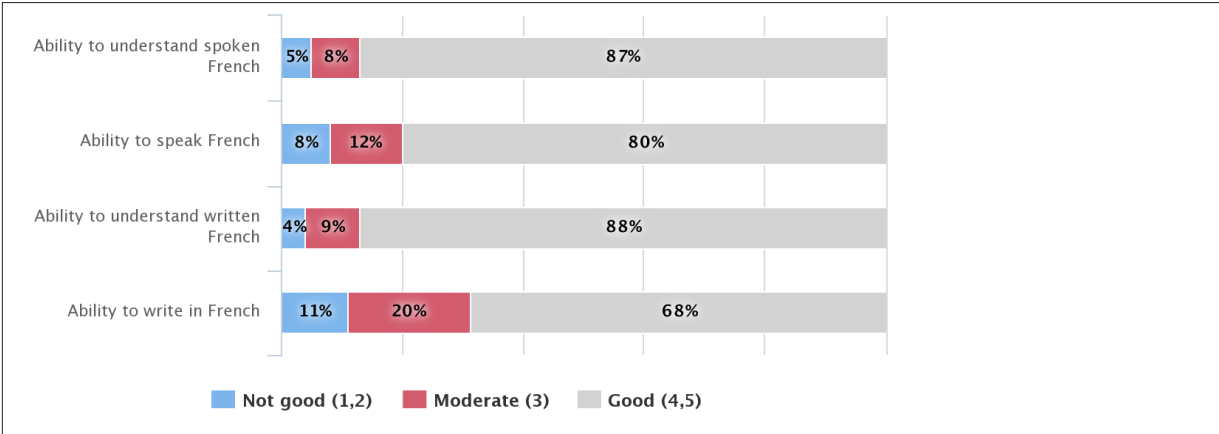
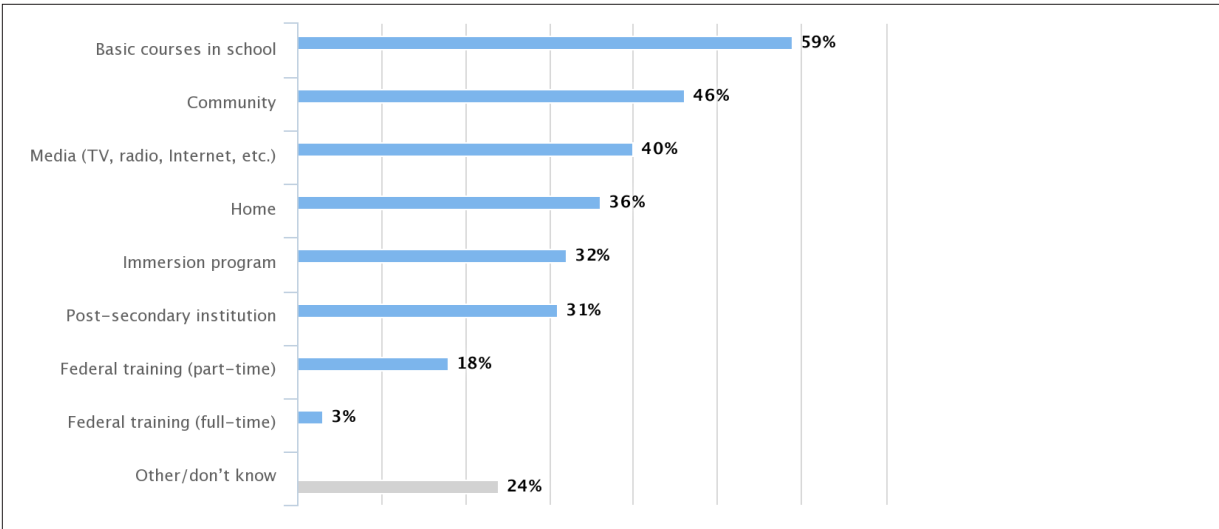


Figure 11. How French was learned by Anglophone respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: Where did you learn your second official language? (n=285 - More than one answer could be selected)



Language skills and preferences of Anglophones in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)

Figure 12. Language preference for Anglophone respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What is your language preference for...? (n=183)

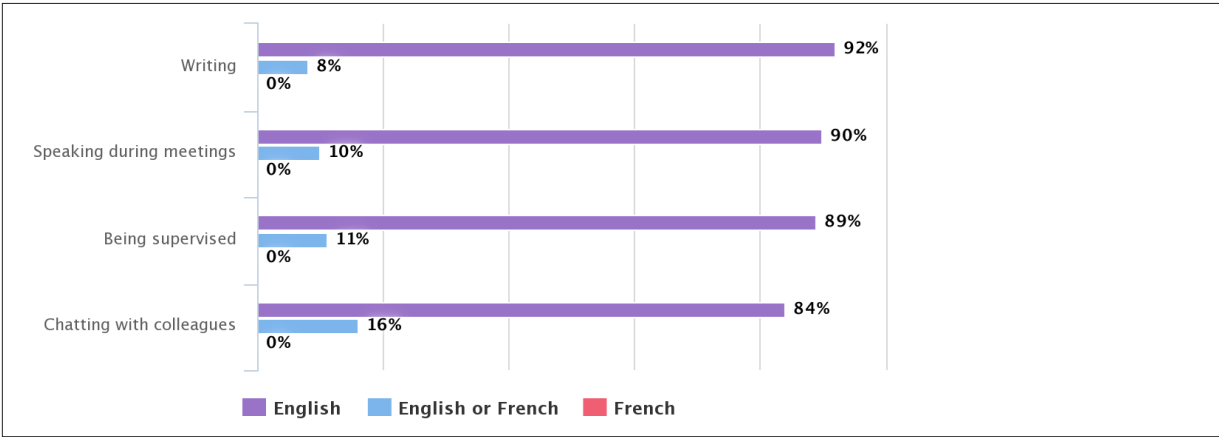


Figure 13. French test results for Anglophone respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What is the most recent score you received for...? (n=65)

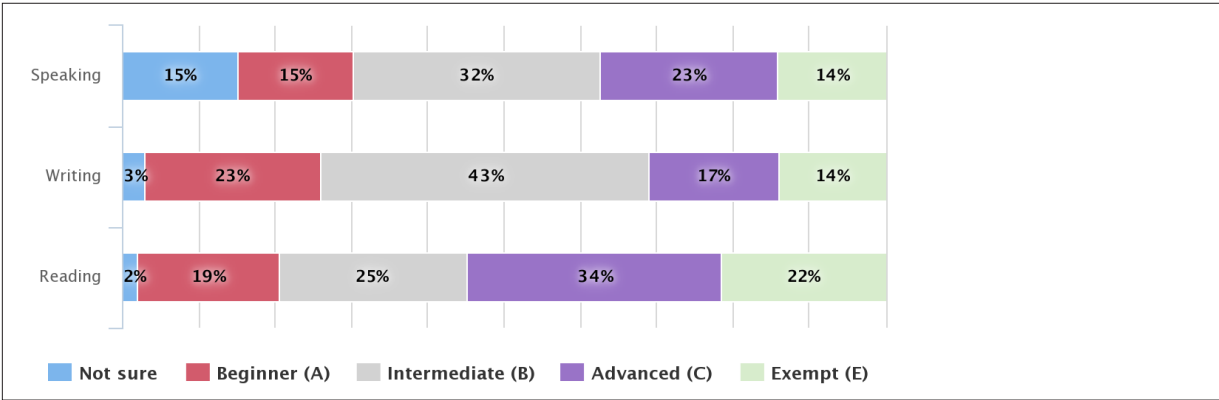


Figure 14. Self-reported French skills for Anglophone respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: How would you rate your French language skills (1 to 5 scale)? (n=183)

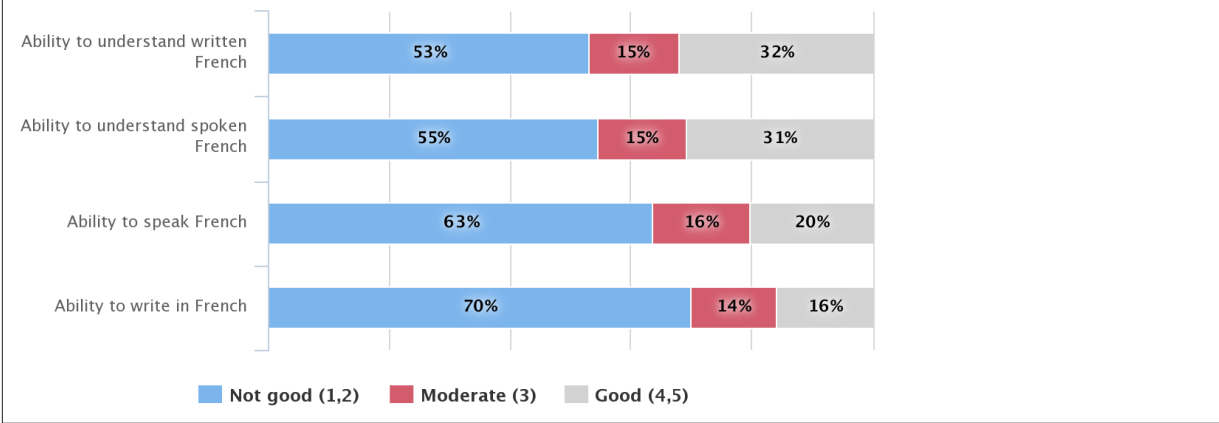
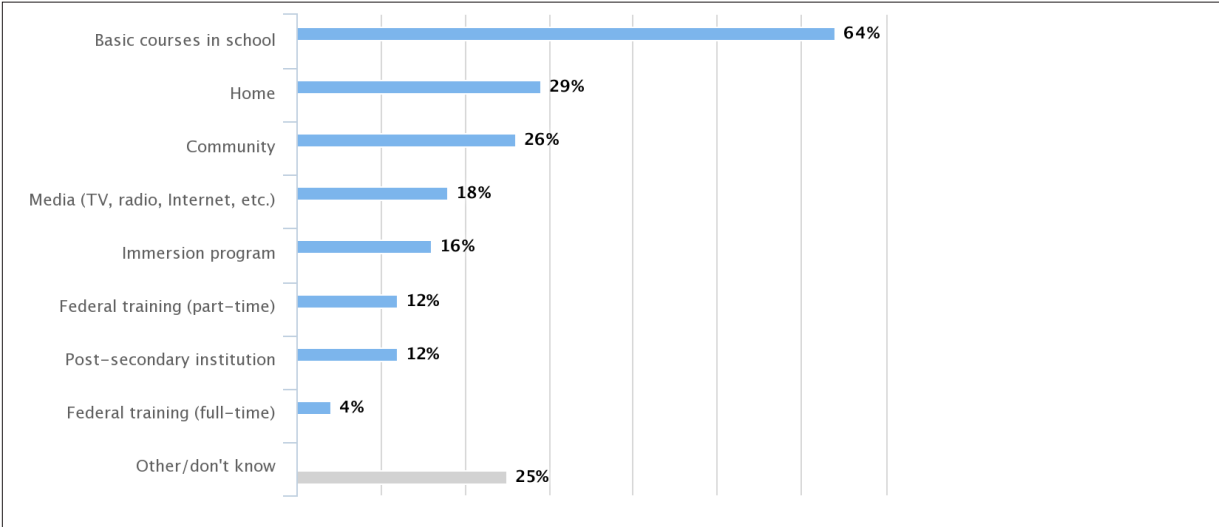


Figure 15. How French was learned by Anglophone respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: Where did you learn your second official language? (n=154 - More than one answer could be selected)



Language skills and preferences of Anglophones in New Brunswick

Figure 16. Language preference for Anglophone respondents in New Brunswick
Question: What is your language preference for...? (n=255)

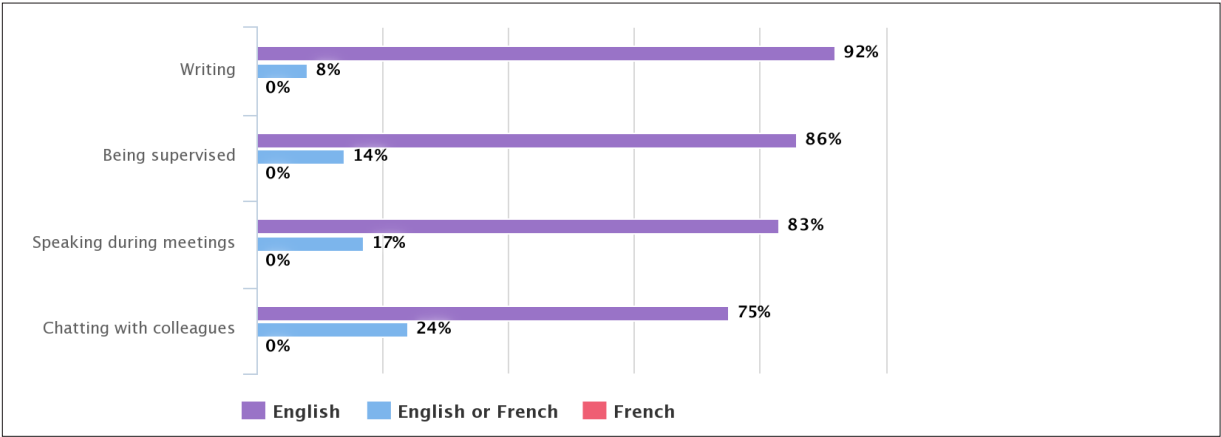


Figure 17. French test results for Anglophone respondents in New Brunswick
Question: What is the most recent score you received for...? (n=135)

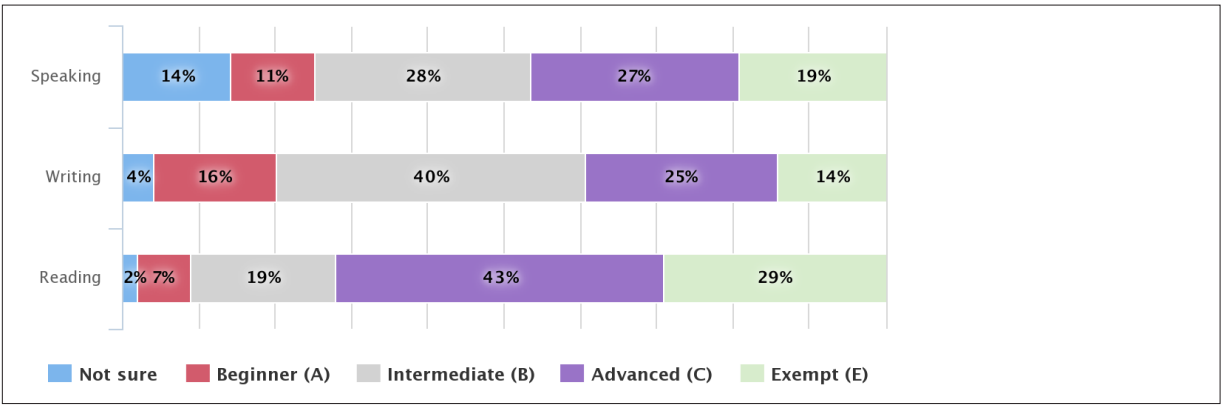


Figure 18. Self-reported French skills for Anglophone respondents in New Brunswick
Question: How would you rate your French language skills (1 to 5 scale)? (n=255)

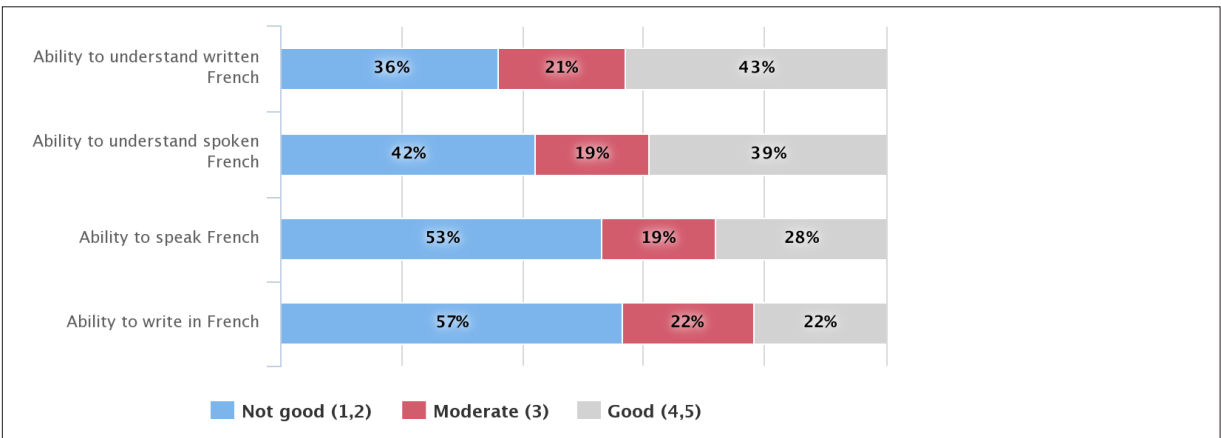
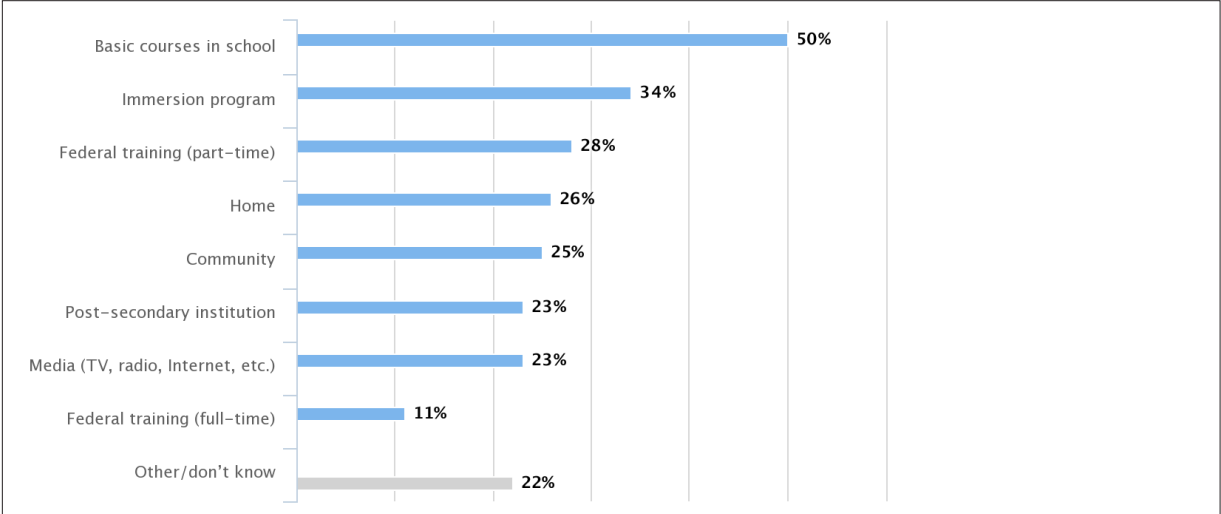


Figure 19. How French was learned by Anglophone respondents in New Brunswick
 Question: Where did you learn your second official language? (n=225 - More than one answer could be selected)



Language skills and preferences of Francophones in the National Capital Region

Figure 20. Language preference for Francophone respondents in the National Capital Region
 Question: What is your language preference for...? (n=4,223)

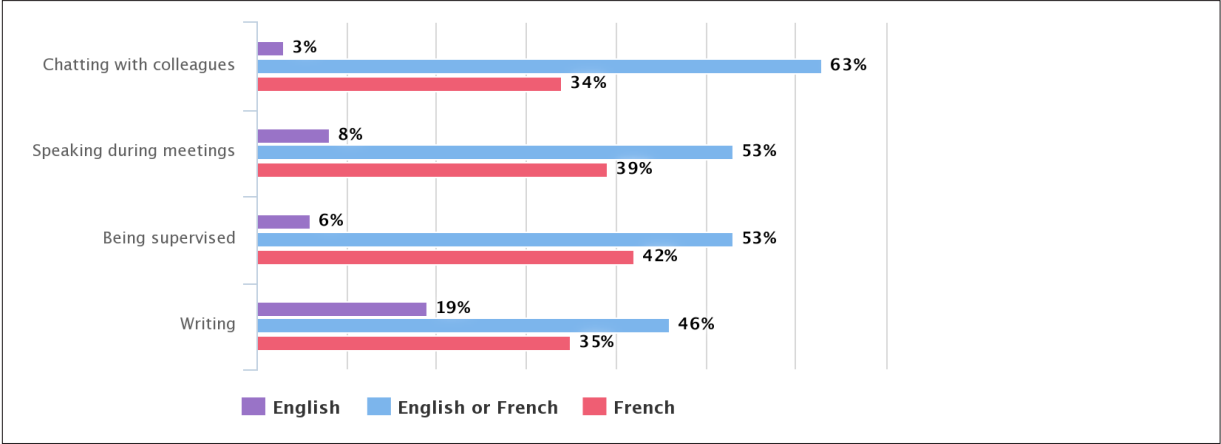


Figure 21. English test results for Francophone respondents in the National Capital Region
 Question: What is the most recent score you received for...? (n=3,998)

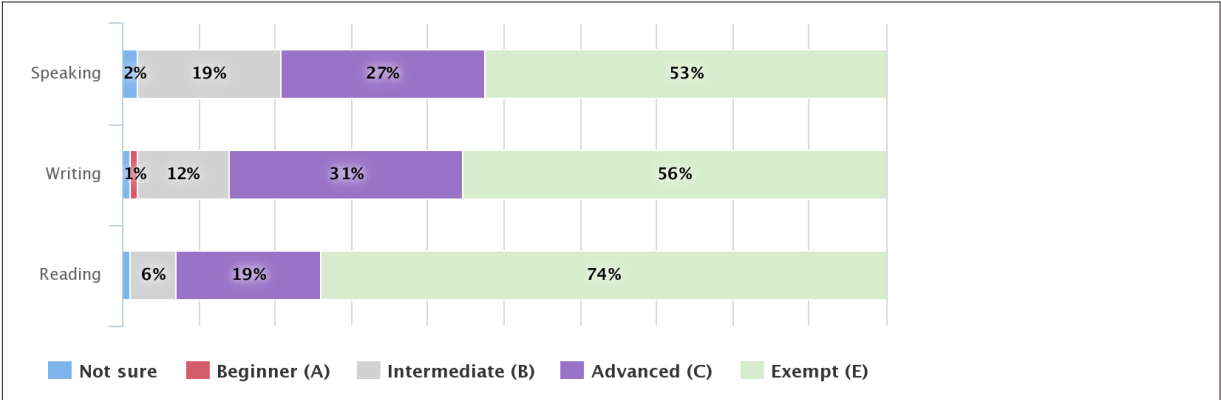


Figure 22. Self-reported English skills for Francophone respondents in the National Capital Region
 Question: How would you rate your English language skills (1 to 5 scale)? (n=4,223)

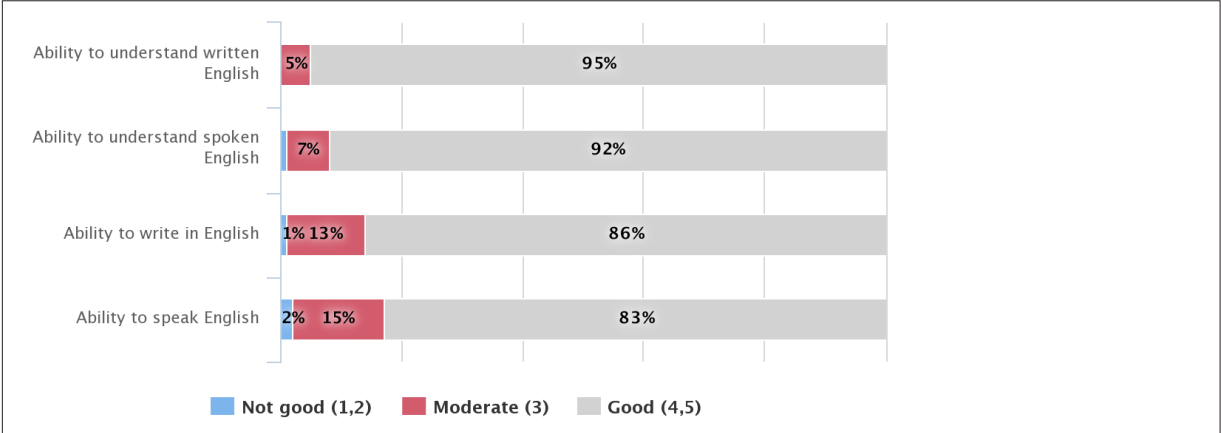
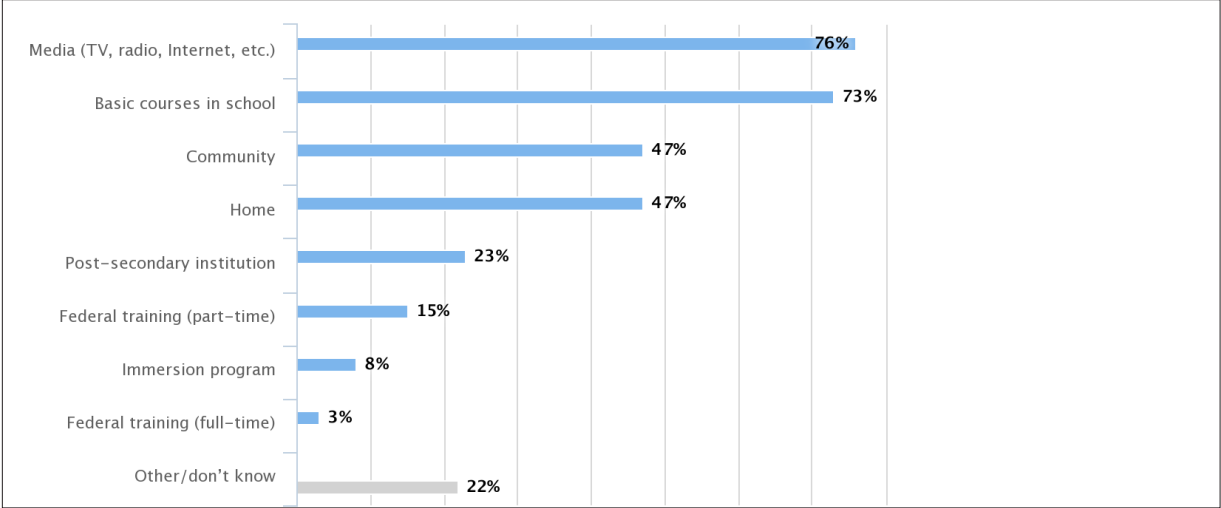


Figure 23. How English was learned by Francophone respondents in the National Capital Region
 Question: Where did you learn your second official language? (n=4,220 - More than one answer could be selected)



Language skills and preferences of Francophones in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)

Figure 24. Language preference for Francophone respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What is your language preference for...? (n=1,142)

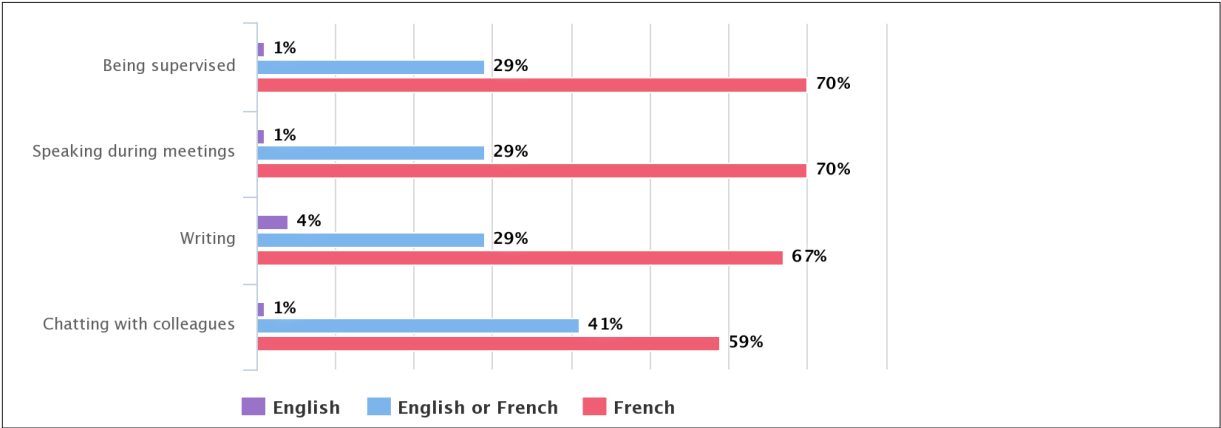


Figure 25. English test results for Francophone respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What is the most recent score you received for...? (n=976)

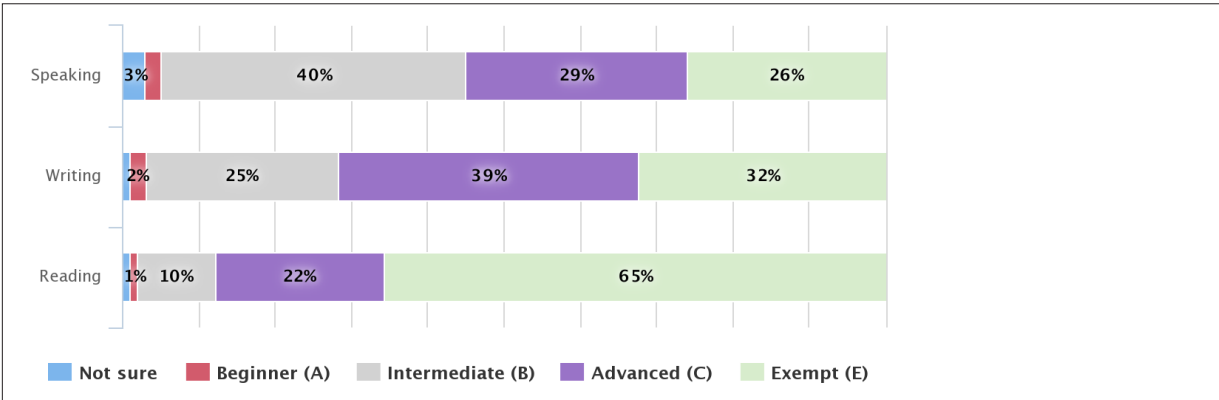


Figure 26. Self-reported English skills for Francophone respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: How would you rate your English language skills (1 to 5 scale)? (n=1,142)

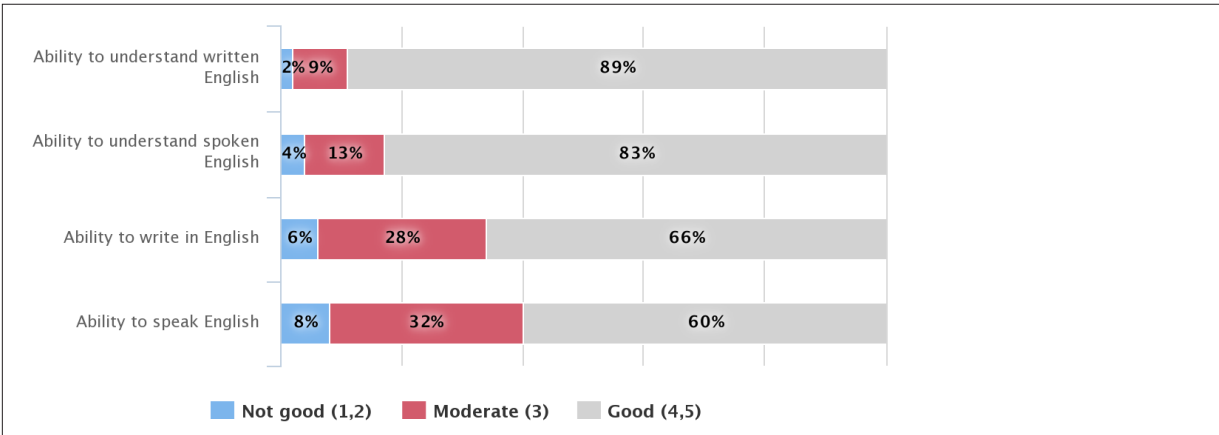
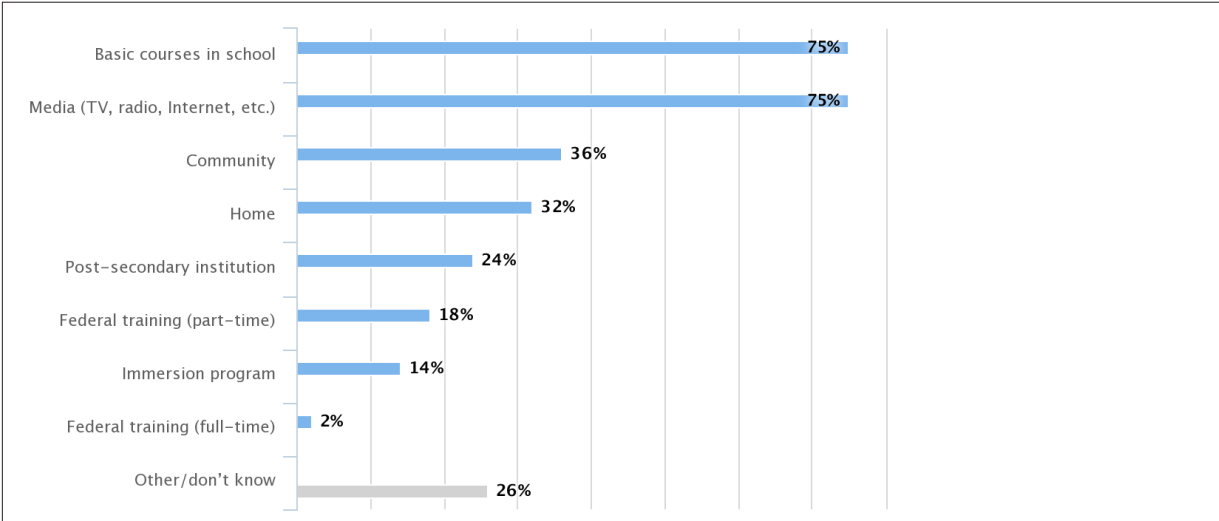


Figure 27. How English was learned by Francophone respondents in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: Where did you learn your second official language? (n=1,140 - More than one answer could be selected)



Language skills and preferences of Francophones in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)

Figure 28. Language preference for Francophone respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
Question: What is your language preference for...? (n=110)

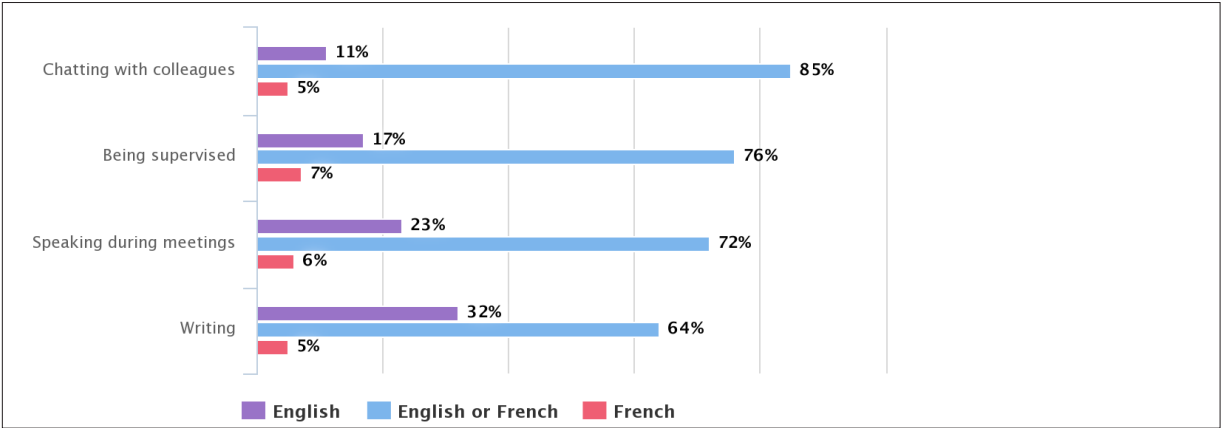


Figure 29. English test results for Francophone respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
Question: What is the most recent score you received for...? (n=103)

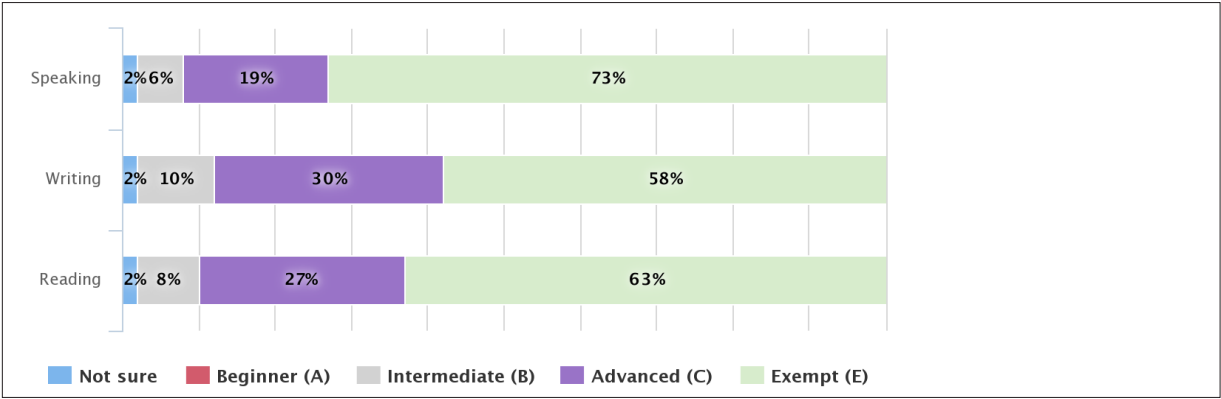


Figure 30. Self-reported English skills for Francophone respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
Question: How would you rate your English language skills (1 to 5 scale)? (n=110)

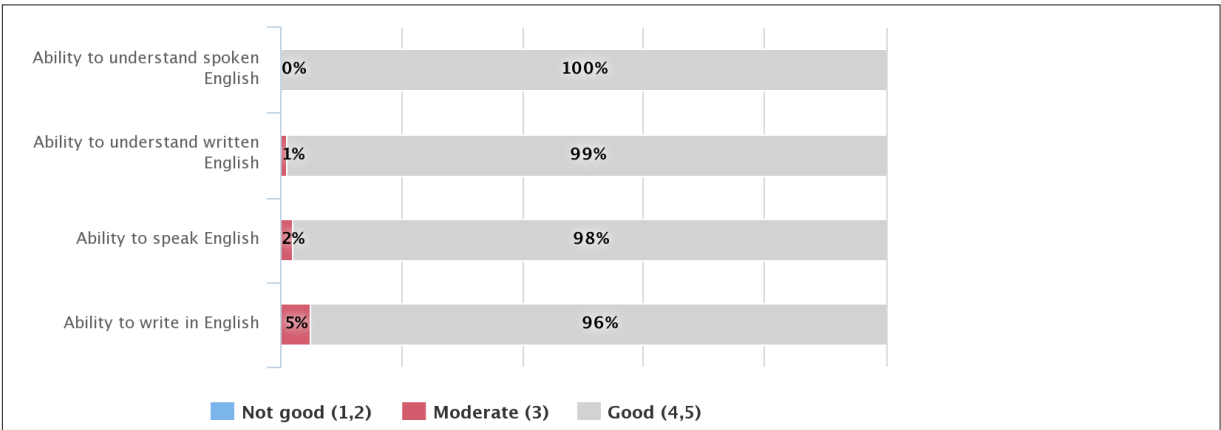
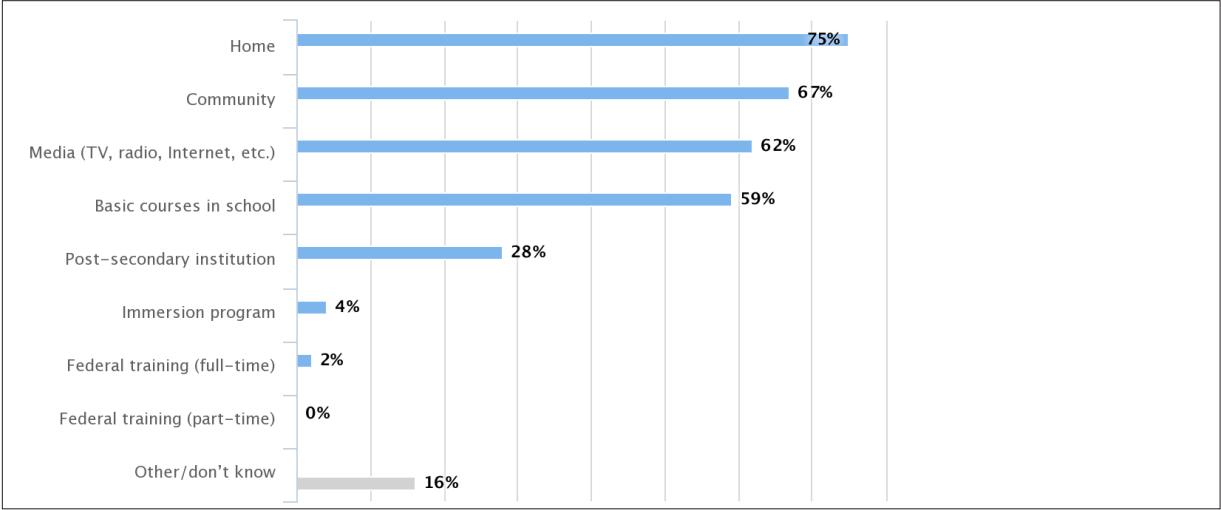


Figure 31. How English was learned by Francophone respondents in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: Where did you learn your second official language? (n=110 - More than one answer could be selected)



Language skills and preferences of Francophones in New Brunswick

Figure 32. Language preference for Francophone respondents in New Brunswick
 Question: What is your language preference for...? (n=310)

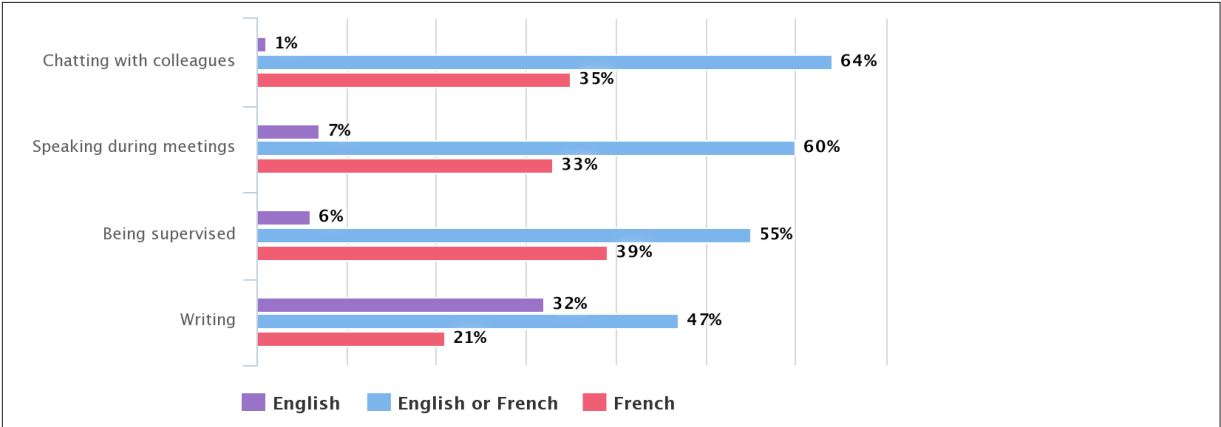


Figure 33. English test results for Francophone respondents in New Brunswick
 Question: What is the most recent score you received for...? (n=291)

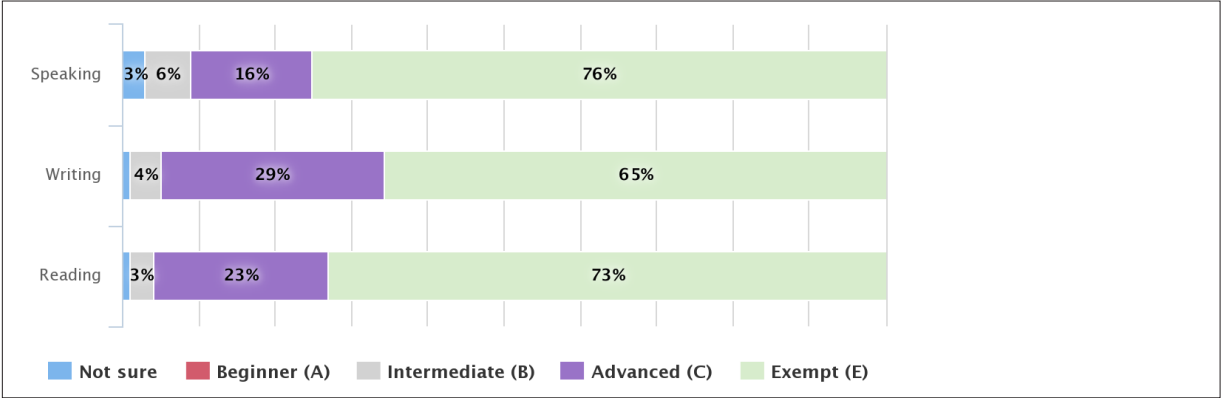


Figure 34. Self-reported English skills for Francophone respondents in New Brunswick

Question: How would you rate your English language skills (1 to 5 scale)? (n=310)

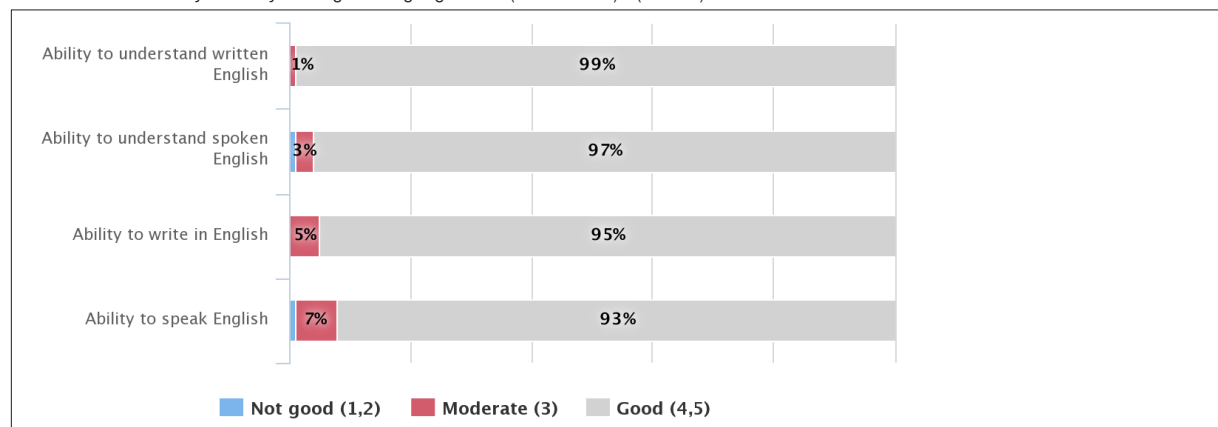
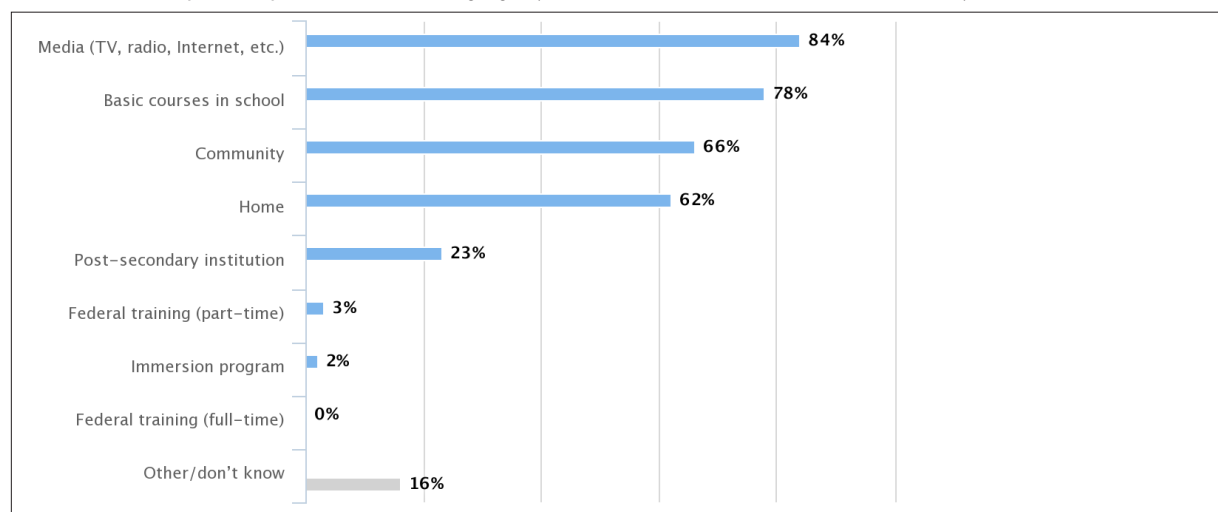


Figure 35. How English was learned by Francophone respondents in New Brunswick

Question: Where did you learn your second official language? (n=310 - More than one answer could be selected)



LANGUAGE-OF-WORK ENVIRONMENT BY REGION

Although results varied between regions, Anglophones and Francophones within the same region tended to report similar trends with regard to the language(s) used by colleagues and senior management:

- In the National Capital Region, English was more prevalent, but French was also used often.
- In Quebec (outside the National Capital Region), French was more prevalent, but English was also used often.
- In Ontario (outside the National Capital Region), English was predominant, and French was used much less often.
- In New Brunswick, Anglophones and Francophones reported differently for the language their colleagues use, but both reported English as being more prevalent among senior management.
- In all regions except Quebec (outside the National Capital Region), most Anglophones and Francophones reported that the predominant language used by senior management was English.

The results for the language used by employees’ supervisors varied by region and language group, but in general they appeared to reflect:

- the language of the individual respondent (given that, working in Part V regions, federal public servants have the right to be supervised in the official language of their choice); and
- the potential influence of the overall language environment at work (i.e., the language used by colleagues and by senior management).

Figures 36 through 47 show the language-of-work environment in each region.

Language-of-work environment in the National Capital Region

Figure 36. Language(s) used by colleagues at work in the National Capital Region
Question: What language(s) do your colleagues generally use at work? (n=4,316 for Anglophones, n=4,223 for Francophones)

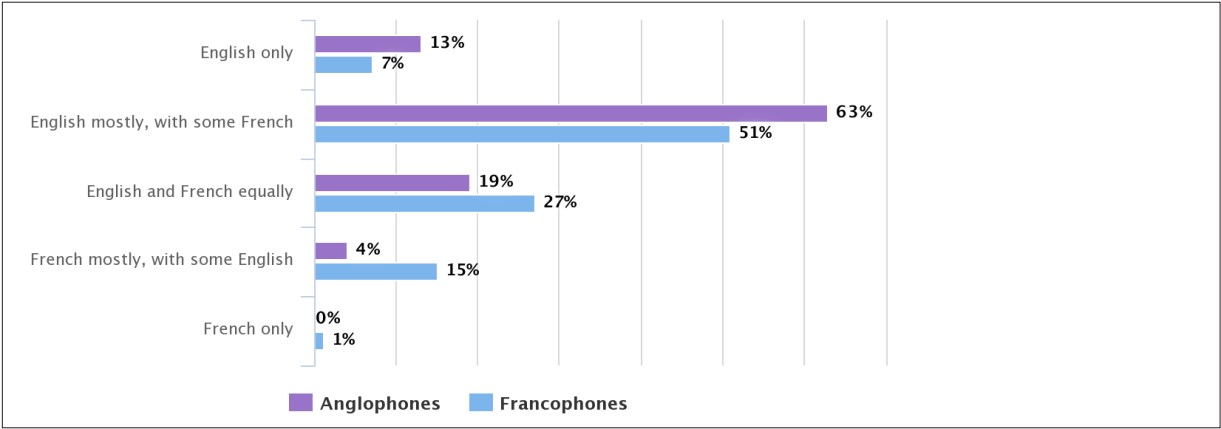


Figure 37. Language(s) used by senior management in the National Capital Region
 Question: What language(s) does senior management generally use at work? (n=4,316 for Anglophones, n=4,223 for Francophones)

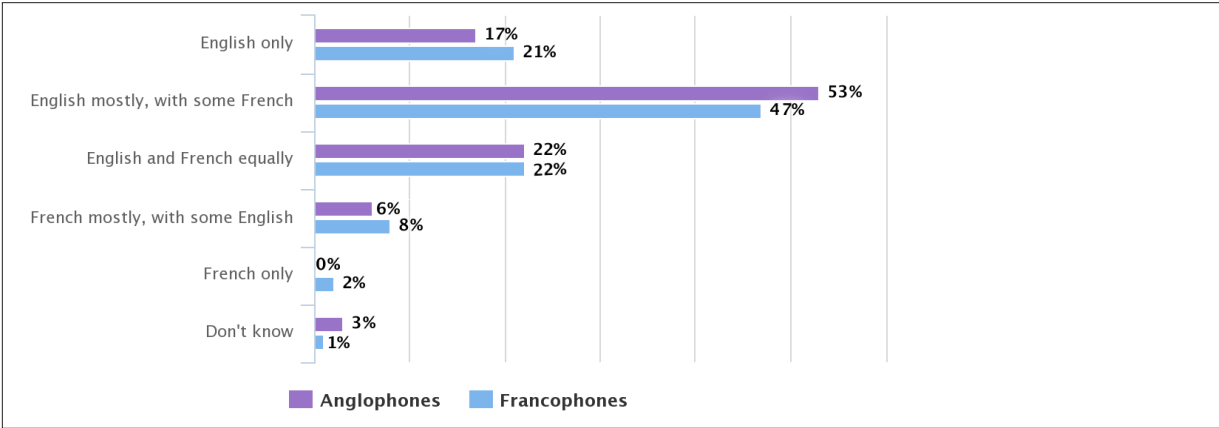
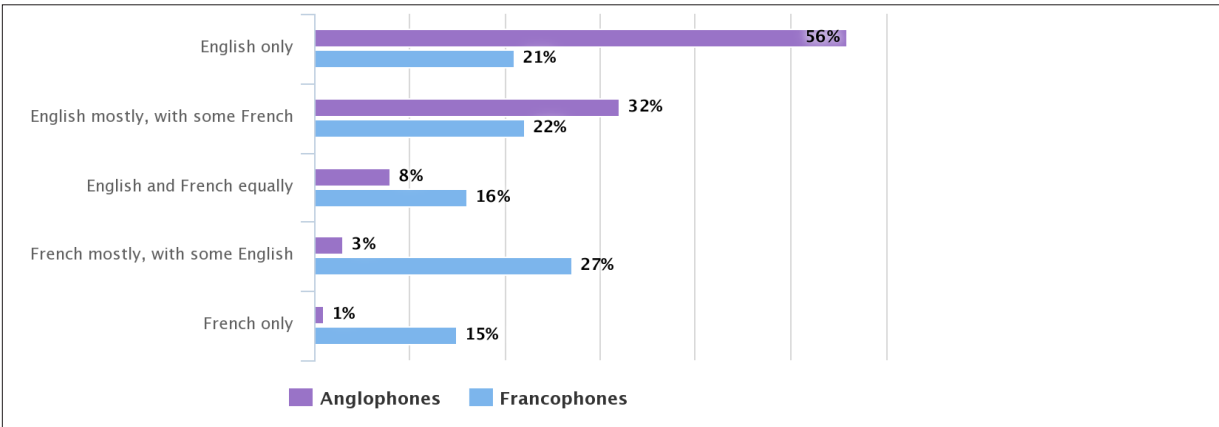


Figure 38. Language(s) used by supervisors at work in the National Capital Region
 Question: What language(s) does your supervisor generally use with you at work? (n=4,316 for Anglophones, n=4,223 for Francophones)



Language-of-work environment in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)

Figure 39. Language(s) used by colleagues at work in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What language(s) do your colleagues generally use at work? (n=289 for Anglophones, n=1,142 for Francophones)

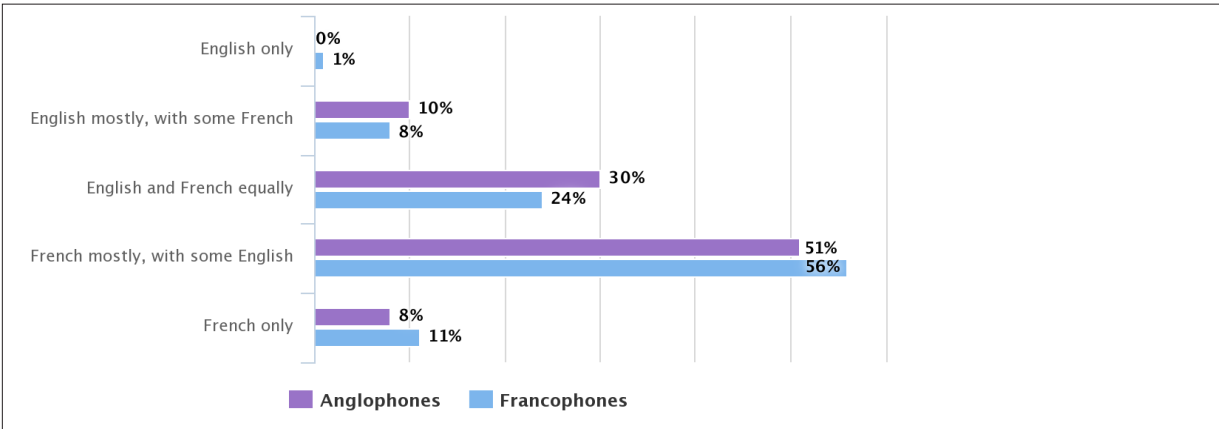


Figure 40. Language(s) used by senior management in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What language(s) does senior management generally use at work? (n=289 for Anglophones, n=1,142 for Francophones)

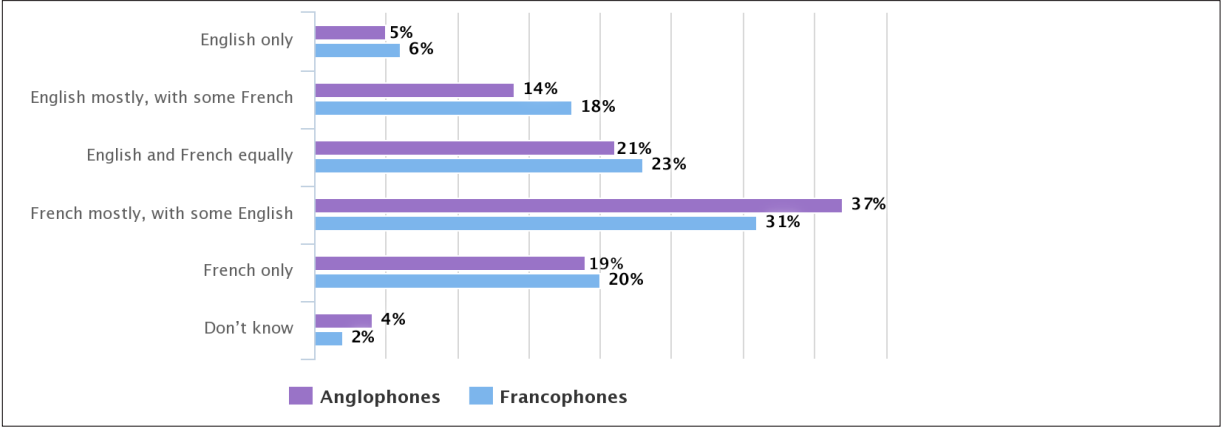
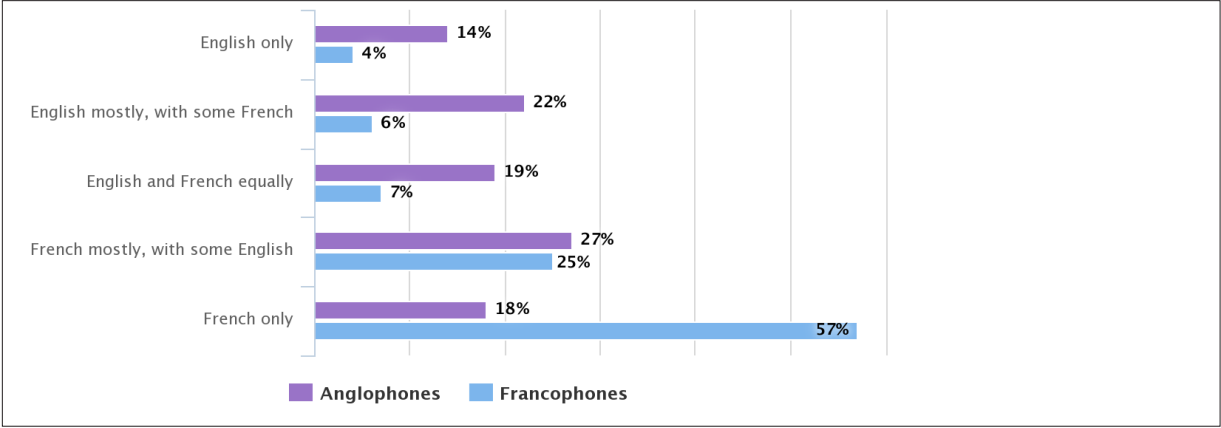


Figure 41. Language(s) used by supervisors at work in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What language(s) does your supervisor generally use with you at work? (n=289 for Anglophones, n=1,142 for Francophones)



Language-of-work environment in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)

Figure 42. Language(s) used by colleagues at work in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What language(s) do your colleagues generally use at work? (n=183 for Anglophones, n=110 for Francophones)

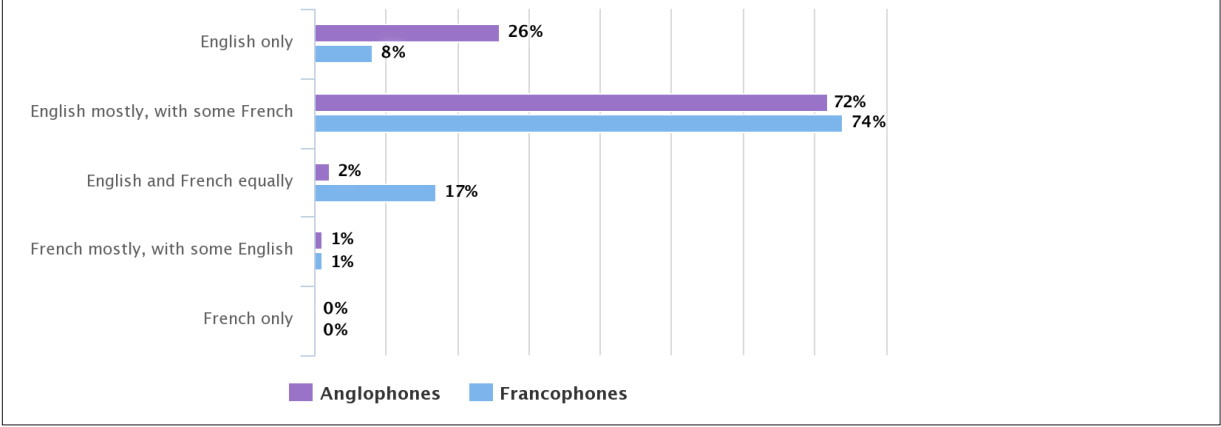


Figure 43. Language(s) used by senior management in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What language(s) does senior management generally use at work? (n=183 for Anglophones, n=110 for Francophones)

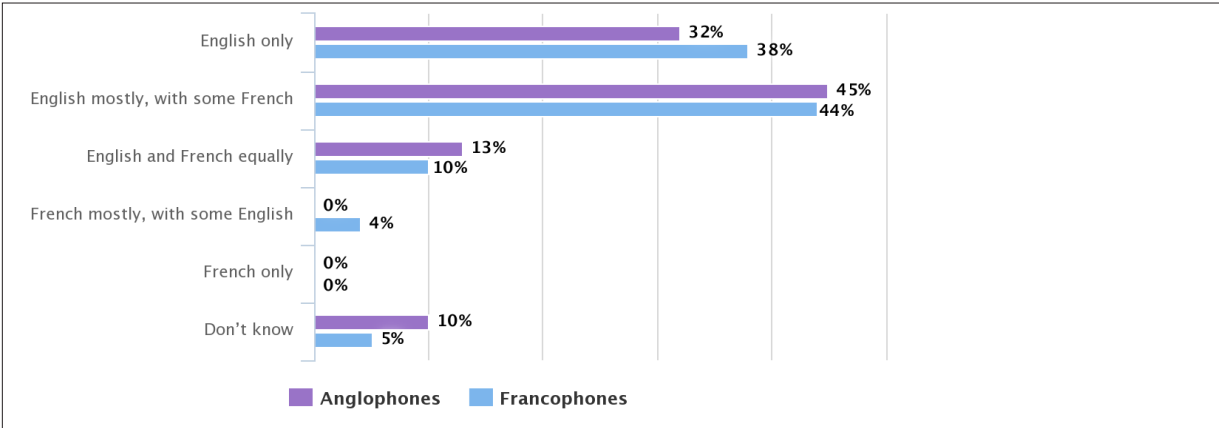
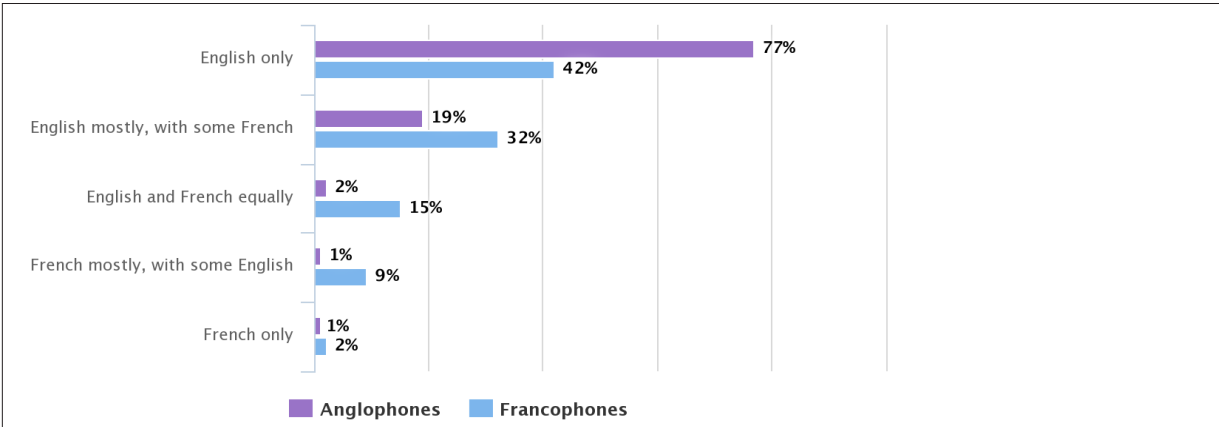


Figure 44. Language(s) used by supervisors at work in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region)
 Question: What language(s) does your supervisor generally use with you at work? (n=183 for Anglophones, n=110 for Francophones)



Language-of-work environment in New Brunswick

Figure 45. Language(s) used by colleagues at work in New Brunswick
 Question: What language(s) do your colleagues generally use at work? (n=255 for Anglophones, n=310 for Francophones)

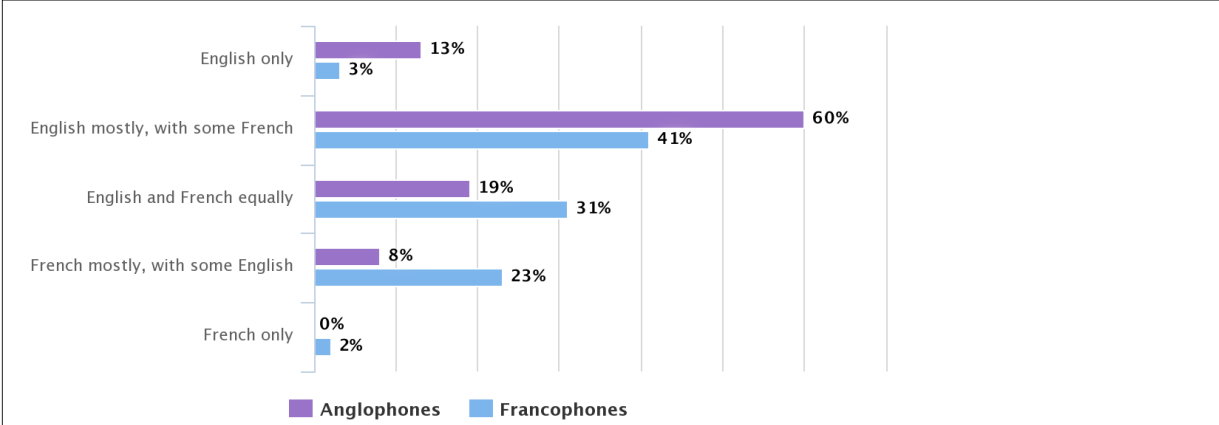


Figure 46. Language(s) used by senior management in New Brunswick
 Question: What language(s) does senior management generally use at work? (n=255 for Anglophones, n=310 for Francophones)

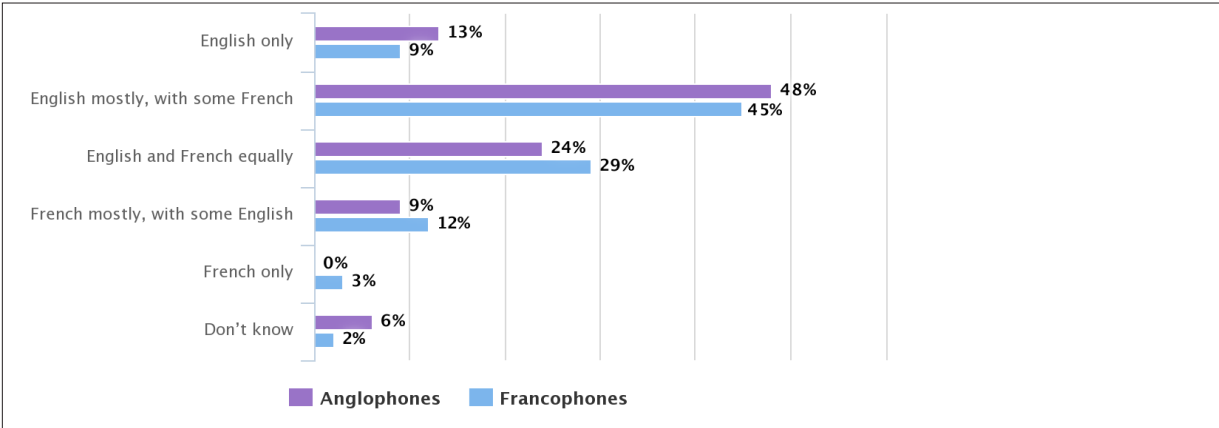
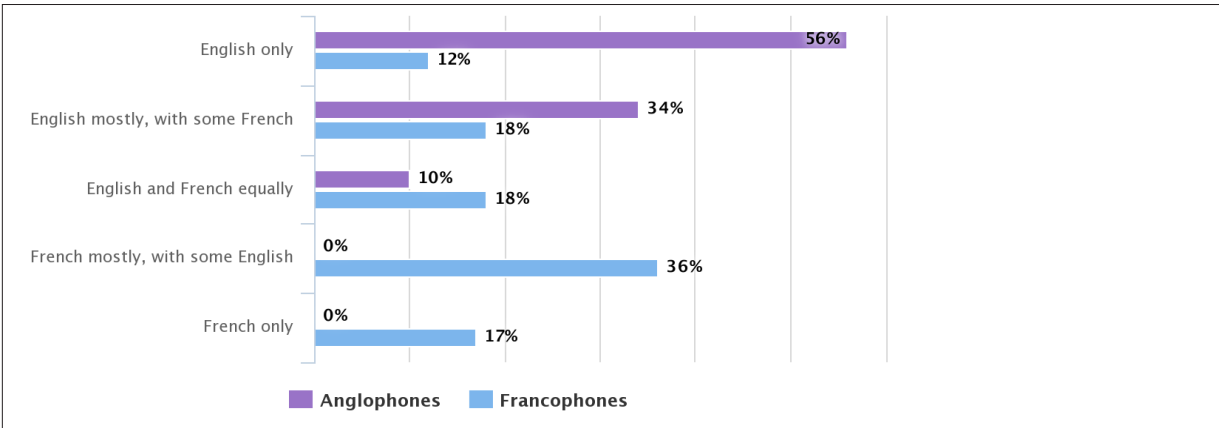


Figure 47. Language(s) used by supervisors at work in New Brunswick
 Question: What language(s) does your supervisor generally use with you at work? (n=255 for Anglophones, n=310 for Francophones)



Linguistic insecurity – Incidence, contexts and reasons by region

Comfort levels

Respondents were asked whether they had ever felt or would ever feel uncomfortable using English or French in their current job. Individuals who did not report at least a minimum ability in their second official language were not asked about their level of comfort in using that language at work.

The results show that respondents from both language groups and from all regions were much more likely to have felt uncomfortable using French, with one exception: Anglophones from Quebec (outside the National Capital Region) were more likely to have felt uncomfortable using English at work.

Figures 48 through 55 show the incidence of linguistic insecurity among respondents in each language in each region.

Incidence of linguistic insecurity among Anglophones by region

Figure 48. Percentage of Anglophones in the National Capital Region who reported feeling uncomfortable using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French in your current job? (n=4,316 for Anglophones in English, n=4,087 for Anglophones in French)

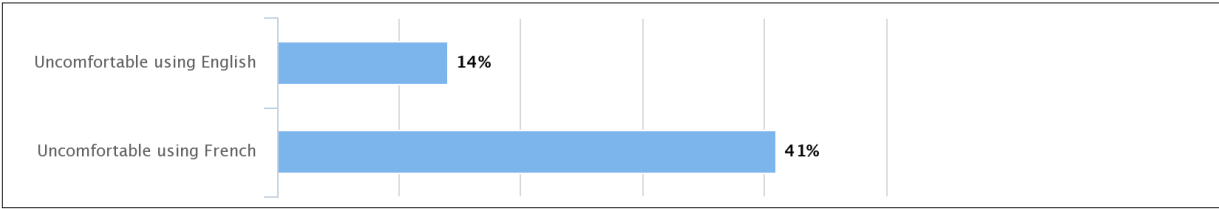


Figure 49. Percentage of Anglophones in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region) who reported feeling uncomfortable using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French in your current job? (n=289 for Anglophones in English, n=285 for Anglophones in French)

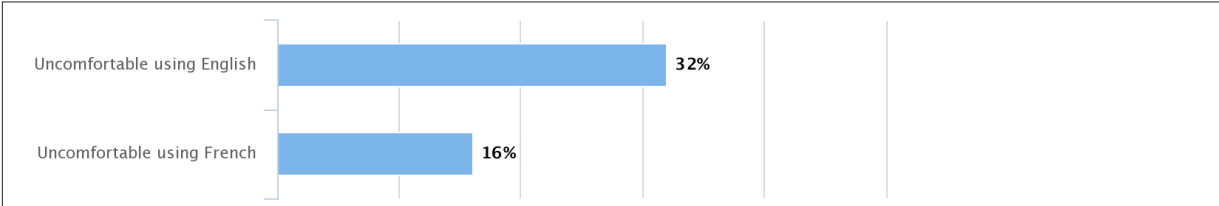


Figure 50. Percentage of Anglophones in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region) who reported feeling uncomfortable using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French in your current job? (n=183 for Anglophones in English, n=154 for Anglophones in French)

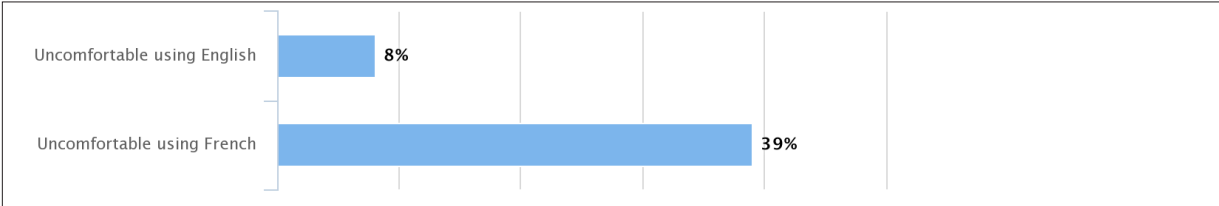
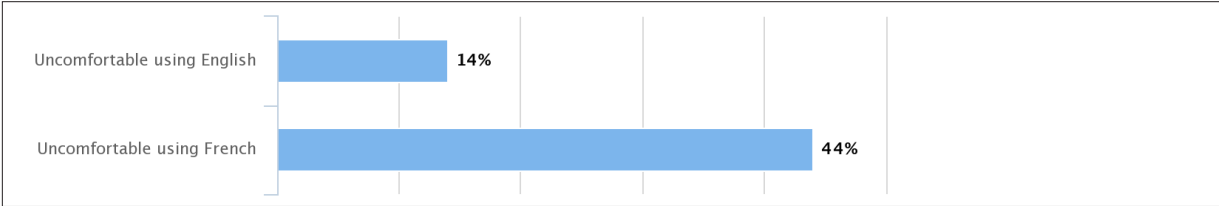


Figure 51. Percentage of Anglophones in New Brunswick who reported feeling uncomfortable using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French in your current job? (n=255 for Anglophones in English, n=225 for Anglophones in French)



Incidence of linguistic insecurity among Francophones by region

Figure 52. Percentage of Francophones in the National Capital Region who reported feeling uncomfortable using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French in your current job? (n=4,220 for Francophones in English, n=4,222 for Francophones in French)

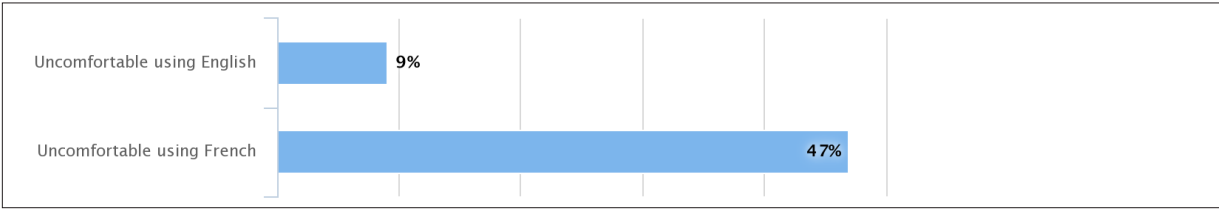


Figure 53. Percentage of Francophones in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region) who reported feeling uncomfortable using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French in your current job? (n=1,140 for Francophones in English, n=1,142 for Francophones in French)

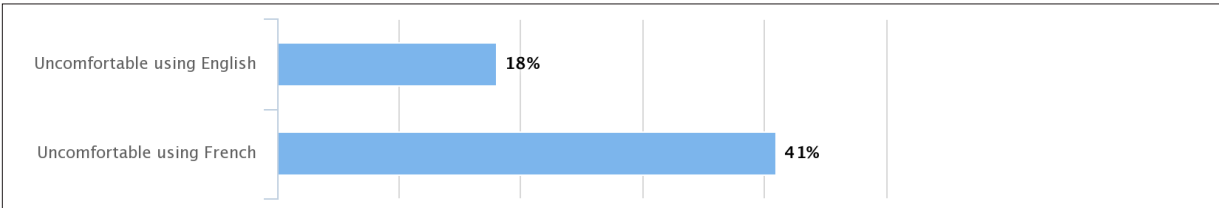


Figure 54. Percentage of Francophones in Ontario (outside the National Capital Region) who reported feeling uncomfortable using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French in your current job? (n=110 for Francophones in English, n=110 for Francophones in French)

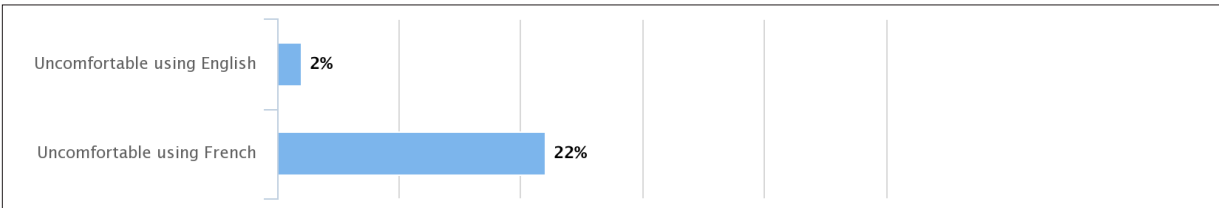
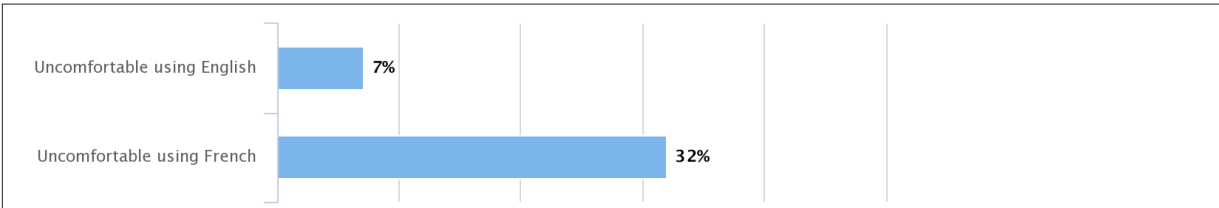


Figure 55. Percentage of Francophones in New Brunswick who reported feeling uncomfortable using English or French at work
Question: Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English/French in your current job? (n=310 for Francophones in English, n=310 for Francophones in French)



Contexts and reasons for potential linguistic insecurity

Tables 4 through 7 list the various reasons given by respondents from each language group and in each region to explain why they felt uncomfortable using English and/or French. Respondents were allowed to provide multiple answers. The results show that the reasons can be varied and complex, depending on the region and language of the respondent. In general, however, the results suggest that potential factors for linguistic insecurity can be linked to first- and second-language contexts and the overall work environment (including whether English or French is the non-predominant language of the workplace).

The regional results (Tables 4 to 7) generally reflected the overall results (Tables 2 and 3). Among respondents who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using their first official language, the discomfort typically came from a concern that colleagues would not be comfortable enough in that language. Among respondents who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using their second official language, the discomfort typically came from concerns about the extra effort involved, a lack of confidence, or being judged or corrected when using the language.

The data also shows some regional particularities. For example, Francophones in the National Capital Region and Anglophones in Quebec (outside the National Capital Region) who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable asking to be supervised in their first official language were relatively more likely to be concerned about their supervisor being uncomfortable using the language.

It is important to note that some questions had a very small number of responses in some regions (e.g., responses relating to English-language insecurity in New Brunswick and in Ontario outside the National Capital Region); therefore, those results should be taken with caution.

First-language linguistic insecurity – Why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using English and why Francophones felt uncomfortable using French at work, by region

Table 4: Reasons why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using English, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable (by region)

Table 4a: Reasons why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using English, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in the language (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in English*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
2% (104)	15% (42)	2% (4)	2% (4)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in English	32%	60%	0%	0%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	54%	62%	75%	50%
I don't want to bother my supervisor	30%	62%	0%	25%
I didn't know that I had the right to be supervised in English	10%	7%	0%	25%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	4%	0%	0%	0%
My English isn't strong enough	2%	0%	0%	0%
Other	31%	24%	50%	25%
Don't know	3%	2%	0%	0%

Table 4b: Reasons why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using English, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in the language (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in English*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
2% (73)	17% (48)	1% (2)	2% (6)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in English	38%	73%	50%	33%
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in English	12%	25%	0%	0%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	23%	35%	50%	0%
Senior management doesn't request or expect written material in English	8%	42%	0%	0%
English isn't often used where I work	14%	56%	0%	0%
Extra time would be needed for translation	11%	15%	0%	17%
My grammar, vocabulary or spelling might be corrected or judged	7%	2%	0%	17%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	3%	4%	0%	17%
Other	45%	25%	50%	100%
Don't know	6%	0%	0%	0%

Table 4c: Reasons why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using English, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking the language in meetings or with colleagues (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking English in meetings or with colleagues*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
6% (273)	26% (75)	3% (5)	9% (24)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in English	45%	72%	40%	29%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	22%	33%	40%	25%
I don't want to bother others	24%	37%	40%	8%
English isn't often used where I work	13%	53%	0%	17%
Colleagues tend to just switch to French when I try to speak English	29%	39%	0%	33%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	5%	3%	0%	4%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	2%	3%	0%	0%
Other	38%	25%	0%	42%
Don't know	4%	0%	0%	4%

*Note: The percentages of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each situation are based on the total number who were asked whether they would feel uncomfortable using the language more generally while at work.

**Note: The percentages for each reason given are based on the total number of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each given situation. More than one answer could be selected. The percentages in bold indicate the three most common responses given by the respondent group for each situation.

Table 5: Reasons why Francophones felt uncomfortable using French, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable (by region)

Table 5a: Reasons why Francophones felt uncomfortable using French, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in the language (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in French*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
23% (967)	9% (107)	8% (9)	14% (43)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in French	76%	62%	56%	63%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	52%	68%	44%	70%
I don't want to bother my supervisor	37%	28%	22%	40%
I didn't know that I had the right to be supervised in French	8%	12%	11%	2%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	1%	3%	0%	2%
My French isn't strong enough	<1%	0%	11%	0%
Other	16%	22%	33%	16%
Don't know	7%	1%	0%	0%

Table 5b: Reasons why Francophones felt uncomfortable using French, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in the language (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in French*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
30% (1,272)	19% (220)	7% (8)	15% (46)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in French	79%	79%	50%	76%
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in French	38%	16%	75%	22%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	40%	41%	38%	50%
Senior management doesn't request or expect written material in French	64%	49%	63%	46%
French isn't often used where I work	70%	28%	25%	48%
Extra time would be needed for translation	33%	28%	75%	37%
My grammar, vocabulary or spelling might be corrected or judged	5%	2%	25%	13%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	6%	3%	50%	17%
Other	16%	26%	13%	13%
Don't know	<1%	1%	0%	2%

Table 5c: Reasons why Francophones felt uncomfortable using French, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking the language in meetings or with colleagues (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking French in meetings or with colleagues*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
41% (1,712)	30% (341)	15% (17)	28% (88)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in French	90%	86%	71%	85%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	32%	30%	29%	43%
I don't want to bother others	21%	18%	29%	28%
French isn't often used where I work	43%	12%	47%	27%
Colleagues tend to just switch to English when I try to speak French	36%	24%	12%	35%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	2%	4%	12%	6%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	1%	1%	24%	2%
Other	15%	26%	24%	15%
Don't know	1%	1%	6%	1%

*Note: The percentages of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each situation are based on the total number who were asked whether they would feel uncomfortable using the language more generally while at work.

**Note: The percentages for each reason given are based on the total number of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each given situation. More than one answer could be selected. The percentages in bold indicate the three most common responses given by the respondent group for each situation.

Second-language linguistic insecurity – Why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using French and why Francophones felt uncomfortable using English at work, by region

Table 6: Reasons why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using French, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable (by region)

Table 6a: Reasons why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using French, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in the language (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in French*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
1% (48)	1% (3)	1% (1)	<1% (1)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in French	56%	33%	0%	100%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	21%	67%	100%	100%
I don't want to bother my supervisor	27%	0%	0%	0%
I didn't know that I had the right to be supervised in French	6%	0%	0%	0%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	23%	0%	0%	100%
My French isn't strong enough	23%	0%	0%	100%
Other	19%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 6b: Reasons why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using French, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in the language (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in French*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
29% (1,191)	10% (28)	19% (30)	29% (65)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in French	18%	25%	17%	11%
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in French	6%	4%	10%	3%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	3%	4%	0%	3%
Senior management doesn't request or expect written material in French	21%	14%	20%	9%
French isn't often used where I work	27%	11%	23%	17%
Extra time would be needed for translation	46%	57%	47%	45%
My grammar, vocabulary or spelling might be corrected or judged	67%	68%	50%	72%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	73%	54%	70%	72%
Other	24%	25%	17%	28%
Don't know	1%	0%	10%	3%

Table 6c: Reasons why Anglophones felt uncomfortable using French, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking the language in meetings or with colleagues (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Anglophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking French in meetings or with colleagues*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
35% (1,441)	12% (34)	29% (44)	38% (85)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in French	20%	29%	23%	11%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	2%	3%	2%	4%
I don't want to bother others	16%	15%	7%	6%
French isn't often used where I work	24%	12%	32%	17%
Colleagues tend to just switch to English when I try to speak French	44%	32%	21%	38%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	62%	53%	48%	61%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	69%	50%	71%	65%
Other	23%	35%	30%	21%
Don't know	1%	0%	2%	0%

*Note: The percentages of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each situation are based on the total number who were asked whether they would feel uncomfortable using the language more generally while at work.

**Note: The percentages for each reason given are based on the total number of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each given situation. More than one answer could be selected. The percentages in bold indicate the three most common responses given by the respondent group for each situation.

Table 7: Reasons why Francophones felt uncomfortable using English, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable (by region)

Table 7a: Reasons why Francophones felt uncomfortable using English, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in the language (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when asking to be supervised in English*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
1% (24)	1% (8)	1% (1)	<1% (1)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in English	33%	63%	0%	0%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	50%	75%	100%	100%
I don't want to bother my supervisor	42%	38%	0%	100%
I didn't know that I had the right to be supervised in English	4%	25%	0%	0%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	29%	13%	0%	0%
My English isn't strong enough	4%	0%	0%	0%
Other	13%	25%	100%	100%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 7b: Reasons why Francophones felt uncomfortable using English, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in the language (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when writing in English*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
4% (166)	12% (138)	0% (0)	2% (7)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in English	7%	12%	-	14%
My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in English	1%	5%	-	0%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	4%	5%	-	14%
Senior management doesn't request or expect written material in English	4%	11%	-	14%
English isn't often used where I work	4%	30%	-	0%
Extra time would be needed for translation	20%	27%	-	14%
My grammar, vocabulary or spelling might be corrected or judged	73%	62%	-	71%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	61%	80%	-	71%
Other	11%	11%	-	14%
Don't know	1%	2%	-	0%

Table 7c: Reasons why Francophones felt uncomfortable using English, among those who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking the language in meetings or with colleagues (by region)

Percentage (and number) of Francophones who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable when speaking English in meetings or with colleagues*

National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
7% (304)	18% (204)	3% (3)	5% (14)

Reasons**	National Capital Region	Quebec outside the National Capital Region	Ontario outside the National Capital Region	New Brunswick
Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in English	7%	15%	0%	14%
I might be seen as a troublemaker	4%	5%	0%	7%
I don't want to bother others	8%	8%	0%	29%
English isn't often used where I work	7%	27%	0%	7%
Colleagues tend to just switch to French when I try to speak English	12%	17%	0%	7%
My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged	64%	61%	67%	57%
I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort	62%	71%	33%	64%
Other	13%	16%	33%	14%
Don't know	2%	1%	33%	0%

*Note: The percentages of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each situation are based on the total number who were asked whether they would feel uncomfortable using the language more generally while at work.

**Note: The percentages for each reason given are based on the total number of respondents for each group who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable in each given situation. More than one answer could be selected. The percentages in bold indicate the three most common responses given by the respondent group for each situation.

WHAT WE LEARNED AND WHAT WE NEED TO EXPLORE FURTHER: POSSIBILITIES FOR LINGUISTIC SECURITY IN THE FEDERAL WORKPLACE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The survey described in this study report provided a unique opportunity to better understand how federal public servants in bilingual regions use both official languages and what circumstances may limit their ability or willingness to use these languages.

After analyzing the factors that contributed to respondents' first- and second-language insecurity (discussed in chapters I and II) and taking into account the respondents' comments and suggestions (discussed below), this report concludes by identifying possible strategies for further consideration in order to help senior management, supervisors and employees work together toward a more linguistically secure work environment. It also suggests possible avenues for further research and analysis.

Many Anglophone and Francophone respondents had suggestions of their own

The questionnaire asked respondents to provide suggestions as to how employees could be helped to feel more comfortable using English and/or French at work, and roughly 40% did so. Half of all respondents were randomly selected and their responses to the open survey question were coded and analyzed according to their first official language (see Table 8, below).

Respondents gave a variety of suggestions, but some suggestions were more prevalent than others. Among Anglophones (who were more likely to feel uncomfortable in their second language, except in Quebec outside the National Capital Region), the predominant suggestion was for greater access to opportunities

Table 8: Respondent suggestions to help employees feel more comfortable using English and/or French

Question: Do you have any suggestions as to how employees can be helped to feel more comfortable using English and/or French at work?	Anglophones (n=2,513)	Francophones (n=2,901)
Provide greater access to training (including time and budget)	13.8%	5%
Management should be bilingual; management should ensure equal promotion of both languages	3.4%	12.3%
Allow/encourage people to practise their second language; don't discourage or switch back if they're struggling; provide constructive feedback/resources	13.8%	7%
Work in a truly bilingual environment; federal employees should be bilingual or have some knowledge of both languages	0.9%	7.4%
Encourage people to speak their preferred official language; respect the language people choose to use	4.9%	6.1%
Speak English and French in day-to-day functions (e.g., meetings, workshops)	4.6%	7.1%
Frustrating in meetings; no time for both languages; majority of work is in English	2.9%	2.4%
Do not make bilingualism mandatory; stop limiting promotions when an applicant is not bilingual	3.7%	0.6%
Introduce incentive measures (e.g., penalties, include language requirements in annual reviews, better financial incentives)	0.7%	1.8%
Problem is with work culture / Canadian culture	1.2%	1.2%
Focus on comprehension; lower language standards (e.g., for e-mails, reports)	1.7%	0.6%
Other	1.6%	1.3%
No suggestions	59.9%	59.5%

Note: Individual responses may have been attributed to more than one category. The percentages in bold indicate the three most common responses given by each respondent group.

to learn and to improve in the languages, including through training and a workplace environment that is more encouraging and open to people practising their second language. Among Francophones (who were more likely to feel uncomfortable in their first language), the predominant suggestion was to ensure a meaningful place for both languages through leadership from management in promoting bilingualism and through fostering a workplace environment in which both languages can be seen and heard being used by colleagues.

Is it possible to create a “virtuous circle” of linguistic security in which both first- and second-language speakers can benefit?

The survey results showed that first- and second-language speakers can have different needs when it comes to overcoming linguistic insecurity. But both groups can also form part of a shared linguistic work environment in which either English or French is the non-predominant language. This raises the question: By helping one group, is it possible to help the other? Is it possible to create a “virtuous circle” of linguistic security in which both first- and second-language speakers of the non-predominant language in a given office, team or department can benefit?

For example, encouraging second-language learners to use the underrepresented language more often (whether English or French) could help to make it more seen and heard. This could, in turn, help first-language speakers to see that their own use of the language is not inconveniencing colleagues who may, in fact, also wish to use it more often. With this in mind, first-language speakers could feel encouraged to respond in the non-predominant language to second-language speakers who are trying to use it, helping to show them that their efforts to develop their skills and to make the non-predominant language more seen and heard are worthwhile.

Moreover, it may be possible that *both* groups would benefit from the knowledge that some of their colleagues may be more bilingual than they realize (e.g., receptive bilingualism), and that some of them—first- and second-language speakers alike—may actually *want* to use the non-predominant language more often. No employee should have to feel alone in their desire to use or improve their English or French. As one respondent from an English-predominant work environment explained:

Native French speakers could more frequently engage in French during meetings and conversations so that others who are trying to practise/improve/engage in French can feel like they are genuinely participating and not artificially speaking French just because colleagues are French Making French more commonplace would make it easier for all employees to feel more comfortable speaking in French, regardless of their proficiency.

The next two sections present a set of potential strategies for further exploration that could help to address linguistic insecurity among first-language speakers and second-language speakers in ways that are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The strategies presented here are not exhaustive; they are based on the survey findings and respondent suggestions and are illustrated with direct quotations from individual respondents.

Potential strategies for further exploration: Addressing the needs of first-language speakers

Overcoming first-language linguistic insecurity in the workplace could benefit from an inclusive language environment in which first-language speakers know that they are genuinely welcome to use their language, and that their use of the language is not “inconveniencing” others. Everyone can play a positive role—colleagues, supervisors and senior management alike—to encourage this inclusivity and to help foster a meaningful place for the non-predominant language.⁴

A more inclusive language environment for first-language speakers could be fostered by one or more of the following:

- Equal promotion of both languages by senior management and supervisors
 - *If senior management were to use both official languages equally more often, the employees would feel more comfortable.*
 - *I'd appreciate it if [management] made the effort to talk to me in French so that I don't feel as if I'm causing them extra stress.* [translation]
- Making the non-predominant language more seen and heard by encouraging greater use among first- and second-language speakers alike
 - *Let people know that they are welcome to work in either official language and to practise using the language of their choice.* [translation]
 - *The simple fact of reminding people about this at the beginning of a meeting can reduce stress and increase the level of comfort for people who are not as fluent in one language as they are in the other.* [translation]
- Greater awareness that second-language speakers may be more bilingual than people realize (e.g., receptive bilingualism)
 - *Trusting in Anglophones' receptive bilingualism would improve Francophones' comfort level, and French would be used more often. Francophones wouldn't feel as if they're excluding their Anglophone colleagues from the conversation by speaking French.* [translation]
- Normalization and encouragement of using “at-level” receptive bilingualism between first-language speakers (e.g., internal documents using both languages, or Anglophone and Francophone colleagues conversing with each other in their own respective first language)
 - *People should be able to speak in their language of choice. We all speak both, and at varying levels, but we understand one another . . . I understand my French colleagues fully when they speak in French, and they understand me when I speak in English . . . we get our work done and are very productive.*
 - *Allowing for “bilingual” files (e.g., . . . documentation in either or both languages) could allow more flexibility.*
- Greater awareness that some colleagues, including first- and second-language speakers, may wish to use the non-predominant language more often—those who want to use it need to know that they are not alone
 - *Some of my colleagues who don't speak French very well may appreciate it if I speak to them in that language, but because I'm perfectly bilingual, it's often just easier or quicker for me to speak to them in English. Maybe it's up to me to make an effort to use my own language more often so that my colleagues can improve their second language. . . . That's the reason I sometimes do choose to speak French, but maybe I should do it more often?* [translation]

Potential strategies for further exploration: Addressing the needs of second-language speakers

Overcoming second-language linguistic insecurity in the workplace may require, above all, individual effort and engagement. As one respondent put it, employees “have to make the commitment to do it on their own.” But meaningful opportunities to learn, improve and maintain skills are also critical, including access to training (not just in terms of an available budget but also a manageable workload) and a non-judgemental language environment that encourages “linguistic risk-taking.”⁵ Less formal situations—chatting with colleagues or short e-mail messages, for example—may provide such opportunities in some cases.

A more inclusive language environment for second-language speakers and learners could be fostered by one or more of the following:

- Meaningful access to opportunities to learn, improve and maintain one's second official language, both through training and while at work
 - *If a completely bilingual environment is the goal, then everyone must be given equal and ongoing opportunities for training and maintaining.*
 - *Training allows a safe space for people to learn, improve and practise.*
- Patience and encouragement on the part of senior management, supervisors and colleagues of employees who wish to make the effort to use their second language more often
 - *Employees who suffer from being judged when speaking or writing French/English should be encouraged instead of shamed or disregarded when their use of the language isn't perfect, especially if it is apparent that they put a lot of time and effort into trying to [give] their responses.*
- Normalizing and encouraging second-language learners to ask to use their second language with native speakers and with each other
 - *Just give it a try! Don't be shy, or intimidated, or afraid of making mistakes. Nobody will judge you, most everyone will help you, and it's only through practice and a willingness to learn and have others correct you that you'll feel more comfortable. You've got nothing to lose by trying!*
- Avoiding switching to the first official language of a second-language learner who is trying to practise—although well intentioned, switching can have a discouraging effect for language learners
 - *When someone initiates a conversation in their second language, people should take this as a cue that they want to speak in that language even if they are having difficulty. Often when people notice someone is struggling a bit, they will switch to the language they believe the other person will feel more comfortable with, but this will frustrate their efforts to speak in their second official language.*
- Normalizing mistakes as part of the learning process, and discouraging the practice of over-correcting or frequently commenting on a second-language learner's imperfect English or French
 - *Take a risk and make mistakes to improve your skills.* [translation]
 - *Change the social dynamic so that people can be imperfect and encouraged.*
 - *People need to stop being afraid of looking stupid when they're speaking their second language. Don't be too proud or too fearful of making mistakes.* [translation]
- Greater awareness that some colleagues, including first- and second-language speakers, may wish to use the non-predominant language more often—those who want to use it need to know that they are not alone and that their effort is worthwhile
 - *For me personally, my colleagues are very supportive when I try to speak in French, but it's more of an internal struggle, as I know I'm not as comfortable or necessarily strong in French, so it's easier to revert back to English when I forget a word or can't express myself as I would in English. But I should remind myself they want to help me and are patient with me when I try to improve my French.*

**Additional opportunities for further understanding –
Non-Part V regions, the relationship between language
of work and service, workplace wellbeing,
and other questions**

The potential strategies suggested above would benefit from additional analysis and consideration through further study, including ongoing analysis of the survey data by other experts in the field and by establishing discussion groups—for example, by drawing on the more than 2,000 respondents who volunteered to participate in potential follow-up discussions.

The strong interest from federal public servants outside of Part V regions also suggests that there is an opportunity to study and to better understand their needs and contexts, including through a separate survey and through potential discussion groups.

The mutually reinforcing potential of promoting best practices in language of work (Part V) and best practices in language of service (Part IV) should also be explored further. Public servants working in non-Part V regions who contacted the Office of the Commissioner and PRA during the administration of the survey pointed out that fostering a positive language-of-work environment was important to them because they had an obligation to serve the public in both languages. Survey respondents from Part V regions appeared to be of a similar view. When asked whether they agreed that “if employees were made to feel more comfortable using both English and French with colleagues it would make them feel more confident using both languages when interacting with the public,” 60% of all survey respondents (including 53% of Anglophones and 66% of Francophones, see Figure 56, below) agreed, and only 16% disagreed.

Figure 56. Confidence using English and French with colleagues and with the public

Question: If employees were more comfortable using both English and French with colleagues, would it make them feel more confident using both when interacting with the public? (n=5,043 for Anglophones, n=5,785 for Francophones)

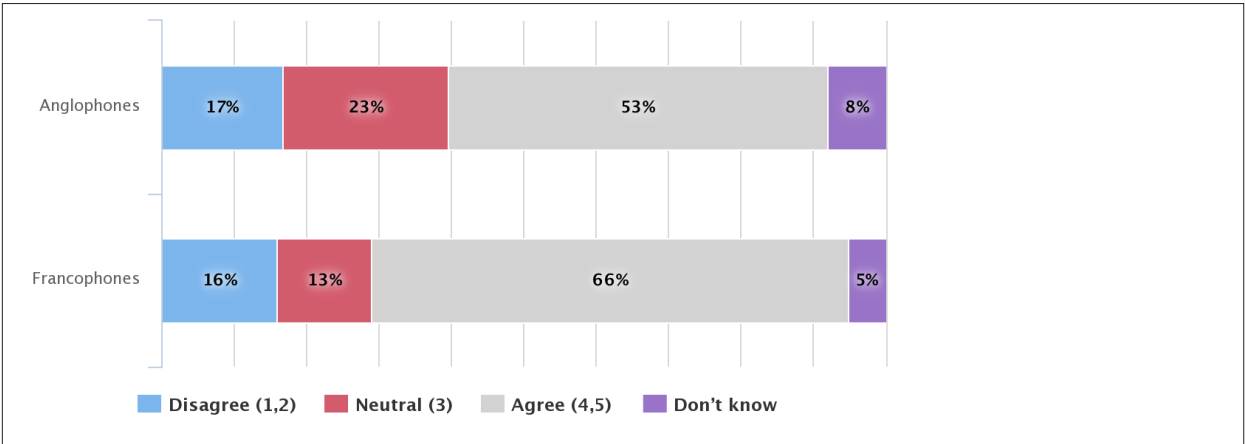
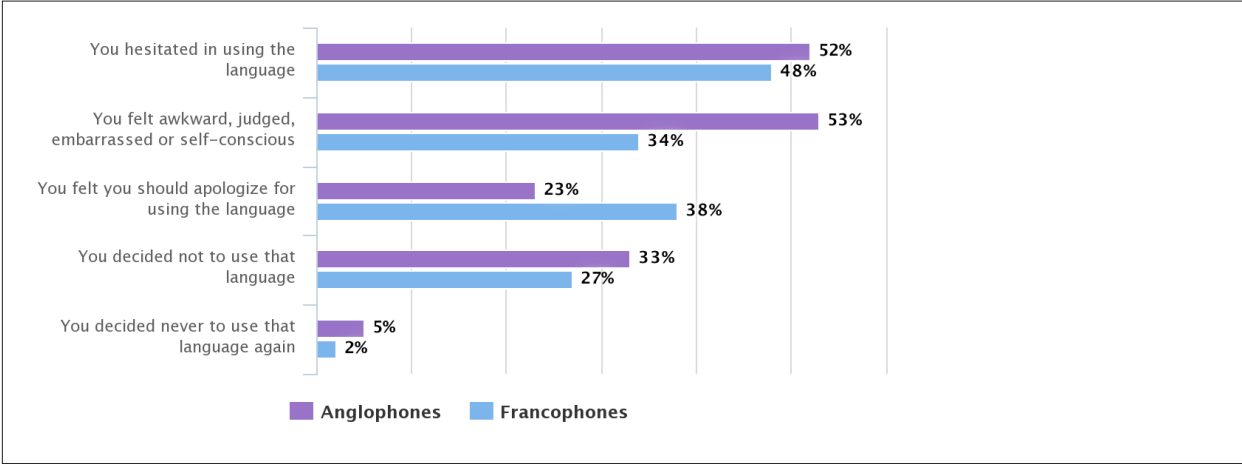


Figure 57. Impact of the feeling of discomfort in using an official language

Question: Has discomfort in using a particular official language in your current job led to any of the following? (n=2,921 for Anglophones, n=3,112 for Francophones - More than one answer could be selected)



The potential personal impacts of linguistic insecurity on federal employees' workplace wellbeing may also merit further exploration. Among survey respondents who said they had felt or would feel uncomfortable using English or French at work, over three quarters of them reported having experienced some kind of personal impact as a result. Among those respondents, half (50%) stated that as a result they had hesitated to use the language, 43% (mainly Anglophones) stated that they felt awkward, judged, embarrassed or self-conscious, and 31% (mainly Francophones) felt the need to apologize for using the language.

Some survey respondents wrote about how their experiences had left them feeling frustrated, pessimistic or even disillusioned. One respondent, for example, was skeptical that the federal workplace culture could change:

I'm sorry, but I don't think concrete actions will change anything. . . . The federal public service is slowly and surely assimilating Francophones.
[translation]

Another cited the politicization of language in their workplace as a symptom of a broader societal challenge that their employer could do little to influence:

There is definitely a stigma in Quebec towards English speaking people. . . . But it's not anything the job is doing, it's the culture and the way people were raised, unfortunately.

A respondent in their 40s, although supportive of bilingualism, explained how they had never themselves had the opportunity to become bilingual, stating that "many of us are at a distinct disadvantage simply because of where and when we grew up."

Still, others remained optimistic that, regardless of language or ability, all federal employees could contribute to a more linguistically secure work environment:

I think that all employees should be considerate of each other as they try to practise their second languages. That would go a long way to help.

Linguistic insecurity in the federal workplace intersects with other important challenges, issues and opportunities that survey participants identified in their comments and that could benefit from further consideration. These include questions around:

- diversity and inclusion;
- workplace environment and culture;
- the promotion of bilingualism among employees;
- the need for access to second-language education before entering the public service;
- leveraging technology and other tools;
- possibilities for greater cost-effectiveness; and
- the need for more bilingual staffing and recruitment.

As one survey respondent explained, perhaps the greatest need is for the continued promotion of linguistic duality and bilingualism as fundamental values of Canadian society:

First and foremost, we need to instill the idea among all Canadians that Canada is a bilingual country and that everyone benefits by being able to speak both of their country's official languages. [translation]

DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF THE SURVEY METHODOLOGY, SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Background research

The development of the research project was informed by a literature review conducted for the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (the Office of the Commissioner) by Jedweb Inc. in 2018. The literature review found that most research related to linguistic insecurity used qualitative rather than quantitative methods. It also found that, with a few notable exceptions, relatively little research had been conducted on linguistic insecurity in the workplace. In Canada, the research tended to focus on youth and educational settings and on French first-language contexts, although research has also been conducted into second-language contexts. The available research suggested that first-language linguistic insecurity in these contexts can relate to the favouring of some accents and dialects over others (e.g., European French over Canadian French, Quebec French over Acadian French) or the favouring of the predominant language in minority situations. For second-language contexts linguistic insecurity was more present among Core French students than among immersion students, and the lack of opportunities to speak the language outside of a school setting was cited as a major challenge.

As a complement to the literature review, Jedweb Inc. contracted Leger Marketing to conduct a web-based survey in February 2018 on second-language linguistic insecurity among 203 Anglophones and 179 Francophones in Canada. The data supported the view that opportunities to use one's second official language are an important factor in reducing insecurity and anxiety in the language and that comfort levels are higher in institutional settings where such opportunities may arise (e.g., in a workplace that encourages people to use both languages). The results suggested that building confidence in second-language communication at the school level supports successful interaction in the workplace, but this too may be linked to opportunities for contact in the second language either inside or outside of school. The survey underscored the need to look more closely at the transition between school and the workplace in terms of acquiring and developing a second language.

Scope and limitations

This exploratory survey employed a questionnaire that was circulated on a voluntary basis by Official Languages Champions and other personnel using an open link. The Official Language Champion of a federal institution is generally a member of the institution's executive, and their role includes demonstrating leadership and promoting official languages within the institution. The sample is therefore non-probability, meaning that a margin of error cannot be calculated and that the results cannot be projected to the entirety of the target population (i.e., employees of federal institutions working in Part V regions). While it is possible that the results of the survey may be consistent with experiences in federal institutions more generally, this cannot be stated with certainty, as the results reflect only the experiences of the respondents themselves. The large number of respondents, however, delivered a large sample size and a valuable means for exploring, understanding and analyzing the potential nature and scope of the challenge of linguistic insecurity in the federal public service.

Level of participation

The original intent was to reach a minimum base of 1,000 respondents. However, the survey achieved very strong participation, exceeding the target. The survey thus closed with a total of 10,828 completed questionnaires. Individuals from nearly 100 federal departments and agencies participated in the survey. Table 1 in Chapter I shows the geographical distribution of survey respondents.

To accommodate the relative overrepresentation of the National Capital Region, results for each of the four different regions were considered separately in the report. It is also important to note that an additional 5,314 individuals started to complete the survey but did not finish it (in addition to the 4,044 individuals who attempted to participate in the survey but were screened out because they were not located in one of the designated bilingual regions).

Questionnaire design and pretest

The Office of the Commissioner and PRA research teams reviewed relevant documentation and literature, including the literature review that had previously been prepared for the Office of the Commissioner by Jedweb Inc. This document review informed the design of the survey questionnaire and provided helpful contextual information.

Beginning in January 2019, the Office of the Commissioner and PRA drafted a relatively short questionnaire that employed skip logic. This was to allow the survey to take no more than 10 minutes to complete. The Office of the Commissioner and PRA pretested the survey internally in both official languages to improve respondents' understanding of questions and survey flow. The final version of the survey is presented in Appendix B. The software used for the online survey was Acuity, provided through Voxco's survey platform. The survey was designed so that questions appeared properly on computer, smartphone or tablet screens. The questions automatically adjusted to the size of the page on these devices, and additional measures for accessibility were taken. All data was stored in PRA's protected servers located in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Recruitment strategy and surveying

The Office of the Commissioner's and PRA's research teams collaborated on a recruitment strategy rather than a sampling plan. Establishing a sampling plan would have required gathering the contact information of each potential respondent and then sharing individual online survey links with them by e-mail. This would have been a time-consuming and costly process. Keeping in mind the project's timeline and budget, the option of having an online open link survey was chosen, allowing potential respondents to access the survey through multiple platforms. In addition, the software and the very large sample size mitigated potential impacts of duplicate responses—an analysis of more than 2,000 respondents found only two instances in which a respondent appeared to have completed the survey more than once (a frequency of <0.001%).

A snowball approach was used, whereby the Office of the Commissioner and PRA worked directly with the Official Language Champions in federal departments and agencies located in designated bilingual regions. An initial e-mail informed Champions of the survey and requested their assistance in promoting and

distributing the survey link. To maximize participation, Champions were asked to inform federal public servants within their respective departments and agencies about the survey ahead of time. An invitation in both official languages containing an open link was sent to the Champions on March 6, 2019 (the date that the survey went live), so that they could forward it at an appropriate time to employees in Part V regions. The invitation was not sent to Champions whose institutions had declined to participate in the survey.

Throughout the course of the project, the Office of the Commissioner and PRA worked with the Champions to ensure that reminder e-mails were sent to employees where appropriate. In most cases, reminder e-mails were deemed unnecessary because of the already high level of participation. Office of the Commissioner project manager Robert Talbot and PRA project manager Stéphanie Jollette responded to questions and issues from Champions and from respondents. The survey was closed on March 25, 2019.

Qualitative analysis with open-ended responses

Because of the very high number of respondents, the Office of the Commissioner contracted PRA to conduct a separate follow-up analysis of the open-ended responses, the results of which have been integrated into this report. Given the time and thought that respondents had put into the survey, it was important to take their feedback into consideration, even though this meant that more time would be required to complete the final report.

Half of the 10,828 respondents were randomly selected, and their responses to Question 26 ("Do you have any suggestions as to how employees can be helped to feel more comfortable using English and/or French at work?") were coded and analyzed.

PRA reviewed these responses and categorized them into general themes (or codes) that were assigned numerical values. PRA then reviewed each response and assigned it a value or values. In many cases, a response was given a single numerical code, while in others, responses from participants who touched on many themes in one answer were assigned multiple codes.

PRA's goal was to capture results so that at least 90% of all responses (including blank responses) were categorized without having to create codes that captured less than 1% of participants' responses. Any response or part of a response that did not fit a code was coded as "Other." This meant that, for some responses, the entire response was coded as "Other," while other responses were given codes in addition to "Other" if part of the response fit into another code. This means that the percentage listed under "Other" in a table reflects the total number of respondents whose response was coded as "Other" for at least part of their answer. It also means that some aspects of the responses of these participants may have been coded into other categories. In addition to creating the coding for Question 26, PRA identified a selection of representative quotations in English and French for the Office of the Commissioner to use in this final report.

PRA also conducted a thematic analysis of the key concepts that emerged from Question 35 ("Do you have any other comments regarding language of work?"). A total of 2,975 responses were given to this question, half of which were randomly selected for analysis. While most respondents reiterated some of the points that were raised throughout the survey, some mentioned new elements that were given consideration in the conclusions of this report.

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

LANGUAGE OF SURVEY

Would you prefer to complete the survey in English or French?

Please note that once you select your language preference for the survey, the language of completion cannot be changed.

Préférez-vous effectuer le sondage en français ou en anglais?

S.v.p., veuillez noter qu'une fois votre langue de préférence sélectionnée, la langue dans laquelle vous effectuez le sondage ne peut pas être changée.

- English
- Français

Thank you for opening this survey!

PRA Inc. is conducting this survey on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada. The survey is looking to explore how federal public servants work [in bilingual regions](#) and how to foster the use of both official languages in the workplace.

The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and all responses will remain confidential.

Please note that you must complete the survey in one session in order for your answers to be saved.

Your participation and input are greatly appreciated!

Please use the button(s) below to navigate through the survey.

1. At which federal department or other federal institution do you currently work?

- [Over 100 options to select from]
- Other, please specify: _____
- I do not work for a federal institution. [end of questionnaire – go to message: “This survey is intended for employees of federal institutions. If you are a federal employee, you may return to the survey by clicking ‘back.’”]

2. In which region do you currently work?

- National Capital Region:
 - ◇ Ottawa, Ontario
 - ◇ Gatineau, Quebec
- New Brunswick
- Quebec (outside the National Capital Region):

◇ Montreal (metropolitan area excluding Longueuil)	◇ Waterville	◇ Lennoxville
◇ New Richmond	◇ Huntingdon	◇ Magog
◇ Gaspé	◇ Farnham	◇ Coaticook
◇ Percé	◇ Bedford	◇ Rock Island
◇ Chandler	◇ Cowansville	◇ Lachute
◇ Bromont	◇ Asbestos	◇ Barkmere
◇ Lac-Brome	◇ Bromptonville	◇ Pontiac
◇ Sutton	◇ Danville	◇ Other Quebec location
◇ Cookshire	◇ Richmond	[end of questionnaire – go to message “This survey is intended for employees of federal institutions who work in regions that are designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes . If you are a federal employee who works in a bilingual region, you may return to the survey by clicking ‘back.’”]
◇ East Angus	◇ Windsor	
◇ Scotstown	◇ Sherbrooke	
- Ontario (outside the National Capital Region):

◇ Alexandria	◇ Hearst	◇ Sudbury	◇ Cobalt
◇ Hawkesbury	◇ Iroquois Falls	◇ Capreol	◇ Englehart
◇ Vankleek Hill	◇ Kapuskasing	◇ Coniston	◇ Latchford
◇ Rockland	◇ Smooth Rock Falls	◇ Copper Cliff	◇ New Liskeard
◇ Cornwall	◇ Timmins	◇ Espanola	◇ Other Ontario location
◇ Sault Ste Marie	◇ North Bay	◇ Levack	[end of questionnaire – go to message “This survey is intended for employees of federal institutions who work in regions that are designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes . If you are a federal employee who works in a bilingual region, you may return to the survey by clicking ‘back.’”]
◇ Blind River	◇ Bonfield	◇ Lively	
◇ Bruce Mines	◇ Cache Bay	◇ Massey	
◇ Thessalon	◇ Mattawa	◇ Webbwood	
◇ Cochrane	◇ Sturgeon Falls	◇ Charlton	
- Elsewhere [end of questionnaire – go to message “This survey is intended for employees of federal institutions who work in [regions that are designated as bilingual for language-of-work purposes](#). If you are a federal employee who works in a bilingual region, you may return to the survey by clicking ‘back.’”]

3. Do you manage or supervise one or more people as part of your job?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

4. What is your first official language?

- English
- French

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “non-existent” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate your English- and French-language skills?

- Ability to understand written: English (1-5); French (1-5)
- Ability to write in: English (1-5); French (1-5)
- Ability to understand spoken: English (1-5); French (1-5)
- Ability to speak: English (1-5); French (1-5)

[If all “1” for English, skip questions 6, 11, 13-14, 17-18 and 21-22]

[If “1” for “ability to write in English”, skip questions 17-18]

[If “1” for “ability to speak English”, skip questions 21-22]

[If all “1” for French, skip questions 6, 12, 15-16, 19-20 and 23-24]

[If “1” for “ability to write in French”, skip questions 19-20]

[If “1” for “ability to speak French”, skip questions 23-24]

6. Where did you learn your second official language? (Select all that apply.)

- Home
- Community
- Television, radio, books, Internet or other media
- Basic courses in school
- Immersion program at school
- Post-secondary institution
- Federal government training (part-time)
- Federal government training (full-time)
- Other
- Don't know / Not sure

7. What language(s) do your colleagues generally use at work?

- English only
- English mostly, with some French
- English and French equally
- French mostly, with some English
- French only
- Don't know / Does not apply

8. What language(s) does your immediate supervisor generally use with you at work?

- English only
- English mostly, with some French
- English and French equally
- French mostly, with some English
- French only
- Don't know / Does not apply

9. What language(s) does senior management generally use at work?

- English only
- English mostly, with some French
- English and French equally
- French mostly, with some English
- French only
- Don't know / Does not apply

10. What is your language preference for the following workplace activities?

	English 1	English or French 2	French 3
Being supervised	1	2	3
Writing	1	2	3
Speaking during meetings	1	2	3
Chatting with colleagues	1	2	3

[If for "Being supervised" answered "English only", skip questions 15-16]

[If for "Being supervised" answered "French only", skip questions 13-14]

11. Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using English or asking to use English in your current job?

- Yes
- No [skip questions 13-14, 17-18 and 21-22]
- Don't know / Not sure

12. Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable using French or asking to use French in your current job?

- Yes
- No [skip questions 15-16, 19-20 and 23-24]
- Don't know / Not sure

[If answered "No" to questions 11 and 12, skip question 25]

13. Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable asking to be supervised in English in your current job?

- Yes
- No [skip next question]
- Don't know / Not sure [skip next question]
- Does not apply [skip next question]

**14. Why haven't you felt or why might you not always feel comfortable asking to be supervised in English?
(Select all that apply.)**

- I didn't know that I had the right to be supervised in English
- My English isn't strong enough
- My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in English
- My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged
- I don't want to bother my supervisor
- I might be seen as a troublemaker
- Don't know
- Other, please specify: _____

15. Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable asking to be supervised in French in your current job?

- Yes
- No [skip next question]
- Don't know / Not sure [skip next question]
- Does not apply [skip next question]

**16. Why haven't you felt or why might you not always feel comfortable asking to be supervised in French?
(Select all that apply.)**

- I didn't know that I had the right to be supervised in French
- My French isn't strong enough
- My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in French
- My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged
- I don't want to bother my supervisor
- I might be seen as a troublemaker
- Don't know
- Other, please specify: _____

17. Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable writing in English at work in your current job?

- Yes
- No [skip next question]
- Don't know / Not sure [skip next question]
- Does not apply [skip next question]

**18. Why haven't you felt or why might you not always feel comfortable writing in English at work?
(Select all that apply.)**

- English isn't often used where I work
- I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort to write in English
- My grammar, vocabulary or spelling might be corrected or judged
- My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in English
- Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in English
- Senior management doesn't request or expect written material in English
- Extra time would be needed for translation
- I might be seen as a troublemaker
- Don't know
- Other, please specify: _____

19. Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable writing in French at work in your current job?

- Yes
- No [skip next question]
- Don't know / Not sure [skip next question]
- Does not apply [skip next question]

**20. Why haven't you felt or why might you not always feel comfortable writing in French at work?
(Select all that apply.)**

- French isn't often used where I work
- I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort to write in French
- My grammar, vocabulary or spelling might be corrected or judged
- My supervisor isn't comfortable enough in French
- Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in French
- Senior management doesn't request or expect written material in French
- Extra time would be needed for translation
- I might be seen as a troublemaker
- Don't know
- Other, please specify: _____

21. Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable speaking English in meetings or in conversations with colleagues in your current job?

- Yes, in meetings
- Yes, in conversations
- Yes, in meetings and in conversations
- No [skip next question]
- Don't know / Not sure [skip next question]
- Does not apply [skip next question]

**22. Why haven't you felt or why might you not always feel comfortable speaking English at work?
(Select all that apply.)**

- English isn't often spoken where I work
- I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort to speak in English
- My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged
- Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in English
- I don't want to bother others
- I might be seen as a troublemaker
- Colleagues tend to just switch to French when I try to speak English
- Don't know
- Other, please specify: _____

23. Have you ever felt or would you ever feel uncomfortable speaking French in meetings or in conversations with colleagues in your current job?

- Yes, in meetings
- Yes, in conversations
- Yes, in meetings and in conversations
- No [skip next question]
- Don't know / Not sure [skip next question]
- Does not apply [skip next question]

**24. Why haven't you felt or why might you not always feel comfortable speaking French at work?
(Select all that apply.)**

- French isn't often spoken where I work
- I'm out of practice – it takes extra effort to speak in French
- My grammar, vocabulary or accent might be corrected or judged
- Some of my colleagues aren't comfortable enough in French
- I don't want to bother others
- I might be seen as a troublemaker
- Colleagues tend to just switch to English when I try to speak French
- Don't know
- Other, please specify: _____

**25. Has discomfort in using a particular official language in your current job led to any of the following?
(Select all that apply.)**

- You hesitated in using the language
- You felt awkward, judged, embarrassed or self-conscious
- You felt you should apologize for using the language
- You decided not to use the language
- You decided never to use the language again
- Don't know
- Other, please specify: _____
- None of the above

26. Do you have any suggestions as to how employees can be helped to feel more comfortable using English and/or French at work? Please explain.

- No suggestions

27. Would you like to have more opportunities to use English or French at work?

- Yes, English
- Yes, French
- No
- Don't know / Does not apply

28. How much do you agree or disagree that if employees were made to feel more comfortable using both English and French with colleagues it would make them feel more confident using both languages when interacting with the public?

- Strongly disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Neutral
- Slightly agree
- Strongly agree
- Don't know

29. How much do you agree or disagree that supervisors' confidence in their own use of English and French at work impacts their decision to make a position bilingual?

- Strongly disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Neutral
- Slightly agree
- Strongly agree
- Don't know

30. What are the language requirements of your position?

- Bilingual
- Unilingual English
- Unilingual French
- Either English or French
- Don't know / Not sure

31. Have you ever been tested for proficiency in your second official language within the federal public service?

- Yes
- No [skip next question]
- Not sure / Does not apply

32. What are the most recent scores you received for... ?

(A=Beginner; B=Intermediate; C=Advanced; E=Exempt; N=Never tested / Not sure)

- Reading: A, B, C, E, N
- Writing: A, B, C, E, N
- Speaking: A, B, C, E, N

33. What is your age group?

- 24 years old or under
- 25 to 34 years old
- 35 to 44 years old
- 45 to 54 years old
- 55 years old or over
- Prefer not to answer

34. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other, please specify if you wish:
- Prefer not to answer

35. Do you have any other comments regarding language of work? If so, please elaborate:

- No other comments

36. Would you be interested in participating in any follow-up interviews or focus groups for this survey?

- Yes: Please provide your name and e-mail
- No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

ENDNOTES

1. See Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, [*National Strategy for Linguistic Security*](#), 2020; Canadian Parents for French, [*Building Linguistic Security: Be Brave, Speak French!*](#), 2020; Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, [*Accessing opportunity: A study on challenges in French-as-a-second-language education teacher supply and demand in Canada*](#), Gatineau, 2019; and Matthieu Leblanc, “Traduction, bilinguisme et langue de travail : une étude de cas au sein de la fonction publique fédérale canadienne,” *Meta*, Volume 59, Issue 3, December 2014, pp. 537–556.

Although it did not make specific reference to linguistic insecurity, the 2017 report of the Clerk of the Privy Council, [*The next level: Normalizing a culture of inclusive linguistic duality in the Federal Public Service workplace*](#), explored how workplace culture and environment (which can be a contributing factor to linguistic insecurity) can have an impact on public servants’ use of official languages.

2. Jack Jedwab and Julie Peronne, *Literature review on first- and second-language linguistic insecurity*, study report by Jedweb Inc. completed for the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2018.
3. Respondents who reported having no ability in their second official language were not asked whether they would feel uncomfortable using that language.
4. See the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, [*Beyond Bilingual Meetings: Leadership Behaviours for Managers*](#), Ottawa, 2011.
5. See Nikolay Slavkov and Jérémie Séror, “[The Development of the Linguistic Risk-Taking Initiative at the University of Ottawa](#),” *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, Volume 75, Issue 3, August 2019, pp. 254–272.