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What Canadians think about official languages (2021)

Introduction and objectives

In 2016, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages commissioned a survey to explore Canadians' opinions on official languages and bilingualism. The research included a random probability telephone survey and an opt-in online panel survey of Canadians. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages wanted to survey Canadians again in 2021, using the same methodology but with larger sample sizes in both modes, to compare the results with those of the 2016 survey and to understand how public opinion has evolved.

The research project included the following objectives:

- Gauge Canadians' current views on official languages and bilingualism and see how those views correlate with key demographic and regional characteristics.

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- Track and compare the results of the 2021 survey with those of the 2016 survey, and draw observations based on this comparison. The 2021 survey will also replicate the demographic variables and weighting (by region, age and gender) that are normally included in public opinion research conducted by the Government of Canada and that were included in the 2016 study.
- Identify ways to better understand support for official bilingualism among Canadians by asking a limited number of new survey questions that explore how perceptions of official languages intersect with other important contemporary issues (e.g., diversity and the COVID-19 pandemic).

For the detailed survey results, please consult our report, [*Official Languages Tracking Survey 2021 - Final Report*](#).

Key findings

Support for official languages remains resilient

- Support for official languages is high and it's consistent; it appears to be a core Canadian value in 2021—as it was in 2016.
- A strong majority of Canadians, in all regions and demographic segments studied, continue to express support for official languages in 2021, at levels similar to those in 2016.

Support for official languages is consistent with support for other forms of diversity

- A strong majority of Canadians agree with different statements about the mutually reinforcing potential of official languages and other forms of diversity.

- Those from diverse backgrounds also tend to agree with statements about official languages as something that can reinforce other forms of diversity.

There is majority support for official language minorities, but some myths persist

- A majority of Canadians are in favour of different specific measures to support official languages and official language minorities.
- Some key myths persist about official languages and official language minorities.

Quebecers continue to have far greater exposure to the two languages

- Quebecers are far more likely to encounter people using the other official language or to be exposed to media and cultural products in the other official language.
- Among bilingual Canadians, Francophones are more likely than Anglophones to learn the other official language outside of school, while Anglophones are more likely to learn it only in school.

A strong majority continue to support second-language education

- Most Canadians strongly agree that both official languages should continue to be taught in elementary schools across Canada.
- A majority of Canadians agree that federal and provincial governments should implement measures to make second-language learning more accessible.
- A strong majority of parents, notably in Quebec but also outside Quebec, feel it is important that their children have the opportunity

to learn the other official language.

Some correlation between environmental concerns and support for the *Official Languages Act*

- Modest correlation between attitudes toward official languages and other contemporary issues.
- Some correlation between support for the *Official Languages Act* and environmental concerns and equal rights.
- Some correlation between opposition to the *Official Languages Act* and feelings that the government is inefficient and has gone “too far” in its efforts to establish equal rights.

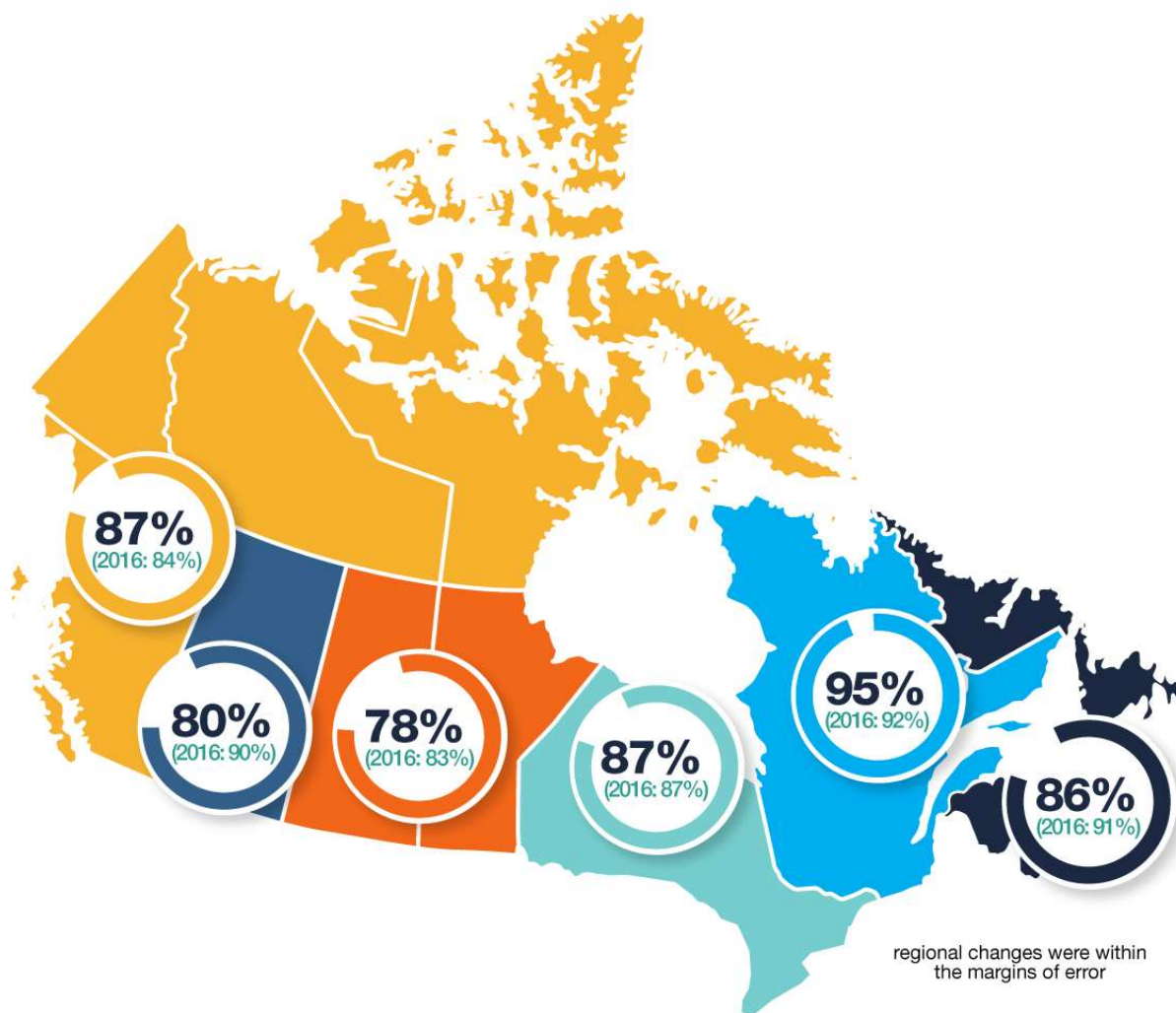
Methodology

This report is based on data collected through a dual-mode research program: a national probability-based telephone survey of 1,507 adult Canadians and a national online survey of 1,500 Canadians. The online survey contained additional questions not asked in the shorter telephone survey. The telephone survey was conducted from September 27 to October 16, 2021. The online survey was conducted from September 30 to October 19, 2021.

	Total	British Columbia and territories	Alberta	Saskatchewan and Manitoba	Ontario	Qu
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Number of completed telephone interviews (unweighted)	1,507	225	204	100	453	3
Percent of completed interviews	100%	15%	14%	7%	30%	2
Margin of error (\pm @ 95% CI (Plus or minus the percentage indicated at the 95% confidence interval))	2.5	6.5	6.8	9.7	4.6	1
Number of completed online surveys (unweighted)	1,500	204	168	97	577	3
Percent of completed online surveys	100%	14%	11%	6%	38%	2

i **Note:** As the online survey used opt-in panels, this is a non-probability sample. Therefore, no margin of sampling error was calculated for the online survey.



► Text version: What Canadians think about official bilingualism and the *Official Languages Act* map

Infographic: What Canadians think about official bilingualism and the *Official Languages Act* (2021)

In this infographic, you will find the Environics survey results on the Canadian public's support for official languages, including the objectives of the *Official Languages Act*, and bilingualism in general.

Consult the infographic



Findings: Education

The majority of survey respondents strongly agree that both official languages should still be taught in elementary schools. In addition, most agree with other measures to support second-language learning.



Infographic: What Canadians think about learning English and French (2021)

In this infographic, you will find the Environics survey results on the Canadian public's experiences and attitudes with regard to learning English and French.

Consult the infographic

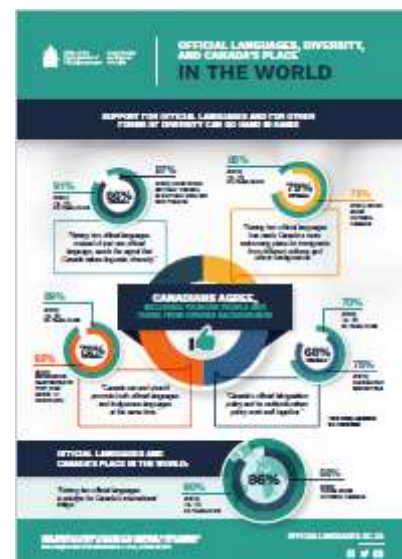
Findings: Diversity

Support for official languages is consistent with support for other forms of diversity. A large majority of respondents agree that: having two official languages shows that Canada values linguistic diversity; it makes Canada a more welcoming place for immigrants from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds; and that Canada can and should promote both official languages and Indigenous languages.

Infographic: Official languages, diversity, and Canada's place in the world

In this infographic, you will find the Environics survey results on the Canadian public's experiences and opinions with regard to the relationship between official languages and diversity.

[Consult the infographic](#)



For the detailed survey results, please consult our report, ***Official Languages Tracking Survey 2021 - Final Report.***

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