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Study on the Appreciation and Perception of Canada's Official Languages

Executive Summary

Prepared for Department of Canadian Heritage

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For more information on this report, please contact Canadian Heritage at: PCH.info-info.PCH@canada.ca

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Canada 

Study on the Appreciation and Perception of Canada's Official Languages

Executive summary

Prepared for Department of Canadian Heritage and Canada Council for the Arts by Environics Research Group.

Delivery Date: November 29, 2022

This public opinion research report presents the results of an online survey conducted by Environics Research Group from October 20-November 3, 2022.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Appréciation et perception des deux langues officielles du Canada 2022*.

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Executive summary

Background and objectives

Since 2002, the Department of Canadian Heritage has been conducting an ongoing series of surveys of the Canadian population on topics related to their appreciation of Canada's two official languages (OL). The purpose of these studies has been to better understand the views and attitudes of Canadians toward official languages, and to contribute to program evaluation. The Official Languages Branch contracted Environics Research to conduct the next wave of this study in 2022.

Specific objectives of the study included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Appreciation of linguistic duality
- Linguistic majority/minority relations
- Official bilingualism and linguistic rights
- Official language knowledge and learning opportunities, and
- Public participation in Canada's linguistic landscape.

Methodology in brief

This study consisted of an online survey with a representative sample of 5,020 Canadians (aged 18 and older) in the provinces and territories. *As the online survey uses an opt-in panel, this is a non-probability sample, and no margin of sampling error is calculated. For more information, see the Methodology section in Appendix A of the Final Report.* The online survey was conducted from October 20 to November 2, 2022.

The following table shows the number of completed interviews by jurisdiction.

| Jurisdiction | Total | BC | Alberta | MB/SK | Ontario | Quebec | Atlantic | Terri-tories |
|--|-------|-----|---------|-------|---------|--------|----------|--------------|
| Number of completed interviews | 5,020 | 671 | 574 | 337 | 1,930 | 1,156 | 337 | 15 |
| Regional distribution % of completed interviews | 100% | 13% | 11% | 7% | 38% | 23% | 7% | <1% |

The sample was randomly drawn from an opt-in online panel; because it is not a random probability sample, the results cannot be extrapolated to the actual population and no margin of sampling error can be calculated.

Contract value

The total contract value for the research was \$101,982.50 (including HST).

Use of findings of the research

Results of this survey enable the Department to ensure its programs continue to respond to, and report on, the behaviours and preferences of Canadians. The information collected with this survey will allow the Official Languages Branch to fulfil the requirements associated with the approach of the Treasury Board Secretariat in

the matter of program evaluation and performance results framework. The data will therefore allow to update a series of program indicators.

Political neutrality statement and contact information

I hereby certify as Senior Research Associate of Environics Research Group that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

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Vice President, Corporate and Public Affairs

Research Firm: Environics Research Group
PWGSC contract number: C1111-220163
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For more information on this report, please contact the Department of Canadian Heritage at: [PCH.info-info.PCH@canada.ca](mailto:info.PCH@canada.ca).

Key findings

All in all, the research found that Canadians are very positive about the country's linguistic duality. There is strong support for access to services in both languages and acknowledgement of the importance of children having access to learning the other official language. English remains the dominant official language in Canada, and most French speakers have adapted to this by learning at least some English. This is not reciprocated by English speakers to the same extent, and they also tend not to share the view of French speakers that the future of the French language is threatened.

The key findings of the research are summarized below.

A. Speaking and understanding

- Eight in ten (80%) Canadians identify English as their main official language and 20 percent say it is French. This is strongly correlated with mother tongue, with most Allophones saying their main official language is English.
- Just over four in ten (42%) have at least a basic understanding of the other official language (considerably higher among those stating French is their main official language (83%, vs. 31% whose main official language is English). One-quarter (24%) do not understand the other language at all (29% of English speakers and 4% of French speakers).
- Just under four in ten (38%) Canadians have at least a basic knowledge of how to *speak* the other official language (80% of those with French as their main official language vs. 27% with English). One-third (32%) do not speak the other language at all (38% of English speakers and 6% of French speakers).

B. Opinions about official languages

- Most Canadians agree with positive statements about official languages, with the highest agreement being that, in Canada, knowing English and French improves the chances of finding a job (77%), followed by agreeing that language rights are as important as any other rights guaranteed by the Constitution (68%).
- Fewer than half agree with three statements about official languages: that in Canada, relationships between Francophones and Anglophones are more positive today than they were 10 years ago (42%); that the future of French in Canada is threatened (41%); or that the future of French in Quebec is threatened (32%). However, high proportions of those whose main official language is French agree that the future of French in Canada is threatened (83% French vs. 30% English) and that the future of French in Quebec is threatened (78% French, vs. 21% English).
- Strong proportions of three-quarters or more agree with statements about ensuring access to federal government and education services in both official languages, and that children should have access to learning the other official language in their region. Agreement is highest that people should still get access to federal government services (89%) or children's education (86%) in their preferred OL if they were to relocate to a location where theirs is the minority language. Canadians also agree, but to a lesser extent (76%), that children should have the opportunity to learn the other official language as a second language in their region.

C. Cultural products, cultural activities and contact

- Just under four in ten Canadians (38%) indicate they have at least some interest in cultural products (like books, music or films) in the other official language. French speakers are over twice as likely to express some interest in English cultural products (66%) than do English speakers about French cultural products (31%).
- Only small proportions of both language speakers say most or all of the events they attended were in the other official language, although this is higher among French speakers (16%, vs. 4% of English speakers). Just under seven in ten (68%) say no events they attended were in the other official language (72% English as OL, vs. 53% French).
- Half of Canadians regularly engage with at least one person who speaks the other official language (i.e., who is an Anglophone or a Francophone); this is marginally higher among French speakers (57%) than English speakers (50%). One-third of French speakers (34%) regularly have contact with more than two Anglophones, compared to one-quarter (23%) of English speakers who engage with more than two Francophones.

D. Opportunities and resources

- Just under seven in ten (68%) of the small number of French speakers who do not understand or speak English at all say English would be the most important other language; one in seven (14%) say Spanish. Among English speakers who do not speak or understand French at all, Spanish (37%) and French (33%) are the two most frequently mentioned other languages, followed by Mandarin Chinese (18%).

- The greatest advantages to having a working knowledge of both of Canada's two official languages are thought to be getting a job (29%) or being able to communicate with others more easily (27%). Somewhat fewer indicate it is useful for travel (14%) or for personal enrichment (12%). Six percent do not think there is an advantage.
- Canadians are most likely to indicate a lack of necessity in their region as being a barrier to learning the other official language (29%, or 30% of English speakers and 25% of French speakers). Around two in ten indicate either a lack of personal interest (21%) or a lack of practice opportunity (20%) as being barriers. One in ten each cite poor quality instruction (11%) or limited access to learning in their region (11%).
- Four in ten (41%) think discussions and language exchanges would be the most useful activities (outside of school) to facilitate learning the other official language, followed by television (29%) and being in a workplace environment (28%). Two in ten each think online activities (21%) or film (20%) would be beneficial.
- Just under six in ten (58%) Canadians living in locations where theirs is the majority official language (French speakers and Quebec and English speakers outside of Quebec) think children in their region have some or full access to learning the other official language. This is somewhat higher among French speakers in Quebec (65%) than English speakers outside Quebec (56%).
- Around half of Canadians (52%) indicate they have at least some interest in using an online learning tool to learn or improve their knowledge of the other official language. French speakers are notably more likely to express interest in such a tool than are English speakers (63% vs. 49%).