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## Ethnicity, Language and Immigration Thematic Series

# Key facts on the French language in Manitoba in 2021

by Nicolas Auclair, Catherine Frigon and Gabriel St-Amant

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# Key facts on the French language in Manitoba in 2021

by **Nicolas Auclair**, **Catherine Frigon** and **Gabriel St-Amant**

This fact sheet gives an overview of the situation of French in Manitoba in 2021. It begins by providing information on the changes in the number and proportion of the population who can have a conversation in French, whose first official language spoken is French, whose mother tongue is French, and who speak French at home or use French at work. Next, it presents information on French-language instruction in primary and secondary schools, on French spoken among recent and established immigrants, as well as on the mobility and place of birth of individuals whose first official language spoken is French. Additional data on these topics can be found in the appendix.

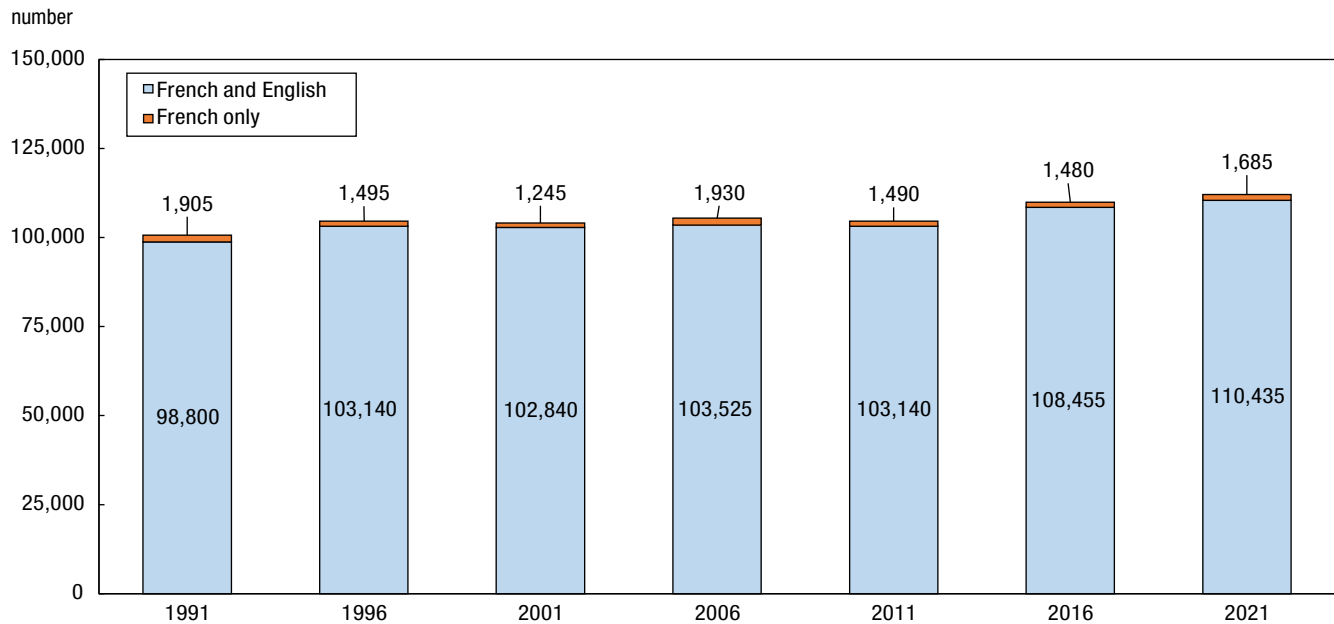
The information in this fact sheet is taken from the Census of Population. To learn more about the census concepts and the historical comparability of data, please refer to the 2021 Census of Population *Languages Reference Guide* and the *Instruction in the Minority Official Language Reference Guide*.

## Highlights

- In 2021, 112,115 Manitobans could have a conversation in French. This is up from 2016 (+2,175) and 1991 (+11,410). However, the demographic weight of this population dropped from 9.3% in 1991 to 8.4% in 2021.
- In 2021, 37,750 people (2.8% of the population) spoke French at least regularly at home. Among those with French as one of their mother tongues, more than half (55.0%) spoke French regularly at home.
- In Manitoba, 16,395 workers (2.6%) used French at least regularly at work in 2021. Many of them worked in educational services (32.2%) or in health care and social assistance (14.4%).
- About 1 in 25 immigrants (4.1%) could have a conversation in French in 2021. This proportion was lower than that of the non-immigrant population (9.8%).
- Nearly three in four Manitobans (74.4%) whose only first official language spoken was French in 2021 were born in that province.

## Ability to conduct a conversation in French

**Chart 1**  
Population who can conduct a conversation in French, Manitoba, 1991 to 2021

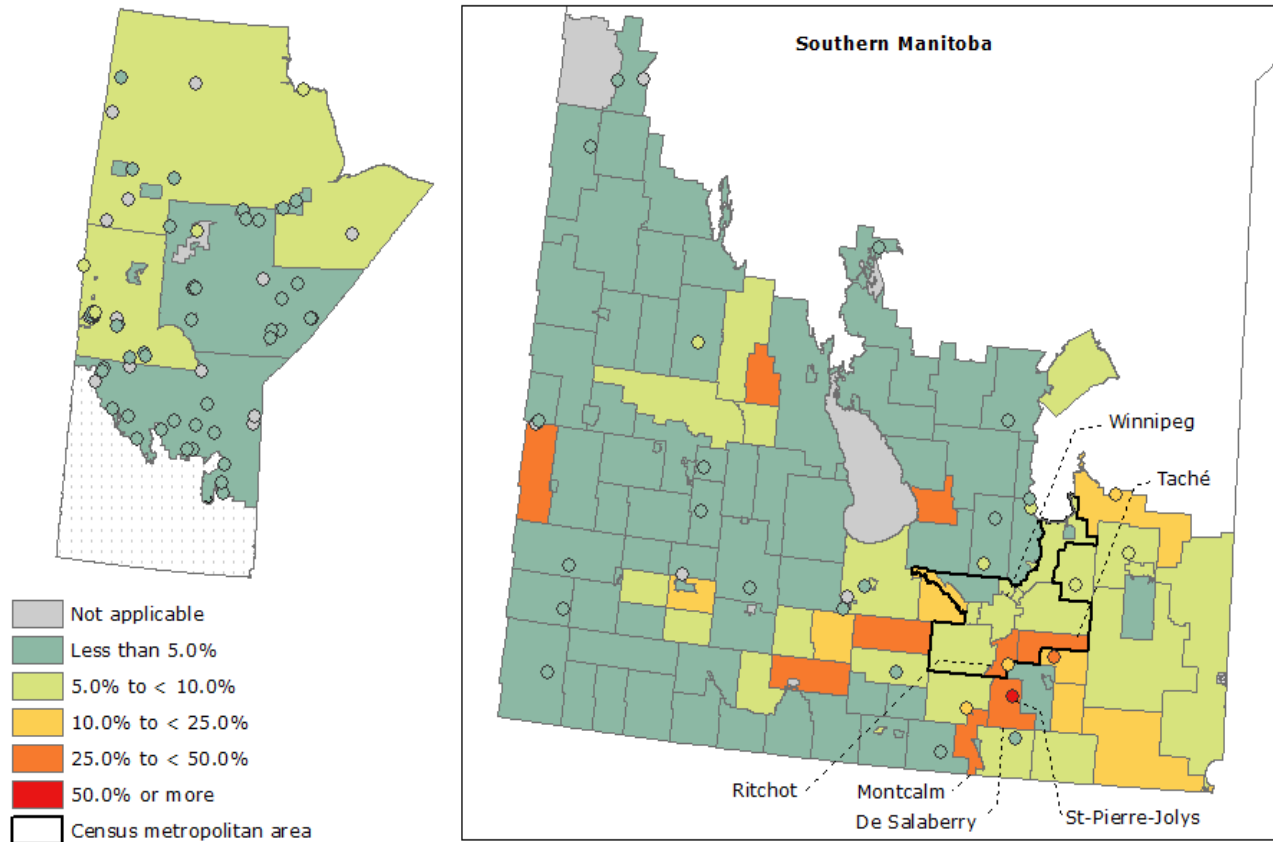


Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021.

- In 2021, 112,115 Manitobans could have a conversation in French. Almost all (98.5%, or 110,435 people) could also do so in English.
  - The number of people in the province who could conduct a conversation in French has been rising since 1991 (+11,410). From 2016 to 2021, this number has continued to grow (+2,175), reaching an all-time high in 2021.
- In 2021, 8.4% of the Manitoban population could have a conversation in French, a 30-year low. The demographic weight of this population has fallen consistently since the peak observed in 1996 (9.5%).
  - From 1991 to 2021, the number and proportion of Manitobans able to conduct a conversation in French increased among Manitobans who did not learn French first at home in their childhood: while 52,105 (5.1%) could have a conversation in French in 1991, this rose to 70,330 (5.5%) in 2021.

**Map 1**

**Proportion of Manitoba’s population who could conduct a conversation in French, by census subdivision, 2021**



**Note:** Circles represent census subdivisions with a smaller land area.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

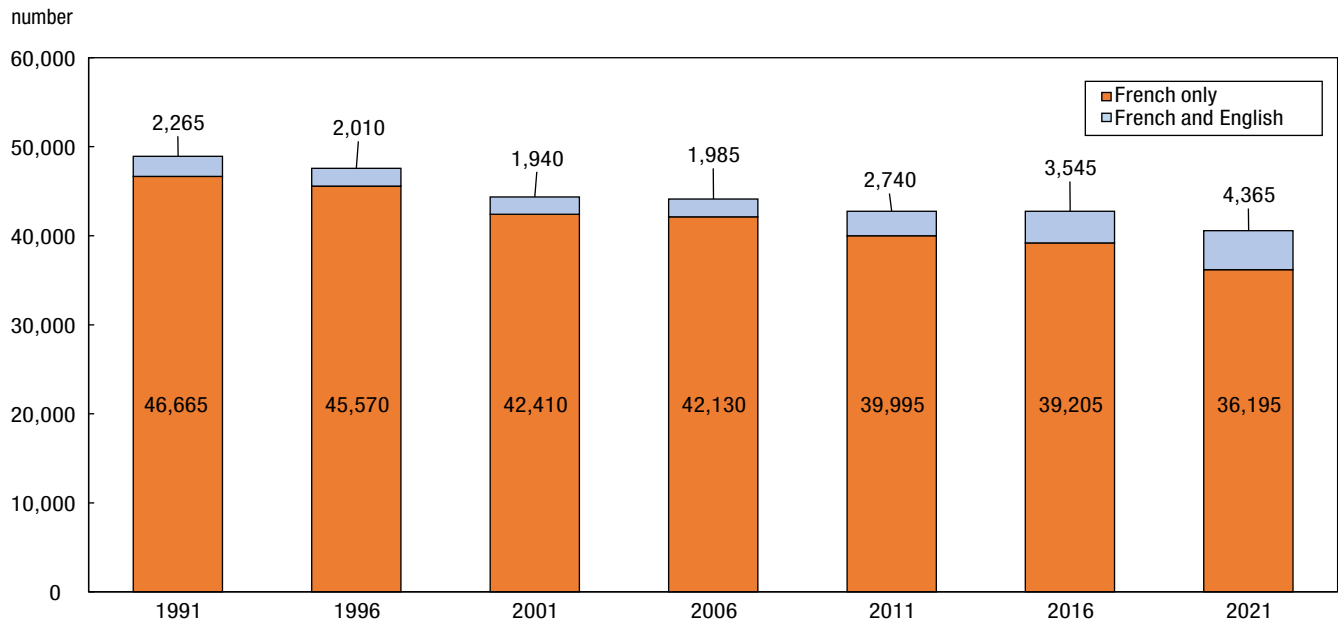
- In 2021, in 150 of Manitoba’s 214 municipalities,<sup>1</sup> less than 5% of the population could conduct a conversation in French. Conversely, in 13 municipalities, 20% or more of the population could speak French.
- The municipalities with a population of more than 500 that had the largest proportion of people who knew French were all south of the provincial capital, Winnipeg: St-Pierre-Jolys (59.9%), Montcalm (43.4%) and De Salaberry (41.2%).
- The municipalities that had the largest number of people who knew French are all in the Winnipeg census metropolitan area (CMA): Winnipeg (72,955), Taché (3,005) and Ritchot (2,505).

1. In this fact sheet, “municipality” refers to a census subdivision for which data are available.

## French as first official language spoken

**Chart 2**

**Population with French as their first official language spoken, Manitoba, 1991 to 2021**

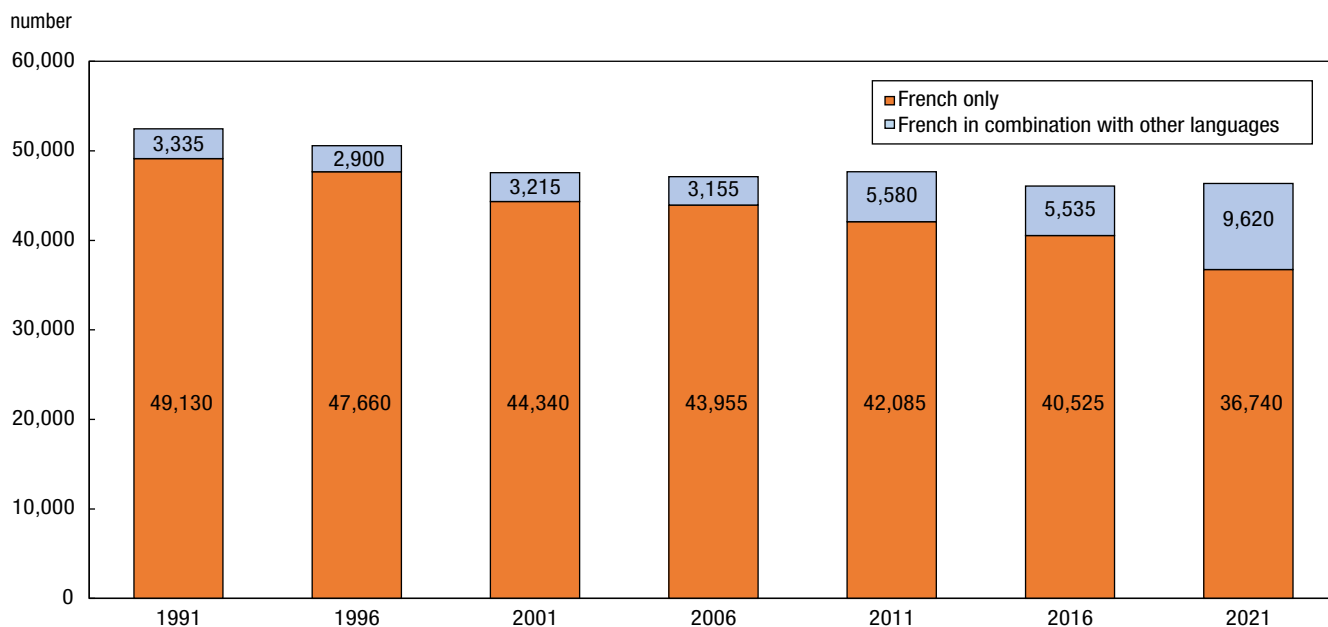


Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021.

- In 2021, 36,195 Manitobans had French as their only first official language spoken (2.7% of the population) and 4,365 had French and English as their first official languages spoken (0.3% of the population).
  - From 1991 to 2021, the number of people who had French as their first official language spoken fell steadily (-10,470), as did their demographic weight, which decreased from 4.3% to 2.7%. In 2021, both the number and proportion were the lowest ever recorded in a census in Manitoba.
- The number of Manitobans with French and English as their first official languages spoken increased from 1991 to 2021 (+2,100).

## French as a mother tongue

**Chart 3**  
**Population with French as mother tongue, Manitoba, 1991 to 2021**



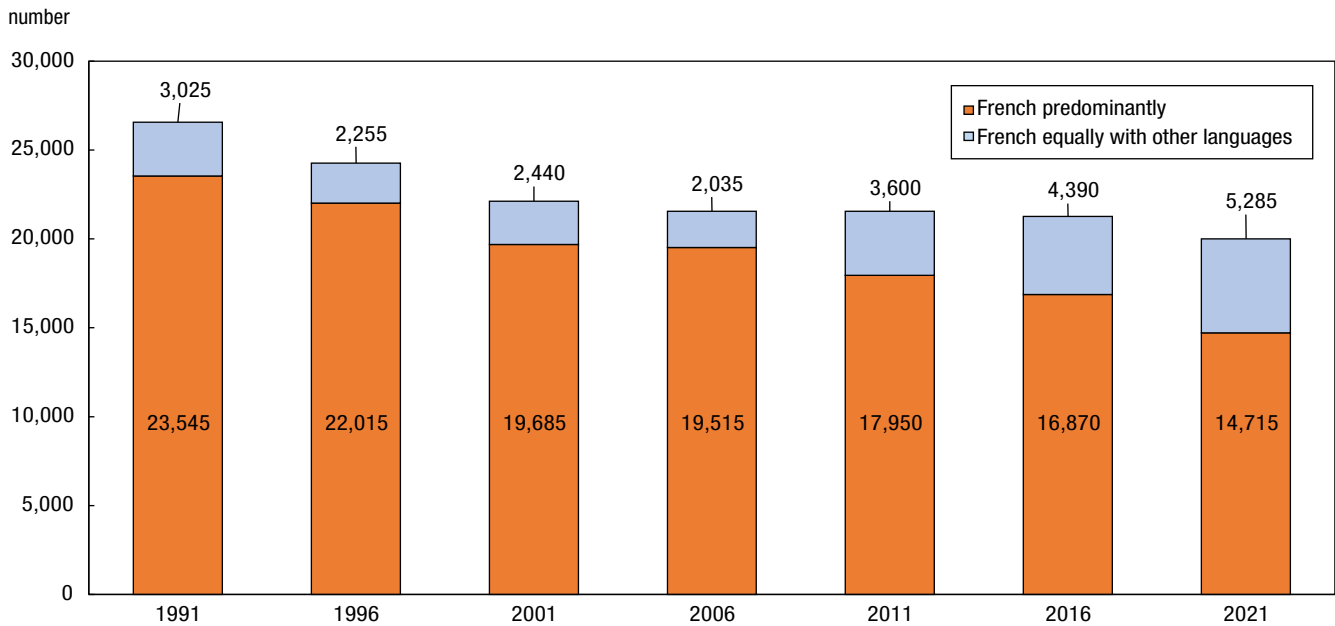
Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021.

- In 2021, 46,360 Manitobans (3.5% of the population) had French as one of their mother tongues, down from 1991 (52,465 people, or 4.9%). Compared with 2016, the number of people rose slightly (+300), but their proportion continued to fall (from 3.7% to 3.5%).
  - In 2021, 79.2% of these residents (36,740 people) had French as their only mother tongue and 20.8% (9,620 people) had French as their mother tongue along with other languages (mainly English).
- Among people who were married or in a common-law union and who had French as one of their mother tongues, roughly two in five (40.1%) were in a relationship with another person whose mother tongue is French.



## French spoken at home

**Chart 4**  
Population speaking French most often at home, Manitoba, 1991 to 2021

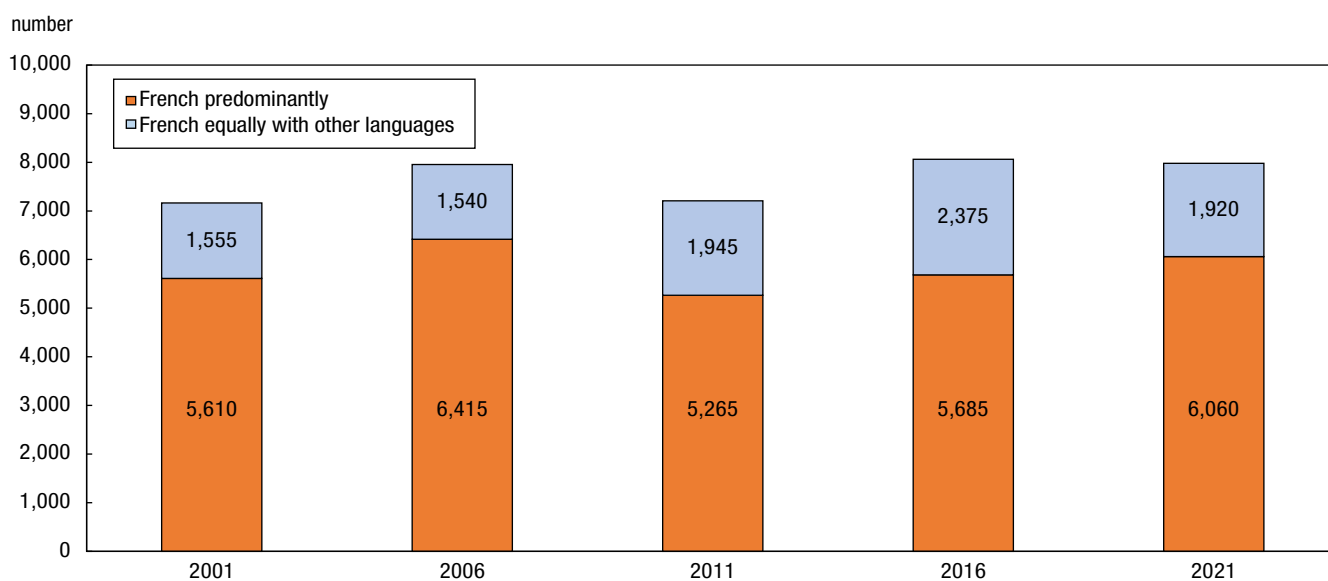


Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021.

- In 2021, 37,750 Manitobans (2.8% of the population) spoke French at least regularly at home.
  - Of these, more than half (53.0%, or 19,995 people) spoke French most often at home, predominantly or equally with other languages. This number was down from 1991 (-6,575) and 2016 (-1,260).
  - Moreover, 17,755 people (47.0%) spoke French at home as a secondary language while speaking another language more often (generally English).
- Among people with French as their mother tongue, alone or with other languages:
  - More than half (55.0%, or 25,480 people) spoke French at least regularly at home in 2021. However, this rate varied by age, ranging from 82.1% among those under age 15 to 45.0% among those aged 45 and older.
  - Nearly two in five (38.5%, or 17,845 people) spoke French most often at home, predominantly or equally with other languages, down from 1991 (48.1%, or 25,260 people).
- Among Manitoba residents whose mother tongue is not French, 12,275 (1.0%) spoke French regularly at home.
  - The vast majority of these residents (82.4%, or 10,120 people) spoke French at home as a secondary language while speaking another language more often (generally English).

## French used at work

**Chart 5**  
Population using French most often at work, Manitoba, 2001 to 2021



**Notes:** Among workers who were employed during the census reference week. In 2021, changes were made to the census questions regarding languages used at work. Comparisons with previous cycles must therefore be made with caution. For more information, consult the Languages Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021.

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001, 2006, 2016 and 2021, and the National Household Survey of 2011.

- In 2021, 16,395 Manitobans used French at least regularly at work. This represents 2.6% of the province's workers.<sup>2</sup>
- In Manitoba, 7,975 people used French most often at work in 2021, predominantly or equally with other languages, accounting for 1.3% of the province's workers.
  - The number of workers who used French most often at work rose from 2001 (+810), but remained relatively stable from 2016 to 2021 (-80).
- In 2021, among workers who use French at least regularly at work, most worked in educational services (5,285 people, or 32.2%), health care and social assistance (2,365 people, or 14.4%), or public administration (2,170 people, or 13.2%).<sup>3</sup>
- Among workers who spoke French most often at home, predominantly or equally with other languages, 63.8% also used it regularly at work in 2021.
- In 2021, just over three in four workers (75.1%) who used French regularly at work lived in the Winnipeg CMA.

2. Persons employed during the Census of Population reference week.

3. Based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

## Instruction in French at the primary and secondary levels

- In 2021, 30,470 (10.1%) of the 302,080 children under 18 living in the province were eligible<sup>4</sup> for instruction in French at the primary and secondary levels.
  - Just over 7 in 10 eligible children (70.8%, or 21,580 children) lived in the Winnipeg CMA.
- In Manitoba, 54,070 people attended or had already attended a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada, representing 4.4% of the population aged 5 and older.
  - Of those who had never attended a French-language school, 75,380 (6.2%) had attended a French immersion program in an English-language school.
  - Among school-aged children<sup>5</sup> who were eligible for instruction in French, 14,755 (64.0%) were attending or had already attended a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada.

## French among immigrants

- In 2021, the proportions of recent<sup>6</sup> immigrants and established<sup>7</sup> immigrants living in Manitoba who could have a conversation in French (4.4% and 4.0%, respectively) were lower than the proportion among the non-immigrant population (9.8%).
  - The proportions of recent immigrants and established immigrants who spoke French at least regularly at home (2.8% and 1.8%, respectively) were lower than for the non-immigrant population (3.1%).
  - The proportion of immigrants who had French as their only first official language spoken (1.4%) was lower than that of the non-immigrant population (3.1%). However, the proportion of immigrants who had French and English as their first official languages spoken (0.8%) was higher than the proportion for the non-immigrant population (0.2%).

4. According to the criteria set out in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, excluding citizenship.

5. Children aged 5 to 17.

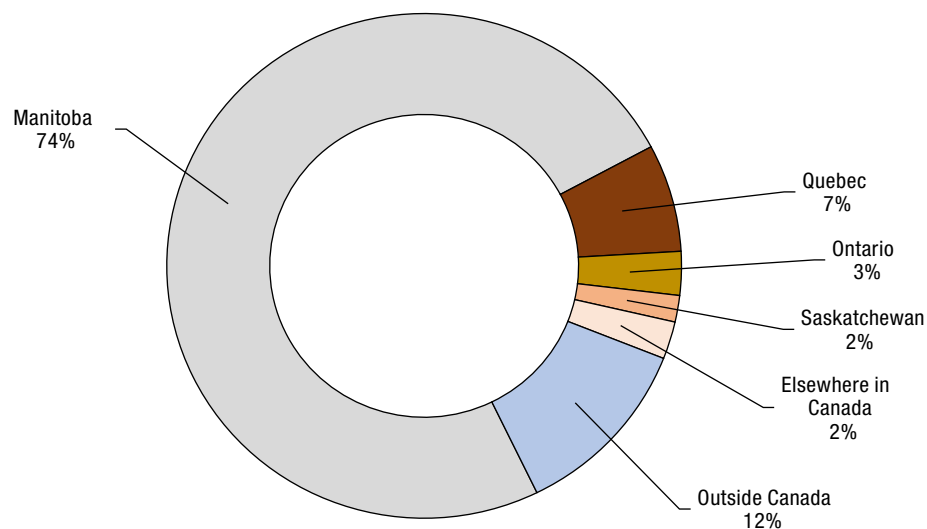
6. Immigrants admitted from 2016 to 2021.

7. Immigrants admitted before 2016.

## Mobility and birthplace of the French-speaking population

### Chart 6

#### Place of birth of the population whose only first official language spoken is French, Manitoba, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

- In 2021, among Manitobans whose only first official language spoken is French, about three-quarters (74.4%, or 26,530 people) were born in the province.
  - Nearly one in seven (13.8%, or 4,905 people) were born in another province or territory, with the majority coming from Quebec (6.9%, or 2,455 people) or Ontario (2.8%, or 990 people).
  - Close to one in eight (11.8%, or 4,220 people) were born abroad, specifically in Africa (7.8%), including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2.2%), or in metropolitan France (2.4%).
- From 2016 to 2021, the net interprovincial migration of the Manitoba population whose only first official language spoken is French was negative (-900).
  - While 1,215 people with French as their only first official language spoken moved to Manitoba from another province or territory from 2016 to 2021, 2,115 people left the province during the same period, with the majority settling in Quebec (39.5%) or Ontario (25.3%).

## Appendix

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of selected French-language indicators, Manitoba, 1991 to 2021**

Indicator	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
	percent						
French as first official language spoken <sup>1</sup>	4.5	4.3	4.0	3.9	3.6	3.4	3.1
French only	4.3	4.1	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.1	2.7
French and English	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
Knowledge of French <sup>2</sup>	9.3	9.5	9.4	9.3	8.8	8.7	8.4
French only	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
French and English	9.2	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.6	8.6	8.3
French as mother tongue	4.9	4.6	4.3	4.2	4.0	3.7	3.5
French only	4.6	4.3	4.0	3.9	3.5	3.2	2.8
French in combination with other languages	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.7
French spoken most often at home	2.5	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.5
French predominantly	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.1
French equally with other languages	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4
French used most often at work <sup>3</sup>	..	..	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.3
French predominantly	..	..	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.0
French equally with other languages	..	..	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3

.. not available for a specific reference period

1. Corresponds to the sum of the “French” and “French and English” categories.

2. According to the knowledge of official languages.

3. Among workers who were employed during the census reference week. In 2021, changes were made to the census questions regarding languages used at work. Comparisons with previous cycles must therefore be made with caution. For more information, consult the Languages Reference Guide, Census of Population, 2021.

**Sources:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021, and the National Household Survey of 2011.

**Table 2**  
**Frequency of French use at work and frequency of French spoken at home, Manitoba, 2021**

Frequency <sup>2</sup>	French used at work <sup>1</sup>		French spoken at home	
	number	percent	number	percent
<b>Total population</b>	<b>625,115</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,326,810</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Only	3,285	0.5	9,840	0.6
Mostly	2,775	0.4	4,875	0.3
Equally	1,920	0.3	5,285	0.3
Regularly	8,410	1.3	17,755	0.7
No mention	608,725	97.4	1,289,060	98.1

1. Among workers who were employed during the census reference week.

2. “Only” includes people who solely use or speak French. “Mostly” includes people who predominantly use or speak French along with at least one secondary language. “Equally” includes people who use or speak French most often equally with at least one other language. Finally, “regularly” includes people who use or speak French as a secondary language and have at least one other main language.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

**Table 3**  
**Use of French at work,<sup>1</sup> by frequency and industry sectors, Manitoba, 2021**

Selection of industry sectors	Use of French at work			
	At least regularly <sup>2</sup>		Most often	
	number	percent	number	percent
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,395</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7,975</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	465	2.8	300	3.8
Retail trade	895	5.5	250	3.1
Transportation and warehousing	515	3.1	170	2.1
Finance and insurance	915	5.6	410	5.1
Professional, scientific and technical services	500	3.0	110	1.4
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	570	3.5	275	3.4
Educational services	5,285	32.2	4,015	50.3
Health care and social assistance	2,365	14.4	980	12.3
Other services (except public administration)	510	3.1	210	2.6
Public administration	2,170	13.2	485	6.1
Other sectors	2,205	13.4	785	9.8

1. Among workers who were employed during the census reference week.

2. Workers using French at least regularly includes all those who reported using this language at work, whether it was most often or on a regular basis as a secondary language.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

**Table 4**  
**French spoken at least regularly at home, by age and mother tongue, Manitoba, 2021**

Age group	Mother tongue					
	Total		French <sup>1</sup>		Other languages	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,750</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>25,480</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>12,275</b>	<b>1.0</b>
0 to 14 years	9,760	3.9	5,245	82.1	4,515	1.8
15 to 44 years	14,350	2.7	8,895	60.1	5,450	1.1
45 years and older	13,650	2.5	11,340	45.0	2,310	0.4

1. Alone or in combination with other languages.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

**Table 5**  
**Comparison of French-language indicators, by immigrant status and period of immigration, Manitoba, 2021**

Immigration status and period of immigration	Knowledge of French <sup>1</sup>		French spoken at home <sup>1</sup>		First official language spoken			
					French only		French and English	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
<b>Total</b>	<b>111,785</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>37,465</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>35,650</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>4,335</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Non-immigrants	99,810	9.8	31,345	3.1	31,545	3.1	1,810	0.2
Immigrants	10,580	4.1	5,290	2.1	3,490	1.4	2,160	0.8
Recent immigrants <sup>2</sup>	2,540	4.4	1,635	2.8	1,120	1.9	665	1.1
Established immigrants <sup>3</sup>	8,035	4.0	3,660	1.8	2,370	1.2	1,495	0.8
2011 to 2015	2,395	4.6	1,325	2.5	760	1.5	610	1.2
2001 to 2010	2,770	4.2	1,370	2.1	825	1.3	610	0.9
1991 to 2000	820	3.8	350	1.6	265	1.2	115	0.5
1980 to 1990	585	2.8	205	1.0	105	0.5	80	0.4
Before 1980	1,480	3.8	410	1.1	425	1.1	85	0.2
Non-permanent residents	1,400	4.1	830	2.4	615	1.8	365	1.1

1. Includes all mentions of French.

2. Admitted to Canada between 2016 and 2021.

3. Admitted to Canada before 2016.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.