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The school closest to home: Proximity of French-language elementary schools and enrolment in the Maritime provinces

by Étienne Lemyre

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The school closest to home: Proximity of French-language elementary schools and enrolment in the Maritime provinces

by Étienne Lemyre

Overview of the study

This study examines enrolment in French-language elementary schools in the Maritime provinces—i.e., New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island—according to the distance between children’s homes and French- and English-language schools. The study is based on data from the 2021 Census of Population, which provides information on whether children attend minority official language schools, and on data from the 2022 Open Database on Educational Facilities, which includes information on the location of elementary schools and the language of the school authority. Elementary school is a pivotal place of learning and socialization in the lives of young children. Attending French-language school is important for the intergenerational transmission of the language and its preservation.

- In 2021, in the Maritime provinces, nearly half (49%) of elementary school-aged children eligible for instruction in French were living within 10 km of a French-language elementary school and an English-language elementary school.
- About half of eligible children (51%) lived closer to a French-language elementary school than to an English-language school. This proportion varied across the provinces and regions, ranging from 19% in Nova Scotia to 63% in southeastern New Brunswick and 84% in northern New Brunswick.
- In municipalities where at least half of the population had French as first official language spoken, the vast majority of children eligible for instruction in French lived closer to a French-language elementary school than to an English school (89%). In contrast, in municipalities where fewer than one in five people were French-speaking, the proportion of children who lived closer to a French-language school was smaller (7%).
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of children eligible for instruction in French were attending or had attended French-language school. This proportion was higher among children with at least one parent who had attended a French-language school as a child (77%) or with at least one parent who spoke French most often at home (92%). The language spoken at home by parents was the factor most strongly associated with enrolment of children eligible for instruction in French in French-language elementary schools.
- Enrolment in French-language schools was affected by the language of instruction of the elementary school closest to the family home, regardless of distance. When a French-language school was closest, 89% of children attended a French-language school. This proportion was much lower when the closest school was English (56%).

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Introduction

Elementary school is a pivotal place of learning and socialization in the lives of young children, including schools where the language of instruction is a minority official language (English in Quebec, French in Canada outside Quebec). In addition to fostering oral and written proficiency in the minority language, these schools can be one of the only places in the public space where that language takes precedence. Therefore, schools that offer a regular program in a minority language play a key role in ensuring the continued use of that language in the community.

Eligibility of children for instruction in a minority language is set out in Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In Canada outside Quebec, children whose parent has French as their mother tongue, or whose parent, brother or sister (or the child themselves) attended a French-language school¹ in Canada, are eligible for instruction in French. Based on these criteria,² data from the 2021 Census of Population reveal that 593,000 of the 5.1 million children under 18 years in Canada outside Quebec were eligible for instruction in French.³

Data from the 2021 Census were also used to examine the extent to which school-aged children (aged 5 to 17) who are eligible for instruction in French were attending or had attended a school that offers a regular program in a minority language. The results showed that less than two-thirds (64%) of children eligible for instruction in French had attended a French-language school in Canada outside Quebec, with the proportion varying from 50% in Alberta to 81% in New Brunswick.

One of the factors associated with enrolment in a school where instruction is in a minority language is the distance between the family home and the nearest school. In Canada outside Quebec, 76% of school-aged children who lived within 1 km of a French-language school had attended such a school, compared with 41% of children who lived within 20 km of a French-language school. However, these results do not take into account the level of the schools (elementary or secondary) or the proximity of other schools that do not offer a regular French-language program,⁴ which can be appealing and compete with the minority language schools. Moreover, it remains to be determined whether the association between enrolment and the distance to French-language schools exists simply because families likely to educate their children in a minority official language are concentrated near these schools.

Enrolment in schools where instruction is in a minority language is of great interest to education decision makers who must determine the programs to offer. A number of factors can guide school choice, such as perceived quality,⁵ the school's reputation, the programs offered, or the language characteristics of parents and children.⁶ The school's location relative to the family home also plays a key role, since the distance between the two can affect travel time and the mode of transportation,⁷ which can vary between urban, peri-urban and rural areas.⁸ Therefore, proximity to a school is one of the factors in the decision to choose one school over another.⁹ In a minority language context, proximity to schools is actually the most common reason

given to explain why children eligible for instruction in French attend an English-language school.¹⁰

Using data from the 2021 Census of Population and the 2022 Open Database of Educational Facilities, this study examines the role that proximity to different schools plays in enrolment in French-language schools. More specifically, the study examines public elementary¹¹ schools in the Maritime provinces. These provinces are New Brunswick, where more than a third (36%) of children were eligible for instruction in a minority official language in 2021—the highest proportion among the Canadian provinces and territories—Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, where 1 in 10 (10%) children were eligible for instruction in French, a proportion similar to the proportion for Canada outside Quebec as a whole (11%).

For more information on the sample of children eligible for instruction in French in this study and on how the distance between the family home and nearby elementary schools was calculated, see the section "[Data sources, methods and definitions.](#)"

Nearly half of children eligible for instruction in French lived within 10 km of a French-language elementary school and an English-language elementary school

Some families live in communities with only one type of school nearby, while others live near several schools that offer different types of programs. This diversity can be observed in the distribution of children eligible for instruction in French,¹² based on the distance between the family home and the nearest French and English elementary schools.

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Elementary schools and school choice

Parents of children eligible for instruction in French who send their child to a public elementary school can choose their child's school based on the language of instruction. There are three main language choices: a regular French program, a regular English program, or a French immersion program.

French-language elementary schools offer a regular French program where all instruction is in French, except for English classes.

English-language elementary schools offer a regular English program, where all instruction is in English. Some English-language elementary schools also offer a French immersion program, where some subjects are taught in French and others are taught in English. These programs were originally designed for children for whom French is a second language.

This study does not distinguish between English-language elementary schools that offer a French immersion program and those that do not.

In 2021, many children were living close to both French and English elementary schools. In the Maritime provinces, the home of nearly half (49%) of all children eligible for instruction in French was less than 10 km from both a French-language elementary school and an English-language elementary school (Table 1). In particular, 9% of children lived less than 2 km from these two types of schools.

However, a significant proportion of children eligible for instruction in French lived relatively far from the closest French-language elementary school. For example, the home of a quarter (25%) of children was located 10 km or more from the nearest French-language elementary school. Furthermore, some children eligible for instruction in French

simply lived far from elementary schools, regardless of the language of instruction: 10% lived 10 km or more from the nearest French- and English-language elementary schools.

A French-language elementary school was the closest to home for about half of children eligible for instruction in French

In addition to the distance to school, the language of instruction of the elementary school closest to home can play a role in parents' choice of school.

The distribution of children eligible for instruction in French, by language of instruction of the elementary school closest to home, varied

greatly from one province or region to another. Generally speaking, about half (51%) of children eligible for instruction in French lived closer to a French-language elementary school than to an English-language school in the Maritime provinces (Chart 1). This proportion was lower in Nova Scotia (19%) and Prince Edward Island (20%) than in New Brunswick (62%).

In New Brunswick, the closest school to the family home for 84% of eligible children in the north¹³ and 63% of eligible children in the southeast¹⁴ was a French-language elementary school, compared with 16% in the rest of the province.

In urban centres,¹⁵ a French-language elementary school was closest to the home of 37% of children eligible

Table 1
Distribution of children eligible for instruction in French, by distance from their home to the nearest French- and English-language elementary schools, Maritime provinces, 2021

Distance from home to the nearest French-language elementary school	Distance from home to the nearest English-language elementary school				
	Total	Less than 2 km	From 2 to 4 km	From 5 to 9 km	10 km or more
	percentage				
Total	100	27	21	15	36
Less than 2 km	24	9	6	2	8
From 2 to 4 km	27	9	6	4	8
From 5 to 9 km	24	5	5	4	11
10 km or more	25	5	5	6	10

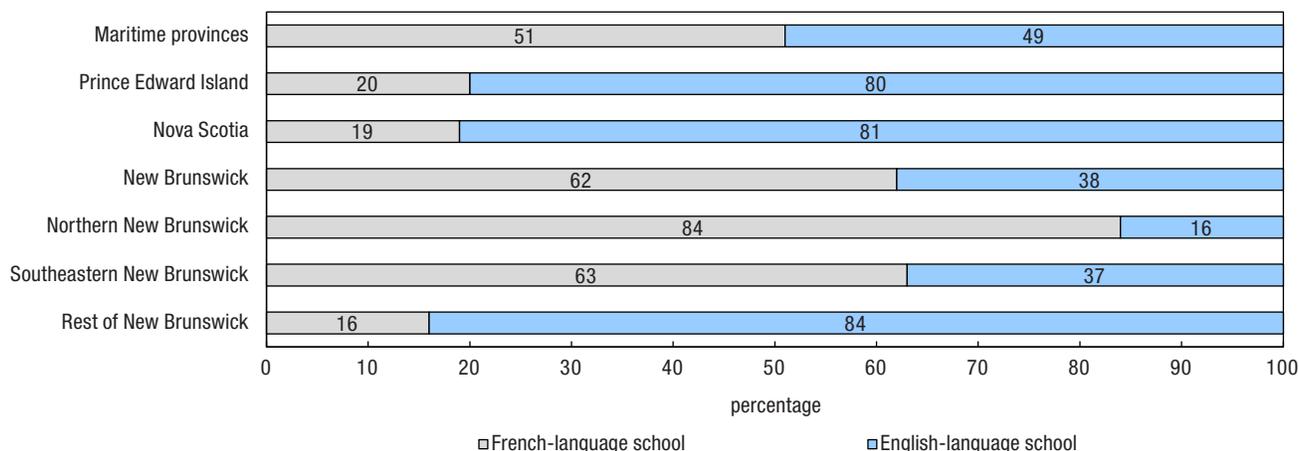
Note: Elementary school-aged children whose eligibility for instruction in French is based on their parents' education or mother tongue.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021. Open Database of Educational Facilities, 2022.

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Chart 1

Distribution of children eligible for instruction in French, by language of the elementary school closest to the family home, by province or region, Maritime provinces, 2021



Note: Elementary school-aged children whose eligibility for instruction in French is based on their parents' education or mother tongue.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021. Open Database of Educational Facilities, 2022.

for instruction in French. In rural areas, outside urban centres, this proportion was higher (70%). However, in the urban centre of Edmundston, the vast majority of children eligible for instruction in French lived closer to a French-language elementary school than to an English-language school (92%), as did a high proportion of children in Bathurst (82%) and half of eligible children living in Moncton (50%).

Conversely, the proportion of children who lived closer to a French elementary school than to an English-language school was significantly lower in Campbellton (16%), Miramichi (11%), Halifax (9%), Charlottetown (8%), Fredericton (8%) and Saint John (5%).

The proportion of children who lived closest to a French-language school also varied by the demographic representation of the French-speaking population. In municipalities¹⁶ where at least half of the population was French-speaking,¹⁷ the vast majority

of children eligible for instruction in French lived closer to a French-language elementary school than to an English school (89%). In contrast, in municipalities where fewer than one in five people were French-speaking, the proportion of children who lived closer to a French-language school was smaller (7%).

These results reflect the differences in the choice of school in each region and urban centre in the Maritime provinces, with the number¹⁸ of English- and French-language elementary schools varying greatly from one place to another. For example, there were more French-language elementary schools in the urban centres¹⁹ of Edmundston (6 schools) and Bathurst (6 schools) than English-language elementary schools (1 and 3 schools, respectively). Conversely, there were fewer French elementary schools than English elementary schools in the urban centres of Moncton (11 vs. 25 schools), Halifax

(7 vs. 101 schools), Fredericton (3 vs. 21 schools), Saint John (2 vs. 40 schools) and Charlottetown (2 vs. 14 schools).

A higher proportion of children live closer to a French elementary school than an English elementary school when at least one parent speaks French at home

In the Maritime provinces, the number of children eligible for instruction in French who lived near a French-language elementary school was higher when their parents spoke French or had attended a French-language school themselves. For close to 7 in 10 children (69%) with at least one parent who spoke French most often at home, a French-language elementary school was closest to the family home. This proportion was 53% for children with at least one parent who had attended a French-language school as a child.

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The situation was different for children whose parents were less likely to use French. A smaller proportion of these children lived near a French elementary school when neither parent spoke French at home (18%) or when neither parent had attended a French-language school as a child (33%).

These differences may be due to a higher number of French-language elementary schools in communities where French-speaking families are concentrated, or to the choice of where to live of French-speaking families, who may be more likely to settle near French elementary schools. More information on moves of families of elementary school-aged children in the years preceding the census can be found in the [“Data sources, methods and definitions”](#) section.

Enrolment in a French-language school varies by place of residence and parents’ language characteristics

In 2021, the majority of elementary school-aged children eligible for instruction in French²⁰ were attending or had attended a French-language school. Nearly three-quarters (72%) had attended a French-language school in Canada, while one-tenth (10%) had studied in a French immersion program. The remaining children (18%) had not received instruction in French (Table 2).

The proportion of children eligible for instruction in French who attended a French-language school varied by province and region. For example, it was higher in northern (88%) and southeastern (84%) New Brunswick, but lower in the rest of the province (56%), and in Prince Edward Island (54%) and Nova

Scotia (52%). This proportion was also lower in urban centres (68%) than outside urban centres (78%).

Moreover, in municipalities where at least half of the population was French-speaking, 90% of children had attended a French-language school, compared with less than half (48%) in municipalities where less than one-fifth of the population was French-speaking.

Enrolment in French-language schools also varied by the parents’ language characteristics. For example, 92% of children eligible for instruction in French who had at least one parent who spoke French most often at home had attended a French-language school, compared with 29% of children whose parents did not speak French at home. Furthermore, 77% attended a French-language school when at least one of their parents had themselves attended a French-language school as a child. This proportion was lower among children whose parents had not attended a French-language school (38%). More than a third (35%) of children whose parents studied in a French immersion program were also in French immersion.

Enrolment in French-language schools varies by the language of instruction at the school closest to home

Enrolment of children eligible for instruction in French in French-language schools also varied according to the language of instruction of the elementary school closest to home. If that school was English, enrolment also varied by the distance between home and the closest French-language elementary school.

Among children who lived closest to a French elementary school, 89% had such a school/a French-language school (Chart 2). This proportion varied little based on the distance to the closest French-language school. In contrast, the proportion of children who attended a French-language school was much lower when the closest elementary school was English (56%). In addition, this proportion declined as the distance between the child’s home and the closest French-language elementary school increased. For example, 69% of children had attended a French-language elementary school when the closest French-language school was less than 2 km from the child’s home, versus 44% of children when the school was 10 km or more from the home.

Some parents may decide to settle in a neighbourhood or community because of an elementary school that they want their child to attend, and as a result, live closer to that school. However, the effect of the language of instruction of the school closest to the family home is significant, regardless of the distance to the French- and English-language elementary schools.

For example, 87% of children had attended a French-language school when the French elementary school was less than 2 km from the family home and was also the closest school. When the French-language elementary school was less than 2 km from home, but another elementary school—an English one—was even closer, the proportion of children who attended the French-language school was much lower (69%). These results illustrate the appeal of the school

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Table 2
Percentage of children eligible for instruction in French who attended a French-language school, by selected characteristics, Maritime provinces, 2021

Characteristics	Regular program in a French-language school	Immersion program in an English-language school only	No instruction in French
	percentage		
Total	72	10	18
Province and region			
Prince Edward Island	54	21	25
Nova Scotia	52	16	32
New Brunswick	80	8	13
Northern	88	3	9
Southeastern	84	7	9
Rest of New Brunswick	56	18	26
Urban centres/outside urban centres			
Urban centres	68	13	19
Outside urban centres	78	6	16
Proportion of the French-speaking population in the municipality¹			
Less than 20%	48	19	33
From 20% to 49%	75	12	13
50% or more	90	2	8
Language spoken at home by parents			
French spoken most often at home ²	92	2	6
French spoken regularly at home ³	61	21	19
No French spoken at home	29	26	45
Parents' elementary and secondary education			
Regular program in a French-language school ⁴	77	9	14
French immersion program only ⁵	28	35	37
No instruction in French	38	11	51

1. According to the first official language spoken ("English and French" category not broken down).

2. Includes children with at least one parent who speaks French most often at home.

3. Includes children with at least one parent who speaks French at home on a regular basis as a second language, but no parent who speaks French most often at home.

4. Includes children with at least one parent who attended a French-language elementary or secondary school in Canada.

5. Includes children with at least one parent who studied in a French immersion program, but no parent who attended a French-language elementary or secondary school in Canada.

Note: Elementary school-aged children whose eligibility for instruction in French is based on their parents' education or mother tongue.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021. Open Database of Educational Facilities, 2022.

closest to home, even if different schools offering different programs are located nearby.

Parents' language characteristics have the biggest influence on the likelihood of attending a French-language school

Previous results have shown that the proportion of children eligible for instruction in French whose home is located near a French-language school varied across regions or urban centres. In addition, children with at least one parent who spoke French most often at home or who had

attended French-language school as a child were more likely to live near a French-language elementary school. Lastly, the results also indicate that enrolment in French-language schools varied according to the language of instruction of the closest elementary school and to the distance between the closest French-language elementary school and the family home.

A multivariate analysis examined the specific contribution of each of these factors to determine which ones are significantly associated with the probability that a child eligible for instruction in French

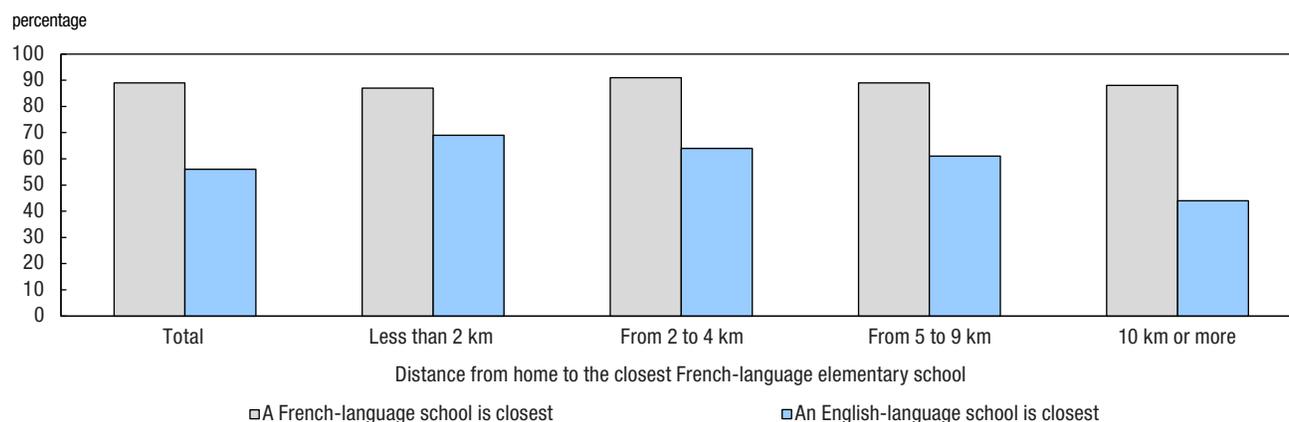
attended a French-language school. Separate analyses are presented for the Maritime provinces as a whole, for New Brunswick, and for Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia combined. Because the number and proportion of children eligible for instruction in French in these two provinces are lower, combining the provinces helps to illustrate a contrast with New Brunswick, where this proportion is the highest of all the Canadian provinces and territories.

The results of the multivariate analysis confirm that by taking into account all factors—i.e., the

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Chart 2

Percentage of children eligible for instruction in French who attended a French-language school, by distance to the closest French-language elementary school and whether a French-language school is the closest school, Maritime provinces, 2021



Note: Elementary school-aged children whose eligibility for instruction in French is based on their parents' education or mother tongue.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021. Open Database of Educational Facilities, 2022.

proximity of schools, the place of residence of families, and parents' language characteristics—children who live closer to a French-language elementary school (70%) were more likely to go to a French-language school than those living closer to an English-language school (56%) (Table 3). The distance between the family home and the closest French-language elementary school remains a significant factor, but only when the school is located more than 10 km from the family home. Children who lived this far from a French-language elementary school (78%) were still less likely to go to a French-language school than those who lived less than 2 km from the school (83%).

The province of residence and the proportion of the French-speaking population in the municipality where the child lives are important factors for enrolment in French-language schools. However, contrary to the results of the descriptive analysis, children from Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia were more likely

to have attended a French-language school (86%) than children from New Brunswick (80%), given the same characteristics. Nevertheless, children were still more likely to have attended a French-language school in municipalities where the French-speaking population represented at least half of the population (59%) than in municipalities where it represented less than 20% (48%).

Moreover, the association between the type of environment (urban/rural) and enrolment in a French-language school changes when all factors are taken into account. In New Brunswick, children eligible for instruction in French who lived in an urban centre were more likely to have attended a French-language school than those living outside urban centres. However, this association was not significant for Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. These results also contrast with the 2021 Census results on all school-aged children in Canada outside Quebec, which showed that a lower

proportion of children eligible for instruction in French had attended a French-language school in urban areas.²¹ More research is therefore needed to better understand how the relationship between rural/urban areas and school choice varies across regions and provinces.

Lastly, when all factors are taken into account, parents' language characteristics appear to play a key role in the likelihood of enrolment in a French-language school in the Maritime provinces. Children eligible for instruction in French whose parents spoke French most often at home (89%) were three times more likely to attend a French-language school than those whose parents did not speak French at home (29%). Similarly, children with at least one parent who attended a French-language school as a child (77%) were much more likely to attend a French-language school than children whose parent did not (35%).

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Table 3

Predicted probabilities of attending a French-language school, children eligible for instruction in French, Maritime provinces, 2021

Characteristics	Maritime provinces	Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia combined predicted probability	New Brunswick
Elementary school closest to home			
English-language (ref.)	0.56	0.45	0.63
French-language	0.70*	0.64*	0.72*
Distance from home to the closest French-language elementary school			
Less than 2 km (ref.)	0.83	0.70	0.84
From 2 to 4 km	0.85*	0.72	0.85
From 5 to 9 km	0.85*	0.70	0.85
10 km or more	0.78*	0.58*	0.81*
Province			
Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia combined	0.86*
New Brunswick (ref.)	0.80
Urban centres/outside urban centres			
Urban centres	0.81*	0.57	0.90*
Outside urban centres (ref.)	0.78	0.56	0.85
French-speaking population in the municipality¹			
Less than 20% (ref.)	0.48	0.46	0.51
From 20% to 49%	0.57*	0.69*	0.53
50% or more	0.59*	0.66*	0.64*
Language spoken at home by parents			
French spoken most often at home ²	0.89*	0.85*	0.91*
French spoken regularly at home ³	0.62*	0.65*	0.58*
No French spoken at home (ref.)	0.29	0.31	0.26
Parents' elementary and secondary education			
Regular program in a French-language school ⁴	0.77*	0.54*	0.86*
No French-language education or French immersion program only (ref.)	0.35	0.35	0.34

... not applicable

* significantly different from the reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

1. According to the first official language spoken ("English and French" category not broken down).

2. Includes children with at least one parent who speaks French most often at home.

3. Includes children with at least one parent who speaks French at home on a regular basis as a second language, but no parent who speaks French most often at home.

4. Includes children with at least one parent who attended a French-language elementary or secondary school in Canada.

Note: Elementary school-aged children whose eligibility for instruction in French is based on their parents' education or mother tongue.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021. Open Database of Educational Facilities, 2022.

Conclusion

The results of the 2021 Census on enrolment in minority language schools of children eligible for instruction in the minority official language of their province or territory showed that enrolment rates declined the further these schools were located from the children's home.

By examining elementary school-aged children in the Maritime provinces, this study confirms the link between the relative proximity of French- and English-language

elementary schools and enrolment of children eligible for instruction in French in French-language schools. Even when a French-language elementary school is a short distance from home, the child is less likely to attend a French-language school if an English-language elementary school is closer to the home. Distance also played a role beyond the 10 km mark: children who lived this distance from the closest French-language elementary school were less likely to have enrolled in a French-language school than those who lived closer to a French-

language school. This highlights the importance of the location of schools relative to enrolment: schools that are closer have greater appeal, which can have repercussions on the child's language of instruction, or possibly the families' choice of where to live.

Finally, this study showed that parents' language characteristics are very strongly associated with the enrolment of children eligible for instruction in French in French-language schools. These results expand on results from other studies

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that had confirmed links between intergenerational transmission of language,²² the language composition of families²³ and enrolment in French-language schools in a minority context. To a certain extent, this is an example of “language reproduction” in French-language minority communities: children whose parents speak French at home or attended a French-language school as children are in turn more likely to attend a French-language school. Another example is that children living in communities with a higher proportion of francophones were more likely to have attended a French-language school.

The question of choosing a school is complex and many factors can influence the choices parents make

about their child’s education. The results of the 2022 Survey on the Official Language Minority Population will help delve deeper into this issue. For example, the survey will provide more information on the reasons behind parents’ choice of school for children eligible for instruction in the minority official language of their province, and on the intentions of parents of children who have yet to start school.

The 2021 Census results on instruction in the minority official language help to address various needs related to planning minority-language school services across Canada. For example, new analyses can be done on the choice of French-language education—a regular or immersion program—among

children who are not eligible for instruction in French on account of their parents’ education or mother tongue. In addition, as more information becomes available on the geographic location and programs offered in Canadian schools²⁴, future analyses may also examine the relationship between distance to elementary—and secondary—schools and enrolment in these schools in other parts of the country,²⁵ again with a view to improving services to Canadians.

Étienne Lemyre is an analyst with Statistics Canada’s Centre for Demography.

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Data sources, methods and definitions

Data sources

Information on eligible children and their parents is taken from the 2021 Census of Population short-form questionnaire, and refers to persons in private households in occupied private dwellings. The location of elementary schools and their language of instruction were determined using Statistics Canada's 2022 [Open Database of Educational Facilities](#), which provides information on the language of the school authority responsible for each public school.

Target population

This study examines children eligible for instruction in a minority official language who were of kindergarten or elementary school age. In Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, these are children who were 5 to 11 years of age on December 31, 2020 (born between 2009 and 2015), corresponding to kindergarten through grade 6. In New Brunswick, this refers to children aged 5 to 10 on December 31, 2020 (born between 2010 and 2015), corresponding to kindergarten through grade 5. The number of years of elementary school in New Brunswick differs in the English and French school systems. Therefore, this study focuses on New Brunswick children considered to be of elementary school age in both systems.

A total of 20,175 children in the Maritime provinces who were elementary school-aged and living with at least one parent at the time of the 2021 Census were eligible on the basis of at least one parent's mother tongue or education, including 740 in Prince Edward Island, 4,515 in Nova Scotia and 14,925 in New Brunswick. Since this study examines the relationship between parents' characteristics and enrolment of eligible children, eligible children who did not live with at least one parent at the time of the census (375 children) and children who lived with at least one parent, but whose eligibility was not based on their parents' mother tongue or education (4,585 children) are not included in the results,²⁶ in part because of the different dynamic regarding the choice of instruction in French for these children.

Methods

Attendance is the percentage of eligible school-aged children who attended or had attended a French-language school in Canada for at least one year between the time they reached elementary school age and the collection of 2021 Census data.

The distance between eligible children's place of residence and the closest schools corresponds to the distance between the midpoint (centroid) of the block (dissemination block) where the child lives and the exact coordinates of the closest public schools. These distances were calculated using using a Geographic Information System (GIS) software and produced by following the road network, using Statistics Canada's [Road Network Files](#). Children whose place of residence is not connected by road to either an English- or French-language

elementary school (for example, the place of residence is on an island not connected by bridge to the rest of the province) are not included in the study (50 children).

This study includes a multivariate analysis that examines the effect of various factors—the proximity of schools, place of residence characteristics, and parents' language characteristics—on the probability that a child eligible for instruction in French attended a French-language school. This analysis was carried out using binomial logistic regression, which, for each factor, determined the predicted probability that a child attended a French-language school compared with a reference category. A child with a given criterion for which the predicted probability is greater than the reference category is more likely to have attended a French-language school. However, if this predicted probability is lower than the reference category, they were less likely to have attended a French-language school.

Limitations of this study

This study has certain limitations. For example, there is only information on the parent or parents who were living with the child at the time of the census. Another parent or person not living with the child at the time of the census may have played a role in school choice.

In addition, this study does not take into account the boundaries of school authorities and catchment areas. For example, the school closest to a child's home is not necessarily the school to which the child is assigned by the school authority.

This study is based on place of residence at the time of the census, but on school enrolment at any time in the child's life. Enrolment in a French-language school may therefore be current at the time of the census or may have happened prior to it. One limitation of this study is therefore the possibility that the eligible child's family may have recently moved. This may have resulted in the family moving away from or closer to a French-language school during the elementary education of the eligible child. Therefore, respondents may have reported enrolment at a French-language school for a school located in another region, province or territory, before the move.

According to data from the 2021 Census of Population long-form questionnaire, among children in the target population who were living in the Maritime provinces in 2021, 91% were living at the same address one year before the census, 5% were living at another address within the same municipality, and 4% lived outside that municipality. Among children 10 years of age on December 31, 2020, 65% were living at the same address five years earlier, 14% were living at another address in the same municipality, and 22% lived outside this municipality. One of the effects of these children eligible for instruction in French having moved is that the proportion of children who attended a French-language school in certain areas may have risen, since the enrolment reported by respondents refers to a school attended elsewhere, before the move. While some families may have moved to be closer to a particular

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school, many other factors can guide a family's choice of where to live, including proximity to a workplace, or the availability, size or cost of housing.

Lastly, the distance between the block and the closest school calculated using the road network does not necessarily correspond to the shortest route, given speed limits, restricted access and the mode of transportation to get to school. However, the advantage of an analysis based on the road network is that it better represents the distance children need to travel than the "as-the-crow-flies" method, which does not take into account

the road network or topography, such as mountains, a lake or a watercourse that cannot be crossed by road. Therefore, the distances calculated using the road network method are generally a bit longer than using the "as-the-crow-flies" method. In this study, for example, the average distance between the homes of children eligible for instruction in French and the closest French-language elementary school was 9.3 km using the road network method, and 6.8 km using the "as-the-crow-flies" method. However, when either method was used to examine the factors associated with eligible children attending a French-language school, the results were generally similar.

Notes

1. An elementary school in the case of parents, or an elementary or secondary school in the case of siblings or the child itself.
2. Without taking into account the criterion of Canadian citizenship of the parents. More information on the effect of including this criterion on the count of eligible children will be available shortly when the data tables on this subject are released.
3. Statistics Canada (2022).
4. English-language schools that offer a regular English program and/or a French immersion program.
5. Burgess et al. (2015).
6. Corbeil, Grenier and Lafrenière (2007).
7. Mandic et al. (2023).
8. He and Giuliano (2017).
9. Mandic et al. (2017).
10. Corbeil, Grenier and Lafrenière (2007).
11. The choice of school at elementary and secondary levels differs in some respects, one reason being that the child plays a bigger role in the choice of a secondary school than of an elementary school. In addition, there are more elementary schools across the regions than secondary schools.
12. Children of elementary school age whose eligibility for instruction in French is based on at least one criterion relating to their parents' education or mother tongue.
13. "Northern" New Brunswick corresponds to the census divisions of Gloucester, Madawaska, Restigouche and Victoria.
14. "Southeastern" New Brunswick corresponds to the census divisions of Kent and Westmorland.
15. Census agglomerations and census metropolitan areas.
16. Census subdivisions.
17. According to the first official language spoken ("English and French" category not broken down).
18. The elementary school counts presented in this study were obtained from the 2022 Open Database of Educational Facilities. These counts may differ from counts from other sources, on one hand because they exclude new schools that opened after the last database update, and on the other, because each pavilion is considered a separate school for elementary schools that have pavilions located at different addresses.
19. Census agglomerations and census metropolitan areas.
20. On account of the parents' education or mother tongue.
21. Statistics Canada (2022).
22. Statistics Canada (2022).
23. Corbeil, Grenier and Lafrenière (2007).
24. Including public and private schools.
25. Including analyses of children who attend English-language schools in Quebec based on the proximity to these schools.
26. For example, this includes children whose eligibility is based on the fact they themselves went to a minority-language school. All children eligible for instruction in French in this situation attended a French-language school in Canada.

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