

# Study: What is the connection between working from home and the languages used at work?

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Working from home increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 1 in 4 (24.3%) Canadian workers worked from home at the time of the 2021 Census of Population, compared with less than 1 in 10 (7.4%) workers at the time of the 2016 Census.

In 2021, in the regions of Moncton, Montréal and Ottawa–Gatineau, people who worked from home used English at work more than other workers. They were also more likely to use both official languages at work.

These results are based on a new study released today, entitled "[What is the connection between working from home and the languages used at work?](#)"

Using 2021 Census data, the study examines the connection between working from home and the languages used at work. The article focuses on three case studies—the census metropolitan areas (CMAs) of Moncton, Montréal and Ottawa–Gatineau—three regions where both English and French are widely used at work.

## Home-based workers are less likely than other workers to work primarily in French

Overall, in Canada, home-based workers (81.7%) were slightly more likely than other workers (75.6%) to use English as their primary language of work.

More specifically, in the Montréal CMA, 56.3% of home-based workers primarily used French at work, compared with 74.8% of their non-home-based counterparts. In addition, home-based workers (32.8%) in the Montréal CMA were nearly twice as likely to work primarily in English as other workers (16.8%).

Similar, yet less pronounced, patterns were observed in the Ottawa–Gatineau and Moncton CMAs.

## Working from home differs in terms of occupations and language profile of workers

Home-based workers differ in various ways from other workers, which could account for their different language practices at work.

For example, there are more home-based workers in certain occupations and sectors where this work arrangement is possible. In 2021, a large proportion of people working in professional, scientific and technical services (57.8%), finance and insurance (57.7%) and information and cultural industries (54.9%) worked from home. Conversely, the proportion of home-based workers was lower in transportation and warehousing (10.6%), construction (9.7%), retail trade (9.2%) and accommodation and food services (5.3%).

In addition, working from home was more common among workers who knew English. For example, in the Montréal CMA, the work-from-home rate was higher among bilingual English–French workers (30.5%) and those who knew English but not French (28.7%) than among workers who knew French but not English (11.9%).

## Occupation, language and socio-demographic characteristics largely explain language used by home-based workers

The use of English or French at work can be largely explained by the characteristics of jobs and workers.



Similar to the propensity to work from home, the use of languages at work varied greatly by occupation and industry sector. For example, in the Montréal CMA, one-third of workers in professional, scientific and technical services (33.8%) and information and cultural industries (32.2%) worked primarily in English, compared with one-tenth of workers in construction (10.1%) and with 12.6% of those in health care and social assistance.

When occupation, language and socio-demographic characteristics of home-based workers and other workers were taken into account, the differences between the two groups of workers, in terms of language used at work, considerably decreased.

However, after accounting for differences in their occupation, language and socio-demographic characteristics, there were still differences between home-based workers and other workers in terms of using French at work.

For example, in Montréal, home-based workers (66.7%) remained less likely than other workers (71.6%) to use French as their primary language at work, even when both groups of workers had similar characteristics. This means that other factors associated with home-based work not considered in this study, such as employer or work environment characteristics, may explain the languages home-based workers used at work.

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## Note to readers

### Data sources

The data are from the 2021 Census of Population and cover persons aged 15 years and older who were employed during the census reference week, i.e., the week of May 2 to 8, 2021.

### Working from home

People usually working from home are those whose usual place of work and residence were in the same building, those who lived on the farm where they worked, and teleworkers who worked from home for most of their work week.

In the case of hybrid work arrangements, where work time is shared between home and another location, census respondents should have indicated only where they worked most of the time. The inability to distinguish between workplaces for the same person is a limitation of the data and analysis.

### Languages used at work

The 2021 Census question on languages of work had two parts. The first asked about the language or languages used regularly at work. Then, if applicable, the second part asked to specify which of the languages indicated in the first part was used most often. For both parts, multiple responses were possible.

People who use a language regularly (or on a regular basis) include all those who reported using this language regularly, even if they did not use it most often.

For English and French specifically, people who mainly used one language are those who used only one of these two languages most often at work. This excludes people who said that they used English and French equally but includes those who used English or French equally with a non-official language.

## Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3901](#).

The article entitled "[What is the connection between working from home and the languages used at work?](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).