

Article

Retail and customer service in French

by Martin Turcotte

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For most francophones (people whose first language learned is French), being greeted and served in their language when they shop, eat out or go to the hairstylist is not a concern. In fact, a majority live in areas where most residents are also francophones.¹ It's a different story, however, for those who live in regions where their mother tongue is a minority language. This may also be true for francophones who reside in areas such as Montréal where French, though the majority language, is a minority in some places.

To what extent are francophones able to get service in French when they visit businesses in their community? This article provides some answers to that question, focusing on the prevalence of the knowledge of French among sales and service workers who interact *directly* and *routinely* with consumers in the course of their work (For more information about the occupations included in the study, see "What you should know about this study").

Previous studies have examined the availability of health care or government service in French.² However, very little research has been done on the knowledge and use of French among workers in retail and consumer service outlets. This study attempts to determine the extent to which francophone consumers

are able to use their language on a daily basis in "routine" retail and service transactions. A number of occupations have been omitted as most people have only occasional contact with workers in those occupations, for example with real estate agents, physicians and police officers.

In addition to looking at how prevalent knowledge of French is among workers in sales and service occupations, the article also examines the proportion of workers who use the language while performing their duties.

The first section of the article presents data for Canada, the provinces and territories. It contains information on the knowledge and use of French among sales and service workers.

The second part of the article focuses on sales and service workers in four census metropolitan areas (CMA): Ottawa-Gatineau (with a distinction between the Quebec and Ontario sides), Moncton, Greater Sudbury and Montréal. These CMAs have been chosen because of their specific demolinguistic context and because the number of workers that understand and are able to use French is high enough to allow for comparisons over time.

In the Ontario part of Ottawa-Gatineau, Greater Sudbury and

Moncton, francophones are a minority. It may be a challenge for them to receive service in French at local businesses. In the Montréal CMA, francophones are in a majority and account for about two-thirds of the population. However, this proportion varies widely within the CMA – francophones while representing 80% of the population in the northern and southern-most sections of the CMA, are slightly in the minority on the Island of Montréal (49.8 % in 2006³) and are a minority in all municipalities on the West Island. For example, francophones make up 20% of the population in the municipalities of Dollard-des-Ormeaux and Côte-Saint-Luc.⁴ As a result of this linguistic dynamic, understanding how French is used in the marketplace in Montreal is important.

In short, in these four metropolitan areas, contact between francophones and other linguistic groups is likely regular notably during commercial transactions. From census data, it is possible to determine what proportion of workers can, with their knowledge of French, offer services in this language (according to their place of work). In the final part of the article, those sales and service workers most or least likely to be proficient in French are examined.

What you should know about this study

The data used are from the 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006 long census questionnaires (completed by 20% of the Canadian households). Only persons in the employed labour force are included in the study, that is, people who had a job in the week preceding the census. In addition, respondents had to have a usual place of work or to be working at home (in other words, people with no fixed work location are excluded). The statistics concerning knowledge and use of French among sales and service workers are based on location of work and not on place of residence. For example, references to the proportion of central Montréal's workers who were able to carry on a conversation in French relate to persons working in a business outlet located in the central area.

Definitions

Knowledge of French: In the census, each household member is asked whether he or she can speak "English or French well enough to conduct a conversation". People who stated that they spoke "French only" or "English and French" are deemed to have knowledge of French. It should be noted that the ability to carry on a conversation is self-assessed by respondents and that the ability to speak French does not necessarily mean that service in French will be offered automatically. Moreover, proficiency can vary substantially from person to person.

Use of French at work: The census contains the following questions: "In this job, what language did this person use most often?" and "Did this person use any other languages on a regular basis in this job?" Respondents who answered French to either of these questions were deemed to be using French at work. More detailed data on the use of French "on a regular basis" or "most often" are provided in the tables.

Francophones: In this study, francophones are persons who reported that French was the first language they learned in childhood (their mother tongue). Some respondents reported that they had learned more than one language at the same time. They are considered francophones if one of the languages was French.

Allophones: Allophones are people who stated that the first language they learned in childhood was neither English nor French. Respondents who reported a non-official language along with French are considered francophones. Similarly, people who reported a non-official language along with English are considered anglophones, unless they also mentioned

French as one of their mother tongues (in which case they are deemed to be francophones).

Anglophones: In this study, anglophones are persons who reported that English was the first language they learned in childhood (their mother tongue). Respondents who reported that they had learned English and French simultaneously are considered francophones for the purposes of this study.

French-speaking population: Some sections of the article refer to data from the Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities. Those data relate to the French-speaking population outside Quebec, that is, people who: (a) have French as their mother tongue, either alone or with another language; (b) have a non-official language as their mother tongue (we refer to them as allophones) and speak French but not English; (c) have a non-official language as their mother tongue, know both English and French and speak either a non-official language or French, alone or with another language, most often at home.

Sales and service occupations

The National Occupational Classification-Statistics (NOC-S) is based on the National Occupational Classification (NOC), which was developed, and is maintained, by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). It provides a systematic classification structure to identify and categorize the entire range of occupational activity in Canada. It has 10 broad occupational categories.

This study focuses on broad category G, sales and service occupations. The official titles of the occupations included in this analysis are as follows: retail salespersons and sales clerks; cashiers; *mâitres d'hôtel* and hosts / hostesses; bartenders; food and beverage servers; travel counsellors; airline sales and service agents; ticket agents, cargo service representatives and related clerks (except airline); hotel front desk clerks; tour and travel guides; outdoor sport and recreational guides; casino occupations; operators and attendants in amusement, recreation and sport; hairstylists and barbers; estheticians, electrologists and related occupations; service station attendants; and grocery clerks and store shelf stockers. Some occupations were combined with related occupations in Table 4.

About 50% of the occupations in the sales and service category were not included in this study. Some do not necessarily involve direct contact with consumers and

What you should know about this study (continued)

therefore have no bearing on consumers' ability to obtain service in French (for example, retail trade supervisors, chefs and cooks, retail and wholesale buyers, security guards). Other occupations involve contact with "citizens" rather than consumers (for example, police officers). In addition, some occupations are associated with the sale of specialized products and service purchased by members of the public and by businesses and organizations (for example, insurance agents and brokers). Since this study is about workers who routinely come into contact with the public, those occupations were also excluded. In some occupations, workers may or may not have direct contact with customers (e.g., pet groomers). As census data do not provide information about whether there is contact with customers or not, the decision was made to err on the conservative side and exclude occupations that potentially do not involve interaction with customers.

Census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations

For the purposes of this article, urban area is narrowly defined. There are two types of urban areas: census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs). A CMA or a CA consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban area (referred to as an urban core).

A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more must live in the urban core. A CA must have an urban core population of at least 10,000. In 2006, there were 33 CMAs and 110 CAs.

For the data to be comparable over time, the 2006 CMA boundaries were applied to the data from the 2001 and 1996 censuses.

Montréal CMA, Island of Montréal, city of Montréal and Montréal's city centre

Montréal's CMA includes the city of Montréal as well as a hundred more municipalities surrounding it. Some are located in the suburbs, some on the Island of Montréal. The north and south suburbs, as defined in this study, include the municipalities of Laval, Longueuil, Terrebonne, Brossard and many others. The Island of Montréal includes the city of Montréal as well as 15 other municipalities which are classified in the tables under the category other municipalities on the Island of Montréal.

In this study, Montréal's city centre is defined as the rectangular area bisected by Sainte-Catherine Street, the main commercial artery. The area is bounded on the west by Atwater Street, on the north by Sherbrooke Street, on the east by Amherst Street and on the south by Saint-Antoine Street. Between Atwater Street and Guy Street, the southern boundary is located just north of the Ville-Marie highway.

Portrait of Canada and its urban areas

The proportion of sales and service workers who know French is generally higher than the proportion of francophones in the region

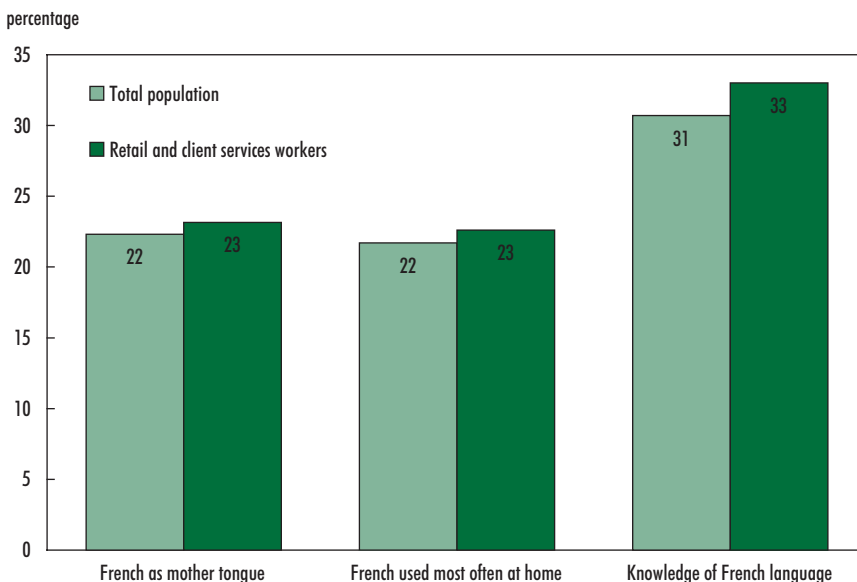
In 2006, there were 6,970,405 francophones in Canada; in this article, a francophone is someone whose mother tongue, or one of them, is French (for more information on these concepts, see "What you should know about this study"). At that time, francophones made up 22% of the population. The proportion of Canadians who could carry on a conversation in French was higher at 31%, because some people whose mother tongue is not French are able to carry on a conversation in French.

People whose job was to serve customers in stores, restaurants and other service outlets were somewhat more likely to know French than Canadians as a whole. In 2006, 33% of these workers were able to carry on a conversation in French. The gap between sales and service workers and the population of a particular area with respect to knowledge of French was observed in almost every province (Table 1). In a number of regions, sales and service workers were more likely to know French than workers in other occupations. This may be attributed to the fact that sales and service workers are, on average, younger than other workers (median age of 33 years for sales and service workers compared to 41 years among other workers). Indeed, outside Quebec, young adults are more likely to be bilingual than are people in other age groups.⁵

As shown in Chart 2, in all areas where 80% or more of the population was francophone almost all sales and service workers were able to carry on a conversation in French.

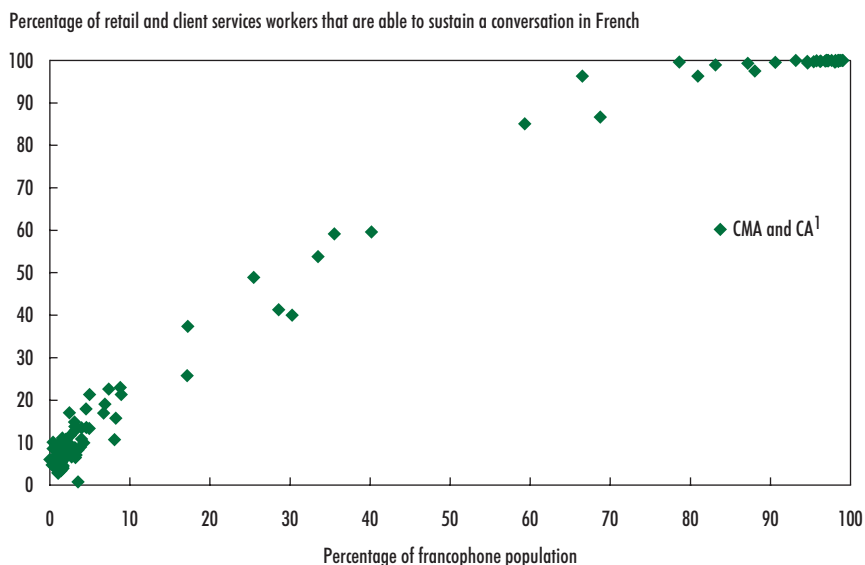
In urban areas where francophones constitute a minority, there was a much greater range and variability in the knowledge of French. Knowledge of French among the residents of a

Chart 1 Retail and client services workers are more likely to be able to sustain a conversation in French than the overall population, Canada, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Chart 2 In communities where 80% or more of the residents are francophones, almost all of the retail and client services workers are capable of sustaining a conversation in French, 2006



1. Census metropolitan area and census agglomeration.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Table 1 Knowledge of French of retail and client services workers and of the total population, by province and territory, 1991 to 2006

	Workers in retail and client services				Total population
	1991	1996	2001	2006 †	2006
	percentage				
Canada	33.2	33.0	33.0	33.0	30.7
Province or territory of work					
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.2*	4.2*	5.8*	7.5	4.7
Prince Edward Island	13.2*	15.3	15.8	17.6	10.6
Nova Scotia	11.1*	12.0	13.2	12.8	12.8
New Brunswick	44.1*	46.1*	47.1	48.3	43.6
Quebec	97.2*	97.8	98.2*	97.8	94.5
Ontario	14.5*	14.8*	14.2*	12.7	11.9
Manitoba	11.1	12.8	13.1*	11.8	9.3
Saskatchewan	5.2*	6.6	7.2	6.7	5.0
Alberta	8.7	9.4*	9.3*	8.5	6.9
British Columbia	8.3	9.5*	9.1*	8.5	7.3
Yukon Territory	11.2*	10.5*	14.5	17.4	9.1
Northwest Territories	8.3	8.2	10.0	9.5	11.8
Nunavut	6.2	5.5	4.0

† reference group

* statistically significant difference from reference group at $p < 0.05$

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population from 1991 to 2006.

particular area may be affected by a number of factors: history, language policy, geographic location, residents' background, the prevalence of linguistically mixed unions, French-as-a-second-language training in local educational institutions, and so on. Not surprisingly, in areas where less than 5% of the population was francophone, less than 25% of sales and service workers were able to carry on a conversation in French.

Knowledge of French among sales and service workers is increasing in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and the Yukon

In Canada as a whole, the prevalence of the knowledge of French among sales and service workers remained virtually unchanged between 1991 and 2006. At the provincial level, however, there were some differences, as knowledge of French generally increased faster in most of the Atlantic provinces (Table 1). In Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick,

the proportion of sales and service workers capable of carrying on a conversation in French increased. There was a similar trend in the Yukon Territory. These variations may be due to changes in the relative number of francophones or to changes in the prevalence of the knowledge of French.

Conversely, in Ontario, the percentage of workers in these occupations who spoke French was lower in 2006 than in the three previous censuses. The situation was relatively stable in the other provinces.

The higher the proportion of francophones relative to the total population, the higher the proportion of sales and service workers who use French at work

Previous studies have shown that the higher the geographic concentration of a linguistic minority group, the greater the community's linguistic vitality.⁶ Hence, the higher the percentage of francophones in a particular community, the stronger the sense of belonging to the minority group, the greater the tendency to

consider it important to use French in everyday living and, ultimately, the more regularly French is used.

The pattern was similar for the prevalence of the use of French by workers who interact directly with the customers of businesses in a particular area: the higher the proportion of francophones in an area, the higher the proportion of the area's sales and service workers who used French most often or regularly at work.

In a number of areas, many workers know French but few use it

In almost every urban area in Quebec the proportion of workers who knew French was almost equal to the proportion of workers who used it at work. Outside Quebec, on the other hand, the proportion of workers who used French at work was lower than the proportion of workers who understood French. That is not surprising, since some of these workers were employed in markets that serve very few customers who request service in French (data not shown).

Portrait of the Moncton, Greater Sudbury, Ottawa-Gatineau and Montréal CMAs

This section examines the knowledge and use of French among sales and service workers in four CMAs and the evolution of this knowledge and use over time. In order to provide details and context, a supplementary table is presented in the appendix. Table A.1 compares the proportions of sales and service workers who know French with workers in other occupations.

Moncton CMA: Francophones make up more than one-third of the population

With 126,400 residents, the Moncton CMA is New Brunswick's most populous urban area. It had a higher proportion of francophones (36% of

the population had French as their mother tongue) in 2006 than any other urban area (CMA or CA) in Canada outside of Quebec.

In view of this demolingistic reality, it is no surprise that the proportion of workers in Moncton who were able to converse in French was relatively high compared with the proportion in most other urban areas outside Quebec. In 2006, 59% of sales and service workers whose place of work was in the Moncton CMA knew French well enough to be able to carry on a conversation. The corresponding proportion in 2001 was 53% (Table 2).

Knowledge of French among sales and service workers varied

by district and municipality within the Moncton metropolitan area. For example, 71% of workers whose place of employment was in Dieppe knew French, compared with 58% in the municipality of Moncton (where francophones make up a smaller proportion of the population) (data now shown).

Moncton CMA: A growing proportion of sales and service workers use French at work

In 2006, just over half (51%) of Moncton's sales and service workers used French at work; this is an increase from 2001. The gain was the result of an increase in the proportion of workers who used French more

Table 2 Knowledge of French of retail and client services workers and the workers in other occupations, 1996, 2001 and 2006

	Knowledge of French					
	Retail and client services workers			Other occupations		
	1996	2001	2006 †	1996	2001	2006
	percentage					
Place of work (CMA¹)						
Moncton	54.8*	53.2*	59.1	50.8‡	53.0	55.1‡
Greater Sudbury	41.9	43.3	41.3	40.3	40.7	41.5
Ottawa-Gatineau	56.3*	56.6*	53.8	54.9‡	54.7‡	56.4‡
Ottawa-Gatineau (Que.)	97.8	98.3	97.8	88.8‡	89.1‡	90.6‡
Ottawa-Gatineau (Ont.)	45.6*	45.0*	41.1	47.8‡	47.8‡	49.2‡
Parliament Hill	51.6	50.5	51.8	61.8‡	63.2‡	66.2‡
Byward Market	57.0*	50.7	45.0	55.5	54.5	56.8‡
Montréal	96.3	97.0*	96.3	93.5‡	94.2‡	94.2‡
Suburban rings of Montréal	99.0	99.2	99.0	97.8‡	98.2‡	98.1‡
Island of Montréal	94.5	95.4*	94.2	91.6‡	92.5‡	92.2‡
City of Montréal (without the city centre)	..	96.0*	95.2	..	93.0‡	92.8‡
Other municipalities on the Island of Montréal	..	93.2*	90.5	..	87.1‡	86.7‡
City centre	93.9	95.0*	93.4	94.0	95.1	94.2
East of Saint-Laurent	95.6	95.9	95.2	97.8‡	98.2‡	97.2
Between Saint-Laurent and Peel	94.8	95.6*	93.1	94.7	95.8	94.9‡
West of Peel	91.4	93.6	93.0	90.3	91.7‡	91.1

† reference group

* statistically significant difference from reference group at $p < 0.05$

‡ statistically significant difference between retail and service workers and the workers in other occupations (for the same reference year)

1. Census metropolitan area.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1996 to 2006.

often than any other language at work (Table 3).

According to the 2006 Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities (SVOLM), 60% of the Moncton CMA's *French-speaking population*⁷ felt that the presence of French had increased in their municipality over the previous 10 years.

Greater Sudbury CMA: 3 in 10 are francophones

In 2006, 44,690 francophones lived in the Greater Sudbury CMA in northern Ontario, accounting for 29% of the population. "The Sudbury francophone community has deep historical roots and is rightly described as a founding community".⁹ Well-established French language media, organizations and institutions are all examples of French culture, identity and life in Sudbury.

Use of French by customers

The 2006 Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities (SVOLM) provides information about the use of French by customers. This information is a valuable addition to the census data on the use of French by workers. According to the SVOLM data, 55% of Moncton's *French-speaking population* used French when they spoke to the employees of the businesses they visited most often (the remainder used English only or much more often).⁸ The corresponding proportion for Ottawa-Gatineau was 38% (Ontario side only) (see "What you should know about this study", where the distinction between *French-speaking population* and *francophones* is explained).

In 2006, 41% of sales and service workers in Greater Sudbury had sufficient knowledge of French to carry on a conversation. This proportion has changed little over the previous ten years. Interestingly, francophones were not as highly represented in sales and service

occupations (25% of workers) as they were in other occupations (29%) (Table A.1).

On the other hand, the proportion of workers who used French at work remained relatively stable between 2001 and 2006 at around 30% (Table 3).

Table 3 Use of French at work by retail and client services workers, 2001 and 2006

Place of work (CMA ¹)	Use of French at work					
	Most often		Regularly		Total	
	2001	2006 †	2001	2006 †	2001	2006 †
	percentage					
Moncton	16.3*	21.4	29.8	29.2	46.1*	50.5
Greater Sudbury	6.7	6.1	23.3	22.8	30.0	28.9
Ottawa-Gatineau	27.3	27.2	17.6*	16.1	44.8*	43.3
Ottawa-Gatineau (Que.)	93.1	93.2	3.2	3.8	96.2	97.0
Ottawa-Gatineau (Ont.)	9.0	8.1	21.6*	19.7	30.6*	27.8
Parliament Hill	12.7	9.5	29.4	30.4	42.1	39.9
Byward Market	8.8	7.7	32.4	29.8	41.2	37.5
Montréal	86.5*	85.5	9.3*	10.1	95.8	95.6
Suburban rings of Montréal	97.0*	96.4	1.8	2.2	98.8	98.6
Island of Montréal	78.8*	76.7	14.9*	16.5	93.6	93.2
City of Montréal (without the city centre)	85.5*	83.4	9.3*	11.1	94.8	94.5
Other municipalities on the Island of Montréal	54.7*	50.4	34.7*	37.7	89.4	88.0
City centre	74.6	73.2	18.5	19.2	93.1	92.4
East of Saint-Laurent	87.7	86.1	7.0	8.9	94.7	95.0
Between Saint-Laurent and Peel	75.5	74.5	17.7	17.3	93.1	91.8
West of Peel	67.5	65.8	24.9	26.7	92.4	92.5

† reference group

* statistically significant difference from reference group at $p < 0.05$

1. Census metropolitan area.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population from 2001 and 2006.

The stability in the knowledge and use of French among sales and service workers was reflected in the perception of the status of French in this community. According to the SVOLM data, almost half of francophones in Greater Sudbury stated that the presence of French in their community had not changed in 10 years (the remainder were almost equally divided between those who thought the situation had improved and those who thought it had worsened).

Ottawa-Gatineau CMA: Two sides of the river, two very different realities for francophones

In 2006, the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA had a population of 374,200 francophones or about one-third of the total population.

The fact that there is a much higher concentration of francophones on the Quebec side than on the Ontario side has consequences for the proportion of sales and service workers on either side of the river who understand and can use French. In 2006, almost all sales and service workers whose place of employment was on the Quebec side of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA knew French (98%). On the Ontario side, 41% of sales and service workers were able to carry on a conversation in French; for individual neighbourhoods and municipalities within the CMA, the proportion varied with the proportion of francophones in the local population. For example, 89% of sales and service workers whose place of employment was in the municipality of Rockland, which has a francophone majority, knew French.

In the area that includes Parliament Hill and downtown Ottawa, which welcomes many Canadian and foreign tourists, and is the workplace for many francophone public servants, just over half of the sales and service workers could carry on a conversation in French in 2006 (52%). The corresponding proportion was

45% for workers in the Byward Market, well known for its restaurants, public market and bars (Table 2).

Ottawa-Gatineau CMA: Knowledge of French among sales and service workers steady in Quebec, down slightly from five years ago in Ontario

On the Quebec side of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA, there was little change in the knowledge of French among sales and service workers between 1996 and 2006. On the Ontario side of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA, however, the prevalence of the knowledge and use of French declined since 2001. The decrease in the prevalence of French in the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA was a major factor in the decline of the proportion of sales and service workers in Ontario who knew French.

The decline in the prevalence of knowledge of French among sales and service workers on the Ontario side of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA is contrary to the trend in other occupations in the same area. In fact, people in occupations other than sales and service were more likely to know French in 2006 than they were in 2001 and 1996 (Table 2). This trend may be the result of two phenomena. First, the proportion of allophone sales and service workers (workers whose mother tongue was neither English nor French) increased somewhat between 2001 and 2006 (from 16% to 20%). Second, those allophone workers, in addition to being more numerous, were less likely to know French in 2006 (23%) than they were in 2001 (32%). The two patterns were not evident in other occupations (data not shown).

Ottawa-Gatineau CMA: The use of French is less common than knowledge of French on the Ontario side

Many sales and service workers on the Ontario side of the CMA were able to provide service in French but did not report doing so on a regular basis. The proportion who reported using

French at work (at least regularly) was 28%, compared with 41% who knew the language (Tables 2 and 3).

This situation may be the result of two factors. First, in some parts of the city there are few francophone residents and thus even if many retail or service employees know French, they may not use it on a regular basis.

Second, francophone customers do not always request service in French. Moreover, SVOLM data show that when French-speaking adults living on the Ontario side converse with employees of the businesses they visit most often, 62% of them stated that they used English much more often than French.¹⁰

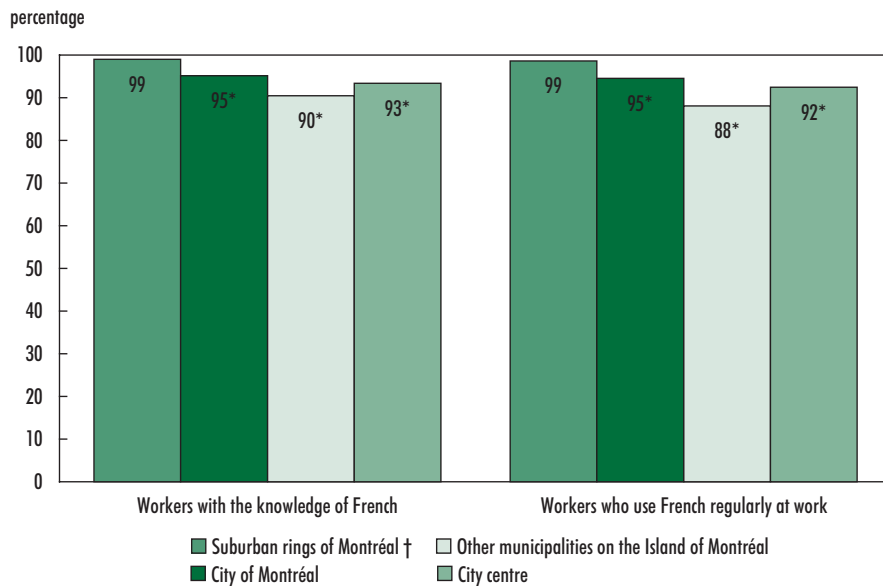
Montréal CMA: Workers in the city centre are slightly less likely to know French than workers elsewhere in the city

In 2006, almost all sales and service workers in the province of Quebec (98%) knew French (Table 1). In most urban areas of the province, the proportion was close to 100% (data not shown).

In the Montréal CMA, 96% of those with sales and service jobs knew French. Given the geographical distribution of anglophones, allophones and francophones in the Montréal CMA, the proportion of workers who knew French was higher in the suburbs (99%) than in the city of Montréal (95%) and in the municipalities located on the Island of Montréal (90%). In Montréal's city centre, 93% of workers knew French in 2006 (Chart 3). There were no statistically significant differences between the western and eastern parts of the centre (Table 2).

In other municipalities on the Island of Montréal (where francophones account for about a quarter of the population) the percentage of workers who knew French varied. As an example, in Côte-Saint-Luc, 82% of workers in sales and service could speak French. The corresponding proportions were 86% in Dollard-des-Ormeaux and 93% in Pointe-Claire (data not shown).

Chart 3 The proportion of retail and client services workers who know and use French is lower in Montréal's city centre than in the suburban rings, 2006



† reference group

* statistically significant difference from reference group at $p < 0.05$

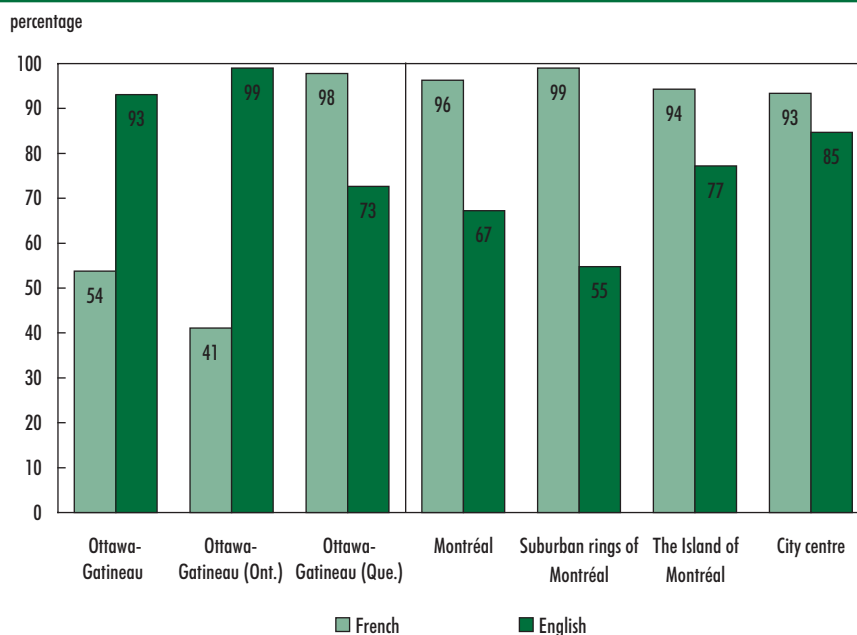
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Montréal CMA: The proportion of workers in the city centre who knew French was relatively stable between 1996 and 2006

In the Montréal CMA, the proportion of sales and service workers who knew French in 2006 was the same as in 1996 at 96%. The situation was virtually the same in the city centre, though with a slightly larger decline in the knowledge of French between Saint-Laurent and Peel streets, where the majority of Montréal's city centre department stores, shopping centres, restaurants and bars are located. In that district, the proportion of sales and service workers who knew French was 93% in 2006, compared to 96% in 2001 (Table 2).

The decrease in the proportion of workers who knew French in that district was primarily due to the fact that a smaller percentage of the workers had French as their mother tongue. In 2006, 51% of sales and service workers in the district between Saint-Laurent and Peel streets were francophones, compared with 59% in 2001 (Table A.1). On the other hand, the propensity of allophone and anglophone workers to know French did not change appreciably between 2001 and 2006.

Chart 4 In the Montréal city centre retail and client services workers are almost as likely to know English as French, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Profile of the workers who are most and least likely to know and use French at work in the Moncton, Greater Sudbury, Ottawa-Gatineau and Montréal CMA

Younger workers are more likely to know French

Among anglophones outside Quebec, the level of English/French bilingualism is much higher for those aged 10 to 29 than any other age group.¹¹ This may be a result of the teaching of French as a second language in schools or the many French-immersion programs across the country. In Quebec, the vast majority of children whose mother tongue was neither French nor English (allophones) have been required to attend elementary and secondary

school in French since Bill 101 was passed in 1997 (*Charter of the French Language*). Consequently, younger sales and service workers in the four CMAs are more likely than older workers to know French (Table 4).

The difference between the youngest and oldest workers is particularly pronounced in Moncton. In 2006, 71% of Moncton's sales and service workers between the ages of 15 and 24 knew French well enough to be able to carry on a conversation, compared with 40% of those aged 55 and over.

The prevalence of the knowledge of French also varies by occupation. In the four CMAs, roughly seven out of 10 sales and service workers were employed in just three occupations: retail salespersons and sales clerks, cashiers, and food and beverage servers. In Moncton, francophones were generally more likely to be able to use French if they went to a restaurant than if they spoke to a salesperson or a sales clerk in a store.

In central Montréal, the opposite was true, though the difference was much smaller: retail salespersons

Table 4 Knowledge of French of retail and client services workers by select CMAs and characteristics, 2006

	Census metropolitan areas								
	Moncton	Greater Sudbury	Ottawa-Gatineau			Montréal			
			Total	Quebec part	Ontario part	Total	Suburban rings	Island of Montréal	City centre
	percentage								
Occupation									
Retail salespersons and sales clerk†	57.5	38.9	52.3	97.2	41.8	96.7	99.0	94.7	94.6
Cashiers	54.0	45.1	54.8	99.2*	39.9	96.2	99.1	93.5*	90.4*
Food and beverages servers	70.5*	39.3	58.6*	98.9*	44.8	95.7*	98.8	93.6	91.0*
Hairstylists/beauticians	69.7*	37.3	49.5	99.0	34.9*	95.7*	98.9	92.5*	91.9
Grocery clerks and store shelf stockers	44.3*	46.3	49.6	95.5	32.4*	95.9	98.6	92.5*	95.3
Other sales occupations	67.0*	46.0	58.5*	97.0	46.8*	96.7	99.4	95.7*	95.1
Age group									
15 to 24 years †	70.6	50.1	59.4	99.3	47.8	98.7	99.6	97.9	97.3
25 to 34 years	65.3*	32.6*	51.8*	96.2*	39.7*	95.4*	98.4*	93.8*	93.5*
35 to 44 years	49.4*	34.4*	48.9*	97.3*	33.4*	94.5*	98.3*	91.9*	92.2*
45 to 54 years	51.3*	40.3*	45.4*	95.7*	30.2*	94.3*	98.5*	90.9*	86.7*
55 years and more	40.3*	32.9*	45.9*	95.2*	34.2*	93.4*	98.3*	89.5*	86.3*
Mother tongue¹									
English	34.7*	23.8*	34.4*	81.4*	32.8*	87.9*	92.4*	86.8*	87.8*
French†	99.6	98.2	99.5	99.9	98.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Other	44.7*	6.6*	28.8*	87.4*	23.4*	87.8*	91.6*	86.9*	85.7*
Immigrant status									
Immigrant †	43.2	2.0	27.0	86.8	22.0	86.2	90.6	85.1	85.1
Non immigrant	59.6*	42.8*	59.8*	98.5*	46.5*	98.7*	99.6*	97.7*	97.5*

† reference group

* statistically significant difference from reference group at $p < 0.05$

1. Persons whose mother tongue or one of the mother tongues is French.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

and sales clerks were slightly more likely to know French (95%) than were servers in restaurants (91%) (Table 4).

Most anglophones and allophones in sales and service occupations in Quebec know French

The propensity of anglophone sales and service workers to know French varied widely by location of employment. The proportion of anglophone workers who knew French was 33% on the Ontario side of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA, compared with 81% on the Quebec side of that CMA and 88% in the Montréal CMA.

Allophones working in Quebec were about as likely as anglophones to know French: 87% on the Quebec side of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA, 88% in the Montréal CMA.

In the Montréal CMA, workers whose mother tongue is Chinese are less likely to know French

The proportion of allophone workers who knew French varied substantially by mother tongue in the Montréal CMA (data not shown). Workers whose mother tongue was Spanish, Arabic, Italian or Portuguese were the most likely to know French (more than 95% in all cases). In contrast, 56% of sales and service workers whose mother tongue was Chinese knew French.

Summary

The vast majority of francophones are able to obtain service in their language since most of them live in communities where French is the dominant language. Outside the province of Quebec, the level of knowledge of French in retail and service outlets varies from area to area depending on, among other things, the proportion of francophones living in the area. In the province of Quebec, in 2006, the proportion of workers who knew French was almost 100% in most CMAs. In the Montréal CMA, this proportion was 99% in the northern and southern suburbs off the Island of

Montréal, 95% in the city of Montréal and 91% in other municipalities on the Island of Montréal. In the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA, 98% of those who worked on the Quebec side could hold a conversation in French; the corresponding proportion was 41% on the Ontario side. Finally, in the two CMAs with the highest concentration of francophones outside Quebec, Moncton and Greater Sudbury, the proportions were 59% and 41% respectively.

Over time, the prevalence of the knowledge of French among sales and service workers has remained steady at the national level but varied somewhat at the provincial/territorial level—up in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Yukon; slightly down in Ontario; unchanged in the other provinces and territories.

In the four CMAs analyzed in this article, the proportion of workers who knew French increased slightly in the Moncton area between 1996 and 2006 and remained relatively stable in Greater Sudbury. In the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA, it remained stable on the Quebec side of the river, but declined on the Ontario side. Over the same period, the proportion of sales and service workers who knew French remained relatively stable on the Island of Montréal, in the central area of the city, as well as in the suburbs.

In the Montréal CMA, most anglophone and allophone sales and service workers were able to carry on a conversation in French.



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at home in childhood (for example, English and French, French and a non-official language, and so on). For the purposes of this article, any respondent who reports French as one of his or her first languages learned is deemed to be a francophone.

2. Marmen L. and Delisle, S. (2003). *Healthcare in French outside Quebec Canadian Social Trends*. No. 11-008-X. Ottawa: Minister of Industry. See also Blaser, C. 2009. *Health Care Professionals and Official-Language Minorities in Canada*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 91-550-X, Ottawa: Minister of Industry.
3. This is the percentage according to the proportional distribution of multiple responses to the question on mother tongue. If we consider as francophones all of those who answered that French was their mother tongue or one of their mother tongues, as we did in this article, this proportion was 50.9 %.
4. On the Island of Montréal, these two municipalities ranked second and third in terms of population (respectively 48,930 in Dollard-Des Ormeaux and 31,395 in Côte-Saint-Luc). In 2006, the city of Montréal reached 1,620,693 people.
5. Statistics Canada. 2007. *The Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*. Catalogue no. 97-555-XIE. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.
6. Corbeil, J-P, Grenier, C. and Lafrenière, S. A. (2007). *Minorities Speak Up: Results of the Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 91-548-X. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.
7. In the Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities, the French-speaking population is composed of persons who:
 - (a) have French as their mother tongue, alone or with another language;
 - (b) have a non-official language as their mother tongue (we refer to them as allophones) and speak French but not English;
 - (c) have a non-official language as their mother tongue, know both English and French and speak either a non-official language or French, alone or with another language, most often at home. In the rest of the study, the term used is Francophones, i.e., persons who reported French as their mother tongue (alone or, in some cases, with other languages).
8. Includes 35% who used English and French equally, 14% who used French much more than English, and 5% who used French only.

1. In this article, persons who reported that French was one of the languages they learned first in childhood are considered francophones. A small number of respondents gave more than one answer to the question on the first language learned

9. Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. (2007). *Vitality Indicators for Official Language Minority, Communities 1: Francophones in Urban Settings - The*

Sudbury Francophone Community. Catalogue no. SF31-92/1-3-2007, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

10. How much effort they made to obtain service in French is unknown.

11. Statistics Canada. 2007. *The Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*. Catalogue no. 97-555-X. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.

Table A.1 Knowledge of French of retail and client services workers and workers in other occupations, by select CMAs, 2006

Place of work (CMA ¹)	Retail and service workers		Workers of other occupations	
	Francophones ² †	Use French at home ³ †	Francophones ²	Use French at home ³
	percentage			
Moncton	37.4	38.8	40.2	41.2
Greater Sudbury	24.9	23.4	29.3*	26.9*
Ottawa-Gatineau	31.3	34.7	33.9*	37.2*
Ottawa-Gatineau (Que.)	86.2	93.4	74.3*	80.3*
Ottawa-Gatineau (Ont.)	15.5	17.8	25.3*	28.0*
Parliament Hill	19.7	22.4	36.9*	41.1*
Byward Market	17.6	19.2	28.3*	34.3*
Montréal	69.9	81.3	69.8	80.6*
Suburban rings of Montréal	87.4	93.3	86.1*	92.7*
Island of Montréal	55.9	71.7	61.8*	74.6*
City of Montréal (without the city centre)	61.7	77.2	63.8*	76.9
Other municipalities on the Island of Montréal	34.8	48.0	46.8*	58.9*
City centre	51.1	70.2	65.7*	78.1*
East of Saint-Laurent	69.9	83.9	79.5*	91.3*
Between Saint-Laurent and Peel	50.9	70.7	68.2*	80.2*
West of Peel	43.9	63.6	53.0*	66.7*

† reference group

* statistically significant difference from reference group at $p < 0.05$

1. Census metropolitan area.

2. Persons whose mother tongue or one of the mother tongues is French.

3. Uses French at home the most often or regularly.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.