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French in New Brunswick, 2001 to 2016

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French in New Brunswick, 2001 to 2016

by Alejandro A. Páez Silva and Émilie Lavoie

The purpose of this document is to present an overview of the trends observed between 2001 and 2016 for the French language and the official language minority population¹ in New Brunswick. To this end, it provides census-based information on the population who reported having French as their mother tongue, French spoken at home or used at work, French as their first official language spoken as well as for those who speak French well enough to sustain a conversation.

Table 1
Knowledge of English and French, New Brunswick, 2001 to 2016

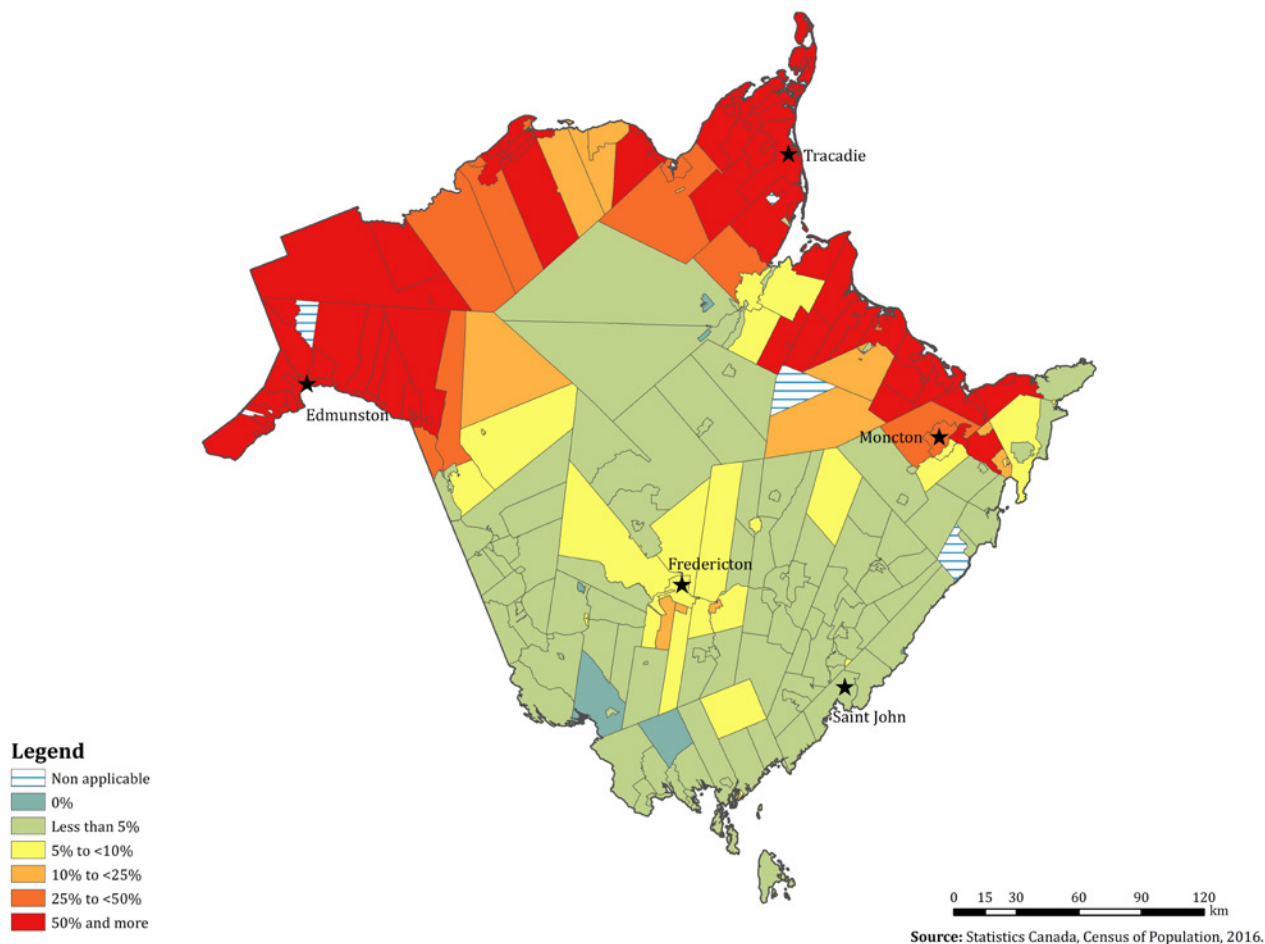
	2001		2006		2011		2016		2001 to 2016 growth	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	percent	
Total population	717,535	100.0	716,870	100.0	735,835	100.0	730,710	100.0	1.8	
Official language minority population	237,800	33.1	234,310	32.7	231,440	31.5	231,610	31.7	-2.6	
English-French bilingualism	171,545	72.1	160,855	68.7	166,465	71.9	169,585	73.2	-1.1	
Rest of the population	479,740	66.9	482,560	67.3	504,410	68.5	499,100	68.3	4.0	
English-French bilingualism	73,610	15.3	78,420	16.3	78,795	15.6	78,975	15.8	7.3	

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001, 2006, 2016; 2011 National Household Survey.

- In 2016, 310,555 people reported being able to conduct a conversation in French, either exclusively or along with English. Collectively, they represented 42.5% of New Brunswick's population.
 - ▶ Since 2001, the number of persons who report being able to conduct a conversation in French, either exclusively or together with English, has decreased by 0.9 percentage points, that is, 830 fewer persons.
- In 2016, 248,560 people in New Brunswick reported being able to conduct a conversation in both English and French, up 1.4% since 2001. In 2016, the English-French bilingualism rate stood at 34.0% and has remained stable since 2001.
 - ▶ In relative terms, slightly less than three quarters (73.2%) of the official language minority population reported having knowledge of both English and French in 2016. By contrast, this figure stood at 15.8% for the rest of the population that same year.
 - ▶ During the 2001-2016 period, English-French bilingualism decreased by 1,960 persons among the official language minority population while increasing by 1.1 percentage points. By contrast, among the rest of the population, English-French bilingualism increased by 0.5 percentage points which amounts to an additional 5,365 persons over the same period.

1. In this document, the official language minority population is defined according to the criterion of the first official language spoken. The 'English-French' category is equally redistributed between the 'French' and 'English' categories.

Map 1
Official language minority population, census subdivisions, New Brunswick, 2016



- In 2016, the official language minority population in New Brunswick reached 231,610 persons in number which represents 31.7% of the province's total population.
 - ▶ Between 2001 and 2016, New Brunswick's official language minority population fell by 2.6%, that is, by 6,190 fewer persons.
 - ▶ In 2016, New Brunswick's official language minority population ranked as the single largest in relative terms (31.7%) from among all provinces and territories. For comparison, Quebec's official language minority population ranked second and stood at 13.8% of that province's population.

Table 2
Selected French language indicators, New Brunswick, 2001 to 2016

	2001		2006		2011		2016		2001 to 2016 growth	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent		percent
Total population	717,535	100.0	716,870	100.0	735,835	100.0	730,710	100.0		1.8
Official language minority population ¹	237,800	33.1	234,310	32.7	231,440	31.5	231,610	31.7		-2.6
Knowledge of French ²	311,385	43.4	312,710	43.6	310,190	42.2	310,555	42.5		-0.3
French as mother tongue ²	241,380	33.6	236,725	33.0	233,870	31.8	235,685	32.3		-2.4
French spoken at home ²	244,995	34.1	243,280	33.9	241,210	32.8	241,745	33.1		-1.3
French primarily spoken ³	214,475	29.9	210,940	29.4	210,610	28.6	203,685	27.9		-5.0
Working population ⁴	404,255	100.0	417,320	100.0	428,790	100.0	413,695	100.0		2.3
French used at work ²	149,790	37.1	156,375	37.5	153,790	35.9	151,915	36.7		1.4
French primarily used ³	94,185	23.3	99,090	23.7	93,970	21.9	89,240	21.6		-5.3

1. The official language minority population is defined according to the first official language spoken. The 'English-French' category is equally redistributed.

2. Includes all persons who reported French whether with or without additional languages.

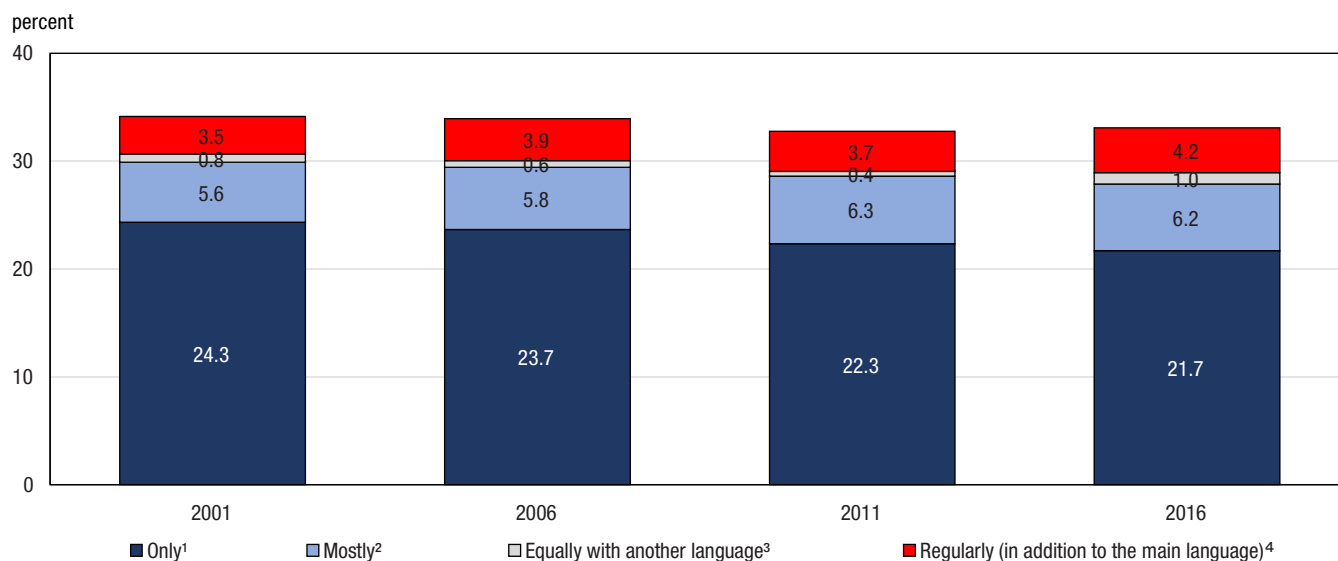
3. Refers to Part A of the language spoken at home and language used at work questions, the language spoken or used most often.

4. Refers to those aged 15 years and over who worked at least once between January 1st, 2015 and Census Day.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001, 2006, 2016; 2011 National Household Survey.

- In 2016, 235,685 people reported having French as their mother tongue², either exclusively or together with another language. Collectively, they accounted for 32.3% of New Brunswick's total population.
 - ▶ In the 2001-2016 period, the number of persons who report having French as a mother tongue, either exclusively or together with another language, dropped by 2.4% which translates to 5,695 fewer persons over that period.

Chart 1
French spoken at home, New Brunswick, 2001 to 2016



1. Includes persons who only speak French most often and no other language regularly.

2. Includes persons who speak French most often and at least one other language regularly.

3. Includes persons who speak French most often equally with another language.

4. Includes persons who speak French regularly in addition to the main language.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2001, 2006, 2016; 2011 National Household Survey.

2. In some cases, the number of respondents whose mother tongue is French is higher than the number given for the official language minority population. As part of the logic used to derive the official language minority population based on the first official language spoken variable, those who may have French as their mother tongue but can no longer speak it well enough to hold a conversation are not included. Similarly, for those who can hold a conversation in English and French and have these languages as their mother tongue but speak English most often at home are likewise excluded from the French-language population.

- In 2016, the number of persons who reported speaking French at home at least regularly (most often or as a secondary language) stood at 241,745. As a whole, in 2016, they represented 33.1% of New Brunswick's population.
 - ▶ In the 2001-2016 period the number of persons who reported speaking French at least regularly at home (most often or as a secondary language) decreased by 1.3%, that is, by 3,250 fewer persons.
 - In 2016, 203,685 people reported speaking primarily³ French at home and they represented 27.9% of New Brunswick's population. In the 2001-2016 period, the number of persons who reported speaking primarily French at home decreased by 5.0%, which amounts to 10,790 fewer persons.
 - However, over the same 2001-2016 period, the number of persons who reported speaking French regularly as a secondary language in addition to the main language at home rose from 25,095 in 2001 to 30,420 in 2016, a 21.2% increase. In addition, the number of persons who reported speaking French equally often with another language at home⁴ increased from 5,425 in 2001 to 7,640 in 2016, up 40.8%.
- In 2016, the number of workers who used French at work at least regularly (most often or as a secondary language) stood at 151,915 and accounted for 36.7% of New Brunswick's working population.
 - ▶ In the 15 years since 2001, the number of workers using French at work at least regularly (most often or as a secondary language) has increased by 1.4%, or by 2,125 workers.
 - The number of workers who report using primarily⁵ French at work fell from 94,185 in 2001 to 89,240 in 2016, a 5.3% decrease over that period.
 - By contrast, the number of workers who reported using French regularly as a secondary language in addition to the main language at work grew from 39,120 in 2001 to 44,570 in 2016, a 13.9% increase. In addition, the number of workers who report using French equally with another language most often at work⁶ increased from 16,485 in 2001 to 18,105 in 2016, up 9.8% over the same period.

3. Primary use of French at home refers to French spoken exclusively or most often.

4. Includes persons who reported speaking French equally with another language at home with or without additional languages spoken regularly as secondary languages.

5. Primary use of French at work refers to French used exclusively or most often.

6. Includes persons who reported speaking French equally with another language at work with or without additional languages spoken regularly as secondary languages.