

Catalogue no. 89-657-X2023015
ISBN 978-0-660-48857-8

Ethnicity, Language and Immigration Thematic Series

Key facts on the French language in New Brunswick in 2021

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Release date: August 22, 2023



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Key facts on the French language in New Brunswick in 2021

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

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

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

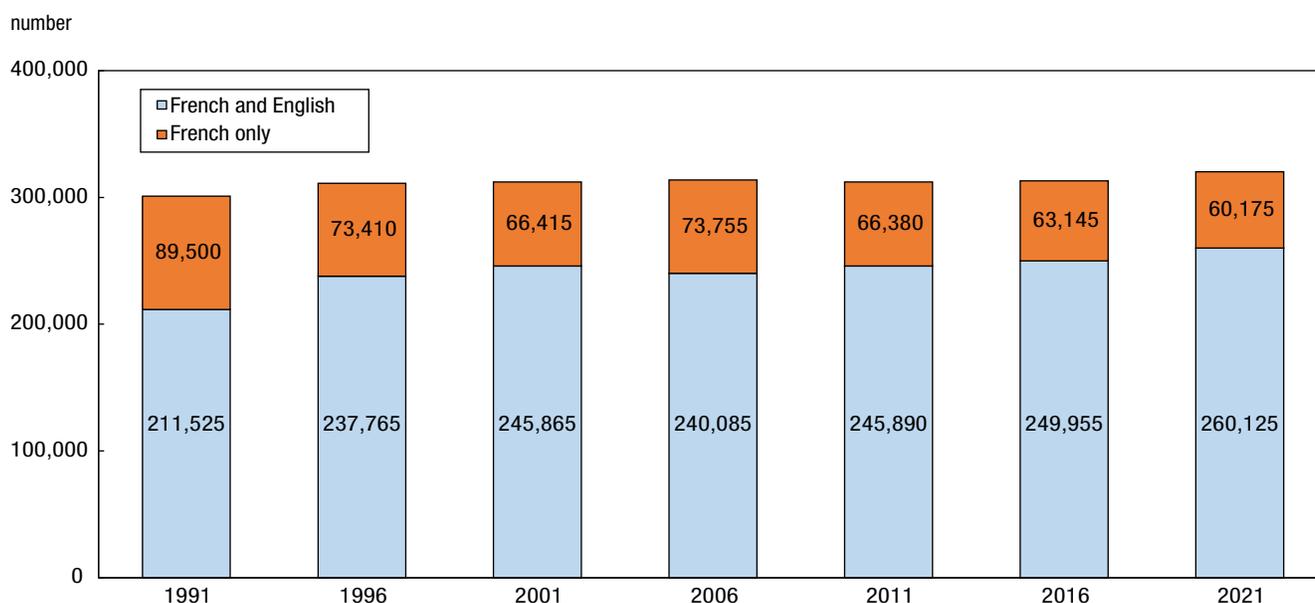
Highlights

- In New Brunswick, 320,300 residents could have a conversation in French in 2021, up from 2016 (+7,200) and 1991 (+19,270). They represented 41.9% of the province's population in 2021, virtually identical to the proportion observed in 1991 (42.0%), but lower than the all-time high recorded in 2006 (43.6%).
- In 2021, 232,285 New Brunswickers (30.4% of the population) spoke French at least regularly at home. This includes all those who spoke French most often at home, whether predominantly (201,555 people, or 26.4% of the population) or equally with other languages (10,085 people, or 1.3%). Moreover, among people with French as one of their mother tongues, the vast majority (90.0%) spoke French regularly at home.
- In New Brunswick, 111,715 workers (32.0%) used French at least regularly at work. This includes all those who used French most often at work, whether predominantly (70,105 workers, or 20.1%) or equally with other languages (13,500 workers, or 3.9%).
- Fewer than one in four immigrants (22.8%) could have a conversation in French in 2021. This proportion was lower than that of the non-immigrant population (43.3%).
- Almost 9 in 10 New Brunswick residents (86.8%) whose only first official language spoken was French in 2021 were born in New Brunswick.

Ability to conduct a conversation in French

Chart 1

Population who can conduct a conversation in French, New Brunswick, 1991 to 2021

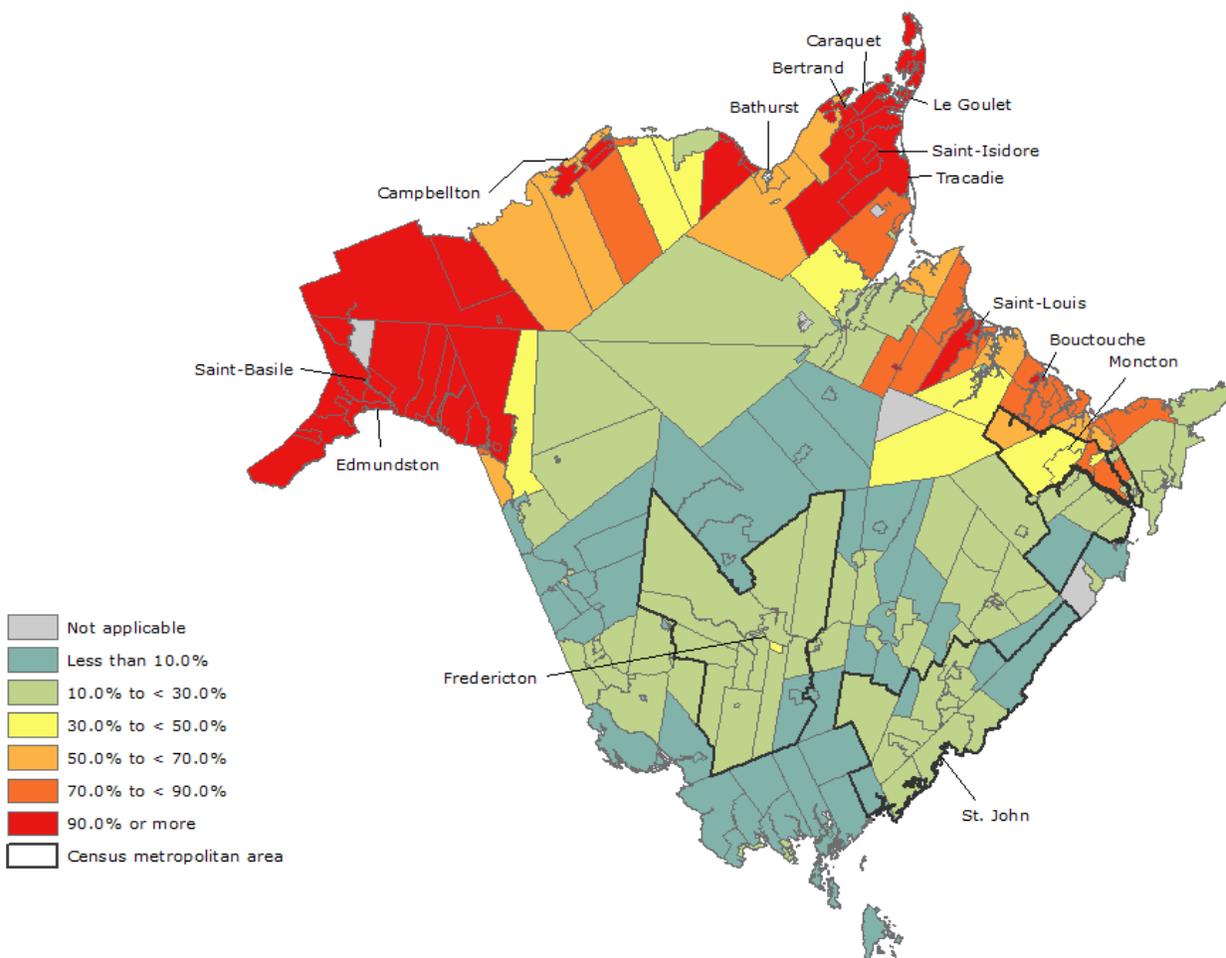


Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021.

- In 2021, 320,300 New Brunswickers could have a conversation in French. This was the largest number ever observed in a census in the province.
 - Of these, 60,175 people could converse in French, but not in English. This number was down from 1991 (-29,325 people). The demographic weight of these residents also declined, falling from 12.5% in 1991 to 7.9% in 2021.
 - Moreover, 260,125 people could have a conversation in French and English in 2021, up from 1991 (+48,600). In 2021, these people represented 34.0% of the population, up from 1991 (29.5%) and fairly stable relative to the peak recorded in 2001 (34.2%).
- In 2021, 41.9% of New Brunswick residents could have a conversation in French. This proportion was virtually unchanged from 1991 (42.0%), but lower than the record observed in 2006 (43.6%).
 - From 1991 to 2021, the number and proportion of New Brunswickers who could converse in French rose among those who did not learn French first at home in their childhood: while 57,185 people (12.1%) could have a conversation in French in 1991, this rose to 83,990 (16.0%) in 2021.
 - In the 2021 Census, the proportion of the population who did not have French as mother tongue but could have a conversation in French varied across the province: it was higher in certain census agglomerations (CA) in the north, such as Edmundston (66.4%) and Bathurst (38.1%), than in the census metropolitan areas (CMAs) of Moncton (22.7%), Fredericton (16.6%) and Saint John (12.5%).

Map 1

Proportion of New Brunswick's population who could conduct a conversation in French, by census subdivision, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

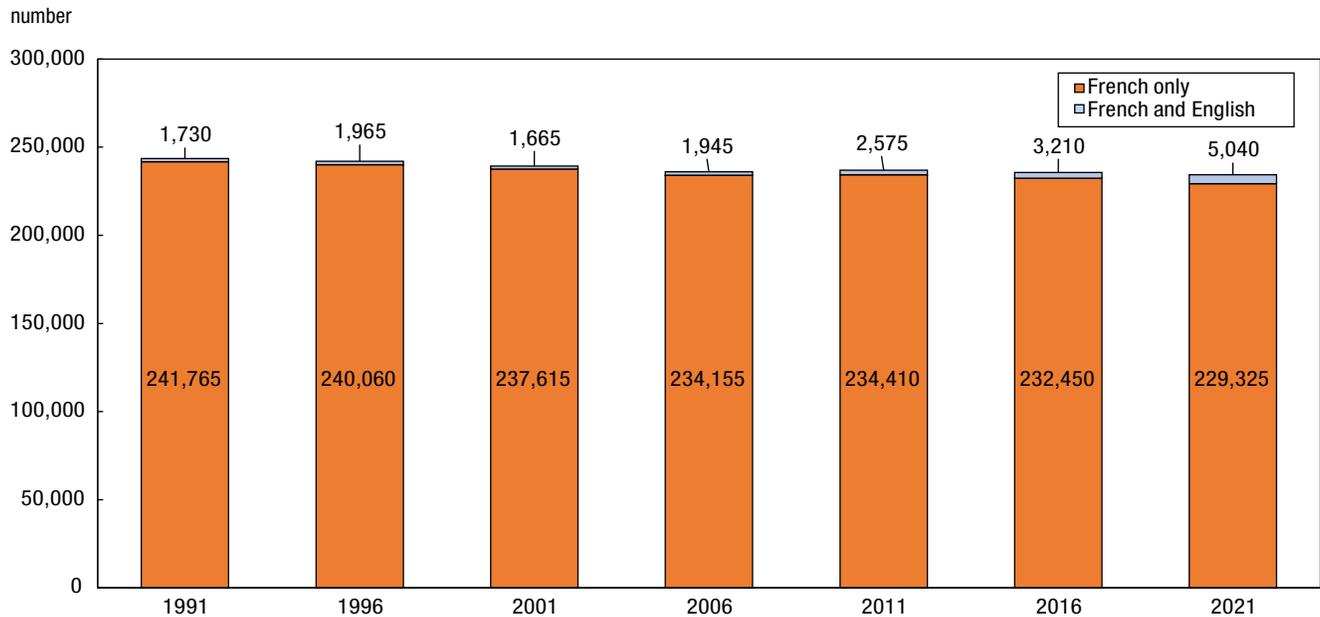
- In 2021, in 67 of New Brunswick's 258 municipalities,¹ 80% or more of the population could have a conversation in French, while in 142 municipalities, fewer than 20% of residents knew French.
- The entire population of some New Brunswick municipalities knew French. These include Le Goulet, Bertrand and Saint-Isidore in the Acadian Peninsula, and Saint-Basile in Madawaska.
- The municipalities with the highest number of people who knew French were Moncton (36,145) and Dieppe (21,615) in the Moncton CMA, as well as Tracadie (15,660) in the Acadian Peninsula.

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

French as first official language spoken

Chart 2

Population with French as their first official language spoken, New Brunswick, 1991 to 2021

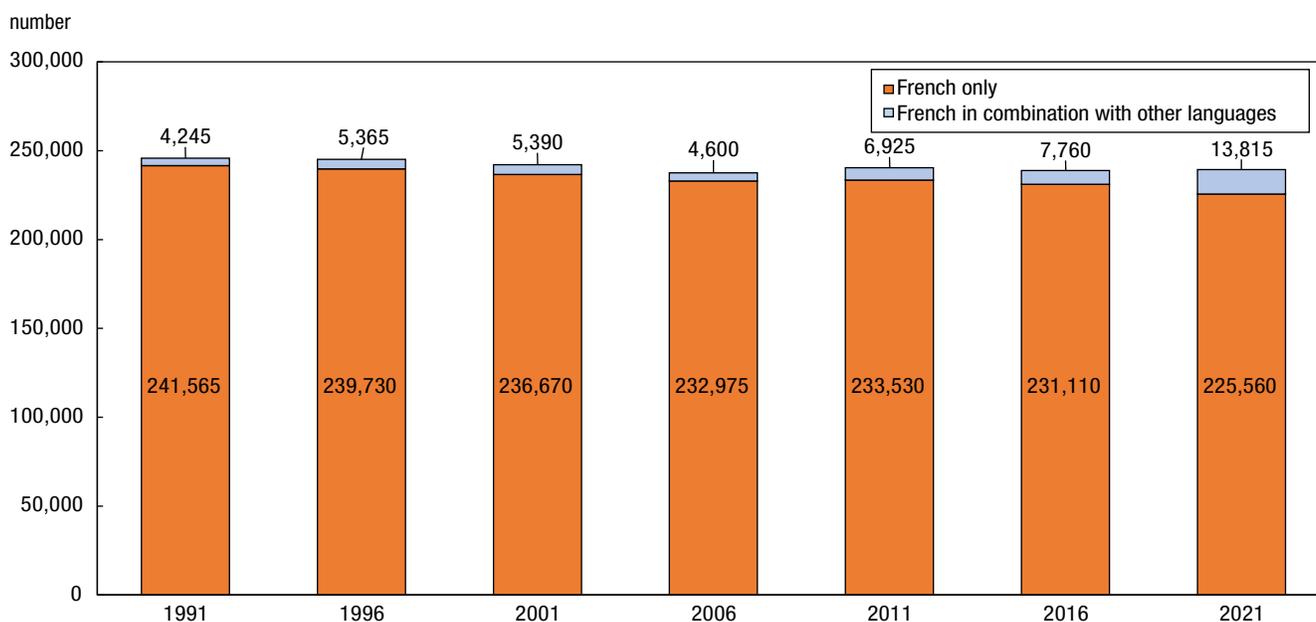


Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021.

- In 2021, 229,325 New Brunswickers (30.0% of the population) had French as their only first official language spoken, and 5,040 residents (0.7%) had French and English as their first official languages spoken.
- From 1991 to 2021, the number of people with French as their only first official language spoken fell (-12,440). The demographic weight of these residents also fell from 33.7% in 1991 to 30.0% in 2021.
 - In the 2021 Census, the proportion of people with French as their only first official language spoken was higher in some CAs in northern New Brunswick, such as Edmundston (93.4%) and Bathurst (65.6%), than in the CMAs of Moncton (32.6%), Fredericton (6.5%) and Saint John (3.3%).
- From 1991 to 2021, the number of New Brunswick residents with French and English as their first official languages spoken almost tripled, from 1,730 people to 5,040.
 - In 2021, most of these residents were living in the CMAs of Moncton (41.0%) or Fredericton (14.1%).

French as a mother tongue

Chart 3
Population with French as a mother tongue, New Brunswick, 1991 to 2021

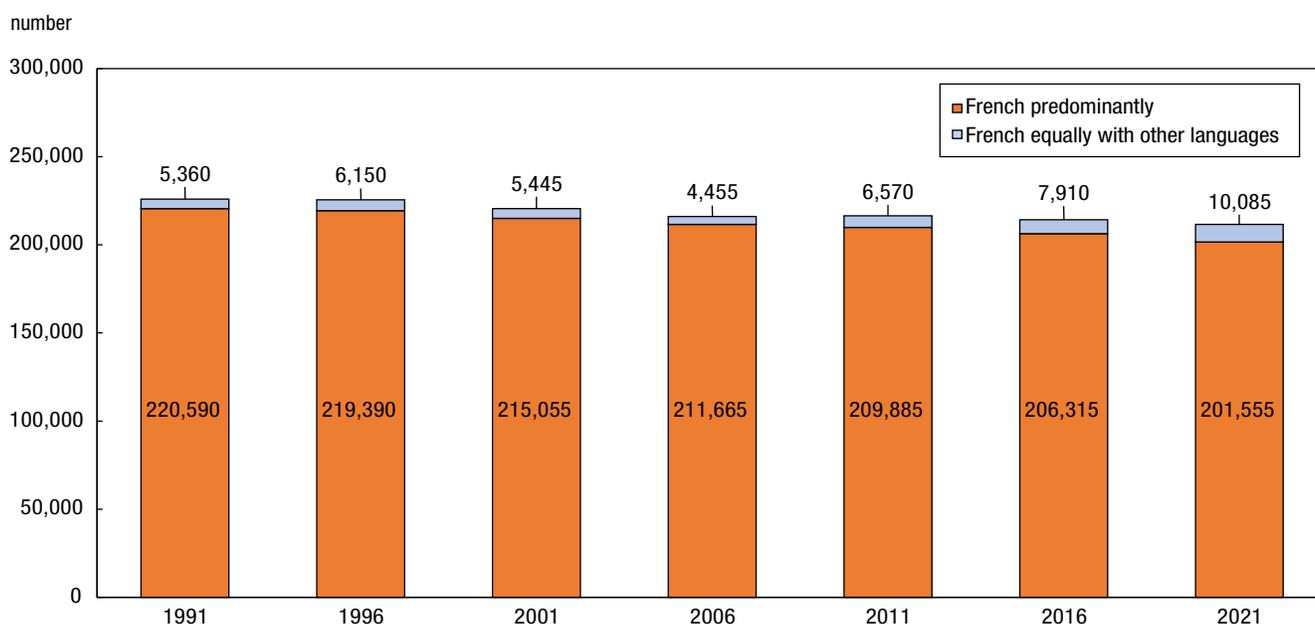


Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021.

- In 2021, 239,375 New Brunswick residents had French as one of their mother tongues, down from 1991 (-6,435 people), but similar to the 2016 figure (+510 people).
 - In 2021, 94.2% of these residents (225,560 people) had French as their only mother tongue, while 5.8% (13,815 people) had French along with other languages (mainly English).
- From 1991 to 2021, the demographic weight of New Brunswickers with French as one of their mother tongues fell from 34.3% to 31.3%.
- Among married people or common-law partners who had French as one of their mother tongues, more than four in five (81.1%) were in a relationship with another person whose mother tongue is French.

French spoken at home

Chart 4
Population speaking French most often at home, New Brunswick, 1991 to 2021



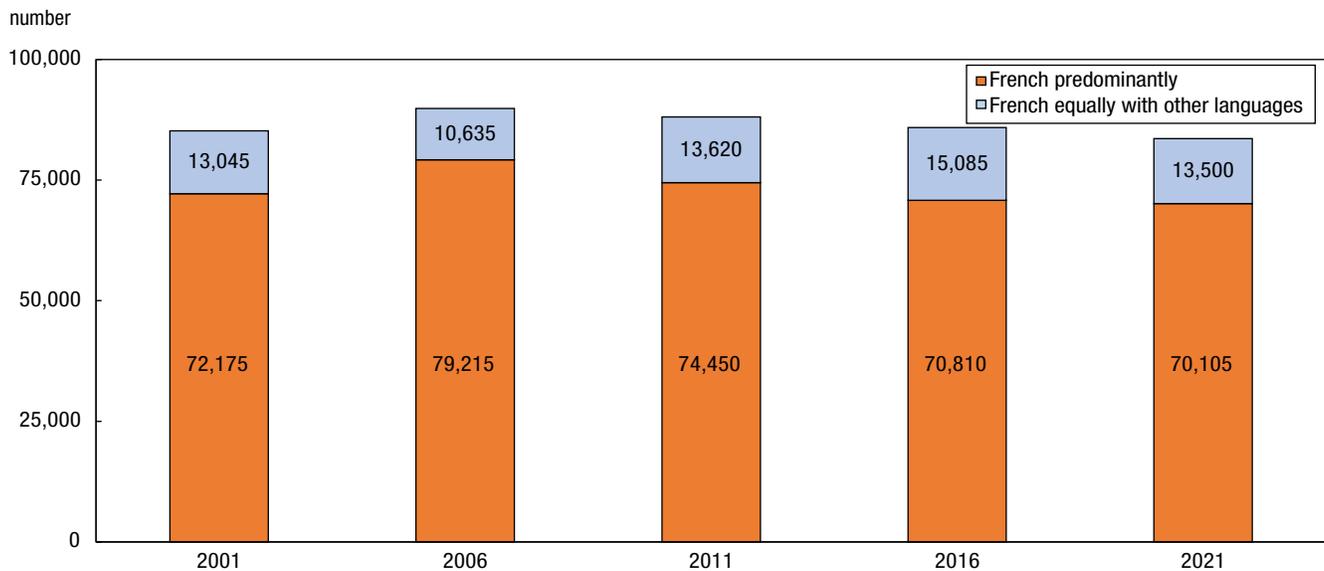
Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1991 to 2021.

- In 2021, 232,285 New Brunswick residents (30.4% of the population) spoke French at least regularly at home.
 - The vast majority of these residents (91.1%, or 211,640 people) spoke French most often at home, predominantly or equally with other languages, down from 1991 (-14,310 people) and 2016 (-2,585 people).
 - Moreover, 20,640 people (8.9%) spoke French at home as a secondary language while speaking another language more often (generally English).
- Among people with French as their mother tongue, alone or with other languages:
 - The vast majority (90.0%, or 215,340 people) spoke French at least regularly at home in 2021. However, this rate varied across the province, being higher in some CAs in northern New Brunswick, such as Edmundston (98.9%) and Campbellton² (92.7%), than in the CMAs of Moncton (85.0%), Fredericton (67.2%) and Saint John (49.4%).
 - Around six in seven (85.5%, or 204,655 people) spoke French most often at home, predominantly or equally with other languages, down from 1991 (89.8%, or 220,710 people).
- Among New Brunswick residents whose mother tongue is not French, 16,940 (3.2%) spoke French at least regularly at home.
 - Of these, just under a third (30.7%, or 5,200 people) spoke French predominantly at home, while more than half (58.8%, or 9,960 people) spoke French at home as a secondary language while speaking another language more often (generally English).

2. In this fact sheet, the Campbellton CA refers to the New Brunswick part of the Campbellton CA.

French used at work

Chart 5
Population using French most often at work, New Brunswick, 2001 to 2021



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

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

- In 2021, 111,715 New Brunswick residents used French at least regularly at work. This represents 32.0% of the province's workers.³
- In New Brunswick, 83,605 people used French most often at work, predominantly or equally with other languages, accounting for 23.9% of the province's workers.
 - After increasing from 2001 to 2006 (+4,630), the number of people who used French most often at work fell between each census from 2006 to 2021 (-6,250).
- In 2021, among workers who used French at least regularly at work, many worked in health care and social assistance (21,120 people, or 18.9%), public administration (13,700 people, or 12.3%) or retail trade (12,380 people, or 11.1%).⁴
- Among workers who spoke French most often at home, predominantly or equally with other languages, 91.0% also used French regularly at work.
- A quarter (25.6%) of the workers who used French regularly at work lived in the Moncton CMA.

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

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

Instruction in French at the primary and secondary levels

- In 2021, 49,335 (36.0%) of the 136,995 children under 18 living in the province were eligible⁵ for instruction in French at the primary and secondary levels.
 - More than one in four eligible children (27.8%, or 13,720 children) lived in the Moncton CMA.
- In New Brunswick, 214,030 people attended or had already attended a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada, representing 29.6% of the population aged 5 and older.
 - Of those who had never attended a French-language school, 78,585 (10.8%) had instead attended a French immersion program in an English-language school.
 - Among school-aged children⁶ who were eligible for instruction in French, 29,980 (80.6%) were attending or had already attended a regular French program in a French-language school in Canada.

French among immigrants

- In 2021, the proportions of recent⁷ immigrants and established⁸ immigrants living in New Brunswick who could conduct a conversation in French (19.7% and 24.6%, respectively) were lower than the proportion of the non-immigrant population (43.3%).
 - The proportion of immigrants who spoke French at least regularly at home (14.8%) was lower than that of the non-immigrant population (31.5%).
 - The proportion of immigrants who had French as their only first official language spoken (11.3%) was lower than for the non-immigrant population (31.4%). However, the proportion of immigrants who had French and English as their first official languages spoken (3.8%) was higher than that of the non-immigrant population (0.4%).

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

6. Children aged 5 to 17.

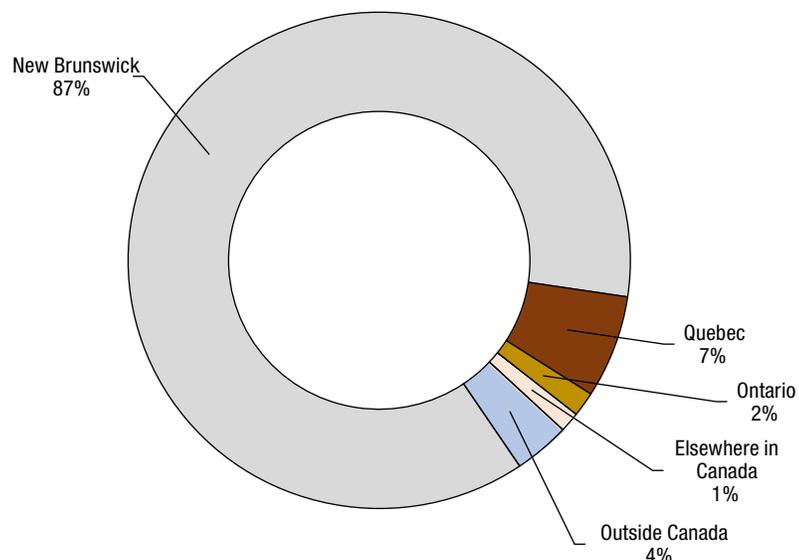
7. Immigrants admitted from 2016 to 2021.

8. Immigrants admitted before 2016.

Mobility and birthplace of the French-speaking population

Chart 6

Place of birth of the population whose only first official language spoken is French, New Brunswick, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

- In 2021, among New Brunswick residents whose only first official language spoken is French, almost 9 in 10 (86.8%, or 197,965 people) were born in the province.
 - Around 1 in 10 (9.6%, or 21,965 people) were born in another province or territory, with large proportions coming from Quebec (6.7%, or 15,290 people) or Ontario (1.6%, or 3,625 people).
 - A smaller proportion (3.6%, or 8,150 people) were born abroad, particularly in Africa (1.4%) or the United States (0.8%).
- From 2016 to 2021, the net interprovincial migration of the New Brunswick population whose only first official language spoken is French was positive (+1,560).
 - From 2016 to 2021, 7,840 people with French as their only first official language spoken settled in New Brunswick from another province or territory. The majority were from Quebec (51.8%), Ontario (20.4%) or Alberta (11.4%). A total of 6,280 people left the province during the same period.

Appendix

Table 1
Comparison of selected French-language indicators, New Brunswick, 1991 to 2021

Indicator	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
	percent						
French as first official language spoken ¹	34.0	33.2	33.2	32.8	32.0	32.0	30.7
French only	33.7	32.9	33.0	32.5	31.7	31.6	30.0
French and English	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.7
Knowledge of French ²	42.0	42.6	43.4	43.6	42.2	42.5	41.9
French only	12.5	10.1	9.2	10.2	9.0	8.6	7.9
French and English	29.5	32.6	34.2	33.4	33.2	33.9	34.0
French as mother tongue	34.3	33.6	33.6	33.0	32.5	32.4	31.3
French only	33.7	32.9	32.9	32.4	31.6	31.4	29.5
French in combination with other languages	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.9	1.1	1.8
French spoken most often at home	31.5	30.9	30.6	30.0	29.3	29.1	27.7
French predominantly	30.8	30.1	29.9	29.4	28.4	28.0	26.4
French equally with other languages	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.9	1.1	1.3
French used most often at work ³	..	..	26.2	26.1	25.0	25.3	23.9
French predominantly	..	..	22.2	23.0	21.2	20.9	20.1
French equally with other languages	..	..	4.0	3.1	3.9	4.4	3.9

.. not available for a specific reference period

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

2. According to the knowledge of official languages.

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

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

Table 2
Frequency of French use at work and frequency of French spoken at home, New Brunswick, 2021

Frequency ²	French used at work ¹		French spoken at home	
	number	percent	number	percent
Total population	349,215	100.0	764,630	100.0
Only	48,735	14.0	183,635	24.0
Mostly	21,375	6.1	17,925	2.3
Equally	13,500	3.9	10,085	1.3
Regularly	28,110	8.0	20,640	2.7
No mention	237,495	68.0	532,345	69.6

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

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Table 3
Use of French at work,¹ by frequency and industry sectors, New Brunswick, 2021

Selection of industry sectors	Use of French at work			
	At least regularly ²		Most often	
	number	percent	number	percent
Total	111,715	100.0	83,605	100.0
Construction	6,440	5.8	5,205	6.2
Manufacturing	9,855	8.8	8,570	10.3
Retail trade	12,380	11.1	9,185	11.0
Transportation and warehousing	3,550	3.2	2,355	2.8
Professional, scientific and technical services	3,925	3.5	2,430	2.9
Educational services	10,315	9.2	9,130	10.9
Health care and social assistance	21,120	18.9	17,345	20.7
Accommodation and food services	5,380	4.8	3,830	4.6
Other services (except public administration)	5,170	4.6	4,195	5.0
Public administration	13,700	12.3	7,295	8.7
Other sectors	19,880	17.8	14,055	16.8

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

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

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Table 4
French spoken at least regularly at home, by age and mother tongue, New Brunswick, 2021

Age group	Mother tongue					
	Total		French ¹		Other languages	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Total	232,285	30.4	215,340	90.0	16,940	3.2
0 to 14 years	32,050	28.9	28,050	96.2	4,000	4.9
15 to 44 years	74,000	28.6	67,265	91.1	6,735	3.6
45 years and older	126,235	32.0	120,025	88.0	6,210	2.4

1. Alone or in combination with other languages.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

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

Immigration status and period of immigration	Knowledge of French ¹		French spoken at home ¹		First official language spoken			
					French only		French and English	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Total	317,825	41.9	230,545	30.4	228,085	30.0	5,085	0.7
Non-immigrants	305,105	43.3	221,810	31.5	221,065	31.4	3,095	0.4
Immigrants	10,075	22.8	6,520	14.8	5,005	11.3	1,670	3.8
Recent immigrants ²	3,165	19.7	2,270	14.1	1,625	10.1	880	5.5
Established immigrants ³	6,915	24.6	4,255	15.2	3,380	12.0	785	2.8
2011 to 2015	1,430	24.9	965	16.8	715	12.4	310	5.4
2001 to 2010	1,655	25.1	985	14.9	800	12.1	280	4.2
1991 to 2000	630	21.3	360	12.2	280	9.5	85	2.9
1980 to 1990	535	19.5	315	11.5	220	8.0	40	1.5
Before 1980	2,655	26.5	1,620	16.2	1,365	13.6	65	0.6
Non-permanent residents	2,645	24.4	2,210	20.4	2,020	18.6	325	3.0

1. Includes all mentions of French.

2. Admitted to Canada between 2016 and 2021.

3. Admitted to Canada before 2016.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

Table 6
Comparison of French-language indicators, by census metropolitan area, New Brunswick, 2021

Census Metropolitan Area	Knowledge of French ¹		French spoken at home ¹		First official language spoken			
					French only		French and English	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Total - Province	320,300	41.9	232,285	30.4	229,325	30.0	5,040	0.7
Moncton	76,020	48.9	51,270	33.0	50,750	32.6	2,070	1.3
Saint John	20,470	15.8	4,260	3.3	4,295	3.3	430	0.3
Fredericton	24,595	22.9	7,910	7.3	6,955	6.5	710	0.7

1. Includes all mentions of French.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.