

CANADIAN PRESS / LÉGER MARKETING

Canadians and Bilingualism in Canada

Report

March 2003



1.0 Study Highlights

- The majority of Canadians favour the development of bilingualism throughout Canada.

Question: *The Canadian Government will spend 750 million dollars promoting the use of both official languages. Are you FOR or AGAINST the development of bilingualism throughout Canada?*

n=1501	For	Against	Don't know / Refusal
Canada	63%	27%	10%

- More than half of the population is not at all bilingual.

Question: *In terms of our two official languages, do you personally consider yourself to BE PERFECTLY BILINGUAL, ABLE TO GET BY IN THE OTHER LANGUAGE, or NOT AT ALL BILINGUAL?*

n=1501	Perfectly bilingual	Able to get by in other language	Not at all bilingual
Canada	12%	31%	57%

- Public service and health services in Canada: people want bilingualism.

Question: *Do you personally AGREE or DISAGREE with the idea that Canadians throughout Canada should be able to receive service in either English, or in French... ?*

n=1501	Agree	Disagree
... by the public service of Canada	81%	15%
... in health establishments	76%	21%
... in public establishments (bars, restaurants, stores, etc)	49%	45%

Note: The horizontal complement to 100% represents those who did not know or who refused to answer.

- More than half of Canadians doubt the government's capacity to reach its objectives with respect to bilingualism.

Question: *The Government of Canada would like 50% of Canadians aged between 15 and 24 to be bilingual within 10 years. Do you think it will be POSSIBLE or NOT to reach such an objective?*

n=1501	Possible	Not possible	Don't know
Canada	40%	54%	7%

- Bilingualism: an asset to Canada, according to the majority of Canadians.

Question: *Do you think bilingualism in Canada is an ASSET IN WHICH WE SHOULD INVEST or A PROBLEM IN WHICH WE SHOULD STOP INVESTING?*

n=1501	Asset	Problem	Don't know / Refusal
Canada	62%	27%	11%

2. Detailed Results

2.1 The majority of Canadians favour the development of bilingualism throughout Canada

Three out of five Canadians (63%) favour the development of bilingualism throughout Canada, while 27% do not and 10% are undecided.

A higher proportion of Francophones (91%) and Quebecers (90%) favour the development of bilingualism compared with other Canadians. There are also more people between the ages of 18 and 24 (81%), students (89%) and people with a university education (71%) who tend to favour the development of bilingualism. On the other hand, people aged 65 and over (39%), Anglophones (34%), retirees (36%) and Canadians from all regions other than Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces do not favour the development of bilingualism throughout Canada.

Question: *The Canadian Government will spend 750 million dollars promoting the use of both official languages. Are you FOR or AGAINST the development of bilingualism throughout Canada?*

n=1501	For	Against	Don't know / Refusal
Mother tongue:			
French	91%	8%	1%
English	54%	34%	12%
Other	65%	23%	12%
Atlantic Provinces	70%	21%	9%
Quebec	90%	8%	2%
Ontario	57%	31%	13%
Prairies	45%	41%	14%
Alberta	49%	38%	13%
British Columbia	48%	38%	15%
Canada	63%	27%	10%

2.2 More than half of the population is not at all bilingual

When we consider the two official languages, 43% of Canadians claim to be bilingual – 12% of whom are perfectly bilingual – and more than one out of two Canadians, i.e. 57%, are not at all bilingual.

Almost three quarters of Francophones (74%) and Quebecers (73%) are bilingual, approximately a quarter of whom (27% and 23% respectively) are perfectly bilingual. On the other hand, more than two thirds of Anglophones (68%), residents of Ontario (67%), the Prairies (71%) and Alberta (70%) are not at all bilingual, when taking the two official languages into consideration.

Furthermore, there are more people between the ages of 18 and 24 (58%) who claim either to be perfectly bilingual (17%) or able to get by in the other language (41%), compared with people aged 65 and over, of whom 71% are not at all bilingual.

It should be underlined that the vast majority of bilingual Canadians, both those who are perfectly bilingual (83%) and those who are not (76%), are in favour of the development of bilingualism throughout Canada. However, proportionately more people who are not at all bilingual (35%) are not in favour of the development of bilingualism in Canada.

Question: *In terms of our two official languages, do you personally consider yourself to BE PERFECTLY BILINGUAL, ABLE TO GET BY IN THE OTHER LANGUAGE, or NOT AT ALL BILINGUAL?*

n=1501	Perfectly bilingual	Able to get by in other language	Not at all bilingual
Mother tongue:			
French	27%	47%	27%
English	6%	26%	68%
Other	13%	32%	54%
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Atlantic Provinces	7%	28%	64%
Quebec	23%	50%	26%
Ontario	9%	24%	67%
Prairies	5%	24%	71%
Alberta	8%	21%	70%
British Columbia	7%	29%	64%
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Canada	12%	31%	57%

2.3 Public service and health services in Canada: people want bilingualism

Most Canadians feel that the population should be able to receive service in French or English from the public service of Canada (81%) and in health establishments such as hospitals and medical clinics (76%). Opinions are divided regarding public establishments such as restaurants, stores and bars: 49% of people feel that Canadians should be able to receive service in either language whereas 45% do not.

The highest levels of respondents who feel that they should have access to services in either language are found in Quebec, in all three situations (94% by the public service of Canada; 95% in health establishments; 84% in public establishments). In all other regions in Canada, the majority of the population feel that Canadians should receive service in their language, i.e. in English or in French, by the public service of Canada and in health establishments.

Opinions vary according to age: there is a higher tendency for people between the ages of 18 and 24 to feel that they should receive service in either language (94% for the public service of Canada, 92% for health establishments and 68% for public establishments). However, there are more people aged 65 and over who tend to disagree with this idea in all three situations (24% for the public services of Canada, 27% for health establishments and 53% for public establishments such as restaurants and bars).

Question: *Do you personally AGREE or DISAGREE with the idea that Canadians throughout Canada should be able to receive service in either English, or in French... ?* (The percentages represent those who agree)

n=1501	... by the public service of Canada	... in health establishments	... in public establishments such as restaurants, stores, bars, etc.
Mother tongue:			
French	94%	93%	80%
English	79%	71%	39%
Other	72%	70%	48%
Aged 18-24	94%	92%	63%
Aged 25-34	86%	81%	50%
Aged 35-44	81%	76%	46%
Aged 45-54	77%	69%	46%
Aged 55-64	81%	73%	55%
Aged 65 and over	72%	70%	44%
Canada	81%	76%	49%

2.4 More than half of Canadians doubt the government's capacity to reach its objectives with respect to bilingualism

Public opinion is mixed concerning the government's ability to reach its objectives with respect to bilingualism, i.e. for 50% of Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 to be bilingual in 10 years. 40% of Canadians feel that it is possible, while 54% do not.

Francophones (52%) and Quebecers (54%) are the most optimistic regarding the government's objectives with respect to bilingualism, as well as people whose income is lower than \$20,000 (55%) and students (51%). On the other hand, Anglophones (59%), Ontario residents (57%), people whose income is above \$60,000 (64%), the active population (56%) and those with a university education (59%) are more sceptical regarding the government's ability to reach this objective.

It should be mentioned that the number of people between the ages of 18 and 24 who believe in the government's ability to reach its objectives is more or less equal to the number of those who do not (48% vs. 47%). People between the ages of 45 and 54 are the most sceptical, with 59% who feel that it is not possible.

Question: *The Government of Canada would like 50% of Canadians aged between 15 and 24 to be bilingual within 10 years. Do you think it will be POSSIBLE or NOT to reach such an objective?*

n=1501	Possible	Not possible	Don't know
Mother tongue:			
French	52%	43%	5%
English	34%	59%	7%
Other	48%	43%	9%
Aged 18-24	48%	47%	5%
Aged 25-34	47%	49%	4%
Aged 35-44	37%	57%	6%
Aged 45-54	37%	59%	4%
Aged 55-64	35%	55%	9%
65 and over	37%	49%	13%
Canada	40%	54%	7%

2.5 Bilingualism: an asset to Canada, according to the majority of Canadians

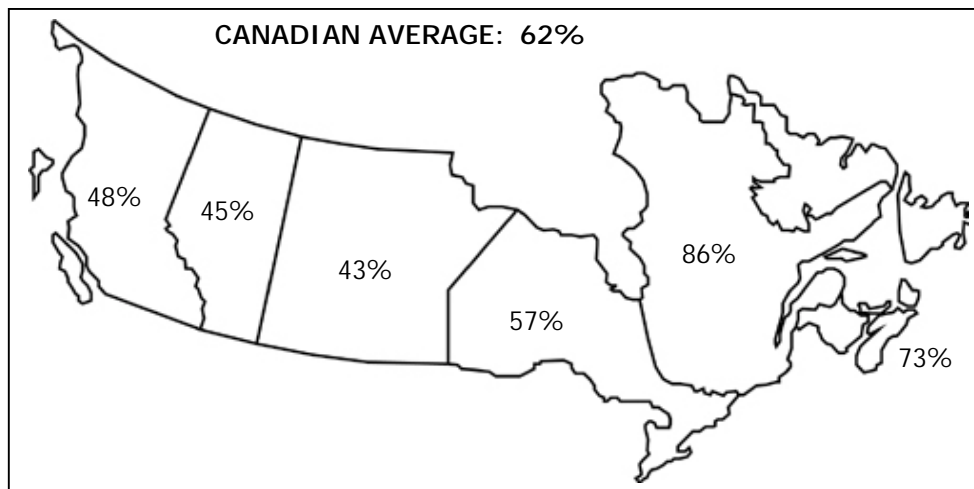
According to more than three out of five Canadians (62%), bilingualism in Canada is an asset in which we should invest. On the other hand, 27% of the population feel that bilingualism is a problem in which we should stop investing. 11% of Canadians do not have an opinion regarding the issue.

The highest levels of respondents who feel that bilingualism is an asset to Canada are from Quebec (86%) and the Atlantic Provinces (73%). 72% of people between the ages of 18 and 34, 85% of Francophones, 86% of students, 71% of those with a university education, 65% of women and 77% of people who claim to be bilingual share this opinion. On the other hand, Canadian residents west of Ontario (40%), people aged 65 and over (40%), Anglophones (32%), retirees (36%), those with secondary school education (32%), men (31%) and people who are not at all bilingual (36%) are more likely to feel that bilingualism in Canada is a problem in which we should stop investing.

Question: *Do you think bilingualism in Canada is an ASSET IN WHICH WE SHOULD INVEST or A PROBLEM IN WHICH WE SHOULD STOP INVESTING?*

n=1501	Asset	Problem	Don't know / Refusal
Mother tongue :			
French	85%	13%	2%
English	54%	32%	13%
Other	60%	28%	12%
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Atlantic Provinces	73%	23%	4%
Quebec	86%	11%	3%
Ontario	57%	29%	14%
Prairies	43%	41%	16%
Alberta	45%	43%	12%
British Columbia	48%	38%	15%
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Canada	62%	27%	11%

Distribution of Canadians who feel that bilingualism is an asset to Canada



3.0 Methodology

Telephone interviews with a representative sample of 1501 Canadians aged 18 and over who speak either French or English were used for the present study conducted by Léger Marketing.

The interviews were conducted from our call centres in Montreal and Winnipeg between March 19 and 23, 2003. Up to 10 calls were made when potential respondents could not be reached.

With the help of Statistics Canada data, the results were weighted according to region, sex and language spoken at home in order for the sample to be representative of the entire adult population in Canada. The maximum margin of error for the 1501 people surveyed was $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.