



Office of the
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Commissariat
aux langues
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Official Languages Tracking Survey 2021

Executive Summary

Prepared for Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages

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For more information on this report, please contact the Office of Commissioner of Official Languages at: information.information@clo-ocol.gc.ca

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Canada

Official Languages Tracking Survey 2021 Executive Summary

Prepared for Office of Commissioner of Official Languages by Environics Research Group.

Delivery Date: January 13, 2022

This public opinion research report presents the results of two surveys (telephone and online) conducted by Environics Research Group.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Sondage de suivi sur les langues officielles 2021 : sommaire*.

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Executive summary

A. Background and objectives

In 2016, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (the Office of the Commissioner) commissioned a survey to explore Canadians' opinions on official languages and bilingualism. This research included both a random probability telephone survey of 1,000 Canadians, and an online panel survey of 1,016 Canadians. In 2021, the Office of the Commissioner commissioned Environics Research to survey Canadians again using the same methodologies, but with the sample sizes for each survey increased to 1,500, and largely the same questionnaires as were used in 2016. This enables the Office of the Commissioner to track the results and measure the extent to which public opinion has or has not evolved over the last five years.

This research project had the following key research objectives:

- Gauge Canadians' current attitudes towards the *Official Languages Act* and towards issues around bilingualism in Canada and how those may correlate with key demographic and regional characteristics.
- Measure Canadians' exposure to and experience with the other official language and their views on second language education.
- Track and compare whether and to what extent attitudes have evolved since the previous survey on this topic conducted in 2016, and draw observations based on this comparison.
- Determine whether Canadians' perceptions about official languages correlate to attitudes towards other current issues.
- Explore how perceptions about official languages may intersect with other important contemporary issues, with a limited number of new questions (e.g., around diversity and COVID-19).

Use of findings of the research: In keeping with the project's research objectives, the findings of this research are intended to inform the Office of the Commissioner as well as stakeholders in and outside of government about the public's attitudes and perceptions of official languages and bilingualism. The findings will be of particular use for better understanding the state of public opinion and to challenge certain myths about official bilingualism and misperceptions about Canadians' attitudes. It is also intended that the findings will be used to develop communications products and research presentations with a view to conveying the results to different audiences, including members of the general public, media, government, community organizations, educators and researchers. As with the 2016 survey results, the 2021 survey results will aid in developing messages and strategies for the promotion of official languages and bilingualism in Canada, in keeping with the Commissioner's mandate and obligations under Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*.

B. Methodology

This report is based on data collected through a dual-mode research program: a national probability-based telephone survey of 1,507 adult Canadians, and a national online survey of 1,500 adult Canadians. As was the case in 2016, the 2021 online survey contained additional questions not asked in the shorter telephone survey, the online mode requiring fewer resources than the telephone mode. The online survey was conducted from September 30 to October 19, 2021, and the telephone survey from September 27 to October 16, 2021.

Completions achieved	Total	BC/Terr	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
# of completed telephone interviews (unweighted)	1,507	225	204	100	453	375	150
% of completed interviews	100%	15%	14%	7%	30%	25%	10%
Margin of error (\pm @ 95% CI)	2.5	6.5	6.8	9.7	4.6	5.0	8.0
# of completed online interviews (unweighted)	1,500	204	168	97	577	352	102
% of completed interviews	100%	14%	11%	6%	38%	23%	7%

NOTES: As the online survey uses opt-in panels, this is a non-probability sample, and no margin of sampling error is calculated.

A number of questions in the survey were included in a previous survey conducted in 2016; tracking data are shown where applicable. In 2016, the total online survey sample was $n=1,016$ and the telephone survey sample was $n=1,000$ (with a margin of error at the national level of $\pm 3.1\%$, 19 times out of 20).

Telephone and online surveys use differing methodologies and as such can yield results that may differ but that can nevertheless be considered as equally valid. As in 2016, the initial questions were asked in both the telephone and online surveys and, as previously, the magnitude of support and agreement are higher in the telephone than the online survey. This is a known phenomenon in interviewer-guided surveys. As the online survey uses opt-in panels, however, it is a non-probability sample, and a margin of sampling error cannot be calculated. The margin of sampling error for the 2021 national telephone survey is $\pm 2.5\%$ at the 95% confidence interval; margins of error are greater for subsamples of the population. Per the 2016 survey, and to maintain comparability, the results of the telephone and online surveys have not been merged.

In this report, results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses. All results are weighted (by gender, age and region, per the 2016 survey) and are based on the entire sample unless otherwise noted. Data labels for values less than 4% may not be shown on some charts.

Note: All survey respondents were given the choice of completing the telephone or online survey in English or French. For the purposes of analysis of these survey results, Anglophones and Francophones are defined by which language respondents selected to complete the survey.

More information about the methodology for these surveys is included in Appendix A.

C. Contract value

The contract value was \$136,173.93 (HST included).

D. Report

This report begins with an executive summary outlining the background and objectives, methodology, and key findings and conclusions, followed by a detailed analysis of the survey data conducted by Environics and research personnel of the Office of the Commissioner. Where data for both modes (telephone and online) is available, all statements of analysis have been worded so as to be consistent with the results of both unless specified otherwise. Provided under a separate cover is a detailed set of “banner tables” presenting the complete results for all questions for the total and identified subgroups of interest in both modes. These tables are referenced by the survey question in the detailed analysis.

In this report, quantitative results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses. Net results cited in the text may not exactly match individual results shown in the tables due to rounding.

E. Key findings

The key findings and conclusions of the survey are as follows:

1. Support for official languages remains resilient

- Support for official languages is high and it is consistent; it appears to be a core Canadian value in 2021 as it was in 2016.
- A strong majority of Canadians, in all regions studied and within all demographic segments studied, continue to express support for official languages in 2021, at levels similar to 2016.

2. Support for official languages is consistent with support for other forms of diversity

- Strong majorities of Canadians agree with statements about the mutually reinforcing potential of official languages and other forms of diversity.
- Those from diverse backgrounds also tend to agree with statements about official languages as something that can accompany or reinforce other forms of diversity, at rates similar to, and sometimes greater than, other respondents.

3. There is majority support for official language minorities, but some myths persist

- Majorities of Canadians agree with specific measures in support of official languages and official language minorities.
- Some key myths about official languages and official language minorities persist among some populations, notably the perception that the French-speaking minority outside Quebec is less numerous than it really is, or that the English-speaking minority in Quebec is more socio-economically privileged.

4. Quebecers continue to have far greater exposure to the two languages

- Quebecers are far more likely to encounter people using the other official language or to be exposed to media and cultural products in the other official language.

- Among all bilingual Canadians, Francophones are more likely than Anglophones to have learned the other official language outside of school, whereas Anglophones are more likely to have learned it only in school.

5. Strong majorities continue to support second-language education in the other official language

- Most Canadians strongly agree that both official languages should continue to be taught in elementary schools across Canada.
- Majorities of Canadians agree that governments should implement measures to make second-language learning more accessible.
- A strong majority of parents, notably in Quebec but also outside Quebec, feel it is important that their children have the opportunity to learn the other official language.

6. There is some correlation between environmental concerns, support for rights and support for the *Official Languages Act*

- Correlation between attitudes towards official languages and other contemporary issues is modest, suggesting overall support for official languages across a spectrum of social values.
- There is some correlation between support for official languages, environmental concerns and equal rights.
- Opposition correlates somewhat with feelings that government is inefficient and has gone “too far” on equal rights.

F. Political neutrality statement and contact information

I hereby certify as senior officer of Environics that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Policy on Communications and Federal Identity* of the Government of Canada, and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

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