

LEGACY OF THE *OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT*: WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to support **Activity 7: The Official Languages Act Perspectives**, and **Activity 8: Was the B&B Commission Successful?** on pages 10 and 11 of *Historica Canada's Official Languages Act Education Guide*.

When the *Official Languages Act* (OLA) came into force on 7 September 1969, it gave French and English equal status as the two official languages of Canada. The Act grew out of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B Commission), which exposed massive inequalities between francophone and anglophone Canadians. The Act was instrumental in integrating French into federal institutions, requiring all federal institutions to offer services in French and English, creating job opportunities for French Canadians, and offering greater economic opportunity to francophone communities across the country (primarily through increased job opportunities within the Federal government). The Act also set up the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL), which measures linguistic realities, ensures the Act is respected across the country, and takes care of complaints.

But what kind of impact did the B&B Commission and the resulting OLA have for Canadians? The effects of the OLA can be measured through different indicators that measure whether the Act made Canadians more bilingual or helped cultural relations between French and English Canadians.¹ The B&B Commission's success can be measured by assessing whether the OLA did indeed bring about change in three key areas:

- The extent of bilingualism in the federal government
- The role of public and private organizations in promoting better cultural relations
- The opportunities for Canadians to become bilingual in English and French

THE EXTENT OF BILINGUALISM IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

- Since 1969, the percentage of public administration jobs that are bilingual has increased.
- Public servants are offered the possibility of taking French lessons to improve their skills.
- In 2007, positions in the core public administration required the following language skills:
 - Bilingual - 40.2%
 - English Essential - 51.2%
 - French Essential - 4.0%
 - English or French Essential - 4.4%
- While this figure may seem positive, the reality of French usage in the workplace is very different. The report of the OCOL in 2018-2019 found the following:
 - Since 2008, 4 surveys show that between 91% and 93% of English-speaking employees are comfortable writing in the official language of their choice at work.
 - Only 67-68% of French-speaking employees are comfortable writing in their chosen language, a 25% difference.
 - The results of the Public Service Employee Survey show no real progress on any significant issue between 2008 and 2017, showing stagnation.

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING BETTER CULTURAL RELATIONS:

- 67% of anglophones believe that the Government of Canada is effective in protecting both official languages, as opposed to 47% of francophones.
- 96% of francophones believe it is important for all Canadians to have access to services offered by the Federal Government in their official language of choice, while only 83% of anglophones think the same.
- In Canada outside Québec, 98.6% of workers reported using English at least on a regular basis, and 9 out of 10 workers reported using only English. These proportions are similar to those observed in 2006.
- In Québec, the predominant use of French in the workplace fell from 82.0% in 2006 to 79.7% in 2016. This decline was mainly in favour of the equal use of French and English, which rose from 4.6% in 2006 to 7.2% in 2016.
- The proportion of workers who use more than one language at work rose from 14.9% in 2006 to 15.4% in 2016.
- Summer programs (e.g., Explore) have increased over the years, with the goal of helping Canadians speak both French and English.

¹Statistics, facts, and figures taken from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/fr) and from Statistics Canada (www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016031/98-200-x2016031-eng.cfm).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADIANS TO BECOME BILINGUAL IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH:

- Between 2006 and 2011, the number of persons who reported being able to conduct a conversation in both of Canada's official languages grew by 350,000 people to 5.8 million.
- The bilingualism rate of the Canadian population edged up from 17.4% in 2006 to 17.5% in 2011.
- Just under half of the students in public schools across Canada (2,382,693) were learning a second official language in 2015/2016.
- Among these students, the majority (1,954,068) were enrolled in regular second language programs (core programs with English or French as a subject), down slightly (-0.2%) from the previous school year.
- The Federal Government now offers the possibility for public servants to take French lessons to improve their skills.
- Demand increased for French immersion for students in all provinces. In 2015-2016, around 430,000 students were enrolled in French immersion programs, compared to 360,000 in 2011-2012 – an increase of nearly 20% in four years (total student body has remained the same).

OTHER OFFICIAL LANGUAGE STATISTICS

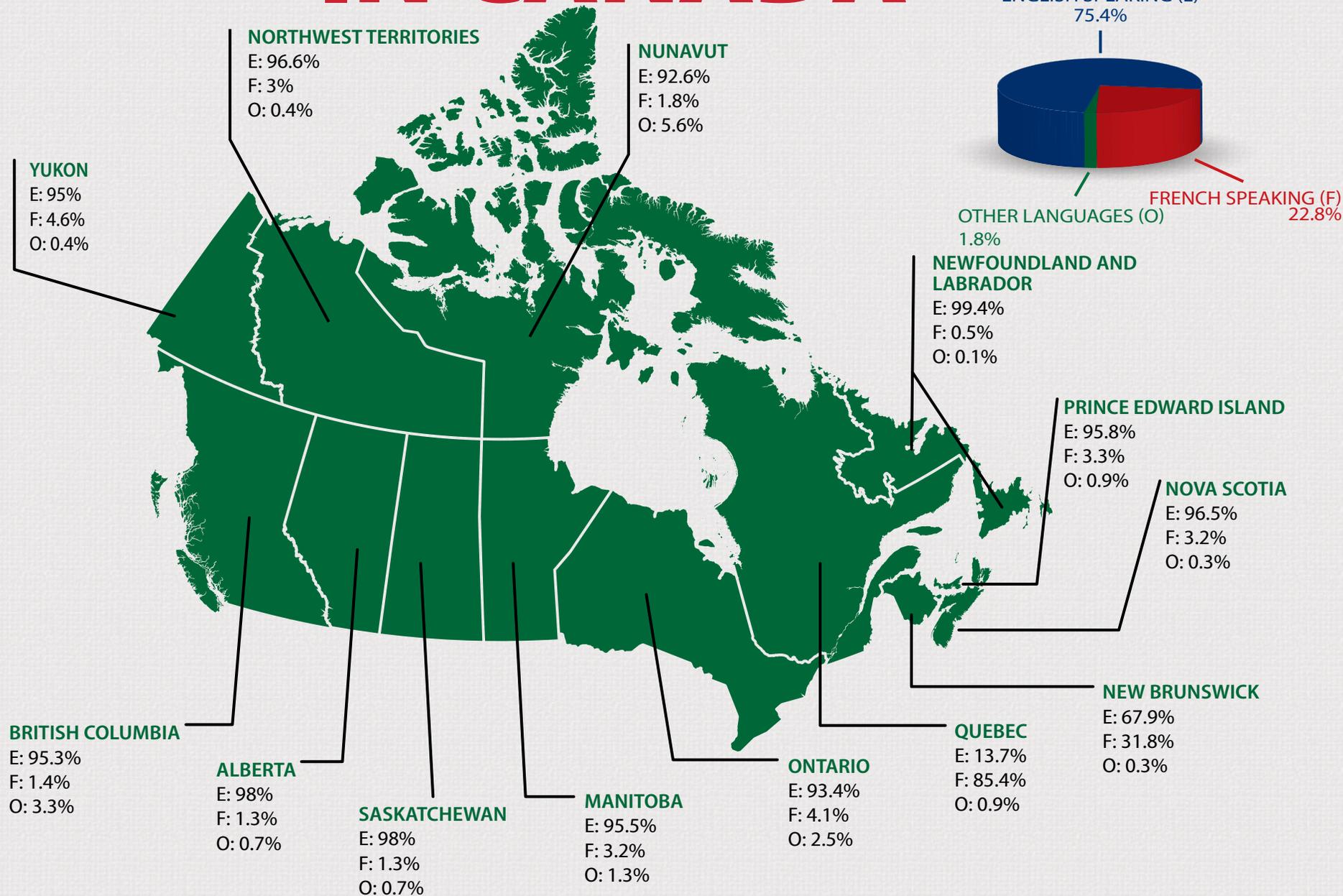
The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL) is the main government organ that makes sure that the Act is respected across the country and that takes care of any complaints. The OCOL also issues recommendations and advice to elected officials regarding the best way to achieve institutional bilingualism. The OLA itself specified three pillars, which the OCOL measures: ensuring respect for English and French and equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in federal institutions; supporting the development of English and French linguistic minority communities; and advancing the equal status and use of English and French. You can visit the OCOL website at www.clo-ocol.gc.ca for more facts and figures. Here are some statistics that may help you assess the impact of the *Official Languages Act* and the success of the B&B Commission:

- In 2018-2019, the OCOL recorded 550 complaints related to Communication and Services to the Public, making up about half of all complaints received by the OCOL. These complaints include services received at the border, at voting polls, and in over 30 different federal agencies.
- While 20.6% of Canadians (6.8 million people) reported a mother tongue other than English or French, only 6.2% of Canadians spoke a language other than English or French as their sole home language.
- In 2011, 63.5% of the population whose mother tongue was neither English nor French reported speaking English at home.
- Nearly 7 million Canadians reported speaking French most often at home in 2011, compared with 6.7 million in 2006.
- In Quebec, the proportion of the population that reported speaking only French at home decreased from 75.1% to 72.8% between 2006 and 2011. In the rest of Canada, the proportion of the population that reported speaking only English at home declined from 77.1% to 74.1% between 2006 and 2011.

CONCLUSION

After 50 years, the *Official Languages Act* has proven to be a defining force in Canadian society. The future of language in Canada and the modern relevance of the Act still raise many questions. Statistics Canada projects that by 2036, half of all Canadians will either be immigrants or children of immigrants, meaning that 25% of the Canadian population is expected to have a mother tongue other than English or French, and our official-language populations will become increasingly culturally diverse. The creation of an *Indigenous Languages Act* aimed at reclaiming, revitalizing, strengthening, and maintaining Indigenous languages in Canada will also influence the way our government implements linguistic policy across the country. While it's important to acknowledge the enormous progress that has been possible because of the Act, it is important to think about its place in our current society and the future of language and linguistic policy in Canada.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN CANADA

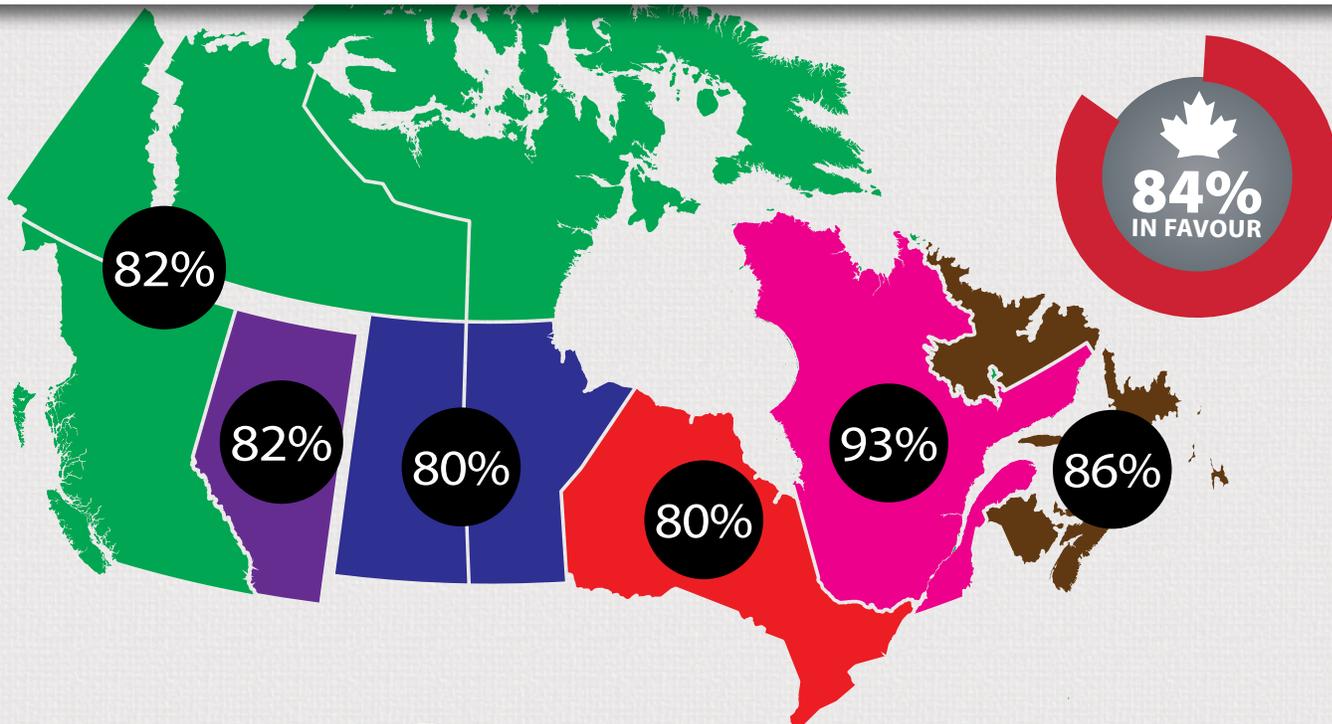


Use this worksheet to support **Activity 7: The Official Languages Act — Perspectives**, on page 10 of *Historica Canada's Official Languages Act Education Guide*.

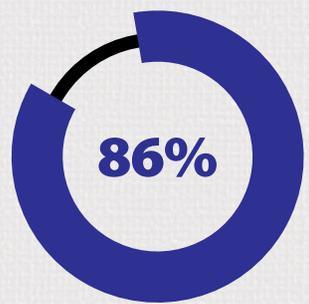
Source: Fast figures on Canada's official languages (2016), Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/statistics/canada>

WHAT CANADIANS THINK

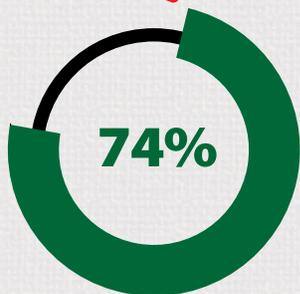
ABOUT THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT



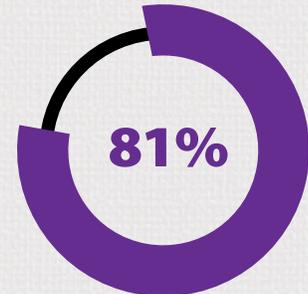
FEDERAL SERVICES should be in English and French



THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA should be bilingual

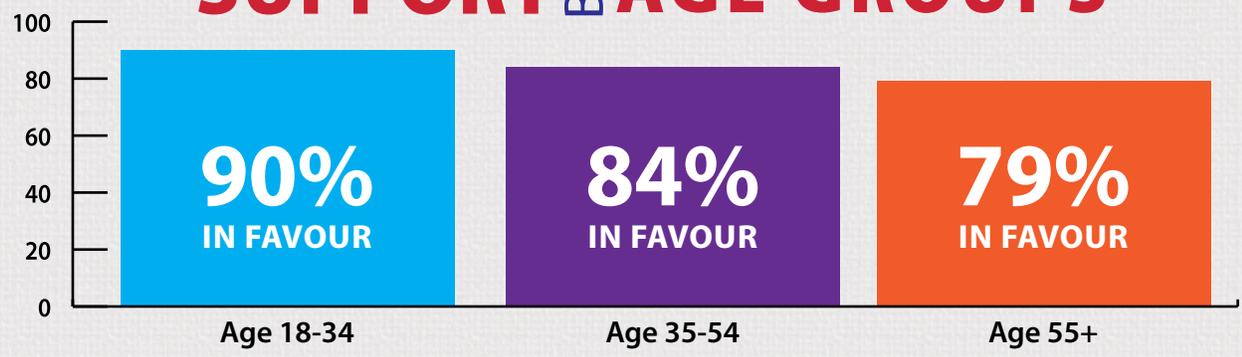


FEDERAL CABINET MINISTERS should be bilingual



SUPREME COURT JUDGES should be bilingual

SUPPORT BY AGE GROUPS



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Source: What Canadians think about bilingualism and the Official Languages Act, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2016

<https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/statistics/infographics/what-canadians-think-about-bilingualism-and-ola>

8 IN 10 CANADIANS AGREE



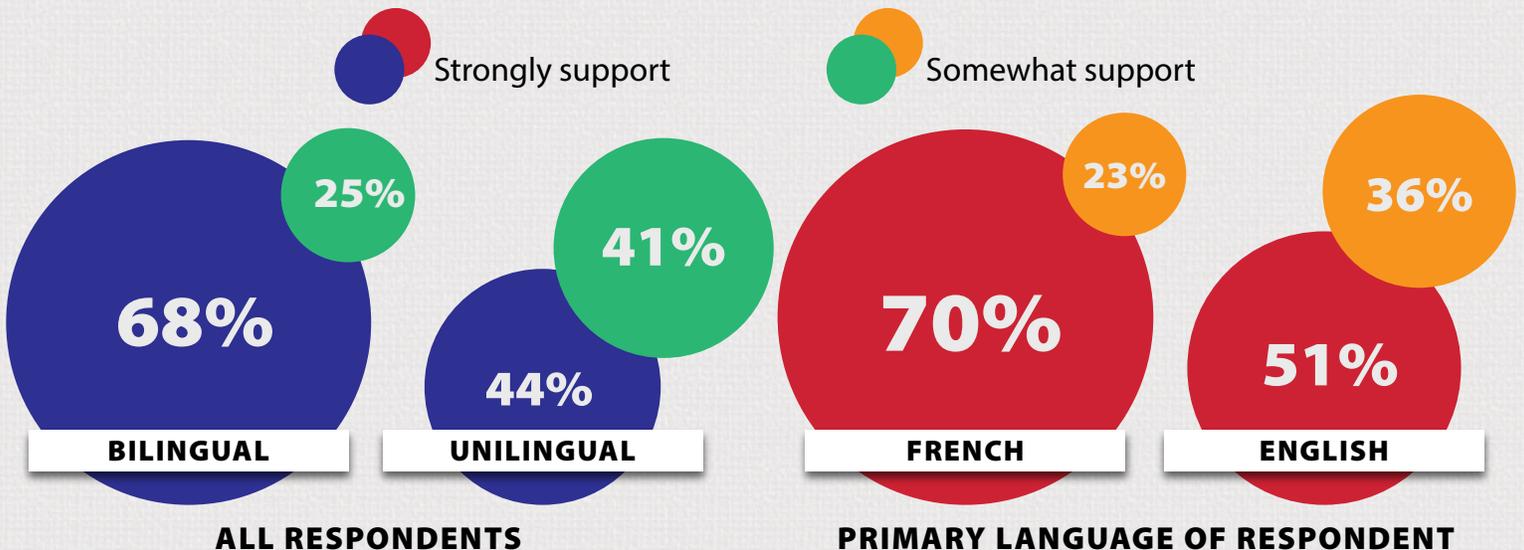
"Because English and French are part of our history, it makes sense that they have equal status."

"Having two official languages is positive for Canada's international image."

"Having two official languages has made Canada a more welcoming place for immigrants from different cultures."

"Having two official languages is one of the things that really defines Canada."

SUPPORT ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE OF RESPONDENT



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Source: What Canadians think about bilingualism and the Official Languages Act, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2016

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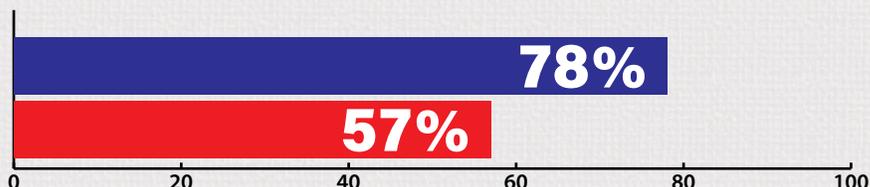
FRANCOPHONES

VS

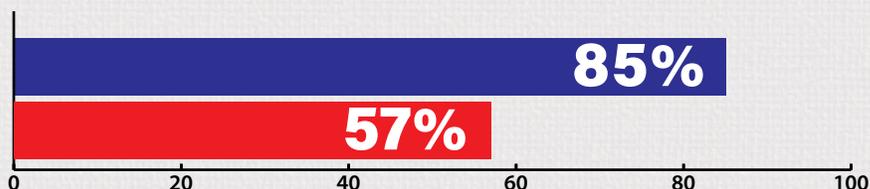
ANGLOPHONES

In general, French-speaking Canadians tend to be far more passionate than English-speaking Canadians on the subject of Canada's two official languages.

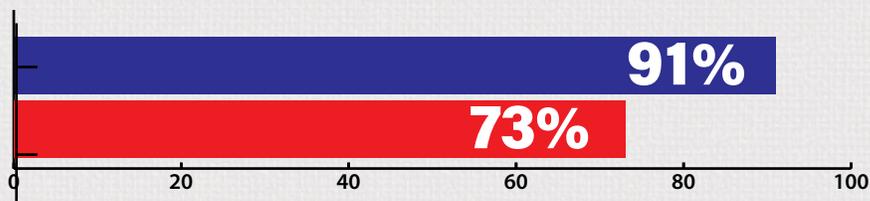
"Having two official languages in Canada is an important part of being Canadian."



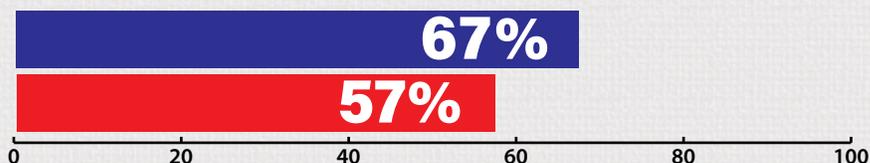
"Linguistic duality in Canada is a source of cultural enrichment."



"Learning both official languages contributes to better understanding among Canadians."



"In Canada, relationships between Francophones and Anglophones are more positive today than they were 10 years ago."



Use this worksheet to support **Activity 7: The Official Languages Act – Perspectives**, on page 10 of Historica Canada's *Official Languages Act* Education Guide.
Source: Appreciation and Perception of Canada's Two Official Languages – Executive Summary, Official Languages Support Programs Branch (OLSPB) for the Department of Canadian Heritage, 2012

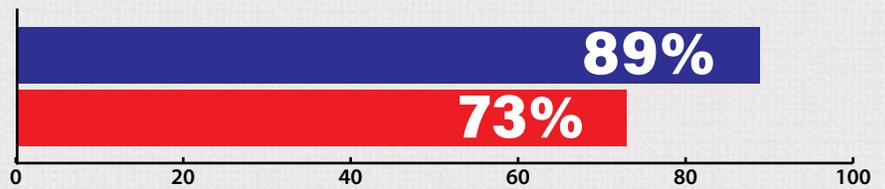
<https://canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2012/08/appreciation-and-perception-of-canada-s-two-official-languages?ga=2.31592446.1141006904.1559835255-1128085060.1558098828>

FRANCOPHONES

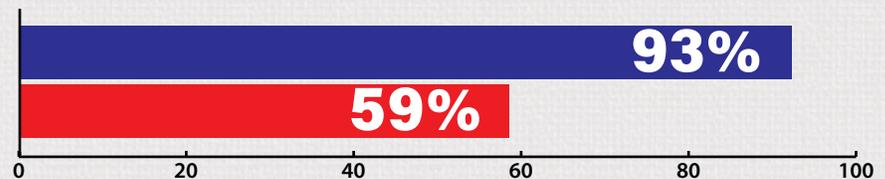
VS

ANGLOPHONES

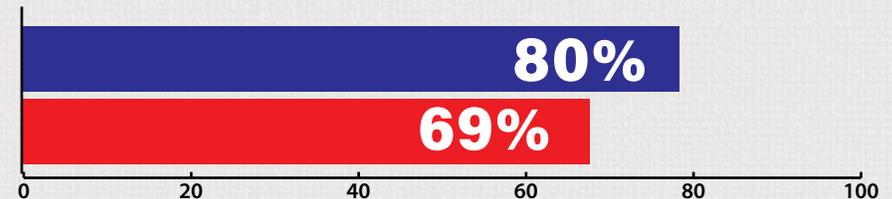
"Knowing both official languages improves chances of finding a job."



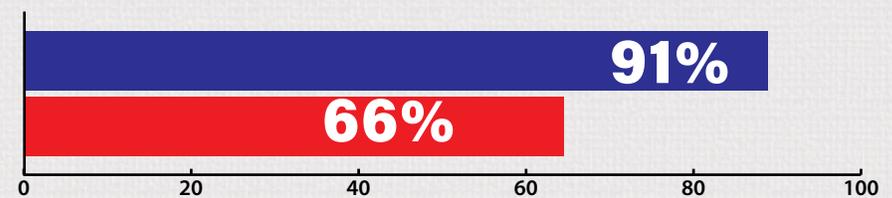
"All high school graduates should have a working knowledge of English and French."



"Interest in participating in school-based language exchanges to interact with young people from the other official language communities."



"The Government of Canada should continue to invest in exchange programs as a way to encourage understanding between Anglophones and Francophones."



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Source: *Appreciation and Perception of Canada's Two Official Languages – Executive Summary*, Official Languages Support Programs Branch (OLSPB) for the Department of Canadian Heritage, 2012

<https://canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2012/08/appreciation-and-perception-of-canada-s-two-official-languages?ga=2.31592446.1141006904.1559835255-1128085060.1558098828>

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Use this worksheet to support **Activity 7: The Official Languages Act – Perspectives**, on page 10 of *Historica Canada’s Official Languages Act Education Guide*.

Writing a letter to the editor of your local or regional newspaper is an effective and easy way to reach a large audience with your message. The more letters editors receive on a given topic, the more likely they are to dedicate more time in their newspaper to that issue — both on the editorial page and in news articles, which can influence public opinion and perhaps even government policy. If an editor receives many letters on a topic, it can help convey the issue’s importance to the community.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE LETTER:

- 1) Respond to an event: The best letters are timely and respond to a recent event. If you’re writing a letter from a historical perspective, write as if you were contemporary to that time.
- 2) Determine your reason for writing that letter: Decide what you hope to accomplish by writing the letter, and tailor it to best achieve that goal.
- 3) Be timely: Respond to an event within 2 or 3 days.
- 4) Write to the appropriate newspaper: If you are writing about a local issue (the municipal vote, for instance) choose a local paper. For a larger issue, choose a national paper. Make sure you are writing to a paper that existed at the time.
- 5) State your position clearly at the beginning of your paper, and make sure to connect your argument to the issue you are writing about. Focus on one major point, as the letter is relatively short. A focused letter is more convincing than a scattered one.
- 6) Provide evidence to back up your argument: Once you’ve stated your opinion on an issue, back it up. Support your claims with facts and advocate for your position.
- 7) Make a call to action: Try to focus on the positive. Finish your letter by explaining what you think should happen. Indicate how readers will be affected by the issue you address and ask readers to take action.
- 8) Close the letter simply and clearly: Summarize your point of view in one sentence so your readers have a clear reminder of your main message.
- 9) Name names: Refer to the person you are trying to influence by name.
- 10) Keep your letter short, focused, and interesting: If possible, include interesting facts, relevant personal experience, and any local connections to the issue.
- 11) Write the letter in your own words: Editors want letters in their papers to be original and personal. Make sure the voice in your letter is your own.

THINGS TO AVOID:

- Don’t overstate or exaggerate your points. One overstatement makes the rest of your letter seem untrustworthy.
- Don’t insult your opponents.
- Avoid acronyms (spell out any name the first time you use it, followed by the acronym in parentheses).
- Never use all capital letters or bold text to emphasize a word. The words must speak for themselves. Use quotation marks to indicate the title of a book, article, etc.

SOME EDITING TIPS:

- Edit your letter to cut out wordiness.
- Be respectful and professional in tone.
- Proofread! Have a classmate review your work to catch any errors you might miss.