

Overview

Ninety-eight percent of Canadians can speak one or both of the country's official languages, but that does not necessarily mean that English or French is their 'mother tongue'—the language a person learns first and still understands. According to the 2006 Census, about 58% of Canadians reported English as their mother tongue and about 22% reported French. The third largest mother-tongue group, 3% of the population, reported Chinese languages, including Mandarin and Cantonese.

In 2006, Canada had 18.0 million anglophones, 3% more than in 2001, and 6.9 million francophones, 2% more than in 2001. Although the numbers of people in these groups are rising, their share of the Canadian population is declining. Anglophones saw their share of the Canadian population decline from 59% in 2001 to 58% in 2006. Francophones saw their share decline from 23% in 2001 to 22% in 2006.

These decreases are largely attributable to the growing allophone population.

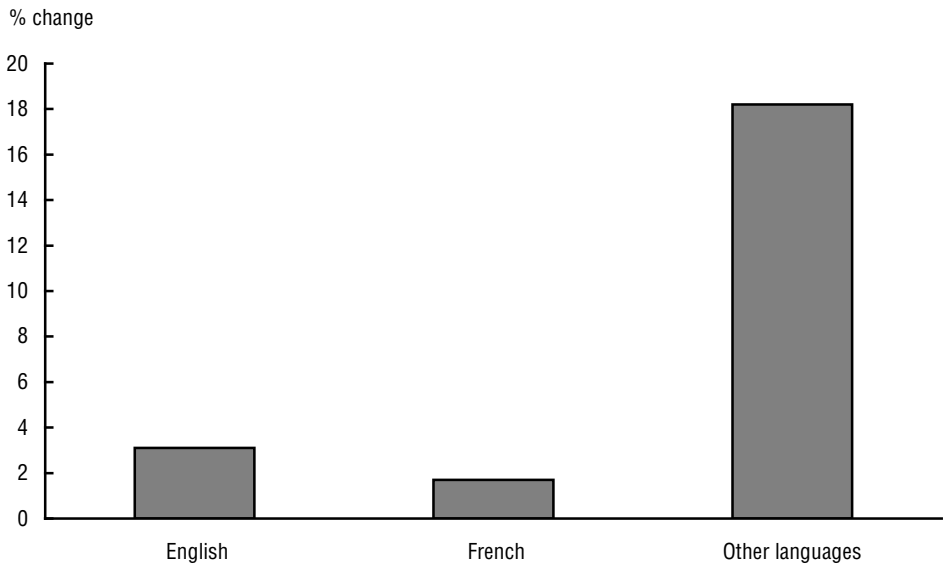
An 'allophone' is a person whose mother tongue is not English or French. Canada's allophone population neared 6.3 million in 2006, up 18% since 2001. As a group, allophones made up 20% of Canada's population in 2006, up from 18% in 2001 and 17% in 1996.

What's learned first, what's spoken at home

The language people first learn and the language they speak in their daily home lives are not always the same. Also, in many households many languages are spoken.

English and French, however, are the most commonly used languages at home: 94% of Canadians speak one of the official languages at home regularly, and 89% use English or

Chart 22.1
Population, by mother tongue, 2001 to 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

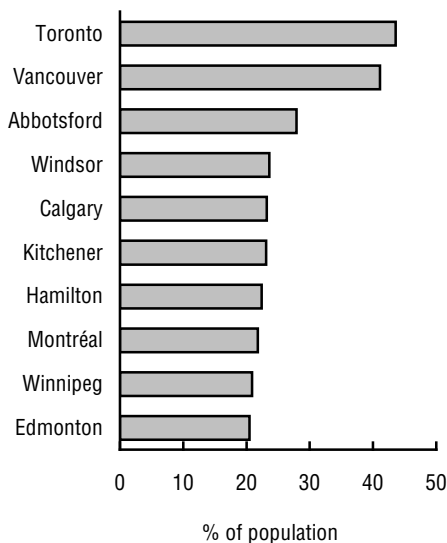
French at home most often, sometimes in combination with a non-official language.

Speaking English or French in the home regularly does not mean that other languages are not spoken as well. The rapid rise in the allophone population has boosted the proportion of people who speak a non-official language at home to 12% in 2006 from 10% in 2001. Of Canada's 6.3 million allophones, 46% reported speaking English or French most often at home in 2006; another 22% reported that they speak English or French regularly at home, but use another language most often.

Mother-tongue mosaic

Of the 1.1 million immigrants who settled in Canada between the 2001 and 2006 censuses, 901,300, or 80%, were allophones. Canadians reported more than 200 different mother-tongue languages in the 2006 Census, including languages associated with historic

Chart 22.2
Allophone population, selected census metropolitan areas, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Table 22.a
Most common non-official mother tongues

	1971		2006
	number		number
German	558,965	Chinese	
Italian	538,765	languages ¹	1,034,090
Ukrainian	309,890	Italian	476,905
Polish	136,540	German	466,650
Chinese		Punjabi	382,585
languages ¹	95,915	Spanish	362,120
Portuguese	85,845	Arabic	286,785
Arabic	28,520	Tagalog	266,440
Spanish	23,950	Portuguese	229,280
Punjabi	..	Polish	217,605
Tagalog	..	Urdu	156,415
Urdu	..	Ukrainian	141,805

1. Includes Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Taiwanese, and other Chinese languages.

Source: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1971 and 2006.

immigration patterns, such as German, Italian, Ukrainian and Dutch, as well as languages that characterize more recent immigration, such as Chinese languages, Punjabi and Spanish.

Of the 1,034,000 people in Canada in 2006 whose mother tongue is a Chinese language, two-thirds arrived in Canada within the last 25 years. This number rose 19% from 2001 to 2006, the largest increase since 2001 of any allophone group in Canada. It was followed by Spanish, Punjabi, Urdu, Tagalog and Arabic.

The Chinese languages accounted for the largest proportion of non-official mother-tongue groups in 2006, 16%. The next largest groups were Italian (8%) and German (7%).

While some non-official language mother-tongue groups have grown, others have shrunk. As a smaller share of our new immigrants are arriving from Italy, Ukraine and Poland, those mother tongues are losing ground, being replaced by languages such as Chinese and Punjabi. For example, the number of people in Canada with Italian as a mother tongue declined by more than 17,000, or 4%, from 2001 to 2006. The decline of Ukrainian was similar, a loss of nearly 15,600. German-speakers, however

were on the increase: after declining from 1961 to 2001, their numbers rose by 11,000 from 2001 to 2006.

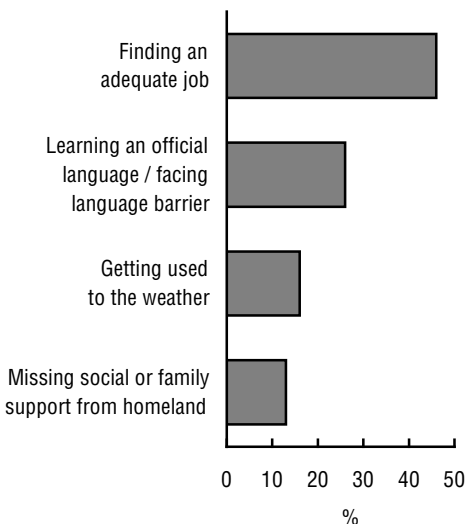
Canada's census metropolitan areas (CMAs) are home to 87% of allophones: 72% of whom reside in Toronto, Vancouver, Montréal, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa–Gatineau. Another 6% live in Hamilton, Winnipeg and Kitchener.

Toronto had the largest proportion of allophones in 2006—44% of Toronto residents had a mother tongue other than English or French, followed by Vancouver (41%), Calgary (23%), Montréal (22%), Edmonton (21%) and Ottawa–Gatineau (17%).

Language is a tool

When immigrants arrive in Canada, their ability to express themselves in one of the official languages can have a major impact on how successfully they integrate.

Chart 22.3
Immigrants' most-cited difficulties since arrival in Canada, 2004/2005



Note: Four years after their arrival in Canada in 2000/2001.

Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-624-XWE.

In 2004/2005, four years after their arrival in Canada in 2000/2001, finding an 'appropriate' job—one that was a good match with the person's skills—was the top-ranked difficulty reported by 46% of immigrants who participated in the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC). The second-ranked difficulty, reported by 26% of immigrants surveyed, was overcoming the language barrier.

Six months after their arrival in Canada, 58% of immigrants who participated in the survey reported being able to speak English well or very well; 11% reported the same for French. These percentages rose to 69% and 14% after spending four years in Canada.

In Quebec, 55% of immigrants reported speaking French well or very well six months after their arrival—a percentage that climbed to 73% after four years in Canada. Of immigrants to Quebec, 40% could speak English well or very well six months after their arrival, and 54% could do so four years after arrival.

Many immigrants stated that it was important for them to learn or improve their English or, in Quebec, both official languages. About 45% of immigrants who participated in the LSIC said they had taken language training in English since coming to Canada; 10% had done so in French. Most benefited from their language training. Of those immigrants who took training in English, 38% found it very useful and 47% found it useful.

In Quebec, of those who took training in French, 55% found it very useful and 35% found it useful.

Language training helped them with daily communication, adjusting to life in Canada, making new friends and looking for work.

Aboriginal languages

More than 50 different Aboriginal languages exist across Canada, yet only three of them—Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway—have a large enough population base to make their long-term survival likely.

Among the nearly 1.2 million people who identified themselves as an Aboriginal person in the 2006 Census, the third-largest group, Inuit, had the largest proportion of people who speak an Aboriginal language: 69% of the 50,845 Inuit could speak Inuktitut.

North American Indians, or First Nations, were the largest Aboriginal census group, with 698,025 people. Of these people, 29% could speak an Aboriginal language well enough to carry on a conversation. This compares with the Métis, the second-largest Aboriginal group, at 4%.

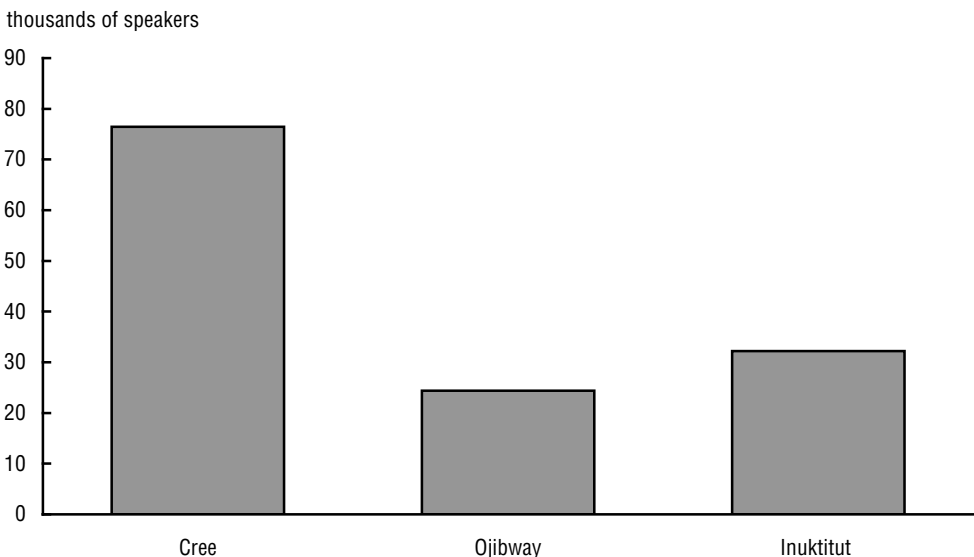
While Inuktitut remains strong overall, fewer Inuit are reporting it as their mother tongue. In 2006, 64% of Inuit reported Inuktitut as

their mother tongue, down from 68% in 1996. Knowledge and use of the language are also declining: 69% of Inuit could converse in Inuktitut in 2006, down from 72% in 1996. Fewer speak it as their main language at home: 50% in 2006, down from 58% in 1996.

As with the Inuit, more First Nations people could speak an Aboriginal language (29%) than reported one as a mother tongue (25%), suggesting many have learned an Aboriginal language as a second language.

The most commonly spoken First Nations language is Cree. The number of Cree speakers increased 7% from 2001 to 2006. In 2006, 87,285 First Nations people could converse in Cree, 30,255 in Ojibway, 12,435 in Oji-Cree and 11,080 in Montagnais–Naskapi. Four percent of Métis spoke an Aboriginal language in 2006, compared with 5% in 2001.

Chart 22.4
Mother tongue, selected Aboriginal languages, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Official-language minorities

An official-language minority is either a French-speaker or French-speaking population living outside of Quebec, where English is predominant, or an English-speaker or English-speaking population living in Quebec, where French is predominant. The government, in its *Official Languages Act* of 1988, committed to “enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada.”

In 2006, 8% of Quebec’s population had English as their mother tongue and 4% of Canada excluding Quebec, had French.

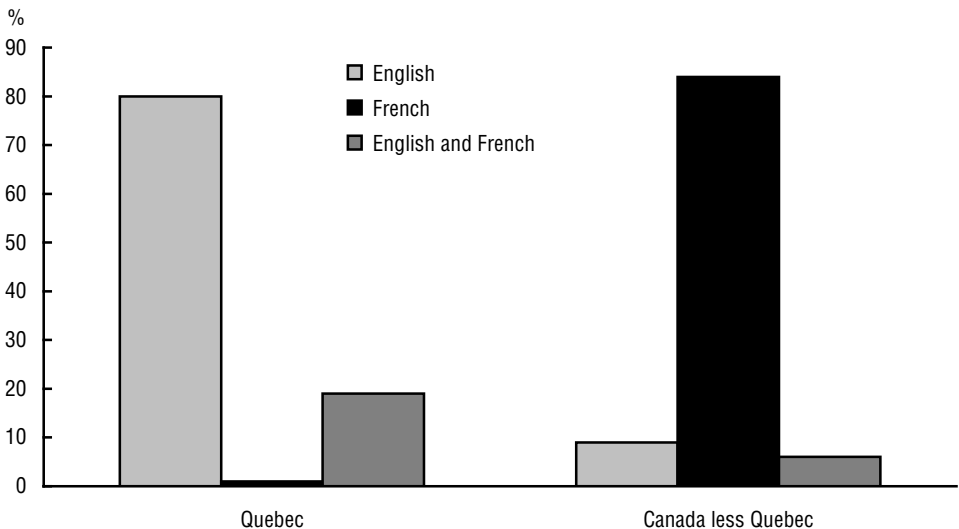
Most adult French-speakers living outside Quebec (78%) and most adult English-speakers inside Quebec (87%) felt that being able to use their language in their daily life was important, according to the 2006 Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities. Most French-speakers outside Quebec and English-speakers in Quebec

felt it was important to have their linguistic rights respected with regard to, for example, receiving an education or accessing federal government services.

How much people care about these rights varies: 91% of French-speakers who did not feel comfortable using English felt strongly about these rights, while 79% of French-speakers who feel equally comfortable in both languages felt the same way.

French-speakers outside Quebec seemed generally optimistic about the continuing presence of French in their community: only 25% of French-speaking adults outside Quebec believed that French will lose ground during the next 10 years. Their English-speaking counterparts in Quebec are more pessimistic about the future presence of English in their community: 36% believed the presence of English will decline.

Chart 22.5
Adults belonging to the official-language minority, by the first official language spoken, Quebec and Canada less Quebec, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 91-548-XIE.

Table 22.1 Population, by mother tongue and by province and territory, 2006

	Canada	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec
	number					
Population	31,241,030	500,610	134,205	903,090	719,650	7,435,905
Mother tongue, single response ¹						
English	17,882,775	488,405	125,260	832,105	463,190	575,555
French	6,817,655	1,885	5,345	32,540	232,975	5,877,660
Non-official languages	6,147,840	9,540	2,960	34,620	18,320	886,280
Chinese	1,012,065	1,080	190	3,370	2,160	63,415
Cantonese	361,450	185	15	505	295	9,850
Mandarin	170,950	120	45	595	505	7,770
Hakka	4,415	0	0	0	10	85
Chinese (not otherwise specified)	456,705	760	115	2,240	1,270	44,740
Italian	455,040	195	55	905	590	124,820
German	450,570	655	275	4,045	1,935	17,855
Polish	211,175	115	70	1,570	220	17,305
Spanish	345,345	670	220	1,305	1,040	108,790
Portuguese	219,275	150	10	560	210	34,710
Punjabi	367,505	120	0	420	55	11,905
Ukrainian	134,500	60	20	440	140	5,395
Arabic	261,640	540	150	4,425	970	108,105
Dutch	128,900	300	865	2,440	1,290	3,620
Tagalog (Pilipino)	235,615	180	15	415	330	11,785
Greek	117,285	70	30	1,035	275	41,845
Vietnamese	141,630	15	10	500	205	25,370
Cree	78,855	20	0	15	0	13,340
Inuktitut (Inuit)	32,380	595	15	15	0	9,615
Other non-official languages	1,956,060	4,775	1,035	13,160	8,900	288,405
Mother tongue, multiple responses ²	392,760	780	635	3,820	5,160	96,405
English and French	98,625	295	495	2,100	4,450	43,335
English and non-official language	240,005	435	105	1,440	560	16,200
French and non-official language	43,335	30	25	140	120	31,350
English, French and non-official language	10,790	10	10	145	30	5,520

See notes and source at end of table.

Table 22.1 Population, by mother tongue and by province and territory, 2006 (continued)

	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia	Yukon	Northwest Territories	Nunavut
	number							
Population	12,028,895	1,133,510	953,850	3,256,355	4,074,385	30,195	41,055	29,325
Mother tongue, single response ¹								
English	8,230,705	838,415	811,725	2,576,670	2,875,770	25,655	31,545	7,765
French	488,815	43,955	16,060	61,225	54,745	1,105	975	370
Non-official languages	3,134,045	236,320	118,465	583,530	1,091,530	3,180	8,165	20,885
Chinese	482,570	11,045	7,475	97,275	342,920	260	260	40
Cantonese	181,820	3,105	1,720	32,485	131,245	85	120	10
Mandarin	75,335	1,470	715	12,135	72,155	70	15	10
Hakka	2,805	10	15	425	1,075	0	0	0
Chinese (not otherwise specified)	215,345	6,345	4,970	51,145	129,560	90	110	20
Italian	282,750	4,775	735	13,095	27,020	25	55	10
German	158,000	67,030	28,555	84,505	86,690	775	190	40
Polish	140,890	8,870	2,510	21,990	17,565	20	30	15
Spanish	160,275	6,850	2,735	29,125	34,075	130	90	30
Portuguese	155,310	6,295	380	7,205	14,385	15	25	10
Punjabi	152,645	6,340	850	36,320	158,750	80	10	10
Ukrainian	48,310	21,950	16,350	29,455	12,285	40	40	10
Arabic	114,730	2,125	1,525	20,495	8,440	15	105	10
Dutch	68,180	3,835	1,785	19,980	26,355	140	95	15
Tagalog (Pilipino)	117,365	22,490	2,170	29,740	50,425	145	505	45
Greek	61,330	1,635	1,060	3,305	6,670	10	0	0
Vietnamese	67,150	2,740	1,305	19,350	24,560	105	305	0
Cree	3,495	19,105	24,255	17,215	1,145	50	190	20
Inuktitut (Inuit)	390	140	35	155	110	60	750	20,480
Other non-official languages	1,120,655	51,095	26,740	154,320	280,135	1,310	5,515	150
Mother tongue, multiple responses ²	175,330	14,825	7,600	34,930	52,335	250	380	305
English and French	32,690	2,630	1,130	5,405	5,920	110	45	20
English and non-official language	131,290	11,675	6,080	27,725	43,785	130	320	260
French and non-official language	7,790	435	245	1,325	1,840	10	15	20
English, French and non-official language	3,565	85	140	480	790	0	0	0

1. The respondent reported only one language as a mother tongue.

2. The respondent reported more than one language as a mother tongue.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Table 22.2 Population, by mother tongue and by census metropolitan area, 2006

	Total population	Single responses	number		
			English	French	Non-official languages
St. John's	179,270	178,880	174,480	535	3,860
Halifax	369,455	367,520	337,715	10,085	19,725
Moncton	124,055	122,830	77,345	42,925	2,555
Saint John	120,875	120,300	111,215	5,510	3,570
Saguenay	149,600	149,230	1,100	146,435	1,700
Québec	704,185	700,810	10,250	671,140	19,410
Sherbrooke	183,635	182,345	8,850	165,115	8,385
Trois-Rivières	138,560	138,055	1,300	134,255	2,495
Montréal	3,588,520	3,514,485	425,635	2,328,400	760,445
Ottawa–Gatineau	1,117,120	1,096,315	550,260	360,175	185,875
Kingston	148,475	147,440	129,770	4,305	13,360
Peterborough	115,140	114,630	106,510	1,295	6,825
Oshawa	328,070	325,510	283,475	6,820	35,215
Toronto	5,072,075	4,965,405	2,746,480	58,590	2,160,335
Hamilton	683,450	675,780	516,360	9,725	149,695
St. Catharines–Niagara	385,035	381,310	307,350	13,490	60,475
Kitchener	446,495	441,780	334,620	5,975	101,180
Brantford	122,825	122,115	107,720	1,310	13,085
Guelph	126,080	124,875	100,365	1,755	22,755
London	452,580	448,750	363,885	6,055	78,805
Windsor	320,730	315,780	230,920	11,105	73,755
Barrie	175,335	174,055	154,535	3,720	15,800
Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	156,395	154,170	99,445	42,950	11,775
Thunder Bay	121,050	120,185	101,305	3,100	15,780
Winnipeg	686,040	676,315	507,530	29,020	139,765
Regina	192,440	190,890	169,720	2,675	18,495
Saskatoon	230,850	228,865	197,260	3,490	28,120
Calgary	1,070,295	1,056,760	797,555	16,310	242,895
Edmonton	1,024,820	1,011,725	785,755	21,980	203,990
Kelowna	160,560	159,490	136,025	2,530	20,935
Abbotsford	156,640	154,770	110,265	1,625	42,885
Vancouver	2,097,960	2,060,350	1,190,560	24,130	845,660
Victoria	325,065	322,655	274,950	5,580	42,120

See source at end of table.

Table 22.2 Population, by mother tongue and by census metropolitan area, 2006
(continued)

	Multiple responses	English and French	English and non-official language	French and non-official language	English, French and non-official language
	number				
St. John's	390	110	235	30	15
Halifax	1,935	1,015	710	85	125
Moncton	1,225	1,085	70	60	15
Saint John	575	495	80	0	0
Saguenay	365	270	0	80	0
Québec	3,375	2,120	85	1,015	155
Sherbrooke	1,295	830	25	400	40
Trois-Rivières	505	320	25	120	30
Montréal	74,035	26,855	15,225	27,005	4,950
Ottawa–Gatineau	20,810	10,495	6,785	2,890	635
Kingston	1,035	365	630	20	15
Peterborough	505	220	265	15	0
Oshawa	2,555	540	1,875	100	45
Toronto	106,670	7,955	92,670	3,865	2,180
Hamilton	7,670	1,135	6,020	380	140
St. Catharines–Niagara	3,725	1,020	2,505	155	45
Kitchener	4,715	695	3,690	255	75
Brantford	710	105	570	20	15
Guelph	1,205	180	975	40	15
London	3,830	730	2,860	170	65
Windsor	4,955	1,115	3,420	330	80
Barrie	1,280	415	815	10	35
Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	2,225	1,675	490	40	15
Thunder Bay	870	190	590	70	15
Winnipeg	9,720	1,830	7,525	310	50
Regina	1,545	225	1,220	70	30
Saskatoon	1,990	265	1,630	50	45
Calgary	13,535	1,845	10,920	600	165
Edmonton	13,100	1,830	10,600	485	185
Kelowna	1,075	175	805	90	0
Abbotsford	1,870	135	1,680	40	10
Vancouver	37,615	2,855	32,880	1,285	595
Victoria	37,615	700	1,530	115	60

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Table 22.3 Population, by knowledge of official language and by province and territory, 2006

	Total	English only	French only	Both English and French	Neither English nor French
	number				
Canada	31,241,030	21,129,945	4,141,850	5,448,850	520,380
Newfoundland and Labrador	500,610	475,985	90	23,675	850
Prince Edward Island	134,205	116,990	60	17,100	55
Nova Scotia	903,090	805,690	1,000	95,010	1,385
New Brunswick	719,650	405,045	73,750	240,085	765
Quebec	7,435,905	336,785	4,010,880	3,017,860	70,375
Ontario	12,028,895	10,335,705	49,210	1,377,325	266,660
Manitoba	1,133,510	1,017,560	1,930	103,520	10,500
Saskatchewan	953,850	902,655	485	47,450	3,260
Alberta	3,256,355	2,990,805	2,200	222,885	40,470
British Columbia	4,074,385	3,653,365	2,070	295,645	123,305
Yukon	30,195	26,515	105	3,440	130
Northwest Territories	41,055	37,010	50	3,665	325
Nunavut	29,325	25,830	20	1,170	2,305

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Table 22.4 Mother tongue, frequency of language used at work, 2006

	Total	Most often	Regularly	Never
	number			
Total	18,418,100	14,414,245	1,234,245	2,769,615
Single responses	18,208,410	14,232,070	1,220,545	2,755,795
English	10,717,070	10,612,740	76,000	28,330
French	3,992,820	621,310	917,420	2,454,085
Non-official languages	3,498,520	2,998,015	227,115	273,385
Multiple responses	209,690	182,175	13,700	13,815
English and French	49,580	37,715	6,900	4,960
English and non-official language	131,950	128,560	2,040	1,345
French and non-official language	22,920	11,465	4,330	7,120
English, French and non-official language	5,245	4,430	420	390

Note: Population 15 years and older who had worked since January 1, 2005, regardless of whether or not they were in the labour force in the reference week.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.