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Inroads 28 | ENGLISH VERSUS FRENCH

# English versus French

A comparison of vitality in Quebec and Ontario yields surprising results

by Charles Castonguay

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## C amille Laurin's dream

“Quebec should be as French as Ontario is English.” This phrase was heard repeatedly from Dr. Camille Laurin, then Minister of State for Cultural Development in René Lévesque’s freshly elected Parti Québécois government, as he sold his Charter of the French Language to Quebecers in 1977.<sup>1</sup>

Laurin’s daring new language policy, more commonly known as Bill 101, was the second stage in a thorough revamping of Quebec’s language regime, following closely on the heels of Liberal Premier Robert Bourassa’s



groundbreaking Bill 22. Passed in 1974, Bill 22 had already proclaimed French Quebec's official language. It had also begun promoting French as language of work as well as streaming the children of wayward francophone parents and of all newcomers whose mother tongue was neither French nor English through Quebec's French-language school system. Bill 101 pursued similar objectives, only more firmly. More generally, Laurin's charter aimed at making French "the normal and everyday language of work, instruction, communication, commerce and business."<sup>2</sup> In short, French was to become the *langue commune* of Quebec society – the default language to be used between people of different mother tongues.

The vision was certainly clear. But some 30 years down the line, the best available data show just as clearly that Laurin's dream is not coming true.

A few years prior to Quebec's "French first" language policy, Canada had already put its Official Languages Act to work, with the aim of bolstering both the status of English in Quebec and that of French in the rest of Canada. So while comparing the status of French in Quebec with that of English in Ontario, in this article I also assess how well English is faring in Quebec and how French stands in Ontario. Here, too, the data clearly show that the result for French is below par.

As far as language behaviour in the home environment is concerned, traditional Canadian census data on mother tongue indicate roughly what language respondents used most often at home in their early childhood. Since 1971, the census has also gathered information on what language respondents speak most often at home. I use the results from the 1971 census as benchmark for the status of French

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and English in Quebec and Ontario homes at the time of the Official Languages Act and just before bills 22 and 101. Data from subsequent censuses then provide adequate means for monitoring language behaviour at home through 2006.

Though the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism – the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission – had suggested in the 1960s that future censuses include a question on principal language spoken at work,<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada put off collecting such data until the census of 2001. As the span of time between 2001 and 2006 is very short, I limit my observations regarding English and French in the work world to the 2006 census

data, supplemented by some recent and telling survey results.

To put things in good perspective, we must take into account the main demographic factors which affect the official-language makeup of Quebec and Ontario. This can best be done by first examining the mother-tongue and home-language data separately. Then I analyze the information on mother tongue, home language and language of work jointly, in order to see how sociolinguistic factors such as the vitality of French and English at home and at work also influence the language situation in both provinces.

### Mother-tongue trends since 1971

Table 1 presents a quick look at overall trends since 1971 in terms of mother tongue. From this standpoint, Quebec has become somewhat less French and much less English, whereas Ontario has become both much less English and much less French. This general trend toward a drop in relative weight of anglophones

**TABLE 1: ENGLISH AND FRENCH MOTHER-TONGUE POPULATIONS IN QUEBEC AND ONTARIO, 1971–2006**

	1971		2006		Growth rate (%)
	Number	Weight (%)	Number	Weight (%)	
<b>Quebec</b>					
English	788,800	13.1	607,200	8.2	- 23.0
French	4,866,400	80.7	5,916,800	79.6	21.6
<b>Ontario</b>					
English	5,967,700	77.5	8,313,900	69.1	39.3
French	482,400	6.3	510,200	4.2	5.8

Sources: Louise Marmen and Jean-Pierre Corbeil, *Languages in Canada: 2001 Census* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2004), table A1; Jean-Pierre Corbeil and Christine Blaser, *The Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2007), tables A3 and A5.

## Getting the data straight on language vitality

To make observations and trends easier to follow, I have apportioned multiple answers to the census questions on mother tongue, main language spoken at home and main language used at work in equal fashion among the languages reported. Once they have been simplified in this way, the data can be conveniently presented in terms of the familiar trio of major language categories: English, French and other (nonofficial) languages.

Throughout this article, a *francophone* is a person whose mother tongue is French, an *anglophone* is a person whose mother tongue is English and an *allophone* is a person whose mother tongue is any other, or nonofficial, language. Similarly, *French-speaking* will refer to a person whose main home language is French, and *English-speaking* will refer to a person whose main home language is English.

Census data on ability to speak English or French are often given the limelight in appraising Canadian language policies. However, they supply no direct information on the actual use of either official language, whereas the best gauge of a language's vitality is how much it is used. Statistics Canada has shown, in fact, that reported ability to speak French among anglophones outside Quebec, in particular, basically reflects school learning, as it peaks at high school age and suffers rapid attrition thereafter, no doubt through lack of use.<sup>a</sup> A former leading analyst at Statistics Canada even dubbed the census data on ability to speak English or French “primitive at best” because of their rough and self-reported nature.<sup>b</sup> As I result, I do not comment on these data in this article.

All of the census data reported here were obtained from a sample of the Canadian population, using the long census questionnaire. When relevant, I accordingly refer to them as “census sample data.”

### Notes

<sup>a</sup> See Louise Marmen and Jean-Pierre Corbeil, *Languages in Canada: 2001 Census* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2004), chart 4.2; Jean-Pierre Corbeil and Christine Blaser, *The Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2007), figure 3.

<sup>b</sup> John Kralt and Mary Cromie, *Preliminary Report: Language, 1981* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1977), p. 4.



and francophones in both provinces can be attributed in the main to their inadequate fertility since 1971 and to heavy allophone immigration.<sup>4</sup> By *anglophone* and *francophone* I mean people of English and French mother tongue respectively, and by *allophone* I mean people whose mother tongue is any language other than English or French (see page 73 for more details).

A closer examination, however, reveals that the two provinces' official-language minorities show the sharpest declines in weight. Quebec's anglophone minority has even lost out in absolute numbers, to the tune of some 180,000 members. This results from the additional impact of heavy net losses through out-migration of Quebec anglophones to Ontario and the other provinces.<sup>5</sup>

The exodus of Anglo-Quebecers was already in full swing by the 1960s, in the thick of Quebec's Quiet Revolution.<sup>6</sup> During the first 20 years of interprovincial migration on record, between 1966 and 1986, the censuses totalled a net loss for Quebec of more than 250,000 anglophones who moved to somewhere else in Canada – mainly to Ontario.<sup>7</sup> During the next 20 years, between 1986 and 2006, the corresponding net loss amounted to fewer than 80,000, with a record low of only 8,000 net anglophone out-migrants from Quebec to the rest of Canada between 2001 and 2006.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, the sharp drop in weight of Ontario's francophone minority, also evidenced in table 1, cannot be explained by interprovincial migration. Indeed, it can be estimated that Ontario gained a net total of more than 20,000 francophones who moved out of Quebec between 1971 and 2006.<sup>9</sup> The decline results instead from the inadequate intergenerational replacement of Ontario francophones, due to their low fertility and to their low maintenance of French as main language spoken at home – and subsequently transmitted as mother tongue to their children. I discuss this process at greater length below.

A closer look at table 1 also reveals a substantial difference in the two provincial majorities' growth rates. Quebec's francophone majority increased by slightly more than one million people over the 35-year period, while Ontario's anglophone majority increased by well over 2.3 million. In terms of relative increase since 1971, Ontario's anglophone majority has grown almost twice as fast as Quebec's francophone majority.

In addition, Quebec's anglophone exodus has become such a thing of the past, and the power of assimilation of English has remained so superior to that of French in the province, that Quebec's anglophone minority has begun to grow once more in absolute numbers.

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Between 2001 and 2006, it grew just as fast as Ontario’s anglophone majority.

### Quebec’s new language dynamic

On December 4, 2007, the first results of the 2006 census were released, and they ran through Quebec like a shock wave. Between 2001 and 2006, the relative weight of the French mother-tongue majority had dropped as never before in Canadian history – in the whole period starting with the census of 1871. The majority had lost 1.8 percentage points provincewide, and 2.6 points in the Montreal metropolitan area.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, throughout Quebec as well as in the Montreal area, the anglophone minority had grown much faster than the francophone majority. The first half of table 2 sums up this initial wave of news as regards the census mother-tongue data at the provincial level.

Things look even less rosy for French as compared to English in Quebec now that

estimates for the population missed at both censuses have been published. At any given census, a small percentage of the population misses being enumerated. Based on other sources of information such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, Statistics Canada is able to estimate the number of people missed in each province as well as their mother tongue. As a rule, immigrants and allophones turn out to be overrepresented among the population missed.

However, over the last two censuses, the number of people missed in Quebec took on a special twist. According to Statistics Canada’s estimations, some 86,000 francophone Quebecers were not counted in 2001, as compared to a scant 11,800 missed in 2006. This means that most of the 114,800 numerical increase in Quebec’s francophone majority between 2001 and 2006, as shown in the first half of table 2, simply derives from the fact that francophone Quebecers were enumerated more exhaustively in the 2006 census than in 2001.

Furthermore, some 15,000 people living in senior residences were included by Statistics

**TABLE 2: ENGLISH AND FRENCH MOTHER-TONGUE POPULATIONS, CENSUS AND ADJUSTED COUNTS, QUEBEC, 2001–2006**

	2001		2006		Growth rate (%)
	Number	Weight (%)	Number	Weight (%)	
<b>Census data</b>					
English	591,400	8.3	607,200	8.2	2.8
French	5,802,000	81.4	5,916,800	79.6	2.0
<b>Adjusted data</b>					
English	600,300	8.3	620,700	8.3	3.4
French	5,888,000	81.0	5,915,100	79.1	0.5

Sources: For census data, Corbeil and Blaser, *Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*, tables A3 and A5. For adjusted data, estimates of the number and mother tongue of persons missed at each census were obtained from 2001 Census Coverage Error Tables [Final Estimates], September 2003, and 2006 Census Coverage Error Tables [Final Estimates], September 2008, Demography Division, Statistics Canada; for seniors included in 2006 census sample data but not in those for 2001, data were obtained from 2006 Census Custom Services.

Canada in the 2006 census sample data for Quebec but not in those of 2001. Almost all such senior Quebecers were of French mother tongue.

The second half of table 2 consequently shows the mother-tongue trends for French and English in Quebec once the comparability of the data has been improved by adjusting them to take into account this disparity concerning seniors, as well as the population missed at both censuses.<sup>11</sup>

As far as trends in weight are concerned, the adjusted data yield a slightly different picture from the one given by the initial census data. The drop in relative weight of Quebec's francophone majority comes a bit closer, in the second half of table 2, to two full percentage points. What is more instructive is that its anglophone minority entirely holds its ground. Ever since 1871, from census to census Quebec's anglophone minority had always decreased in weight. The 2001–06 period marks the first time this is not so.

Equally instructive is the difference in growth rates in the second half of table 2.

The unadjusted data in table 2 represent a growth rate of 2 per cent for Quebec's francophone majority over the 2001–06 period, which is almost double its 1.3 per cent growth rate for the preceding 1996–2001 period.<sup>12</sup> The adjusted data, however, spell a decline in its growth rate to only 0.5 per cent for 2001–06. This is in line with the steady slowdown in growth rate of the francophone population in Quebec since 1951.<sup>13</sup> It also fits demographic forecasts of negative growth for the francophone majority in the near future.<sup>14</sup>

By contrast, the 3.4 per cent growth rate for Quebec's anglophone minority since 2001, according to the second half of table 2, is seven times that of the francophone majority. Indeed, during 2001–06 the anglophone minority in Quebec grew just as fast as the anglophone majority in Ontario, which also boasted a 3.4 per cent growth rate over the same period.<sup>15</sup>

Is Laurin's dream turning into a nightmare?

### Home-language trends since 1971

The Laurendeau-Dunton Commission rightly judged that the information provided by the mother tongue data is “a generation behind the facts,”<sup>16</sup> and suggested adding to the census a question on principal language currently spoken at home. Table 3 shows how the official-language makeup of Quebec and Ontario has changed in terms of the resulting census information on current home language.

The official-language populations have, as a rule, better maintained their relative weight in terms of main home language than in terms of mother tongue. Ontario's French-speaking minority is a striking exception here, its weight having been practically cut in half between 1971 and 2006. By *French-speaking* and *English-speaking* I mean people whose main home language is French and English respectively.

The improved showing of three out of the four official-language populations in table 3 (main home language) as compared to table 1 (mother tongue), and the worse showing of French in Ontario, are due entirely to the process of assimilation in terms of language



behaviour in the home environment. Both French and English benefit from being assimilating languages in Quebec, whereas English stands alone as the uncontested language of assimilation in Ontario, to the detriment of French and nonofficial languages.<sup>17</sup>

It is worth noting, in particular, that over the 35 years in play in table 3, Quebec’s English-speaking minority decreased in absolute numbers by exactly 100,000 – notably less than the corresponding decrease of 180,000 in terms of mother tongue observed in table 1 – whereas Ontario’s French-speaking minority dropped by 47,800. These represent decreases of 11 per cent for English as main home language in Quebec as against 14 per cent for French in Ontario. In other words, Ontario’s French-speaking minority has lost proportionally more through the assimilation of francophones to English than Quebec’s English-speaking minority has lost through the anglophone exodus.<sup>18</sup>

As for the official-language majorities in both provinces, Quebec’s French-speaking majority increased by somewhat more than 1.2 million since 1971, whereas Ontario’s

During 2001–06 the anglophone minority in Quebec grew just as fast as the anglophone majority in Ontario. Is Laurin’s dream turning into a nightmare?

English-speaking majority grew by well over 3.2 million. With respect to their initial sizes, the English home-language population in Ontario grew almost exactly twice as fast as the French home-language population in Quebec.

The increase in weight of Quebec’s French-speaking majority in table 3 is, moreover, somewhat misleading. Fuelled by the exodus of anglophones, the weight of French as main home language in Quebec actually rose to a peak of 82.7 per cent in 1986. It has been decreasing at each census since then.<sup>19</sup> And the decrease has picked up steam between the last two censuses. This is worth looking at more closely.

**TABLE 3: ENGLISH AND FRENCH HOME-LANGUAGE POPULATIONS IN QUEBEC AND ONTARIO, 1971–2006**

	1971		2006		Growth rate [%]
	Number	Weight [%]	Number	Weight [%]	
<b>Quebec</b>					
English	887,900	14.7	787,900	10.6	- 11.3
French	4,870,100	80.8	6,085,200	81.8	25.0
<b>Ontario</b>					
English	6,558,100	85.1	9,789,900	81.4	49.3
French	352,500	4.6	304,700	2.5	- 13.6

Sources: Marmen and Corbeil, *Languages in Canada: 2001 Census*, table A2; Corbeil and Blaser, *Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*, tables A4 and A6.

## Quebec's present home-language dynamic

The 2006 census's bad news for French as mother tongue in Quebec was accompanied by the release of similarly alarming new data regarding main home language. According to the 2001 and 2006 census data, the weight of French in Quebec as language spoken most often at home plunged as it never had before.

In stark contrast, between 2001 and 2006 the weight of English rose for the first time in the whole period in which home-language data have been collected (from 1971 on). The upper half of table 4 sums up this further census information.

As was the case for mother tongue, the news for French is even more disquieting once the 2001 and 2006 data have been adjusted to improve their comparability, by including people missed at both censuses and excluding seniors counted in 2006 but not in 2001.<sup>20</sup>

This can be seen by comparing the upper and lower halves of table 4.

Improving the comparability of the data confirms, in particular, that Quebec's English-speaking minority increased in weight for the first time since 1971. It also establishes that it didn't just grow twice as fast as Quebec's French-speaking majority over the 2001–06 period, as the census data in the upper half of table 4 lead one to think: the adjusted data show that the English-speaking minority grew more than four times as fast (a growth rate of 5.6 per cent as compared to 1.3 per cent).

This cannot be explained by demographic factors, such as a difference in birth rates between Quebec's two official-language populations. Nor can it be explained by interprovincial migration, for Quebec lost about 8,000 anglophones to the rest of Canada between 2001 and 2006 while gaining some 5,000 francophones.<sup>21</sup> The real key to Quebec's new language dynamic is the persistently superior vitality of the English language per se, as compared to that of French.

TABLE 4: ENGLISH AND FRENCH HOME-LANGUAGE POPULATIONS, CENSUS AND ADJUSTED COUNTS, QUEBEC, 2001–2006

	2001		2006		Growth rate [%]
	Number	Weight [%]	Number	Weight [%]	
Census data					
English	746,900	10.5	787,900	10.6	5.5
French	5,918,400	83.1	6,085,200	81.8	2.8
Adjusted data					
English	765,100	10.5	807,900	10.8	5.6
French	6,012,000	82.7	6,089,900	81.4	1.3

Sources: For census data, Corbeil and Blaser, *Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*, tables A4 and A6. For adjusted data, lower half of table 2 above and language shift rates derived from 2001 and 2006 census topic-based tabulations, Statistics Canada, catalogue nos. 97F0007XCB200110 and 97-555-XCB2006028.

## Vitality of English and French in the home environment

The vitality of a language is best measured by the extent to which it is used.<sup>22</sup> In the home environment, the extent to which a given language is currently used depends on how many of its native speakers persist in speaking it as main home language, a behaviour known in sociolinguistics as *language maintenance*, together with how many native speakers of other languages adopt it as their new home language, which is called *language shift*.

In this light, census data on mother tongue and current home language are tailor-made for measuring language vitality in the privacy of the home. We will use the *vitality index* of a given language, obtained by dividing its home-language count by its mother-tongue count, as a handy gauge for the language's

vitality in the home environment. Depending on whether the result is greater than, equal to or less than one, the language's vitality may be considered high, average or low.

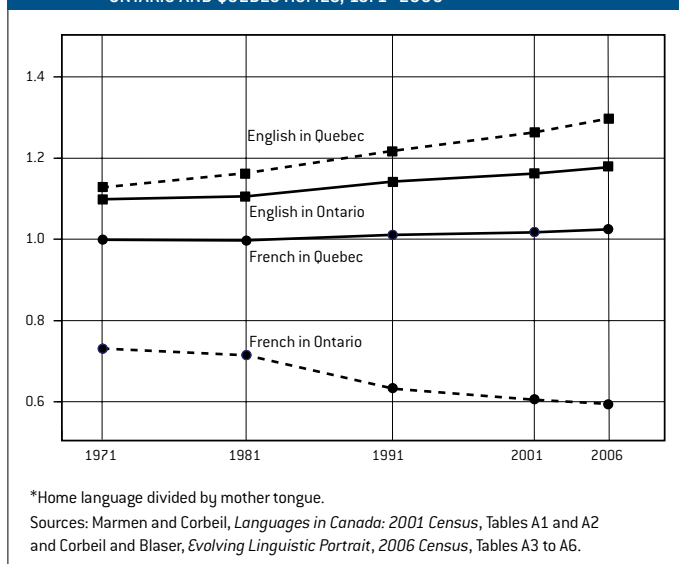
For example, the data for 1971 in tables 1 and 3 yield an index of 1.13 (887,900/788,800) for English in Quebec, which marks its already high vitality in Quebec homes at the time. At the same census, an index of 0.73 (352,500/482,400) for French in Ontario signals its low vitality in Ontario homes in 1971.

Figure 1 charts the vitality trends of English and French in Quebec and Ontario homes through 2006, as based on census sample data. The persistently superior vitality of English as compared to French is evident in both provinces.

In Quebec, the vitality of English has furthermore been increasing more rapidly than that of French throughout the 35 years at stake. This is notably so during the 2001–06 period, by the end of which the vitality index for English had risen to 1.30, compared to only 1.03 for French.

Moreover, the vitality index of English calculated at any given census underestimates the language's true degree of vitality within Quebec society. Franco-phones and allophones who have shifted to English as main home language while living in Quebec are, just like anglophones, more prone to migrate to Ontario

FIGURE 1: VITALITY INDEX\* OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH IN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC HOMES, 1971–2006





The weight of French in Quebec as language spoken most often at home plunged as it never had before. In stark contrast, between 2001 and 2006 the weight of English rose for the first time in the whole period in which home-language data have been collected.

or to other provinces. Those who leave are, at the following census, no longer present to bear witness to the vitality of English in Quebec homes.

Conversely, the vitality index of French substantially overestimates the language's power of assimilation within Quebec at the more recent censuses, because much of the increase in the vitality index for French after

1981 is due to Quebec's selection, following the 1978 Cullen–Couture Agreement, of allophone immigrants who had already shifted to French as main home language abroad, before they had even immigrated to the province. It has been estimated that no more than half of all shift to French as main home language reported by allophone immigrants actually occurred during their stay in Quebec, and the immigrant contribution to overall allophone shift to French is by far the main determinant of the increase in the language's vitality index in Quebec since 1981.<sup>23</sup>

All in all, it should be kept in mind that comparison of the vitality indices for English and French in Quebec homes at recent

censuses systematically underestimates the advantage enjoyed by English in language behaviour maintained or acquired while living in Quebec.<sup>24</sup>

## Vitality of English and French at work

The superior status of English as compared to French in both provinces' work worlds is arguably the main reason for the superior vitality of English in Quebec and Ontario homes. Just as the vitality index for a given language in the home environment can be calculated since 1971, as of 2001 the census data provide the means to calculate a vitality index for any given language in the work world, obtained by dividing its main language of work count by its mother-tongue count.

On the basis of the 2006 census sample data, the vitality of English at work was quite high in both Quebec and Ontario, with indices of 1.87 and 1.39 respectively. In both cases, the vitality of English at work was distinctly higher than the vitality of English at home which, as may be calculated from tables 1 and 3, had grown by 2006 to 1.30 in Quebec and 1.18 in Ontario.

Evidently, for francophones as well as allophones, working in English in Quebec or Ontario does not automatically spell adopting English as main home language. But it certainly helps.

In contrast, the vitality of French at work was just 1.05 in Quebec and only 0.39 in Ontario. Small wonder that French trails far behind English in terms of vitality in Quebec homes, where it crept up to a mere 1.03 in

2006, and that the vitality of French in Ontario homes is firmly caught in a tailspin, falling to a new low of 0.60 at the last census.

A major survey conducted in 2001–02 by the Office Québécois de la Langue Française also bears witness to the superior status of English in Quebec's work world. Though provisions of Bill 101 promoting French as language of work apply with full force in large companies with 100 or more employees, in companies of this size in the Montreal metropolitan area francophone employees still use English slightly more often than French as main language of communication with their anglophone coworkers.<sup>25</sup> French is no doubt even further from becoming “the normal and everyday language of work,” or

the *langue commune* used between people of different mother tongues, in smaller companies where Bill 101 is either applied less stringently (companies with 50 to 99 employees) or not at all (those with 49 employees or fewer).<sup>26</sup>

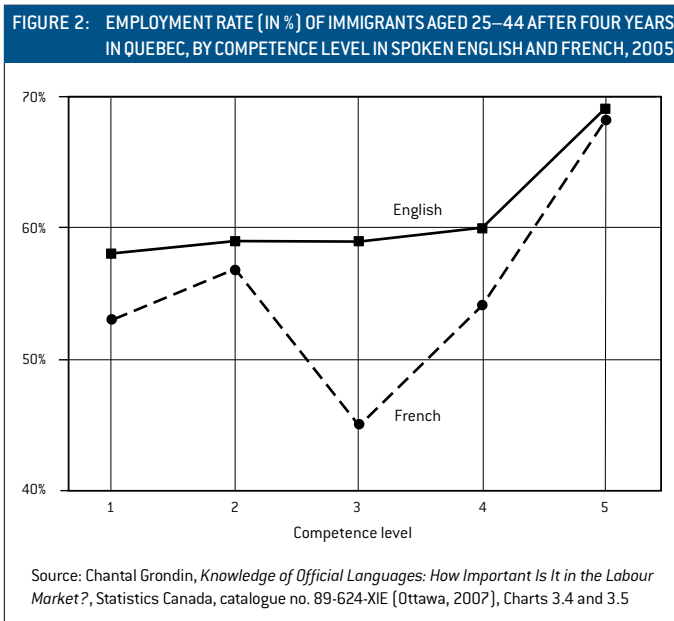


The superior status of English as compared to French in both provinces' work worlds is arguably the main reason for the superior vitality of English in Quebec and Ontario homes.

A further indication of the dominant status of English in Quebec’s work world is the marked disproportion between the total population studying in English-language post-secondary institutions and these institutions’ “natural,” English mother-tongue clientele. Though anglophones make up no more than 9 per cent of the total postsecondary student body in Quebec, twice as many college-age students – 18 per cent – currently choose to study in English-language colleges (Cégeps). A full 25 per cent of all university students likewise choose to study in English-language institutions. The above-mentioned 2001–02 survey confirmed the relevance of these stark disproportions to our present discussion by showing directly that the link between language of work and that of postsecondary education is quite real.

While Bill 101 ensures that all children of recent immigrants to Quebec must attend French primary and secondary schools, immigrants who arrive beyond school age are not directly obliged to speak French, or even to learn the language. As could be expected, after Bill 101 the adoption of French as new home language among allophone immigrants who arrived in Quebec at or before school age rose sharply, to the detriment of English.<sup>27</sup> However, notwithstanding the provisions of Bill 101 fostering the use of French at work, census data show no improvement in the status of French relative to English as home language among allophone immigrants arriving at a more advanced age.<sup>28</sup> Here again, insofar as the adoption of a new main home language by allophone immigrants reflects their language of work, Bill 101 does not seem to have made a significant impact on language use in Quebec’s immigrant work world.

A longitudinal survey of adult immigrants carried out by Statistics Canada during 2001–05 found, in addition, that after four years of residence in Quebec, ability to speak English was associated with a higher employment rate than was ability to speak French. This can be seen from figure 2. Figure 2 shows as well that a higher competence level in English was associated with a higher employment rate, as



can reasonably be expected. But such was not the case for French.

The same survey also found that among immigrants who were employed after four years' residence in Quebec, average or above average competence in spoken English was associated with a higher hourly wage than was a comparable competence level in French (figure 3). It was also observed that, as could be expected, average hourly wage grew with increasing competence in English, whereas this was again not true for French.

Overall, for immigrants to Quebec, knowledge of English still offers better odds of getting a job than knowledge of French, and greater mastery of English still paves the way to more satisfactory, better-paid jobs, whereas greater competence in French does not.<sup>29</sup> French simply has not replaced English as the key to success for allophone newcomers in Quebec's work world.

A higher competence level in English was associated with a higher employment rate, as can reasonably be expected. But such was not the case for French.

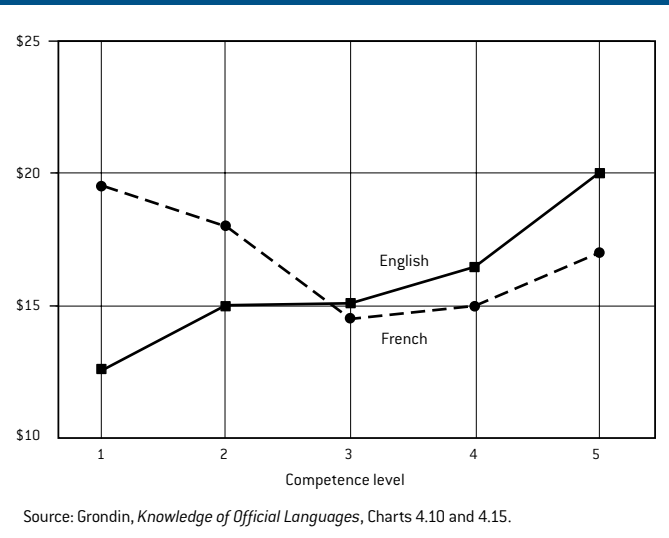
### Superior vitality spells demographic advantage

The superior vitality of English in the work world in Quebec and Ontario no doubt largely explains its superior vitality in both provinces' homes. The superior home vitality of English, in turn, generates a distinct demographic advantage for the anglophone populations in both provinces. In particular, this fuels Quebec's new language dynamic.

But let us first examine this process in Ontario, where the high vitality of English at home and the low vitality of French combine to give its anglophone majority a staggering demographic advantage over its franco-ophone minority.

The mechanism is quite simple.<sup>30</sup> Many franco-ophone and allophone parents who shift to speaking English as main home language transmit English as mother tongue to their children. The consistently

FIGURE 3: AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE OF WORKING IMMIGRANTS AFTER FOUR YEARS IN QUEBEC, BY COMPETENCE LEVEL IN SPOKEN ENGLISH AND FRENCH, 2005



In Ontario, the high vitality of English at home and the low vitality of French combine to give its anglophone majority a staggering demographic advantage over its francophone minority.

high vitality of English in Ontario homes is thus a constant source of additional anglophone children, who just about entirely make up for the anglophone majority's inadequate birth rate.

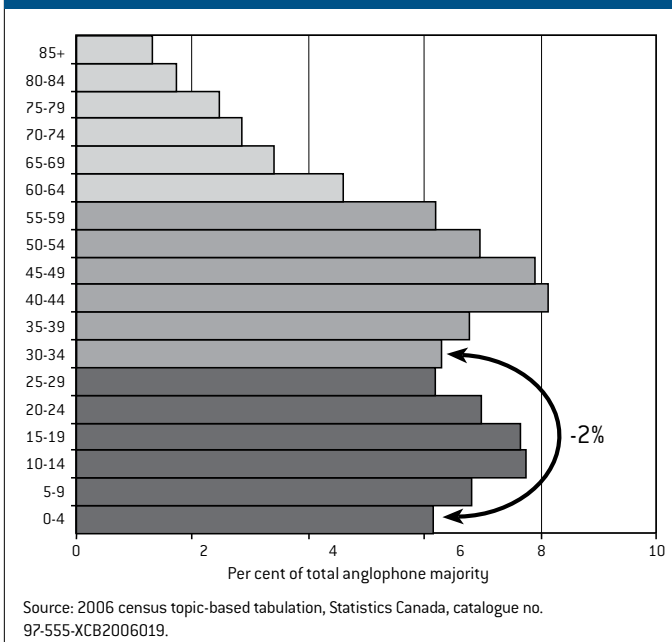
Figure 4 illustrates the successful inter-generational replacement of Ontario's anglophone population nowadays. Despite this population's inadequate total fertility rate of 1.54 children per woman between 2001 and 2006<sup>31</sup> – 27 per cent less than the 2.1 children per woman that demographers view as the requirement for a stable population – figure 4

shows that the number of young anglophone children aged 0 to 4 in 2006 is only 2 per cent less than the number of young anglophone adults aged 30 to 34, who are most likely to be their parents.<sup>32</sup> This means that the high number of francophone and allophone parents who shifted to speaking English at home in Ontario generated enough additional English mother-tongue children between 2001 and 2006 to erase nearly all of the anglophone majority's "biological" intergenerational deficit.

The francophone minority's biological deficit in 2006 was likewise 27 per cent, since

its total fertility rate between the last two censuses was 1.53, almost exactly the same as that of the anglophone majority (as it has been for the past 15 years).<sup>33</sup> But some 40 per cent of young francophone adults in Ontario currently shift to English as main home language, causing an additional loss of francophone children who are brought up with English as their mother tongue instead of French. Assimilation to English thus worsens the francophone minority's intergenerational shortfall,

FIGURE 4: AGE PROFILE OF ONTARIO'S ENGLISH MOTHER-TONGUE MAJORITY, 2006





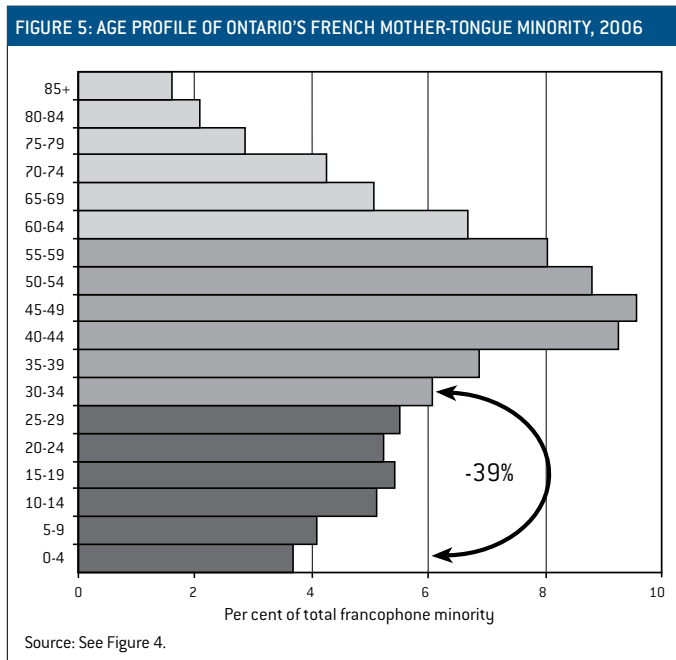
Comparing fertility rates and age profiles brings out the overwhelming demographic advantage that Ontario's anglophone majority gains over its francophone minority through the high vitality of English and the low vitality of French in the province.



which stood at 39 per cent in 2006, as figure 5 shows.

Comparing fertility rates and age profiles in this way brings out the overwhelming demographic advantage that Ontario's anglophone majority gains over its francophone minority through the high vitality of English and the low vitality of French in the province. Similar comparisons establish how the superior vitality of English in Quebec gives

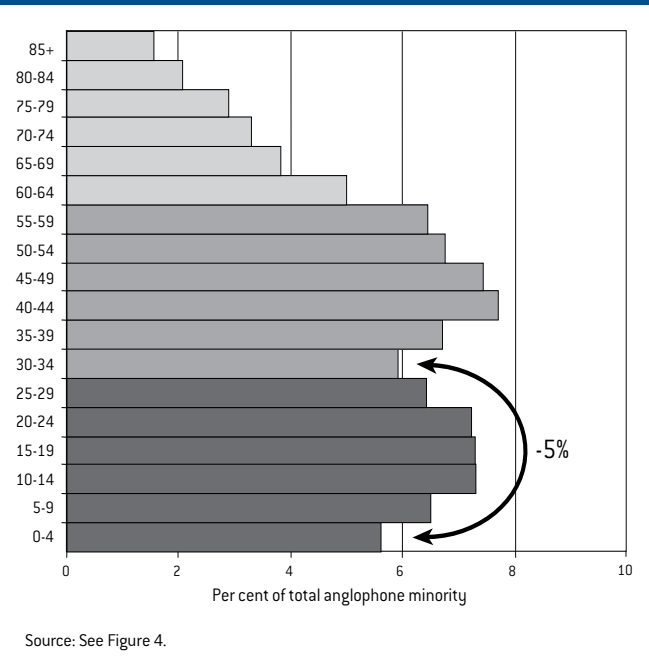
its anglophone minority a kindred advantage over its francophone majority, which led to the stunning language dynamic observed in Quebec during 2001–06.



From 1981 through 2006, Quebec's anglophone minority has been just as inadequately fertile as its francophone majority. Between 2001 and 2006, the anglophone minority's total fertility rate even fell to a record low of only 1.44 children per woman.<sup>34</sup> Its corresponding biological deficit was 31 per cent, a record high.

However, as we have seen, the vitality of English in Quebec has, at the same time, remained distinctly higher than that of French. As a result, the age profile

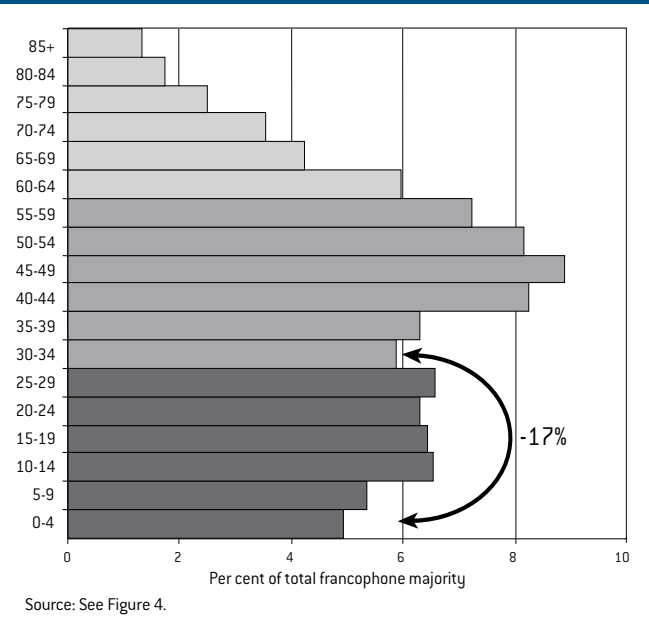
**FIGURE 6: AGE PROFILE OF QUEBEC'S ENGLISH MOTHER-TONGUE MINORITY, 2006**



of Quebec's anglophone minority closely resembles that of Ontario's anglophone majority (compare figure 6 to figure 4). The anglophone minority's intergenerational deficit was only 5 per cent in 2006, thanks to English's formidable power of assimilation in Quebec.

Given that Quebec's anglophones and francophones have been inadequately fertile for so long and to precisely the same degree, were the vitality index for French in Quebec homes identical to that of English, the francophone majority's age profile would also be practically identical to the anglophone minority's. However, the vitality of French has persistently been much lower than that of English in the province's homes. As a consequence, unlike the anglophone minority's age profile, the base of the francophone majority's profile has been eroding.

**FIGURE 7: AGE PROFILE OF QUEBEC'S FRENCH MOTHER-TONGUE MAJORITY, 2006**



Quebec's francophone majority suffered a substantial 17 per cent intergenerational deficit in 2006, as can be seen from figure 7. Comparison of figures 6 and 7 sums up the fact that the superior vitality of English in the province

has given its anglophone minority a distinct demographic advantage over its francophone majority, thus setting the stage for Quebec's new language dynamic.

## A rude awakening

Today's Quebec is definitely not becoming as French as Ontario is English. Stretching the point the better to drive it home, in the light of vitality indices and age profiles, Quebec rather looks as English as Ontario.

Wrapped in Camille Laurin's dream, Quebec's francophone majority has slept soundly for some three decades. By the mid-1990s it had already become evident that French had ceased to progress in Quebec's work world and that the gains of French as language of assimilation were due more to the selection of immigrants than to the power of attraction of French within Quebec society. The Larose Commission of 2000–2001 and the Bouchard-Taylor Commission of 2007–08 chose not to pull the alarm. Quebec agencies like the Office Québécois de la Langue Française and the Conseil Supérieur de la Langue Française likewise avoided rocking the boat.<sup>35</sup>

But the last census undeniably confirmed that the basic sociolinguistic factors constantly at work within Quebec society are geared to making Quebec less French and more English. The scant 2001–06 out-migration of Quebec anglophones to the rest of Canada simply served to make this crystal clear.

As a result, Parti Québécois leader Pauline Marois now seems poised to extend Bill 101's provisions on language of education



Today's Quebec is definitely not becoming as French as Ontario is English. Stretching the point the better to drive it home, Quebec rather looks as English as Ontario.

and language of work to Cégeps and smaller companies. The PQ's desire to act is driven above all by the situation unfolding in the Montreal metropolitan area, where the disparity between the vitality of English and French, and the resulting demographic dynamic, are even more pronounced than the provincewide results presented above.<sup>36</sup>

French Quebec appears to be wide awake again. It's not hard to understand why.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Camille Laurin, *Le français langue du Québec* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1977), pp. 30, 36, 137.

<sup>2</sup> Charter of the French Language, L.R.Q. Chapter C-11, Preamble.

<sup>3</sup> Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *Report*, Vol. 1, *The Official Languages* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Louise Marmen and Jean-Pierre Corbeil, *Languages in Canada: 2001 Census* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2004), tables 5.1, 5.5 and 5.8.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Pierre Corbeil and Christine Blaser, *The Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2007), table 13.

<sup>6</sup> Richard J. Joy, *Languages in Conflict: The Canadian Experience* (Ottawa: Author, 1967; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Marmen and Corbeil, *Languages in Canada: 2001 Census*, chart 5.4A.

<sup>8</sup> Corbeil and Blaser, *Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*, table 13.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., tables 15, A3, and A5.

<sup>11</sup> For details on how this is done, see Charles Castonguay, *Incidence du sous-dénombrement et des changements apportés aux questions de recensement sur l'évolution de la composition linguistique de la population du Québec entre 1991 et 2001* (Montreal: Office Québécois de la Langue Française, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Corbeil and Blaser, *Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*, table A5.

<sup>13</sup> Marmen and Corbeil, *Languages in Canada: 2001 Census*, table A1.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Marc Termote and Normand Thibault, *Nouvelles perspectives démolinguistiques du Québec et de la région de Montréal 2001–2051* (Montreal: Office Québécois de la Langue Française, 2008), p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> Corbeil and Blaser, *Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*, table A3.

<sup>16</sup> Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *Report*, Vol. 1, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Corbeil and Blaser, *Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*, tables 9, 11, and 12.

<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting too that anglophones lost to Quebec through interprovincial migration represent, at the same time, a gain for the anglophone populations of Ontario and the other provinces. On the contrary, assimilation to English as main home language among Ontario francophones produces an absolute loss not only for Ontario's French-speaking minority but for Canada's as well.

<sup>19</sup> French followed the same up-then-down trend in terms of mother tongue. See Charles Castonguay, "La vraie question linguistique: quelle est la force d'attraction réelle du français au Québec?" in Michel Venne, ed., *L'annuaire du Québec 2004* (Montreal: Fides, 2003), pp. 232–53, tables 1 and 7, and Castonguay, *Incidence du sous-dénombrement*, tables 4 and 6.

<sup>20</sup> The details on how Statistics Canada's estimates of the number and mother tongue of people missed at a given census can be used to also estimate the home language of the people missed are given in Castonguay, *Incidence du sous-dénombrement*.

<sup>21</sup> Corbeil and Blaser, *Evolving Linguistic Portrait, 2006 Census*, table 13. Amusingly, according to these analysts, "The increase in Quebec's Anglophone population is primarily due to much fewer Anglophones leaving the province between 2001 and 2006" (p. 21). Can a non-exodus really be the main cause of population growth?

<sup>22</sup> Raquel Casesnoves-Ferrer and David Sankoff, "Transmission, Education, and Integration in Projections of Language Shift in Valencia," *Language Policy*, Vol. 3 (2004), pp. 107–31.

- <sup>23</sup> These considerations regarding a language's true degree of vitality within Quebec society as compared to its vitality index at any given census are substantiated in Charles Castonguay, *Les indicateurs généraux de vitalité des langues au Québec: comparabilité et tendances 1971–2001* (Montreal: Office Québécois de la Langue Française, 2005) and “Le point sur les substitutions linguistiques: l’anglicisation plus courante que la francisation” in Michel Venne and Antoine Robitaille, eds, *L’annuaire du Québec 2006* (Montreal: Fides, 2005), pp. 197–204.
- <sup>24</sup> In explaining the increase in the vitality index for English in Quebec between 1971 and 2006, Statistics Canada’s current leading analyst on language attributes an important role to the decrease in Quebec’s English mother-tongue population due to the anglophone exodus: see Jean-Pierre Corbeil et al., *Portrait of Official-Language Minorities in Canada: Anglophones in Quebec* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2010), p. 31. Now, the anglophone exodus has been following a definite downward trend over the 35 years in question, as we have seen, whereas figure 1 shows that the vitality of English in Quebec has been growing at a constant rate. In particular, Statistics Canada’s explanation obviously holds no water at all for the 2001–06 period, during which the vitality index of English grew as fast as ever while the anglophone exodus dwindled to a trickle and Quebec’s English mother-tongue population was on the rise.
- <sup>25</sup> Virginie Moffet et al., *Langue de travail dans les grandes entreprises privées du Québec: quelle place pour le français?* (Montreal: Office Québécois de la Langue Française, 2008).
- <sup>26</sup> This survey, along with the observations which follow on the status of English and French in Quebec’s work world, are discussed at length in Charles Castonguay, *Avantage à l’anglais! Dynamique actuelle des langues au Québec* (Montreal: Éditions du Renouveau Québécois, 2008).
- <sup>27</sup> Charles Castonguay, “Getting the Facts Straight on French: Reflections Following the 1996 Census,” *Inroads*, 1999, pp. 57–76, figure 3.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> As Statistics Canada’s analyst candidly concludes, “Should we be surprised about this? Were we expecting that immigrants with a better level of spoken French in Quebec would be more likely to have an appropriate job? It is well-known that the vast majority (87%) of immigrants in Quebec live in Montreal. [Now,] French is not the only language of work in Montreal” (Chantal Grondin, *Knowledge of Official Languages: How Important Is It in the Labour Market?*, Statistics Canada, catalogue no. 89-624-XIE [Ottawa, 2007], p. 42).
- <sup>30</sup> The same reasoning applies to the demographics of the anglophone and francophone populations in Canada minus Quebec, as a whole. See Castonguay, “Getting the Facts Straight on French.”
- <sup>31</sup> See Jean-Pierre Corbeil and Sylvie Lafrenière, *Portrait of Official-Language Minorities in Canada: Francophones in Ontario* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2010), table 3.1.
- <sup>32</sup> Women bear children at a later age today than before, so that there are now some 30 years between two successive generations. Accordingly, in our age profiles we have used shades of grey to distinguish between 30-year age cohorts.
- <sup>33</sup> Corbeil and Lafrenière, *Portrait: Francophones in Ontario*, table 3.1.
- <sup>34</sup> Corbeil et al., *Portrait: Anglophones in Quebec*, table 3.1.
- <sup>35</sup> We have commented in depth on the inertia of these governmental commissions and agencies vis-à-vis the flagging status of French in Quebec in Charles Castonguay, Pierre Dubuc and Jean-Claude Germain, *Larose n’est pas Larousse: Regards critiques: La Commission des États généraux sur la situation et l’avenir de la langue française au Québec* (Montreal: Éditions du Renouveau Québécois, 2002), and Castonguay, *Avantage à l’anglais*.
- <sup>36</sup> See, for example, Pierre Curzi, *Le grand Montréal s’anglicise: esquisse du vrai visage du français au Québec*, available since April 7, 2010 on the website of the PQ spokesperson on language ([www.pierrecurzi.org](http://www.pierrecurzi.org)).



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