

It Pays to Be Bilingual in Canada: Though Not Everywhere

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1. Introduction

Results of the 2001 census reveal that individuals with knowledge of English and French benefit from higher median income than those without such knowledge. However this is not the case throughout the country. In some parts of Canada the economic advantages of knowing the two languages is less considerable and this is especially so in those areas where the presence of the two official languages is more limited.

2. Knowledge of Official Languages and Income

As observed below in Canada the median income of those speaking both English and French is nearly 10% greater than for those speaking English only and the gap is considerable between unilingual anglophones and unilingual francophones. Those speaking neither English nor French lag well behind in this category.

Table 1

Median individual income by Knowledge of Official Languages (KOL) for population 15 years and older, Canada 2001

	TOTAL - Population 15 years or older	Median individual income \$
English only	15,983,945	22,987
French only	2,912,385	17,659
English and French	4,646,505	24,974
Neither	358,520	12,356

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

As further illustrated below the gaps are similar when examining income on the basis of the mean or average. In Quebec the gaps in mean income between those persons that know both official languages and those without such knowledge are by far the highest in the country. In that province the mean income of those individuals that know both official languages and those that are unilingually French is over 30%. Those speaking only English have median incomes that are around 10% greater than those that are unilingually French.

Table 2

Mean Income and knowledge of official languages, Canada and the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, 2001

	Canada	Quebec	Ontario
English only	30 576	24 281	32 778
French only	22 342	22 469	19 769
English and French	32 662	32 404	36 719
Other Language	14 944	13 503	15 582

In the province of Ontario what might be described as the 'bilingual advantage' is about 10% when considering the difference in mean income between those knowing both official languages and those individuals that are unilingually English.

Table 3

Mean Income and knowledge of official languages in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto, 2001

	Montreal	Ottawa	Toronto
English only	24 625	38 413	34 091
French only	20 334	19 670	17 363
English and French	32 545	39 250	47 713
Other Language	13 406	15 947	15 448

As seen above in Montreal that the gap between bilingual and non-bilingual is nearly 35% better for bilinguals than it is for those speaking English only on the basis of the mean income. In Ottawa the difference between bilinguals and unilingually English is approximately 3% with unilingually French at less than half the median income of unilingually English. It is worth noting that few francophones in Ontario are unable to speak English. In Toronto the bilingual advantage is as high as 40% on the basis of mean income as observed below

In the Atlantic provinces there is considerable variation in the relationship between median income and knowledge of official languages. In those provinces with a higher proportion of francophones (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) the differences in income between unilingual anglophones and bilinguals are not particularly significant. It is worth noting that nearly all francophones in those provinces are bilingual and thus few fall into the unilingual French category.

Table 4

Mean Income and knowledge of official languages in the Atlantic Provinces, 2001

	Newfoundland	PEI	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick
English only	22 527	23 968	25 221	25 106
French only	24 472	NS	15 667	15 715
English and French	25 331	21 807	26 079	24 202
Other Language	10 232	NS	15 375	12 589

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

If in terms of income, bilingualism is advantageous in Quebec and Ontario in the Western provinces there is less evidence of significant economic benefit accruing from knowledge of the two official languages. There is in effect close proximity in mean income between unilingually English and bilinguals with the exception of British Columbia where mean income among bilinguals is 6% higher for bilinguals. It is worth bearing in mind that the significant portion of the latter group are francophones in all provinces except BC.

Table 5
Mean Income and knowledge of official languages in the Western Provinces, 2001

	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
English only	26 522	25 848	31 517	29 917
French only	26 315	23 402	21 173	18 111
English and French	26 406	25 814	31 739	31 497
Other Language	13 586	12 795	14 703	14 411

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

3. Generational Change in Income

Below are observed the changing patterns of mean income on the basis of age for Canada and selected cities and provinces in the more bilingual parts of the country. In the country one observes a ten percent difference for the working age population (25-64) between bilinguals and unilingually English persons.

Table 6
Mean individual income by Knowledge of Official Languages (KOL) by age category, 15 and older , Canada 2001

	TOTAL	15 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+
ENGLISH	30,576	10,226	33,700	38,084	25,788
FRENCH	22,342	10,047	25,238	25,990	17,781
ENGLISH and FRENCH	32,662	10,131	36,825	42,906	27,870
Neither	14,944	8,952	15,899	15,132	14,684

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

In the province of Quebec and the city of Montreal the gaps are enormous amongst those of working age bilinguals compared to those over the age of 65.

Table 7

Mean individual income by Knowledge of Official Languages (KOL) by age category, 15 and older Quebec 2001

	TOTAL	15 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+
ENGLISH	24,281	9,258	22,958	28,307	25,155
FRENCH	22,469	10,079	25,372	26,141	17,853
ENGLISH and FRENCH	32,404	10,580	35,667	41,076	27,716
Neither	13,503	9,343	12,883	12,843	14,241

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

Table 8

Mean individual income by Knowledge of Official Languages (KOL) by age category, 15 and older Montreal 2001

	TOTAL	15 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+
ENGLISH	24 625	9 531	22 234	28 787	26 992
FRENCH	20 334	10 183	21 924	23 130	18 483
ENGLISH and FRENCH	32 545	10 893	34 698	42 938	30 221
Neither	13 406	10 565	12 852	12 260	14 306

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

In Ottawa the gaps are also substantial amongst the working age population between bilinguals and those speaking only English.

Table 9

Mean individual income by Knowledge of Official Languages (KOL) by age category, 15 and older Ottawa 2001

	TOTAL	15 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+
ENGLISH	38,413	10,232	41,040	47,354	35,319
FRENCH	19,870	4,608	19,589	22,219	20,576
ENGLISH and FRENCH	39,950	10,431	44,046	54,230	36,628
Neither	15,947	8,758	14,328	16,096	16,598

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

In New Brunswick the gap between bilinguals and those speaking English only is greater for those in the early part of their careers (25-44) suggesting a growing recent importance in the acquisition of the official languages in that province.

Table 10
Mean individual income by Knowledge of Official Languages (KOL) by age category, 15 and older New Brunswick, 2001

	TOTAL	15 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+
ENGLISH	25 106	9 324	26 655	30 287	22 417
FRENCH	15 715	8 002	17 506	17 202	14 586
ENGLISH and FRENCH	24 202	9 048	28 163	30 480	19 692
Neither	12 589	NS	11 123	12 436	15 591

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

Part 2

The Language At Work: Unemployment Amongst Linguistic Groups in Canada

Language knowledge plays a factor in unemployment as well but its influence is largely confined to the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. As observed below in Canada it is the unilingual francophone population that has the highest rate of unemployment but this is due to the concentration of this group in Quebec and to a much lesser degree in New Brunswick where overall rates of unemployment are higher. When considering the national capital region it is on the Ontario side where unilingual francophones though not considerable in number possess quite significant rates of unemployment and on the Quebec side where unilingual anglophones have somewhat higher rates than francophones and where the bilingual group has a considerable advantage. It is worth noting that the federal civil service is a large employer of the population in that region.

Table 11
Unemployment Rates by knowledge of official languages for Canada, Ottawa and the Outaouais region (Quebec), 2001

	Canada	Ottawa	Outaouais
Total	7.4	5.7	5.2
English only	7.1	5.9	9.6
French only	9.5	17.5	8.3
English and French	7.1	5.3	4.3

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

On the basis of mother tongue it is observed that the ninety percent-plus bilingual francophone population has the lowest rate of unemployment on both sides of the border of the national capital region. In fact the gap between anglophone and francophone unemployment in the Outaouais is more than two and a half points. Allophones fall behind the average by nearly three and a half points in the region.

Table 12**Unemployment Rates on the basis of mother tongue for Canada, Ottawa and the Outaouais region (Quebec), 2001**

	Canada	Ottawa	Outaouais
Total	7.4	5.7	5.2
Anglophone	7.1	5.1	7.3
Francophone	7.7	4.7	4.7
Allophone	8.0	8.9	8.8

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

In the province of Quebec unilingualism appears to be an impediment for employment in particular for those persons speaking English that have considerably higher than average unemployment rates. The province's bilingual population has rates of unemployment well below the average and this is true the regions outside of Montreal as well as within the metropolitan region. One observes below a sizeable gap in Montreal between the bilingual and unilingual groups that is between four and five points.

Table 13**Unemployment Rates by knowledge of official languages for the province of Quebec, the Island of Montreal and Quebec outside of Montreal, 2001**

	Quebec	Montreal	Rest of Quebec
Total	9.2	9.3	9.0
English only	13.3	13.6	12.8
French only	9.4	12.0	9.0
English and French	6.9	7.8	6.4

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

On the basis of mother tongue rates of unemployment are higher amongst anglophones than francophones but are especially high for allophones and the gap between allophones and non-allophones is of concern more so in Montreal than outside the metropolis.

Table 14**Unemployment Rates on the basis of mother tongue for the province of Quebec, the Island of Montreal and Quebec outside of Montreal, 2001**

	Quebec	Montreal	Rest of Quebec
Total	9.2	9.3	9.0
Anglophone	8.6	8.3	8.9
Francophone	7.8	7.5	7.9
Allophone	12.1	12.8	10.2

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

In the province of Ontario one observes that unemployment rates are higher for the small numbers of unilingual francophones. As to bilingualism it plays a lesser role in that province in employment though it does play a role in the type of employment one secures as evidenced by the data on income surveyed above. Still, in Toronto bilinguals do possess a slightly lower rate of unemployment than unilingual anglophones.

Table 15**Unemployment Rates on the basis of knowledge of official languages for the province of Ontario and the Toronto region, 2001**

	Ontario	Toronto
Total	6.2	7.0
English only	6.0	7.0
French only	11.7	9.6
English and French	6.4	6.0

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

On the basis of mother tongue the differences between anglophones and francophones are not particularly significant and while allophones have higher rates of unemployment, their gap with the other language groups remains far narrower than is the case for either the province of Quebec and /or Montreal.

Table 16**Unemployment Rates on the basis of mother tongue for the province of Ontario and the Toronto region, 2001**

	Ontario	Toronto
Total	6.2	7.0
Anglophone	5.8	6.0
Francophone	6.0	6.3
Allophone	7.0	8.2

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

In the province of Nova Scotia and the city of Halifax the differences in rates of unemployment between language groups are not considerable though in New Brunswick there is a gap between francophones and anglophones of 3 points. In Moncton the gap between anglophones and francophones is less than one point.

Table 17**Unemployment Rates on the basis of mother tongue the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and the cities of Halifax and Moncton, 2001**

	Nova Scotia	Halifax	New Brunswick	Moncton
Total	10.8	7.1	12.5	9.7
Anglophone	11.1	7.1	11.4	9.3
Francophone	10.0	6.0	14.4	10.2
Allophone	10.6	8.2	14.3	6.1

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

In the western provinces the gaps in rates of unemployment on the basis of mother tongue are not significant (with the possible exception of the situation of allophones in Saskatchewan). Indeed mother tongue francophones have rates of unemployment that are lower than anglophones in all the Western provinces.

Table 18
Unemployment Rates on the basis of mother tongue for the Western provinces, 2001

	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
Total	6.0	6.3	5.2	8.8
Anglophone	5.9	5.9	5.1	8.3
Francophone	4.4	4.4	4.1	8.1
Allophone	6.6	9.6	5.6	9.3

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001

In the cities of the West the trend is fairly similar with the exception of Winnipeg where the unemployment rate for allophones is significantly higher than the average. It is also worth observing that in 2001 rates of unemployment in the major western cities are considerably lower than in the Eastern part of the country.

Table 19
Unemployment Rates on the basis of mother tongue for the cities of Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver, 2001

	Winnipeg	Regina	Calgary	Edmonton	Vancouver
Total	6.3	6.6	3.6	3.9	4.8
Anglophone	5.9	6.6	3.6	4.1	4.4
Francophone	4.4	3.7	3.0	3.3	4.6
Allophone	9.6	7.2	3.7	3.2	5.3

Source: Statistics Canada *special tabulation* Census 2001