

Mapping Career Pathways for Ontario's Francophone and Bilingual Workforce



Insights for Post-Secondaries,
Employers, and Students

ICTC  CTIC

Research by



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Preface

The Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC) is a not-for-profit, national centre of expertise for strengthening Canada's digital advantage in a global economy. Through trusted research, practical policy advice, and creative capacity-building programs, ICTC fosters globally competitive Canadian industries enabled by innovative and diverse digital talent. In partnership with an expansive network of industry leaders, academic partners, and policymakers from across Canada, ICTC has empowered a robust and inclusive digital economy for over 30 years.

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Executive Summary

Ontario is Canada's largest provincial economy and home to the country's second-largest number of French speakers outside of Quebec. French-speaking workers are in high demand across the province, and Francophone businesses play a crucial role in the Ontario community and economy.

Even following the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario has a low unemployment rate, and employers see a labour shortage across the economy. Wages across Ontario are increasing, particularly in services-producing sectors. Toronto and Ottawa together account for nearly two-thirds of the province's economic activity. High-growth sectors in the GTA include professional, scientific, and technical services; and finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing. However, some of the highest labour shortages, as perceived by employers, are in sectors like construction, accommodation and food services, and manufacturing.

Employers across the Ontario economy are competing for workers with French-language skills, and many employers require French speakers to fill customer service, sales associate, and client relations roles to service Franco-Ontarians or Francophones in Quebec. French skills are also valued across mid- and senior-level roles in education, governance, finance, insurance, HR, and many others.

The vast majority of jobs requiring French speakers in Ontario require bilingual skills. A small number of roles exist for Francophones who do not speak English, particularly in education, law, social, community, and government services (e.g., teaching immersion French or providing services to other Francophones); natural resources and agriculture (where language in the workplace is less crucial); and arts and culture (e.g., French-language media).



Bilingual talent is hard to find and retain due to salary competition and French skill scarcity. Employers can boost recruitment and retention by forming reciprocal partnerships with Francophone community organizations and post-secondary institutions while improving workplace experiences for their French employees by avoiding problems like having them complete French-language tasks outside of their job descriptions.

Due to the significant demand for bilingual skills in Ontario, French speakers may find that their language skills supersede other training or planning and act as powerful career determinants, as different organizations incentivize bilingual workers to stay in bilingual-requirement roles with salary or other mechanisms. One aspect of this is that French speakers may find themselves typecast in customer-facing roles. For example, the most common high-level occupation for French mother tongue speakers in Ontario in Census 2021 is in Sales and Service, and within Sales and Service, support occupations (e.g., in food, accommodation, tourism) or customer and personal services (e.g., retail).

French mother tongue speakers in Toronto and Ottawa are more typically in roles that require higher education. Many Ontarians whose mother tongues include French are employed in administrative occupations in Business and Finance, and in professional occupations in Education, Law, and Social, Community and Government Services. The latter category includes lawyers, teachers, and government services professionals, which are the most common roles requiring university degrees held by French mother tongue speakers.

Francophone newcomers are key to Ontario's Francophone community and economy but face barriers to integration and employment, including accent and dialect preferences or "Canadian experience" preferences. Racialized Francophone newcomers to Ontario also face significant systemic challenges due to their status as both linguistic and racial minorities in the province. About 15% of Francophone workers in Ontario whose mother tongues include French are immigrants or non-permanent residents. Francophone post-secondary institutions and community organizations play a crucial role in settlement services and reducing workforce entry barriers.

French skill development for non-Francophones contributes to French talent supply but faces challenges such as immersion teacher shortages in primary and secondary education. However, outside of Quebec, Ontario has by far the largest and most diverse Francophone and bilingual post-secondary education offerings in Canada.



Many French-speaking post-secondary students expect to be employed in the public sector and may end up choosing their education and career trajectories accordingly. Prospective and current students in Francophone post-secondary institutions report interest in teaching, education, social sciences, business, and medicine, among many other fields.

Employment outcomes, Francophone identity, and institutional reputation are key variables impacting students' decisions about whether to attend a Francophone post-secondary institution. Students chose to attend (or were thinking about attending) Francophone post-secondary institutions primarily because they felt most comfortable learning in French: strength and variety of programs, proximity, and tuition were also important decision-making factors.

Workforce-integrated learning (WIL) programs are popular with students and offer an important way to connect with a variety of opportunities, but they are underutilized by employers. WIL programs have the potential to improve French-speaking student awareness of a wide range of careers and confer transferable skills. WIL opportunities may help reduce barriers to employment for Francophone newcomer post-secondary students in cases where program experience is high quality. Finally, WIL programs may help employers connect with the French-speaking talent they need.

In sum, French skills offer Ontarians significant labour market advantages, including opportunities for advancement and bilingual salary premiums if used strategically. Low unemployment in the province, along with high demand for French-speaking talent, means that a new French-speaking graduate who is aware of the breadth of their options can leverage their language skills in many occupations.





Introduction

Ontario is Canada's largest provincial economy and home to the country's second-largest number of French speakers outside of Quebec. French speakers work in important roles catering to bilingual and unilingual Francophone clients in finance, insurance, and real estate; the federal public service; education; and beyond. French speakers have been estimated to account for 12% of Ontario's economic output (due in part to higher average wages than unilingual peers).¹ Francophone businesses create bridges between Ontario and its neighbour Quebec and have an opportunity to develop economic relationships with the wider French-speaking world. For example, a 2013 study found that regions of Canada with significant bilingual populations enjoyed an enhanced ability to partake in international trade.² French speakers in Ontario include Franco-Ontarians, immigrants from Quebec and international Francophone countries, and English speakers who have learned French fluently.³

The Government of Ontario has recognized the critical role that French-speaking Ontarians play in the province's economy through institutions like the Ministry of Francophone Affairs and legislation protecting French-language services in key regions of the province.⁴ Ontario released a Francophone Economic Development Strategy in June 2021. The strategy seeks to strengthen Francophone economic development in Ontario by promoting Francophone innovators and entrepreneurs, developing and skilling Ontario's Francophone and bilingual workforce, and advancing the province's Francophone community "as an economic asset."⁵

- 1 Henry A. Diaz, "English-French Bilingualism Outside Quebec: An Economic Portrait of Bilinguals in Canada," Conference Board of Canada, April 2019, https://acufo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ReportConferenceBoard_BilingualismQC-EN.pdf, 68.
- 2 Alan Arcand, "Canada, Bilingualism and Trade," The Conference Board of Canada, June 2013, <https://cedec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Canada-Bilingualism-and-Trade.pdf>
- 3 Government of Ontario, "2022 Report on Francophone Affairs," April 27, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2022-report-francophone-affairs>, accessed March 9, 2023.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ministry of Francophone Affairs (Government of Ontario), "Francophone Economic Development Strategy," June 2021, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/francophone-economic-development-strategy>



The high demand for French-speaking skills in Ontario is lending force to the province's investment in the Francophone economy and skills development. Previous research has identified shortages of bilingual employees across regions and sectors, including an acute bilingual labour shortage in education and healthcare in northwestern Ontario⁶ and in telecommunications, hospitality, and transportation in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) economy.⁷

French skill development in Ontario relies on strong institutions supporting French speakers and language learners to maintain or develop their fluency. Recent data on demand for Francophone talent across the province is essential to support French-language post-secondaries in developing programs that allow their students to leverage their qualifications for in-demand careers. With the release of Canada's Census 2021 and the waning of the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on the labour market, there is an opportunity to offer a supply and demand analysis of the status of French-language skills in Ontario.

The primary goal of the Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC)'s investigation of bilingualism in Ontario's workforce is to understand available career pathways for French-speaking students graduating from Francophone post-secondary institutions in Ontario. It builds on previous work by offering data from the post-pandemic era and triangulating findings from employer and student surveys with the 2021 Canadian Census, job posting data, and semi-structured interviews with Ontario employers and Francophone stakeholder groups. Throughout this study, ICTC follows the Government of Ontario's lead in terminology by differentiating between "French speakers" (all speakers of French), "Francophones" (using the Government of Ontario's inclusive definition of Francophone⁸), and other terms as appropriate when discussing particular data such as "French as a mother tongue" speakers.

Overall, the study aims to provide instructive labour market information for Franco-Ontarian post-secondary institutions in shaping their degree programs, for employers seeking partnerships with post-secondary institutions and a better understanding of how to find Francophone talent in Ontario, and, last but not least, for Francophone students and job seekers. As this study will show, many of the roles available for French speakers in Ontario may lack opportunities for advancement and relegate workers to customer service, sales, or call centres, even though there are numerous opportunities for French speakers in professional roles with higher salaries and career advancement opportunities. As such, Francophone labour market entrants and career transitioners may find demand data instructive in advancing their education and job choices.

6 Chris Southcott, "Bilingual Employment Gaps in Northwestern Ontario: Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis," North Superior Workforce Planning Board, Local Employment Planning Council, March 2019, https://www.nswpb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2019.04.17_FINAL_Bilingual_Employment_Gaps_report-1.pdf

7 La Passerelle-I.D.É., "Looking Forward: Towards an Understanding of the Demand and Supply of Francophone Bilingual immigrants and newcomers in the Hospitality, Telecommunications and Transportation Sectors," 2018, http://www.passerelle-ide.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Human-Capital-Report_2018.pdf

8 "Defined as a person whose mother tongue is French or whose mother tongue is neither French, nor English, but who has a particular knowledge of French and uses French at home," Government of Ontario, "2022 Report on Francophone Affairs," April 27, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2022-report-francophone-affairs>, accessed March 9, 2023.



Part I of this study focuses on the demand for French-language skills in Ontario. The Francophone economy is situated within the Ontario economy: as such, Part I begins with an overview of broader economic trends in the province before turning to the demand for Francophone talent. While the vast majority of roles for French speakers are for workers who can also speak English, this section also examines “unilingual” French roles in the province. Finally, Part I examines employer perspectives on French-skilled worker attraction and retention.

Part II examines French-speaking talent supply, skills development, and career pathways. It first addresses who French speakers in Ontario are, where in the province they are, and what occupations they are currently working in. This section includes an exploration of the role of Francophone newcomers and racialized immigrants in Ontario, and in particular unique workforce barriers facing them. Subsequently, Part II unpacks findings from a French-speaking post-secondary student survey on the reasons why French-speaking young adults may or may not choose to attend a Francophone institution. Finally, Part II addresses the role of Workforce Integrated Learning (WIL) in French-speaking student pathways and its potential to further bridge the supply and demand gap.





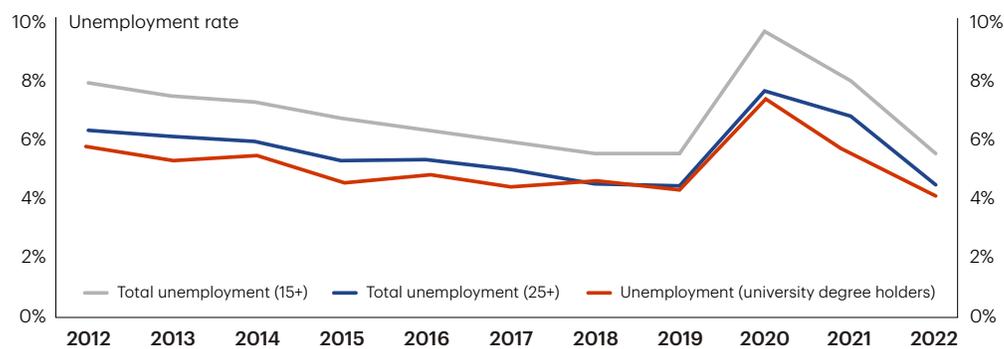
PART 1

Ontario’s Labour Market and the Role of French Speakers

Ontario’s Francophone community and French-language workforce exist within the wider context of Ontarian society and the province’s economy. Before this paper delves into specific labour market demand for French-language and bilingual workers, it will summarize the state of Ontario’s current economy, with a focus on the contemporary job market and trends across different regions of the province.

Ontario is currently enjoying a relatively low unemployment rate despite significant economic headwinds, including the indications of a post-pandemic recession in 2023.⁹ As Figure 1 highlights, overall unemployment in Ontario spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic and quickly recovered by 2022. The provincial unemployment rate as of January 2023 is 5.2%.¹⁰ During the pandemic, university degree holders and older Ontarian workers (25+ years) faced less significant job loss than workers as a whole. University degree holders also currently enjoy a significantly lower unemployment rate in Ontario.

Figure 1: Ontario Annual Unemployment Rate (2012 to 2022)



Data source: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0020-01, Unemployment rate, participation rate and employment rate by educational attainment, annual https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410002001_01_14-10-0023-01

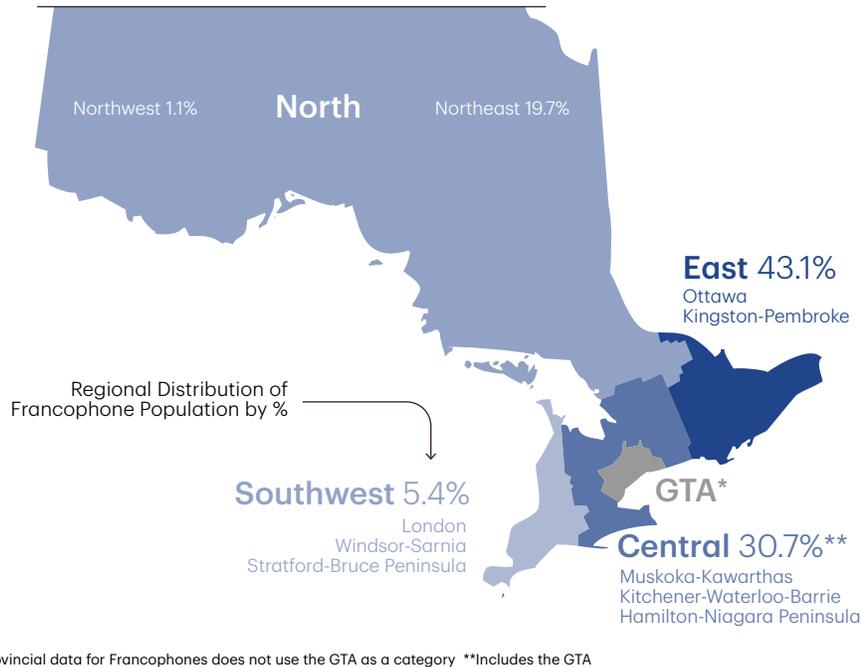
9 Ian Bickis, Bank economists see mild recession likely ahead despite surprising resilience, CTV News, January 13, 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/business/bank-economists-see-mild-recession-likely-ahead-despite-surprising-resilience-1.6229755>
 10 Government of Ontario, Labour market report, January 2023, updated February 22, 2023, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market-report-january-2023>



A Note on Ontario Regions

This report uses standardized economic regions that break down Ontario into five greater regions: the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Eastern Ontario, Central Ontario, Southwest Ontario, and Northern Ontario. These regions are useful when discussing regional variations in Ontario's economy and characterizing the province's French-speaking workforce.¹¹

Figure 2: Ontario Standardized Regions and Sub-Regions



Low unemployment is welcome news for Ontario's workers, but it is also manifesting as a labour shortage for Ontario employers. This labour shortage in Ontario, and Canada as a whole, is structural in nature and driven by significant numbers of experienced older workers retiring and leaving the workforce.¹³ As such, labour scarcity is likely to be a defining characteristic of Canada's economy for the foreseeable future. Ontario's unemployment-to-job vacancy ratio—the ratio of unfilled jobs to unemployed workers—decreased from 2.6 in Q1 2020 to 1.5 by Q1 2022.¹⁴

11 Furthermore, these economic regions can be broken down into standardized sub-regions. This regional framework is adopted from Statistics Canada's Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2021. See: <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=1368923>

12 Government of Ontario, "2022 Report on Francophone Affairs," April 27, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2022-report-francophone-affairs>, accessed March 9, 2023.

13 BDC, How to Adapt to the Labour Shortage Situation: Hiring Difficulties Are Not Going Away, September 2021, <https://www.bdc.ca/en/about/analysis-research/labour-shortage>

14 Statistics Canada, "Labour shortage trends in Canada," last updated, November 18, 2022, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/subjects-start/labour/labour-shortage-trends-canada>



This labour shortage is being recognized by employers throughout Ontario. In a 2022 survey by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 52% of Ontario business leaders surveyed agreed with the statement: “Our organization is currently facing a labour shortage.”¹⁵ Agreement varied greatly by region and was as high as 66% on the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula and as low as 49% in the greater Ottawa area, the GTA, Kingston-Pembroke, Hamilton-Niagara, and Northwest Ontario.¹⁶ The differences in employer perceptions throughout the province speak to the regional variations in Ontario’s labour market but also demonstrate how acutely the post-pandemic labour scarcity is felt in some Ontario regions. Table 1 provides a breakdown of employer perceptions of labour shortages by Ontario region based on the 2022 Ontario Chamber of Commerce survey.

Table 1: Ontario Business Sentiment: Perceptions of Regional Labour Shortages, Fall 2022

Sub-Region	Parent Region	"Our organization is currently facing a labour shortage."		
		Strongly Agree / Agree	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Net Agree - Disagree (+/-)
Ontario (all regions)	N/A	52%	28%	+24%
Greater Toronto Area	GTA	49%	31%	+18%
Muskoka-Kawarthas	Central Ontario	54%	22%	+32%
Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie	Central Ontario	52%	29%	+23%
Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula	Central Ontario	49%	36%	+13%
Greater Ottawa Area	East Ontario	49%	38%	+11%
Kingston-Pembroke	East Ontario	49%	34%	+15%
Greater London Area	Southwest Ontario	51%	28%	+23%
Windsor-Sarnia	Southwest Ontario	61%	29%	+32%
Stratford-Bruce Peninsula	Southwest Ontario	66%	19%	+47%
Northeast Ontario	North Ontario	54%	25%	+29%
Northwest Ontario	North Ontario	49%	24%	+25%

Data Source: Ontario Chamber of Commerce, “2022 Economic Report,” <https://occ.ca/oer2022/>, 65.

¹⁵ Ontario Chamber of Commerce, “2022 Economic Report,” <https://occ.ca/oer2022/>, 65.

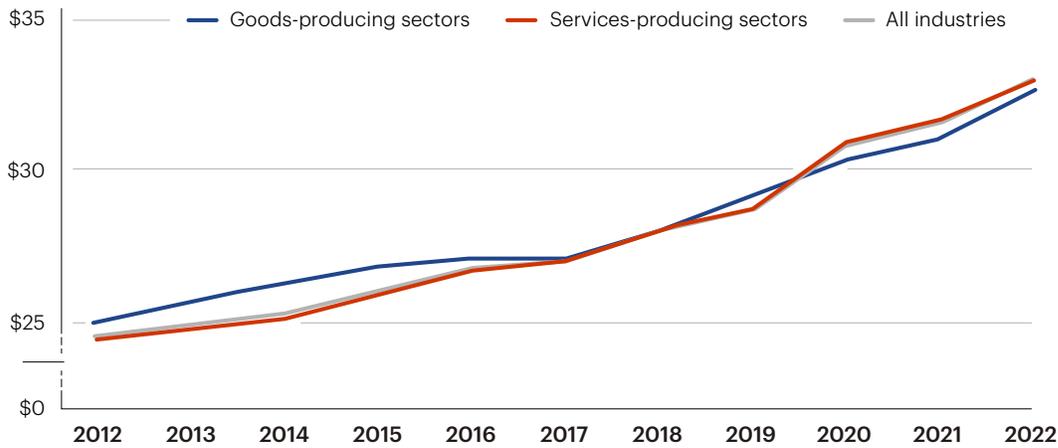
¹⁶ Ibid., 65.



The average hourly wage in Ontario increased to \$33.96 in January 2023, up by \$1.19 from \$32.77 the year before.¹⁷ Ontario's currently low unemployment rate and rising wages underscore the significant degree of scarcity in Ontario's labour market.

Wages across Ontario industries increased, but services-producing sectors outpaced goods-producing sectors overall. As of 2022, the average hourly wage in service-based sectors was \$33.01/hour versus \$32.65/hour for jobs in goods-based sectors in Ontario. Figure 3 charts the average hourly wage growth in Ontario from 2012 to 2022.

Figure 3: Average Hourly Wages in Ontario (2012-2022)



Data Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0064-01 Employee wages by industry, annual
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410006401>

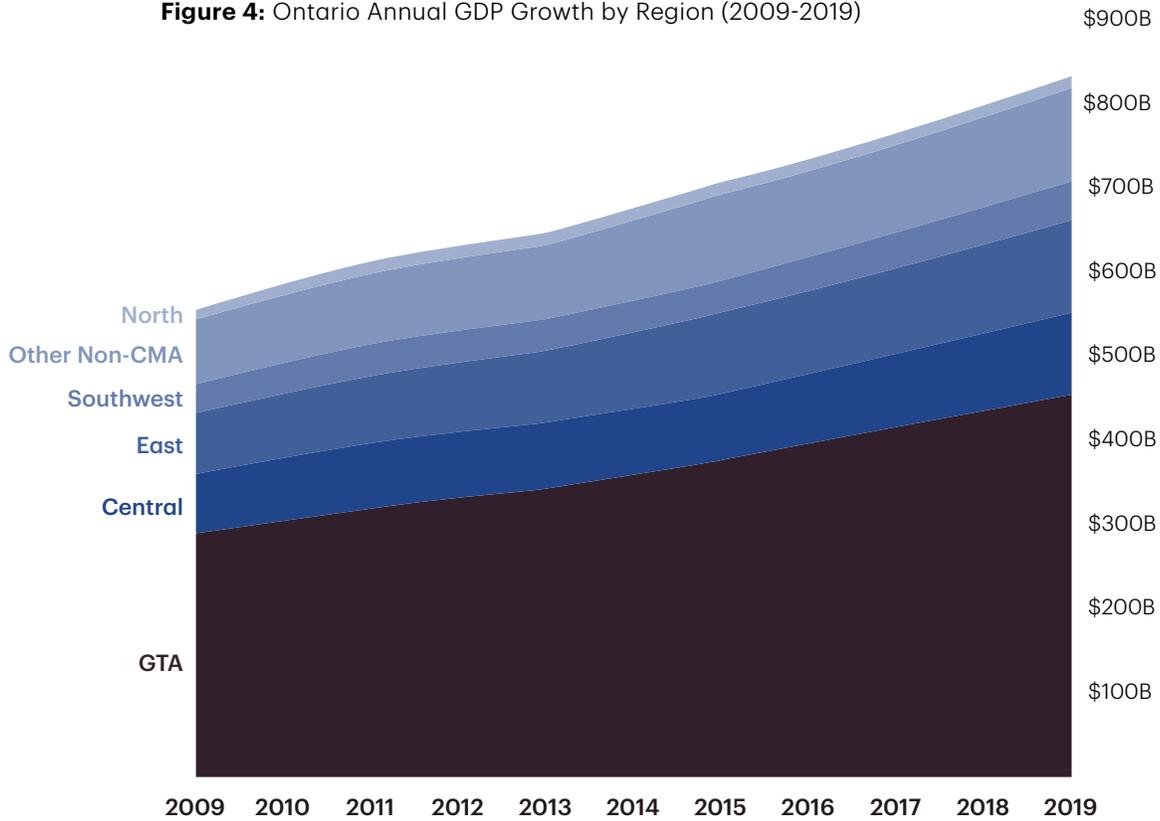
From a regional perspective, economic growth in Ontario is concentrated primarily in the southern parts of the province. Central Ontario and the GTA are enjoying a larger part of economic growth in the province. The GTA, in particular, is the economic engine of Ontario, driving the majority of this growth, though all regions of Ontario have enjoyed economic growth to some extent. Figure 4 outlines Ontario's annual GDP growth by region from 2009 to 2019.

17

Government of Ontario, Labour market report, January 2023, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market-report-january-2023>



Figure 4: Ontario Annual GDP Growth by Region (2009-2019)



Data source: Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0468-01 Gross domestic product (GDP) at basic prices by census metropolitan area (CMA) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610046801>

As Ontario’s two largest cities and provincial and federal capitals, the Toronto and Ottawa metropolitan areas together account for nearly two-thirds of the province’s economic activity. The GTA accounted for 55% of economic activity in Ontario in 2019. Discounting the economic activity in Gatineau and other parts of Quebec, the Ottawa metro area also accounted for 10% of the province’s economic activity. This data demonstrates the critical role of Toronto and Ottawa in Ontario’s economy and as major centres of employment. Figure 5 highlights the GTA and Ottawa metro area’s enormous economic influence on Ontario’s economy.

Figure 5: Share of Ontario GDP (%) of Ottawa and GTA (2019)

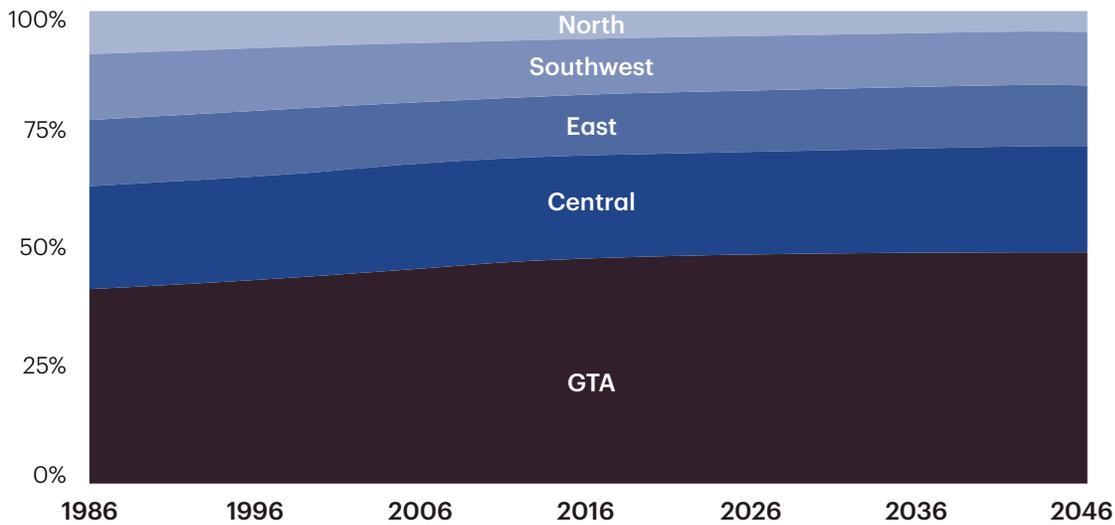


Data source: Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0468-01 Gross domestic product (GDP) at basic prices by census metropolitan area (CMA) (x 1,000,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=3610046801>



As Ontario's most populous region, the GTA is also projected to dominate population growth in Ontario in the coming decades. The Government of Ontario forecasts that the GTA will be home to nearly 50% of Ontario's population by 2046.¹⁸ The City of Toronto estimates that 7.45 million people will reside in the GTA by 2031.¹⁹ Conversely, Northern Ontario's proportion of the province's overall population is projected to continue to fall over the coming decades. Population proportions in the central, eastern, and southwestern regions of Ontario are projected to remain relatively stable. Future projections of regional shares of Ontario's population are outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Projected Regional Share of Ontario's Total Population to 2046



Sources: Government of Ontario, "Ontario population projections (Table A: Population shares of Ontario regions, 1986 to 2046)," last updated July 28, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections>

A sectoral breakdown of Ontario's economy demonstrates how different regions of the province lean toward different mixes of industries and underlying economic activities. These differences in regional economic makeup directly affect the labour market and the types of jobs available throughout Ontario. For example, manufacturing jobs make up a significant proportion of employment in central (13.5%) and southwest Ontario (15.3%), while *finance, insurance, and real estate* (12.3%), as well as *scientific and professional services* (12.9%), make up a significant proportion of the employment in the GTA. *Public administration*, driven by jobs in the federal public service in Ottawa, makes up a significant proportion of employment in eastern Ontario (16.6%). Two industry categories that are ubiquitous in their importance to employment throughout Ontario are *wholesale and retail trade*, and *health care and social assistance*. Figure 7 provides an overview of regional employment by industry sectors in Ontario.

18 Government of Ontario, Ontario population projections (Table A: Population shares of Ontario regions, 1986 to 2046), last updated July 28, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections>

19 City of Toronto, "Toronto Official Plan (Section 2)," <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/9534-Flashforward-How-Many-People-Will-There-Be-in-the-GTA.pdf>, 24.



Figure 7: Ontario Regional Employment by Industry (2022)

	GTA	East	Central	Southwest	North
Agriculture	0.3%	1.0%	1.1%	3.2%	0.6%
Forestry, Fishing, Mining, etc.	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	6.1%
Utilities	0.6%	0.5%	0.9%	1.2%	1.4%
Construction	6.5%	7.4%	9.0%	9.4%	8.1%
Manufacturing	9.0%	5.7%	13.5%	15.3%	6.4%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	15.1%	13.7%	15.2%	14.6%	14.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	5.6%	3.6%	4.3%	4.7%	5.1%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, etc.	12.3%	4.7%	6.2%	5.4%	3.5%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	12.9%	10.4%	8.0%	6.4%	4.9%
Business, Building and Other Support Services	3.9%	3.5%	3.7%	3.4%	2.7%
Educational Services	6.7%	7.6%	8.1%	7.3%	8.0%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	10.8%	13.1%	12.2%	13.8%	18.1%
Information, Culture and Recreation	4.8%	3.3%	3.8%	3.0%	3.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	4.7%	5.4%	5.8%	5.4%	5.6%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	3.1%	3.3%	3.6%	3.3%	3.2%
Public Administration	3.8%	16.6%	4.2%	3.2%	7.9%

Data Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0392-01 Employment by industry, annual (x 1,000)
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410039201>

The fate of Ontario's regions is tied to the rises and falls of the predominant industries concentrated in each region. While certain industries may be in a period of rapid growth, benefitting certain regions, other industries may be in a state of stagnation or decline, hurting regional labour markets. Regions with industries that are in a state of expansion will enjoy growing labour markets, while regions with industries in a state of decline will suffer from shrinking labour markets and higher unemployment. Some mature industries may remain in a steady state over many years. While job opportunities will be available in these stable industries, they will not be as widespread as those in expanding industries.



In the regional economies of contemporary Ontario, there are clusters of industries in specific regions that are enjoying robust growth. For example, between 2018 and 2022, there was a 25% increase in employment in *professional, scientific, and technical services* in the GTA. The GTA also enjoyed a 19% increase in *finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing jobs*. Yet, the GTA also suffered from an 18% loss in *accommodation and food service jobs* and a 12% loss in *service industry jobs*.



Public administration job numbers grew throughout all of Ontario's regions between 2018 and 2022, most notably in North Ontario, where they grew by 27%. Public administration jobs grew by 23% in the province as a whole. Along with government administrative jobs, all of Ontario's regions experienced significant employment growth in professional, scientific, and technical services between 2018 and 2022. All Ontario regions also enjoyed steady growth in educational services, health care, and social assistance jobs. Jobs in *business, building, and other support services*, and *other services* suffered job losses throughout Ontario. Figure 8 outlines regional job growth in various industries between 2018 and 2022.



Figure 8: Ontario Regional Employment Growth (%) by Industry (2018-2022)

Occupation (NAIC)	Ontario	GTA	East	Central	Southwest	North
Agriculture	-1%	131%	-8%	-26%	0%	29%
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	5%	15%	0%	13%	0%	-9%
Utilities	4%	10%	-15%	17%	-17%	58%
Construction	11%	4%	18%	17%	19%	2%
Manufacturing	2%	4%	10%	2%	-2%	-8%
Wholesale and retail trade	8%	11%	11%	6%	3%	-3%
Transportation and warehousing	1%	-1%	1%	1%	10%	4%
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	19%	20%	3%	24%	27%	-1%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	28%	25%	29%	33%	53%	15%
Business, building and other support services	-9%	-9%	-3%	-13%	-3%	-20%
Educational services	9%	5%	5%	16%	15%	1%
Health care and social assistance	11%	16%	5%	7%	8%	4%
Information, culture and recreation	3%	8%	-5%	-5%	10%	2%
Accommodation and food services	-13%	-18%	2%	-9%	-17%	-13%
Other services (except public administration)	-12%	-12%	-22%	-5%	-11%	-4%
Public administration	23%	23%	24%	20%	22%	27%

Data Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0392-01 Employment by industry, annual (x 1,000)
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410039201>



Another way to look at labour markets across Ontario's regions is by examining job growth in various occupational categories. Using an occupational lens when assessing labour markets is advantageous as it underlines the link between specific classes of jobs and their associated skill sets with regional variations of employability in specific occupational categories. For example, the GTA saw robust job growth in *management occupations* (13%), *natural and applied sciences and related occupations* (29%), *health occupations* (19%), and *natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations* (19%) between 2018 and 2022. *Business, finance and administration occupations*, an occupation tied to significant employment in the GTA, also enjoyed growth (8%).

Jobs in manufacturing and utilities fell in most regions of Ontario between 2018 and 2022, falling by 6% overall. This occupational-level data shows the strong growth that white-collar roles, which often require a college diploma or university degree, have played in some of Ontario's regional economies. Figure 9 outlines regional job growth by occupational category for regions throughout Ontario between 2018 and 2022.

Figure 9: Ontario Regional Employment Growth (%) by Occupation (2018-2022)

Occupation (NOC)	Ontario	GTA	East	Central	Southwest	North
Management occupations	13%	13%	2%	15%	28%	8%
Business, finance and administration occupations	11%	8%	12%	15%	17%	7%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	32%	29%	38%	36%	27%	32%
Health occupations	15%	19%	8%	13%	15%	19%
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	12%	13%	11%	14%	11%	-3%
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	-1%	1%	-11%	-2%	10%	-10%
Sales and service occupations	-3%	-1%	2%	-6%	-6%	-14%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	-3%
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	-2%	19%	-3%	-12%	1%	-8%
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	-6%	-13%	-2%	3%	-8%	-11%

Data Source: Table 14-10-0389-01 Employment by occupation, annual (x 1,000)
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410038901>



The Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2022 survey measured participant agreement or disagreement with the statement, "Our organization is currently facing a labour shortage."²⁰ Some +24% across all Ontario industries agreed. The most robust agreement came from construction (68%), manufacturing (+64%), and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (+62%). Industries with the highest net disagreement were government (-29%) and non-profit (-4%). Table 2 provides a breakdown of employer perceptions of labour shortages in 2022 across various Ontario industry sectors. While many high-growth occupations across Ontario broadly require post-secondary education, some of the highest labour shortages, as perceived by employers, are in sectors like construction, accommodation and food services, and manufacturing.

Table 2: Ontario Business Sentiment: Perceptions of Industry/Sectoral Labour Shortages, fall 2022

Industry / Sector	"Our organization is currently facing a labor shortage."		
	Strongly Agree / Agree	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Net Agree - Disagree (+/-)
All industry/sectors	52%	28%	+24%
Accommodation and food services	64%	19%	+45%
Administrative and support, waste, management and remediation services	50%	38%	+12%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	42%	33%	+9%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	43%	33%	+10%
Construction	80%	12%	+68%
Educational services	42%	38%	+4%
Finance and insurance	46%	33%	+13%
Government	19%	48%	-29%
Health care and social assistance	62%	25%	+37%
Information and cultural industries	42%	26%	+16%
Labour	75%	17%	+58%
Management of companies and enterprises	47%	29%	+28%
Manufacturing	72%	8%	+64%

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Ontario Chamber of Commerce, "2022 Economic Report," <https://occ.ca/oeer2022/>, 64.



Industry / Sector (cont.)	Strongly Agree / Agree	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Net Agree - Disagree (+/-)
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	75%	13%	+62%
Non-profit	39%	43%	-4%
Professional, scientific and technical services	45%	33%	+12%
Real estate and rental and leasing	34%	34%	0%
Retail trade	56%	27%	+29%
Transportation and warehousing	73%	17%	+56%
Utilities	40%	20%	+20%
Wholesale trade	39%	39%	0%

Data Source: Ontario Chamber of Commerce, "2022 Economic Report," <https://occ.ca/oer2022/>, 64.

French speakers in Ontario with skills relevant to their occupations can work across the economy so long as they also speak English. All of the occupations discussed so far in this section are open to bilingual workers. Nevertheless, there are many occupations and industries for which French skills are in particularly high demand in the province, allowing French speakers to both leverage their fluency within their careers and continue to speak French in the workplace if they wish to maintain their French or the Francophone economy. These opportunities come with benefits and costs—some occupations that need French speakers the most (for example, customer service roles) may not have strong opportunities for advancement. The subsequent section unpacks demand in Ontario through the lens of French talent shortages.



Understanding Demand for French-Speaking Talent in Ontario

Research on bilingual and French-language employment opportunities in Ontario has emphasized several common threads over the last decade:

- Employers are competing for workers with French-language skills²¹
- Demand is stronger for French speakers that can also speak English than for unilingual French speakers (or speakers of non-official languages)
- Significant numbers of bilingual roles are concentrated in urban Ontario, mainly Toronto and Ottawa
- Bilingual roles tend to be client- or public-facing across a wide array of sectors²²

French skill demand literature from before the COVID-19 pandemic establishes an important baseline for this study's investigation. Between 2015 and 2017, about 6% to 8% of job postings in Ontario contained "French" as a term in the job description.²³ Job postings requiring French-language skills were concentrated in large urban centres, particularly Toronto and Ottawa, with 54.8% of these job postings in the GTA alone, and jobs requiring French-language skills in Ontario tended to be client- or public-facing roles.²⁴ At the time, jobs requiring French-language skills were found to pay an 18% to 20% premium in Ontario.²⁵

A sectoral analysis found that Ontario-based industries with relatively large numbers of job postings requiring French-language skills, as well as high rates of growth, included finance and insurance, healthcare, technical service, and retail and wholesale.²⁶

A 2017 study found that there was a growing need for French-speaking post-secondary graduates in central and southwest Ontario and projected that by 2030, there would be a labour market gap of 172,748 French-speaking post-secondary educated workers in these regions Ontario.²⁷ Educational services, health care and social assistance, finance and insurance, information and cultural industries, and professional, scientific, and technical services in central and southern Ontario were reported to "offer the most opportunities for Francophone workers,"²⁸ but primarily in bilingual roles.

21 Radhika Panjwani, "There's a war for talent': Bilingual job applicants are so coveted they can write their own cheque, recruiter says," *The Globe and Mail*, February 6, 2022, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/careers/article-theres-a-war-for-talent-bilingual-job-applicants-are-so-coveted-they/>

22 Mercer, "Looking Forward: Employment opportunities for Ontario's bilingual francophone talents," 2017, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dkm3j1j7f7vbuwxw/AADzEvuY6XZcq7eKYKUGM6dda?dl=0&preview=LP_FHCF_2017_ENGL.pdf; R.A. Malatest & Associates, "Study for the Needs and Interests for a French-Language University in Central and Southwestern Ontario," May 2017, https://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/publications/Malatest_Final_Report_MAESD_FLU_2017.pdf; Chris Southcott, "Bilingual Employment Gaps in Northwestern Ontario: Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis," North Superior Workforce Planning Board, Local Employment Planning Council, March 2019, https://www.nswpb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2019.04.17_FINAL_Bilingual_Employment_Gaps_report-1.pdf; La Passerelle-I.D.É., "Looking Forward: Towards an Understanding of the Demand and Supply of Francophone Bilingual immigrants and newcomers in the Hospitality, Telecommunications and Transportation Sectors," 2018, http://www.passerelle-ide.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Human-Capital-Report_2018.pdf

23 Mercer, "Looking Forward: Employment opportunities for Ontario's bilingual francophone talents," 2017, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dkm3j1j7f7vbuwxw/AADzEvuY6XZcq7eKYKUGM6dda?dl=0&preview=LP_FHCF_2017_ENGL.pdf, 12.

24 Ibid, 13.

25 Ibid, 13.

26 Ibid, 14.

27 Ibid, 32.

28 Ibid, 30.



In 2021, a study by LMiC identified several important challenges to studying bilingualism in Canadian workplaces, including the challenge of determining whether employer difficulties in finding French-speaking workers stem from a labour shortage, where there is an undersupply of workers, or a skills shortage, where workers are available but lack a particular skill, such as bilingualism. Furthermore, this study identifies important gaps in existing Canada-wide surveys used to estimate language skill supply and demand, an issue that will be discussed further throughout this study.²⁹

Occupations Requiring French Skills in Ontario

Interviewees for this study included Francophone employers, employers of numerous bilingual staff, and Francophone community-serving organizations across Ontario (see Appendix A for further details).

Research participants noted recent developments in the demand for French skills in Ontario: first, the COVID-19 pandemic and widespread move to remote work across Canada (allowing some Ontario companies to hire remote workers in Quebec, for example); and second, the passing of Bill 96 in 2022 in Quebec, which strengthens the protection of French language use in the workplace for businesses operating in Quebec (including Ontario businesses serving Quebecois clients).

Overall, interviewees described several types of roles requiring French-language skills—while not exhaustive, the following examples illustrate the reasons for the French talent demand across Ontario.

Public and private service providers for Ontario French speakers. The *Ontario French Language Services Act* (1986) (FLSA) stipulates that the Ontario government provide services in French in all central offices and in 26 designated regions throughout the province. According to the Ministers' Council on the Canadian Francophonie, 81% of French-speaking residents (including Franco-Ontarians, French speakers from other provinces, and French-speaking newcomers) live within one of these designated regions.³⁰ The Ontario Ministry of Francophone Affairs supervises adherence to the FLSA. Other key pieces of Ontario legislation that guarantees Francophone language rights include the Ontario Education Act, the Courts of Justice Act, the Child and Family Services Act, and the Child and Family Services Act.³¹

29 Labour Market Information Council, "Under Pressure: Estimating the demand and supply for bilingual workers in Canada," LMI Insight Report, May 2021, <https://lmic-cimt.ca/publications-all/lmi-insight-report-no-42/#toc-3>.

30 Ministers' Council on the Canadian Francophonie, "Profile of the legal and administrative framework for the delivery of French-language services within each the provincial and territorial governments," May 2019, <https://cmfc-mccf.ca/micro/cadre-juridique/framework/>, 17-19.

31 Ibid.



Accordingly, many **educators, childcare professionals, health professionals, and other public servants** may require French-language skills, as do **federal government and strategic/senior roles**. Similarly, many public-facing executives and managers may require French-language skills in Ontario. There are also significant employment opportunities available in Ontario public services, as well as within municipalities.³² Beyond public service organizations, many non-profits, community organizations, and NGOs serve Ontarians and need bilingual talent to provide services for their clients in both languages.

Private companies in **retail, customer service, tourism, IT services, finance and banking, transport**, and others may hire workers with French-language skills to cater to Francophone customers in the province, as do companies in **communications, media, content creation, and translation**. Several interviewees discussed the prevalence of Francophone media groups in Ontario, such as Groupe Média TFO and Le Droit, along with the increasing need for French-language content for social media and business communications. **Sales, account managers, and call centres** play a large role in hiring Francophones: business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) sales specialists and account managers/executives may need French-language skills, particularly for Ontario companies working with Quebec. Call centre roles were discussed as prevalent by interviewees, but many mentioned that French speakers might feel typecast into this kind of position, particularly at the beginning of their careers.

Finally, **human resources and recruitment specialists** are well-positioned if they speak French. Businesses and public services may require individuals who can work closely with French-language employees, accurately assess French-language skills in applicants, and understand French-language rights in Ontario and Quebec. Furthermore, many French-language recruiters (and those who hire French-language recruiters) discussed the importance of Francophone personal networks as a part of their service offerings. Some Francophone talent acquisition specialists create networks and services in niche areas such as IT or finance.

Bilingualism and the Federal Public Service

Canada's federal public service consists of federally employed public servants who work for the Government of Canada's various agencies, ministries, and offices across Canada and around the world. As the Government of Canada is legally mandated to provide services in both of Canada's Official Languages, the federal government is a major employer of bilingual talent.

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As a point of reference, the Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario, consisting of member Ontario municipalities, is dedicated to the "maintenance and betterment of municipal services in French in Ontario," see: <https://www.afmo.on.ca/en/our-association/who-we-are/>



Positions within the federal public service are classified by their linguistic needs, with some positions requiring individuals to be fully bilingual, while others require unilingual French or English. In order to enhance their capacity to deliver services in both languages and increase linguistic diversity in the workplace, the federal government has strived to increase bilingual skills throughout public service in recent years.³³

For bilingual Ontarians, the federal public service offers an attractive career pathway where public employees can leverage both their French and English skills throughout their careers. As Ontario is Canada's largest province and home to Ottawa, Canada's national capital, there is a significant number of jobs in the federal government available in Ontario.

Excluding the National Capital Region (NCR), which roughly corresponds to the Ottawa-Gatineau metropolitan area, 10.1% of federal jobs in Ontario had bilingual requirements, equating to approximately 2,700 jobs in 2021.³⁴ As Canada's national administrative capital, Ottawa had by far the most bilingual jobs in the federal public service anywhere in the country. In 2021 63.4% of jobs in the NCR were listed as bilingual, totalling nearly 66,700 positions in total.³⁵ Table 3 outlines bilingual, French-essential, and English-essential jobs in the federal public service for the NCR, other regions of Ontario, and throughout Canada.

Table 3: Linguistic Requirements for Federal Public Service Jobs in Ontario (2021)

Region	Total Public Service Jobs	Bilingual Positions	French-Essential Positions	English-Essential Positions	French or English-Essential Positions
Ontario (excluding NCR)	27,146	2,730 (10.1%)	12 (0%)	24,165 (89%)	236 (0.9%)
National Capital Region	105,185	66,695 (63.4%)	377 (0.4%)	29,149 (27.7%)	8,947 (8.5%)
Canada-wide (includes int'l postings)	225,004	94,210 (41.9%)	8,258 (3.7%)	112,513 (50.0%)	9,989 (4.4%)

Source des données : Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor du Canada, « Rapport annuel sur les langues officielles 2020-2021 », gouvernement du Canada, 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/tbs-sct/documents/values-and-ethics/official-languages/reports/2020-2021-ol-lo-fra.pdf>, 51.

The number of positions requiring bilingualism within the federal public service also continues to grow over time. Between 2000 and 2020, the proportion of federal public service jobs throughout Canada grew from 35.3% to 42.4%.

33

Government of Canada, "The next level: Normalizing a culture of inclusive linguistic duality in the Federal Public Service workplace," September 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/clerk/publications/next-level/next-level.html>

34

Ibid., 51.

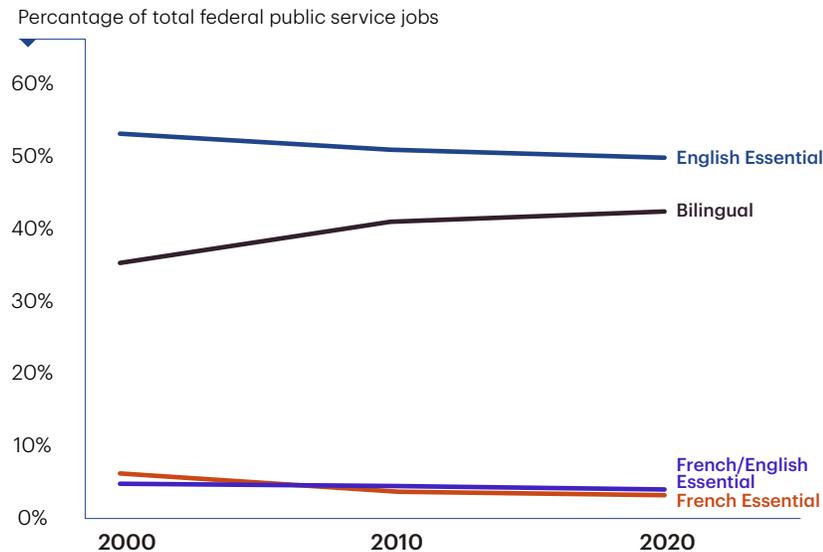
35

Ibid., 51.



Conversely, the proportion of English-essential jobs in the public service decreased from 52.8% to 49.7% and French-essential jobs from 5.8% to 3.4%. French or English-essential jobs remained relatively stable, going from 5% to 4.4%.³⁶ These trends demonstrate the increasing importance of bilingual skills to pursue a career in the federal public service, with a relative decrease in unilingual French and English-essential positions.

Figure 10: Bilingual and Unilingual Positions in the Federal Public Service (2000 to 2020)



Data Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, "Annual Report on Official Languages: 2020-21," Government of Canada, 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/tbs-sct/documents/values-and-ethics/official-languages/reports/2020-2021-ol-lo-eng.pdf>, 50.

Survey of Ontario Employers with French-Language Hiring Needs

Findings from the Survey of Ontario Employers with French-language Hiring Needs (hereafter, "employer survey," ICTC, 2023, n = 401) confirm many of the observations of interviewees.³⁷ First, as emphasized throughout this paper, the Francophone economy in Ontario is inextricable from broader provincial trends: in Table 4, there is overlap between roles generally in high demand and roles that usually or always require French skills. Notably, more than half of respondents who identified as Francophone businesses (60% of 144 respondents) were looking for entry-level hires, while just over half (52%) also required senior staff. Furthermore, about a third of all respondents required customer service, client relations, and senior personnel, and similarly, about a third said that these roles required French most of or all the time.

³⁶ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, "Annual Report on Official Languages: 2020-21," Government of Canada, 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/tbs-sct/documents/values-and-ethics/official-languages/reports/2020-2021-ol-lo-eng.pdf>, 50.

³⁷ See Appendix A for survey methodology details.



Table 4: Survey of Ontario Employers with French-language Hiring Needs
(ICTC, January 2023, n = 401)

Type of Role	Jobs in High Demand (All Businesses)	Jobs in High Demand (Francophone Businesses Subsample)	Roles Always or Usually Require French Skills (All Businesses)
Entry-level	49%	60%	19%
Sales	37%	43%	26%
Customer service	36%	45%	32%
Client relations	33%	41%	30%
Senior-level	29%	52%	30%
Technical	28%	31%	15%
Operational	25%	35%	11%
Strategic	24%	35%	25%
Business-to-consumer (B2C) roles	23%	31%	20%
Mid-level	22%	32%	14%
Business-to-business (B2B) roles	22%	36%	20%
Executive/C-Suite	18%	30%	18%
Managerial	18%	33%	21%
Human resources	17%	36%	18%
Educational/Training	16%	25%	17%
Other	2%	5%	15%

When asked to list up to three job titles that require French-language skills, respondents to the Survey of Ontario Employers with French-Language Hiring Needs most commonly named **customer service representatives** (34%), **sales associates/sales representatives** (28%), and people or project managers (25%). Other titles included directors, executives and c-suite roles (11%), client services/client relations (6%), receptionists and administrators (6%), and numerous other titles such as technical specialists (5%), accountants (5%), marketing roles (4%), and translators (4%).



This list reflects an under-sampling of public sector respondents (see Appendix A, e.g., only 3% of respondents named teachers, which likely does not reflect the actual demand for French-speaking teachers in Ontario). A 2021 study published by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association projected heightened demand for French-speaking teachers in Ontario at the primary and secondary levels due to increasing interest in French as a second language (FSL) programs.³⁸ Furthermore, in ICTC's collection of roles for French speakers from job boards, 223 roles for French-speaking teachers were published within one month (January-February 2023, see "Getting Granular" and Appendix for notes on methodology).

Estimating Demand: A Balance between Competition and Jobs That Require French versus Jobs That List French "As an Asset"

When asked what their organizations' motivation was for hiring French-speaking employees, most respondents commented that they wanted to expand their customer base and reach new markets (14%) and cater to French-speaking customers (14%) or offer better customer service in general (13%). Survey respondents highlighted the importance of building economic ties with French-speaking clients and regions in their responses:

- “ To better serve our customers in Montreal and Quebec.
- “ We will be able to offer better customer service to French-speaking customers. We would be able to release better marketing campaigns in French-speaking areas. We would be able to expand our business to French-speaking provinces.
- “ It's useful for attracting customers beyond France; French is also spoken in Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland. Due to globalization, the number of companies doing business internationally is increasing rapidly.
- “ The Francophone community in Thunder Bay is underserved and should have better accessibility.

The vast majority of respondents to the employer survey are hiring bilingual recruits with intermediate to advanced English skills. When asked what level of English was required for French-speaking staff, **only 4%** had no specified minimum level, with another 4% noting that they would only require beginner English language skills. Furthermore, only 46% of employer survey respondents reported having an assessment process for the French-language skills of bilingual job candidates.

38

Ontario Public School Boards' Association, Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario, 2021, <https://www.opsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/FSL-OLMP-Year-End-Report.pdf>



Accordingly, findings from the Survey of Ontario Employers with French-language Hiring Needs (ICTC, 2023) suggest that many employers are seeking bilingual employees – but also suggest that for many posted roles, the French language may be an asset rather than a requirement. Table 5 illustrates this point across occupations: for all types of occupations listed, a majority of survey respondents felt that French skills were either a requirement or an asset. Interviewees noted that even in roles where French-language skills are simply “nice to have,” such skills if used strategically, can help a candidate advance in their career.

Table 5: French language as a requirement vs. an asset in occupations
Occupations where over 75% of respondents identified that the French language is either a requirement or an asset are highlighted in blue. Survey of Ontario Employers with French-language Hiring Needs (ICTC, 2023).

	Roles Always or Usually Require French Skills	French Skills Are an Asset for These Roles	French Is a Requirement or an Asset (Sum)	Difference Between “Asset” and “Requirement”
Operational	11%	47%	58%	36%
Mid-level	14%	51%	65%	36%
Business-to-consumer (B2C) roles	20%	48%	68%	29%
Business-to-business (B2B) roles	20%	47%	67%	26%
Managerial	21%	46%	67%	25%
Executive/C-Suite	18%	42%	60%	25%
Educational/Training	17%	41%	58%	23%
Human resources	18%	41%	59%	23%
Entry-level	19%	41%	60%	23%
Technical	15%	37%	52%	22%
Sales	26%	49%	75%	22%
Client relations	30%	48%	77%	18%
Customer service	32%	43%	75%	12%
Senior-level	30%	37%	67%	7%
Strategic	25%	32%	58%	7%



Table 5 is sorted in descending order of the difference between the French language being an asset and the French language being a requirement, as an exploration of respondent perceptions of whether French is nice to have compared to it being essential. Interestingly, both very late-career (senior and strategic) and early-career (customer service, client relations, and sales) roles have the smallest difference between French as an asset and French as a requirement. One interviewee (a Francophone talent acquisition specialist) noted from experience:

“ *Mostly entry-level positions are quite often asked to be bilingual. A little higher up the hierarchy, the bilingual aspect... [is] seen as an extra skill, but it's not always seen as necessary. [And then] most of the positions that are fairly up the hierarchy of Canadian companies are generally taken by managers who at least have a really good command of both languages. But between the CEO and the employee who is at the bottom of the ladder, there are a lot of steps.*

One important caveat to the employer survey data is that it primarily reflects the private sector labour market. In a subsequent section, job post data that includes government administration will illustrate that there are indeed mid-career opportunities for French speakers where language use is essential. For French-speaking job seekers in Ontario, however, it seems that French can play a value-added role in many parts of the economy, but they are likely to need strong English language skills as well as other professional skills to succeed and advance in their careers.

To delve a little deeper into the question of when the French language is an essential skill, this study next explores roles for Francophones who do not speak English, as well as data on language use in the workplace.

Roles for Francophones Who Do Not Speak English

According to 2021 Canadian census data, 4.2% of Ontarians' mother tongue is French, and about one in 10 Ontarians whose mother tongue is French do not speak English.³⁹ Furthermore, French-speaking newcomers to Canada, who comprise a significant part of the Francophone talent pool in Ontario (and who are discussed further in Part II of this study), may not always speak English and arrive in Canada looking for French-language work.

The vast majority of roles for French speakers in Ontario require strong English language skills and are essentially bilingual roles, with some notable exceptions. Interviewees discussed settings like Francophone immersion schools and daycares where French is the language of work. Furthermore, some French language newcomer-serving organizations (such as the *Association des communautés Francophones* (ACFO) in some parts of the province) involve French-speaking work environments, as do certain French-language news organizations like Groupe Média TFO.

39

Statistics Canada, (2022), "More than one language in the bag: The rate of English-French bilingualism is increasing in Quebec and decreasing outside Quebec," 2021 Census, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2022052-eng.htm>; Statistics Canada, (2022), Mother tongue by geography, 2021 Census, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/language-langue/index-en.html>



Ontario is also home to numerous Francophone small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), accounting for 4.2% of total SMEs in Ontario and nearly 50% of Francophone-owned businesses in Canada outside of Quebec.⁴⁰ These Francophone-owned businesses also make up an important component of the Franco-Ontarian employment picture. While rare, unilingual roles may offer an important transition for French-speaking newcomers to Canada. For example, one interviewee from an organization that hired French speakers without English skills noted that they often hired newcomers who stayed with them until their English skills had improved.

Interviewees' impressions of opportunities for French speakers are borne out by findings from the 2021 Canadian Census. Table 6 lists occupations in Ontario and examines the most commonly used language in the workplace, as well as occasions where French is the *only* language used in the workplace. Neither are perfect measurements for unilingual skill opportunities in Ontario for three reasons: first, employers may still want their employees to have English skills even if their workplace language is French. Second, the data outlined in Table 6 does not necessarily reflect which occupations are in-demand because it measures individual responses about the workplace rather than a gap between job opportunities and supply. Finally, self-reporting on the language used at work does not necessarily mean a position is bilingual or unilingual French. For example, respondents could simply use French consistently in a job that has no stated language requirements.⁴¹ (Occupations in education, law, and social, community, and government services offer the most jobs that require only one language to be spoken in the workplace, followed by jobs in natural resources, agriculture and related production, and art, recreation, culture, and sport.)

Table 6: Occupations in Ontario by French Language Use in the Workplace

Source: Statistics Canada (2022), Languages used at work by industry and occupation: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts, Table: 98-10-0520-01.

Occupations in Ontario	Total (Count)	French Is Most Commonly Used at Work (Count)	French Is Most Commonly Used at Work (%)	Only French Is Used at Work (Count)	Only French Is Used at Work (%)
Occupations in education, law, and social, community and government services	957,480	38,870	4.06%	24,540	2.56%
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	168,470	2,405	1.43%	1,665	0.99%
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	272,540	3,030	1.11%	1,355	0.50%

40 Fédération des gens d'affaires francophones de l'Ontario, "Profil Sommaire de l'économie franco-ontarienne," March 2021, <https://fedefranco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FGA-Profil-sommaire-de-leconomie-franco-ontarienne.pdf>, 9.

41 The same point is made by LMIC, suggesting that census questions lack the ability to "determine whether a position is truly bilingual." Labour Market Information Council, "Under Pressure: Estimating the demand and supply for bilingual workers in Canada," LMI Insight Report, May 2021, <https://lmic-cimt.ca/publications-all/lmi-insight-report-no-42/#toc-3>



Occupations in Ontario (cont.)	Total (Count)	French Is Most Commonly Used at Work (Count)	French Is Most Commonly Used at Work (%)	Only French Is Used at Work (Count)	Only French Is Used at Work (%)
Health occupations	578,195	5,975	1.03%	2,695	0.47%
Business, finance and administration occupations	1,428,300	13,340	0.93%	6,245	0.44%
Legislative and senior management occupations	99,875	900	0.90%	410	0.41%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	1,278,455	9,790	0.77%	5,645	0.44%
Sales and service occupations	1,978,335	14,755	0.75%	7,390	0.37%
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	405,660	1,825	0.45%	1,160	0.29%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	718,405	3,020	0.42%	1,450	0.20%

Getting Granular: Job Posts and Seniority of Roles for French Speakers in Ontario by Region

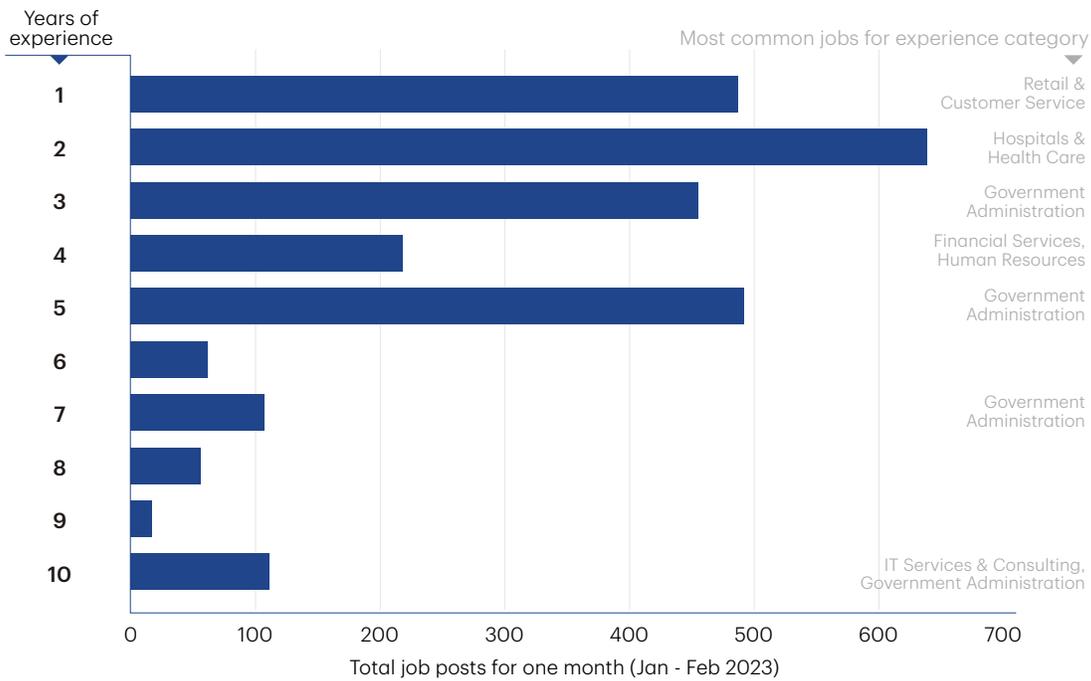
To complement the survey of Ontario employers, interviews, and census data, ICTC scraped job post data for roles that included French-language skills in Ontario. (See Appendix A for details on the methodology used.) Overall, 5,355 jobs were collected over the course of one month, from January 20 to February 23, 2023.

Years of Experience Required in Job Posts

Figure 11 explores jobs according to years of experience required and the top industry within each experience category. Importantly, there is a great diversity of industry within each experience bin: none of the column industry labels in Figure 11 represent the majority of job posts. Furthermore, seasonal hiring trends are likely to impact job post data (e.g., certain industries may be more or less likely to hire immediately following winter holidays). Finally, some industries looking for bilingual talent may bypass job postings via a recruitment firm or hire through their own networks. As such, the following figure should be taken as a snapshot in time of posted roles rather than representative of long-term overall hiring trends.



Figure 11: Job Post Data, January to February 2023, by years of experience and most common industry within each experience category. ICTC, 2023. For over 3000 of the jobs collected, years of experience could not be extracted, and these roles are not listed here.



The major industries that surfaced from the job scraping process included retail and customer service; government administration; hospitals and health care; education; banking and financial services; staffing, recruiting, and human resources; and numerous others.

Bilingual Job Posts: French, English, or Both?

Several primary research participants noted that they tended to post jobs in English in Ontario, even when looking for French-speaking candidates. As one interviewee commented,

“Even French people who went to French universities search for jobs in English. We did an experiment internally. We posted jobs in English and then in French. We had way more applications when it was in English, so that’s where we left it. But we included French and English as language requirements.”

French-language recruiters who participated in this study noted the detrimental tendency of burying language requirements at the end of job posts, commenting that “employers often under-emphasize bilingualism even in roles in which bilingualism is essential.” One participant recommended that employers should emphasize bilingualism in job titles or closer to the top of the post.⁴²

⁴² Job posts in this study were scraped if they used a keyword referring to French or bilingualism in either official language, or if they contained French language text. They were subsequently cleaned to remove roles that had been posted in two languages but in fact only required English in the workplace (e.g., some public sector postings). See Appendix A for further details.



Early Career (0-4 Years of Experience)

Treasury Analyst, Hamilton, Hamilton Health Services, 2+ years of relevant experience

- The Treasury Analyst is Responsible for Supporting the Preparation of HHSC's Bank Reconciliations to Support the Confirmation of Completeness of the Financial Statements as Part of the Year-End Audit.
- Chartered Public Accountant (CPA) Designation or CPA Program Enrolment is preferred, bachelor's degree or diploma in accounting or business is required.



Language Statement: Proficiency in Both Official Languages, French and English, is considering an asset.

Enseignant(e) suppléant(e) à long terme à 100% du temps | ÉÉSP
l'académie de la seigneurie, Casselman, Conseil Des Écoles Publiques De L'est De L'ontario

- The teacher is responsible for the effective education and training of students in matters that they are responsible for teaching, for the real assessment of their progress, the administration of the classes(s) and, on request, the presentation of a report to the school management on the progress of the students.



Language Statement: A French-speaking multicultural work environment in Eastern Ontario.

Renewals Account Representative (French Bilingual), Waterloo, OpenText

- In this role, you are focused on relationship management, selling the value of OpenText Maintenance and Support Programs, and driving retention and growth. Quoting, positioning upsells, regular follow-up, and closing renewals are primary responsibilities. Extremely strong organizational skills and the ability to accurately forecast are required.



Language Statement: Fluency in both English and French languages.



Mid Career (5-9 Years of Experience)

Réalisateur ou réalisatrice à l'affectation (services français),

Greater Sudbury, CBC/Radio-Canada

- In your mandate as a director, you will mainly be responsible for planning, designing, organizing, and developing products and making information programs for the web, radio, and television in Radio-Canada in northern Ontario. You will run a team of journalists responsible for providing daily news.



Exigence linguistique du poste: Bilingue (français/anglais).

Manager, Regional Sales, Toronto, Air Canada

- The Manager, Regional Sales has the overall responsibility for increasing Air Canada's market share and profitability of a defined group of accounts within a region. The Manager, Regional Sales will be responsible for planning, establishing, and implementing regional sales strategies, goals, and key performance indicators that support Air Canada's business objectives and revenue targets.



Language Statement: Based on equal qualifications, preference will be given to bilingual candidates.

Human Resources Advisor (Recruitment),

Ottawa, Public Service Alliance of Canada

- This position develops staffing procedures and offers operational human resources advisory services to management, elected officers, staff and employees of the PSAC and its components on recruitment, workforce planning, staffing, and human resources policies.



Language Statement: Bilingual (English, French).



Late Career (10+ Years of Experience)

Head of Research, RBC Climate, Toronto, Royal Bank of Canada

- We are looking for a dynamic and diligent leader to shape the research agenda and be an additional voice in Canada's climate dialogue. This new position will report to the SVP, Office of the CEO, and oversee a small team of climate and policy researchers, and work collaboratively with our publication and communications team, client-facing business groups and the RBC climate network.



Language Statement: Bilingual English/French would be an asset.

Manager, Public Affairs and Advocacy, Ottawa, Cuso International

- We are looking for public affairs and policy leader driven by passion and principle to advance human progress in all its forms, with a focus on social justice, human rights, gender equality, feminism, environmental sustainability, and economic development. The ideal candidate is a strategic thinker, with extensive experience in helping organizations position themselves for policy awareness, impact, and relevance.



Language Statement: Fluently bilingual, English and French (professional level capacity in writing required in both languages), Spanish is an asset.

Special Hazards Technician / technicien - risques spéciaux, Sudbury, Everguard

- The successful candidate must be a professional, highly motivated, self-starter with a keen attention to detail and the ability to safely execute high-quality work on time, every time. They will bring with them strong communication and customer service skills, with an ability to work both collaboratively with team members, as well as independently, to deliver high-quality service and support to our customers. The candidate must have a minimum of 10+ years' field experience servicing and maintaining fire alarm systems across various industries and hold a valid CFAA (Canadian Fire Alarm Association) certification.



Language Statement: Bilingualism (French/English, both written and spoken) is required.



Demand for French Speakers Across Ontario's Economic Regions

Job post data also shows which regions of Ontario are posting the most opportunities. Figure 12 examines job posts by economic region and mean years of experience. The vast majority of jobs are posted in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and East Ontario (primarily in Ottawa). Meanwhile, jobs posted in the Southwest and Central regions of the province tend to require lower mean years of experience. In both Figure 11 above and Figure 12 below, mean years of experience is likely to be inflated because of the entry-level roles that do not list years of experience at all. If all job posts that do not mention experience are assumed to require no prior experience, the overall mean years of experience across all postings for bilingual roles in Ontario would be 1.80.

Figure 12: Job Post Frequency and Mean Years of Experience by Ontario Economic Region



Job Post Data, January to February 2023, by mean years of experience and percentage of all jobs posted by region of Ontario. ICTC, 2023. For over 3000 of the jobs collected, years of experience could not be extracted, and these roles are not listed here.



Transferable In-Demand Skills: Looking Beyond the French Language

While this study primarily focuses on the demand for French-language skills in Ontario, the vast majority of roles available nevertheless require other technical and non-technical skills. Job posts with bilingual and French keywords were examined for skills across all postings, with the following most commonly mentioned across 5,000+ job posts:

- 1 Communication (>2,000 mentions)
- 2 Customer Service (>2,000 mentions)
- 3 Problem Solving (>1,000 mentions)

Other essential transferable skills included project management, time management, Microsoft Office suite, and social media savvy. While speaking French is itself a highly transferable skill, other transferable skills and primarily “soft” or human skills are essential components of labour market success for French speakers as well as English speakers in Ontario.

This finding is mirrored by literature on skills needs across Ontario; numerous researchers have highlighted a need for human skill development across roles, but particularly for entry-level employees.⁴³ For technical roles as well, human skills are crucial. For example, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce establishes a link between the mastery of human skills and innovation in the workplace.⁴⁴ While human or soft skills are highly sought after, technical skills are also essential, and job boards’ emphasis on skills such as project management and common software solutions reinforces that many “technical” skills are also transferable. As will be discussed later in this section, co-op programs and other workforce-integrated learning offer a key opportunity to teach students transferable and human skills.

Finding, Recruiting, and Retaining Francophone Talent

Throughout Ontario, employers are searching for bilingual employees at all levels of seniority. Across the board, respondents looking for French-speaking bilingual talent in Ontario expressed a sense of scarcity, noting that they often use unique incentives or recruitment strategies to address bilingual talent needs. This section begins by addressing employer perspectives on the availability of bilingual talent before turning to recruitment and retention strategies.

43 Sophie Borwein, “The Great Skills Divide: A Review of the Literature,” Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2014, <https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Skills-Part-1.pdf>; Business Council of Canada, “Developing Canada’s future workforce: a survey of large private-sector employers,” March 2016, <https://thebusinesscouncil.ca/report/developing-canadas-future-workforce-a-survey-of-large-private-sector-employers/>, 4-5; Brookfield Institute, “Future-proof: Preparing young Canadians for the future of work,” March 2017, <https://brookfieldinstitute.ca/future-proof-preparing-young-canadians-for-the-future-of-work/>, 13-15; Business + Higher Education Roundtable, “Empowering People for Recovery and Growth: 2022 Skills Survey Report,” March 2022, <https://www.bher.ca/publications/research-publications/empowering-people-recovery-and-growth-2022-skills-survey-report>, 9.

44 The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Generation Innovation: The Talent Canada Needs for the New Economy, November 2016, https://bellevillechamber.ca/photos/custom/news/161115_Generation_Innovation_The_Talent_Canada_Needs_for_the_New_Economy.pdf



Employer Perspectives on Bilingual Talent Scarcity

Finding bilingual personnel in Ontario can be challenging at all levels of recruitment. Interviewees in this study recounted stories of searching for Francophone talent across the board, including entry-level workers in customer-facing roles, as well as mid-career and senior roles, where it is essential that an employee has strong French skills. Interviewees described challenges in finding professionals with the right combination of language and other professional skills, in part due to the high demand in certain areas:

- “ I recently held a competition for a [well-compensated] communications manager position, and I only had five applications. I recruit for this role on a cycle every two years.
- “ It can take much longer to find people who have the industry experience and the language skills and the qualifications that you need.
- “ It's hard to find good talent that, number one, fits the job description, but then also speaks the language as well. It's definitely like finding a needle in a haystack, especially within the Ontario region.

This challenge was echoed for those working in public services or non-profit spaces, where talented bilingual staff are needed despite budget constraints that prevent these organizations from participating in salary competition. Furthermore, when asked how demand for French-speaking employees was likely to change compared to the organization's employment growth overall, 30% of employer survey respondents felt there would be *more* demand for French-speaking employees than non-French-speaking employees, while 58% felt that demand would be about the same for all employees.

Finding and Recruiting Bilingual Talent in Ontario

Employer survey respondents were asked, “when hiring for a position that requires French-language skills, how would your team recruit candidates?” Nearly half (48%) used a recruiter, and 37% used a specifically French-language recruiter. Just under half (45%) used LinkedIn outreach. Over a third (38%) of respondents “maintain relationships with French-language post-secondary institutions for recruitment purposes,” and this was significantly more likely for the subsample of businesses identifying as Francophone organizations (64% of whom reported using partnerships for recruitment) as opposed to non-Francophone organizations (22%). Other strategies included career fairs (21%), local networks and word of mouth (26%) and online job boards other than LinkedIn (6%).

Interviewees reiterated the important role that French-language recruitment firms, online forums, and personal and professional networks play in Ontario's bilingual talent ecosystem. French-language recruiters may be used in circumstances when organizations don't have any French speakers on their team who are able to recruit and assess French-language skills.



Recruiters may, for example, serve as a first step for organizations trying to build out a French-speaking department by helping a company hire its first French-speaking HR generalist to carry the task forward. French-language recruiters interviewed for this study said that even they had a hard time finding candidates, despite their professional networks and knowledge of the Ontario French-speaking community. One recruiter said that employer retention policies could help attract staff but that bilingual salary bonuses might still cause a challenge:

- “ [T]he issue with the current market that we're in is that there seem to be more opportunities available than there are skilled professionals who are job searching. The unemployment rate is very, very low. Employers have had to be innovative with how they attract not only the language skills but someone who is also qualified for the position at the same time. So they really need to focus on workplace culture.
- “ They need to have a really strong relationship with their staff to make sure that they're happy. If they're not happy, they really inquire about, 'Okay, what is it going to take? Like, what's missing? What [do you need] to stay here for the next year or two, five years, or 10 years?'
- “ I have started to see a lot of organizations offer bilingual bonuses to the folks who are French-speaking and also higher compensation. What I typically see is salaries increasing substantially for those who are bilingual or French speaking. It has gone anywhere up to like \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000, depending on the seniority of the position.

Employers reported attending French-language conferences and events, including Francophone cultural activities, festivals, and career fairs. Seasoned recruiters and people managers emphasized a relational approach to becoming involved in Francophone communities and creating partnerships as “important in order to attract and be more successful in hiring bilingual people.” Further, employers reported publishing job opportunities in French-speaking social media groups and incentivizing existing bilingual staff financially by adopting refer-a-friend recruiting programs.

Partnerships with post-secondary institutions are a key opportunity for employers seeking to build greater partnerships with French-speaking talent, and workforce-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities allow employers to build relationships with new graduates while helping them improve their skills. Part II addresses this topic.

Salary Competition and Bilingual Bonuses

Interviewees reported a consistent challenge of salary competition in Ontario's French-language talent ecosystem. Even for entry-level roles, employers reported offering more for bilingual workers. One estimated that,

- “ A Francophone or bilingual person can claim at least a 20% or 30% higher salary than an anglophone. This rule doesn't apply all the time on all scales, but for example, I recruited someone in customer service who was non-bilingual for maybe \$45,000, whereas someone bilingual could reach \$55-, \$60-, maybe \$65,000 and so on when they had the same number of years of experience.



Another described an inevitable “bilingual premium” and saw headhunting as an issue for retention, noting that French speakers might switch companies for an additional \$5,000 to \$10,000. Organizations that are not able to participate in salary competition, such as non-profit organizations and some levels of public service, reported significant challenges in compensating people for a living wage in the GTA, let alone adding additional salary incentives for bilingual workers. Accordingly, many of these organizations reported investing significant time into upskilling their recruits and addressing burnout in their organizations.

Despite interviewee reports, employer survey respondents were more constrained in their answers to whether they provided recruitment incentives for candidates with French-language skills. Only 12% reported offering a bilingual or signing bonus, and only 4% reported offering a higher base salary. In total, therefore, about one in six (16%) of respondents reported consciously paying more for bilingual talent than anglophone talent.

Assessing Recruits’ French-Language Skills

Only 46% of employer survey respondents reported having an assessment process for the French-language skills of bilingual job candidates. Of those that did have an assessment in place, 33% used some type of test, and 12% used a French-language interview. Interestingly, not all employer survey respondents seemed to have HR professionals able to conduct French-language interviews—rather, some reported having “the translation department” conduct the assessment, or “Francophone employees” in general, tying into a common theme in this study: when French speakers are scarce, they are often asked to do a variety of French tasks outside of their job descriptions.

Interviewees described a variety of assessment procedures, noting that they might use a French test for roles in which French is beneficial but not essential, but opt for a French-language interview in cases where language skills were crucial.

Some employers used Francophone recruiters to do the assessment process, particularly if they did not have French-speaking HR staff internally. Indeed, 27% of employer survey respondents did not speak French, 40% spoke beginner French, and 32% reported being advanced or fluent French speakers. While this data is specific to a sample of employers who have French hiring needs in Ontario (but is not representative of broader provincial trends), it may be illustrative of the number of hiring managers and employers who lack the French skills to assess fluency.



Retaining French-Speaking Staff in Ontario

Interviewees and secondary literature highlight a high turnover of Francophonie and bilingual staff in Ontario.⁴⁵ Factors driving turnover of French-speaking workers include insufficient recognition of their linguistic skills, lack of structured French-language programming and policies in the workplace, and an inundation of extra tasks outside of their job descriptions—such as translating documents on short notice. Indeed, French-speaking workers in Ontario face the professional risk of being pigeonholed in specific roles because of their valuable linguistic skills, leading to job dissatisfaction and potential burnout. Reports on this topic highlight the importance of providing a fair opportunity for career advancement for French-speaking employees.⁴⁶

Retention strategies are crucial for all work environments and all types of employees, and interviewees and employer survey respondents discussed strategies for their whole workforces, as well as strategies specific to Francophone employees.

General workforce retention strategies for employers who hired bilingual personnel included:

- Professional development funding and training opportunities
- Investing in workspace, company culture
- Offering flexible working locations or remote work
- Offering clear and accessible advancement opportunities
- Offering strong benefits packages
- Offering childcare assistance and paid parental leave

Strategies specific to bilingual or Francophone workforce retention included:

- Paying higher base salaries and bilingual premiums
- Paying for English or French-language classes (if someone's language skills need development)
- Offering software that supports French-language work (e.g., French word processing and grammar checkers)
- Employing a French-speaking HR person

45 Andrea Bodkin and Estelle Duchon, "Finders Keepers: Recruiting & Retaining Bilingual Staff," HC Link, March 2014, https://en.healthnexus.ca/sites/en.healthnexus.ca/files/resources/finders_keepers.pdf.

46 Suzanne Tremblay, "Framework for Recruitment & Retention of Bilingual Human Resources in the Health Sector," March 2015, Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario & Société Santé en français, <https://reseausantene.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/HR-Framework.pdf>, 27.



A guidebook by the Ontario-based Healthy Communities Consortium suggests that recognizing employees with French-language skills for their unique workplace contributions and providing French-language work aids and resources, such as translated technical documentation and copies of forums, can make the lives of French-speaking workers at predominantly English-speaking organizations more tenable.⁴⁷

Very few employer survey respondents reported having intentional strategies for retaining Francophone personnel. Of the full sample, 73% did not have Francophone-specific retention strategies, and 20% did not know or declined to answer the question. Those who did name retention strategies typically specified higher pay, benefit packages, or paid training.

Interviewees noted that variation in retention strategy likely depended on the sector, with one respondent commenting that they only saw government and some areas of the private sector offering many of the list items above. The same respondent felt that some companies hiring for bilingual customer service roles would still offer minimum wage but hire from communities less familiar with the market rate for bilingual skills, including French-speaking newcomers and Francophone youth. This issue will be raised in Part II's discussion of French-speaking communities in Ontario.

Bilingual talent scarcity and growing demand have significant implications for French speakers planning their career pathways in Ontario and will be explored further in the next section. Finding a bilingual role with a relatively high salary might not be very difficult, but from the perspective of many professionals and new workers, it is important to find work that also allows for advancement and professional skills development beyond simply speaking and writing French. These work dimensions may be lacking in entry-level customer service and call centre roles (where significant bilingual talent demand exists, as has been discussed).

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Healthy Communities Consortium Work Together With Francophones In Ontario: Understanding The Context And Using Promising Practices, <http://www.entitesante2.ca/fls-cop/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/8-PLANNING-Work-Together-with-Francophones.pdf>, 39-40.





PART 2

French-speaking Talent, Skills Development, and Career Pathways

Part I of this study focuses on French-speaking talent demand in Ontario, highlighting a French skills shortage across the province. Unlike other areas of labour demand and scarcity, many employers looking for bilingual talent may treat French-language skills as superseding other requirements. Some employers interviewed for this study quipped that it can be much easier to train a new French-speaking employee on a specific work skill than a unilingual English-speaking employee who already has that skill to speak French.

Part II of this paper explores the career paths of French speakers in Ontario, including current workers, students, and prospective students. From the perspective of a new graduate or newcomer shaping their career path in Ontario, the value of their French skills, above all else, can be both good and bad. French speakers may be able to trade their language skills for higher salaries or advancement opportunities, or they may be “typecast” into lower-level customer-facing roles, such as call centres.



Few skills hold such primacy in someone's career that they can supersede other education and training. Bilingual skills in Ontario have the potential to be powerful career determinants. Interviewees who currently employ French speakers discussed the impact of bilingual skill primacy early in their careers:

- “ I have only two or three years of experience in recruitment. I get contacted very regularly, just by the simple fact that I speak French, whereas I have colleagues who have about the same years of experience and don't speak French, and they get fewer messages from people.
- “ In my next job, would I take just an English-speaking role? You wouldn't be paid as much as if you kept the bilingual title. And it's harder to make that switch once you've identified yourself as bilingual. For instance, once you have that on your resume and you're applying for an English-speaking role, your employer will say, 'Hey, why don't you want to continue working in French?'
- “ I often think someone who is bilingual can receive an opportunity without having the required experience. We're willing to take someone who shows an interest in finance or is willing to be trained because the French language is the non-trainable aspect of the requirements.
- “ I applied to an interesting [unilingual] position, but I used my bilingual resume, and the person at [company] was like, 'Why are you applying to this role and not this other one? It's a bilingual role, and it pays better....' When I was first hired, I outright said that I didn't have a background in the role. It was repeated often to me that 'we can teach you accounting, but we can't teach you to speak French.'

While bilingual skills led to enhanced career opportunities for many interviewees, they also reported downsides: some found themselves overworked when asked to take on all of the French-language work in their organization or were pulled into French-language tasks incongruent with their job titles. Furthermore, some interviewees' ability to leverage their language skills depended on whether they had Canadian experience or sounded like they came from another Francophone country.

Accordingly, Part II of this study examines the careers of French speakers in Ontario through the dual lens of Census 2021 data and a French-speaking student survey. It begins by examining the roles that French speakers in Ontario are currently in before turning to the aspirations of new French-speaking post-secondary students.



Who are French Speakers in Ontario?

About one in ten (11%) of Ontarians reported having knowledge of French in the 2021 Census of Population.⁴⁸ This group includes Franco-Ontarians, newcomers, and immigrants to Canada whose mother tongues include French, members of the Quebec diaspora, and English speakers who have studied French as a second language.

The following section unpacks data from Census 2021 on workers who report having French as a mother tongue (in other words, Franco-Ontarians, Quebec-Ontario migrants, and international Francophone immigrants) before turning to a discussion of the unique challenges facing Francophone newcomers to Canada. Finally, it examines skill development opportunities for Ontarians who want to learn French and then discusses the role of Francophone post-secondary institutions.



Ontario Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French, by Occupation

As discussed previously, just over 4% of Ontarians report French as one of their mother tongues. Table 7 explores the occupations that this group of Ontarians currently hold and to what extent they use their French-language skills in the workplace. Table 7 examines data from the whole province, showing that *sales and service* occupations are the most common role for workers whose mother tongue includes French; followed by *business, finance, and administration occupations*; and then *education, law, and social, community and government services*.

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Statistics Canada (2023), Ontario Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed March 7, 2023).



Table 7: Use of French Language at Work

	Total Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French Primarily at Work	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French & English at Work	% of Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French Who Use Bilingual Skills at Work
Sales and service occupations	70,645	11,500	7,060	26%
Business, finance and administration occupations	64,575	10,950	7,760	29%
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	57,345	23,725	4,845	50%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	48,135	8,700	3,485	25%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	25,870	2,190	2,275	17%

All workers (over 15 and who worked since Jan 1, 2020) in Ontario who learned French as a mother tongue broken into their top five occupations. Mother tongues include French uses all the following variables: French; English and French; French and non-official language; English, French and non-official language. Statistics Canada (2022), Languages used at work by mother tongue, immigrant status and occupation: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts, Table: 98-10-0525-01

About 15% of Ontario workers whose mother tongues include French are immigrants to Canada or non-permanent residents.⁴⁹ For each of the above occupations, newcomers hold approximately 15% of the roles but are under-represented in *trades, transport, and equipment and related occupations* (comprising only 8% of that group) and are over-represented in *natural and applied sciences and related occupations* (comprising 21%).

Each row in Table 7 is a broad occupation category that can be broken down further. The most common sub-categories for French speakers are:

1 Sales and service occupations:

Sales and support service occupations (includes support occupations in food, accommodation, tourism, sales, cleaning, and related services). These occupations are Training, Education, Experience, and Responsibility (TEER) level 5, “typically accessible with short work demonstration and no formal educational requirements.”⁵⁰

49 Statistics Canada (2022), Languages used at work by mother tongue, immigrant status and occupation: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts, Table: 98-10-0525-01

50 Statistics Canada (2021), National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Version 1.0 (Accessed March 07, 2022).



Sales and service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations (includes retail salespersons, occupations in personal services, food, accommodation, and tourism, customer, information, and protective services). Occupations are TEER level 4, “typically require completion of secondary school; or several weeks of on-the-job training with some secondary school education; or experience in a related occupation.”⁵¹

2 Business, finance, and administration occupations:

Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics occupations (includes office work; finance, insurance, and related; library work; and supply chain logistics). Occupations are TEER level 4.

Administrative occupations and transportation logistics occupations (includes customs brokers, transportation coordinators, and related administrative occupations). Occupations are TEER level 3, “typically require completion of a post-secondary education program of less than two years at community college, institute of technology or CEGEP (a public school that provides the first level of post-secondary education in Quebec); or completion of an apprenticeship training program of less than two years; or more than six months of on-the-job training, training courses or specific work experience with some secondary school education; or the accumulation of several years of experience in a related occupation.”⁵²

3 Occupations in education, law, and social, community and government services:

Professional occupations in law, education, social, community and government services (includes lawyers, teachers, professionals in social roles or government). Occupations are TEER 1, “typically require a university degree (bachelor’s, master’s or doctorate) or the accumulation of several years of experience and expertise in the subject matter knowledge in a related occupation.”⁵³

Front-line public protection services and paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community, and education services (includes paralegals, early childhood educators, social and community service workers, police officers, firefighters, and others). Occupations are TEER 2, and “typically require completion of a post-secondary education program of two to three years at community college, institute of technology or CEGEP; or completion of an apprenticeship training program of two to five years; or supervisory or significant safety responsibilities; or the accumulation of several years of experience in a related occupation.”⁵⁴

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.



4 Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations:

Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers (includes trades contractors and supervisors, technical workers such as machinists, welders, electricians, carpenters, and many others). Occupations are TEER level 2.

General trades (includes building maintenance installers, construction workers, transportation occupations, and many others). Occupations are TEER level 3.

5 Natural and applied sciences and related occupations:

Professional occupations in natural and applied sciences (includes public and environmental health and safety professionals, chemists, meteorologists, physicists, biologists, forestry professionals, agricultural specialists, and many others). Occupations are TEER level 1.

Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences (includes technicians in a wide variety of life sciences and natural sciences roles). Occupations are TEER level 2.⁵⁵

The most common home for workers whose mother tongues include French that requires a university degree is 3a: *Professional occupations in law, education, social, community and government services*. As will be discussed later in this study, Francophone students appear to be more aware of government work than other sectors, raising the issue of student career path understanding and its influence on career choice.

Table 8 examines occupation data by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Occupations in education, law, and social, community and government services; or Business, finance, and administration occupations are the first two occupation categories for French speakers in the profiled cities of Toronto, Ottawa, and Sudbury (with the exception of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA when the Quebec half is included in the data).

In other words, French mother tongue speakers in CMAs such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Sudbury tend to work in roles with higher levels of education required, as described by the TEER levels in the list above. Furthermore, those in education, law, and social, community, and government services are most likely to be using their French and bilingual skills in the workplace.

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All of the examples in each of the occupation categories included is drawn from Statistics Canada (2021), National Occupation Classification (NOC) 2021, version 1.0, <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=1322554> (accessed March 7, 2023).



Table 8: Top Occupations by Region

Toronto (CMA)	Total Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French Primarily at Work	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French & English at Work	% of Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French Who Use Bilingual Skills at Work
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	14,415	3,605	665	30%
Business, finance and administration occupations	14,005	1,050	1,235	16%
Sales and service occupations	9,690	880	1,400	24%
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	6,150	530	300	13%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	5,030	260	325	12%
Greater Sudbury (CMA)	Total Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French Primarily at Work	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French & English at Work	% of Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French Who Use Bilingual Skills at Work
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	5,160	1,850	225	40%
Business, finance and administration occupations	4,580	605	405	22%
Sales and service occupations	4,175	420	355	19%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	3,545	265	145	12%
Health occupations	2,100	160	260	20%



Ottawa - Gatineau (Ontario part only)	Total Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French Primarily at Work	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French & English at Work	% of Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French Who Use Bilingual Skills at Work
Business, finance and administration occupations	25,150	5,045	4,080	36%
Occupations in education, law, social, community and government services	20,530	7,505	2,385	48%
Sales and service occupations	19,720	3,655	2,615	32%
Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations	11,565	2,595	1,390	34%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	10,885	1,055	1,335	22%

Ottawa - Gatineau (CMA, inc. Quebec part)	Total Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French Primarily at Work	Workers with French as Mother Tongue Speaking French & English at Work	% of Workers Whose Mother Tongues Include French Who Use Bilingual Skills at Work
Sales and service occupations	58,290	31,405	5,260	63%
Occupations in education, law, social, community, and government services	54,425	24,870	4,115	53%
Business, finance, and administration occupations	45,915	23,510	7,880	68%
Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations	34,045	19,915	2,810	67%
Health occupations	22,390	10,490	1,645	54%



French-speaking Newcomers and Immigrants in Ontario

Francophone newcomers settling in southern Ontario and the GTA, in particular, are an important constituent in the contemporary Francophone Ontarian community. The Ontario government has set a policy objective of ensuring that 5% of economic immigrants to Ontario are of Francophone origin.⁵⁶ The Ontario government's Francophone immigration goals are in alignment with the federal government's 4% target outside of Quebec.⁵⁷ The Government of Canada's recently launched Indo-Pacific strategy calls for the expansion and diversification of efforts to attract Francophone immigrants to Canada from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.⁵⁸

Yet, Ontario has struggled to recruit and retain Francophone immigrants despite its stated immigration targets. Other research has suggested that linguistic and employment barriers, difficulties with immigration and settlement services, and the general lack of knowledge about Ontario's Francophone community may be key culprits.⁵⁹

While significant French-speaking communities are already established in rural Eastern and Northern Ontario communities, Francophone immigrants are predominantly settling in the GTA, the Ottawa metro area, and elsewhere in urban Ontario.⁶⁰ Toronto and Ottawa combined accounted for 85% of Francophone immigration to Ontario between 2001 and 2012.⁶¹ Ontario is a destination of choice for French-speaking newcomers to Canada. Between 2001 and 2012, the province attracted the highest number of Francophone immigrants in Canada, outside of Quebec.⁶²

The 2021 Canadian census sheds some light on the proportion of Ontario's French-speaking immigrant workforce. Of workers whose mother tongues include French, about 15% are immigrants or non-permanent residents. Francophone newcomers speak French most commonly at work at about the same rate as other French mother tongue speakers in Ontario. Non-permanent residents speak French most commonly at work at a slightly higher rate (about 27% compared with about 21% for the other groups). As discussed in Part I on roles for unilingual French speakers who do not speak English, these workers may be in temporary roles in agriculture and natural resources (a common industry mentioned in the census for workers who only spoke French on the job), or other roles that typically use visitor visas.

56 Government of Canada, "FPT Action Plan for Increasing Francophone Immigration Outside of Quebec, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, March 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/documents/pdf/english/pub/action-plan.pdf>, 5.

57 Ibid.

58 Government of Canada, "Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy," 2022, <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparence-transparence/assets/pdfs/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique-en.pdf>, 20.

59 L'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, Francophone Immigration in Ontario, March 2017, 13-17.

60 Kathryn Barber, "Ontario Francophone Immigrant Profile: Immigration Trends & Labour Outcomes," Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement, January 2014, https://www.academia.edu/5786028/Ontario_Francophone_Immigrant_Profile_Immigration_Trends_and_Labour_Outcomes, 3.

61 Ibid, 17-18.

62 Ibid, 14-15.



Table 9: French in the Workplace

Mother Tongue Includes French, Ontario	Total (Count)	French Is Most Commonly Used at Work (Count)	French Is Most Commonly Used at Work (%)	Only French Is Used at Work (Count)	Only French Is Used at Work (%)
Total	322,210	68,395	21.23%	40,375	12.53%
Non-immigrants	273,600	57,630	21.06%	33,730	12.33%
immigrants	43,435	9,390	21.62%	5,800	13.35%
Non-permanent residents	5,180	1,375	26.54%	845	16.31%

All workers (over 15 and who worked since Jan 1, 2020) in Ontario who learned French as a mother tongue by language spoken in the workplace. See Table 7 for mother tongue definition. Statistics Canada (2022), Languages used at work by mother tongue, immigrant status and occupation: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts, Table: 98-10-0525-01.

Interviewees commented that French-speaking newcomers and immigrants face barriers to workforce entry and advancement despite their in-demand bilingual skills. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has noted that asking for “Canadian experience” in work requirements may be discriminatory and a violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code.⁶³ Nevertheless, some employers and recruiters interviewed in this study voiced a preference for recruits with Canadian experience and “gaps” in their French over a fluent French speaker with no Canadian experience. Others did not espouse the same preference but reported seeing it used broadly in practice.

Beyond Canadian experience requirements, some interviewees noted that an employer’s preference for a specific accent or dialect could also present a hiring barrier to a Francophone newcomer. Indeed, sociological research finds that racialized Francophone Ontarians can face dual barriers due to their status as both linguistic and racial minorities in Ontario.⁶⁴ Ontario immigrant and refugee youths from linguistic and racialized minority backgrounds face significant systemic barriers related to racism, underrepresentation, unemployment, and lack of access to education and social support in the province.⁶⁵ Several Francophone employers and community organizations interviewed as a part of this study reported actively working to hire Francophone newcomers in their organizations, in part due to awareness of the challenges that immigrants might face. For example, one recruiter commented:

“ I’ve heard a lot about [diversity and inclusion] within the past 12 months. One non-profit that I work with will put it in their mandatory requirements, depending on the position. They’ll specifically send us job descriptions and say, ‘We reserve this position for a visible minority or a French-speaking woman...’ to allow future generations to see that it’s possible to do X, Y, Z role because ‘I see a person that looks like me or sounds like me in that spot.’ ”

63 “Policy on Removing the “Canadian experience” barrier,” Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013, <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-removing-%E2%80%9Ccanadian-experience%E2%80%9D-barrier>

64 Amal Ibrahim Madibbo, “Race, Gender, Language and Power Relations: Blacks within Francophone Communities in Ontario, Canada,” *Race, Gender & Class*, vol. 14, no. 1-2 (2007), 213-226.

65 Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange, “The Integration of Black Francophone Immigrant Youth in Ontario,” 2019, <https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FINAL-YouthREX-RS-The-Integration-of-Black-Francophone-Immigrant-Youth-Colour.pdf>



Francophone post-secondary institutions and community organizations that offer immigration services play a crucial role in reducing workforce entry barriers for French-speaking newcomers and immigrants. Some employers voiced that Canadian workforce readiness training, English language skills, Canadian education, and exposure to the Franco-Ontarian French language improved their willingness to hire Francophone newcomers. Interviewees also expressed that settlement services and other bridging programs are essential to ensuring that Francophone newcomers are able to negotiate a fair salary and navigate Canadian workplaces with a network and resources to draw upon for advice about advancement and workers' rights.

These community settlement organizations are also an employment option for monolingual French speakers looking for work. (Newcomers with both French and English skills were likely to find it easier to market themselves and secure employment.) One Francophone organization described itself as a transition place where newcomers could work while developing their English skills: "We have really qualified newcomers that join [us], but in two or three years, they often switch to a bilingual role when they have developed their English because they have more opportunities then."

Finally, other Francophone organizations noted that immigration is an essential way of maintaining a French-speaking population and minority language rights in Ontario, as well as providing a crucial French-language talent supply. One French-language recruiter discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

“ Immigration stopped for a number of years, and we quickly saw that a lot of the roles that we had been able to fill with immigrant talent who had those language skills [come] to a dead halt when they relied on people who were already here.

Learning French as an Ontarian English Speaker

In addition to newcomers and Franco-Ontarians, a further source of French talent supply in Ontario comes from anglophones who have developed their French skills enough to succeed in bilingual jobs. Interviewees identified a shortage of French immersion language teachers in primary and secondary education as one important gap preventing greater French skill development across the province. Indeed, a 2021 analysis published by the Canadian Association for Immersion Professionals (ACPI) found that 42% of French immersion programs across Canada were facing teacher shortages. This significant shortage accounts for an estimated gap of 1,000 to 1,400 full-time French immersion teachers across Canada.⁶⁶

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Canadian Association for Immersion Professionals, "The Shortage of French Immersion and French as a Second Language Teachers," October 15, 2021, https://www.acpi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Socius_%C3%89tude-P%C3%A9nurie_IF-et-FLS_2021-11-04_avec-questionnaire_EN.pdf





French Education in the Ontario Primary and Secondary School System

Ontario offers French education in three different streams that correspond to students' mother tongue, preferred language of instruction, and interest in developing French-language skills. The first stream is Francophone schools, where Francophone students are able to receive instruction exclusively in French throughout their primary and secondary education. Students who enrol in Francophone schools are normally from Francophone families and consider French as their first language. Ontario's French public and French Catholic school systems consist of 12 French-language school boards and 470 Francophone elementary and secondary schools.⁶⁷

The second stream of French-language education in Ontario is French immersion programs, where students will pursue their primary and secondary studies with the French language as the language of instruction for the majority of their courses.⁶⁸ These students typically would not consider French as their primary language. Rather, these students are seeking to develop comprehensive mastery of French as a second or additional language.

The third stream of French-language education in Ontario is non-immersive French as a second language programming, where students take courses on the French language while pursuing their other courses in English. In the Ontario school system, students are required to take Core French courses in primary school and can opt to take additional French courses in secondary school. Ontario secondary school students can also choose to take Extended French, which requires them to take one subject in French alongside their courses on the French language.⁶⁹

67 Government of Ontario, "French-language education," updated July 5, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/french-language-education>

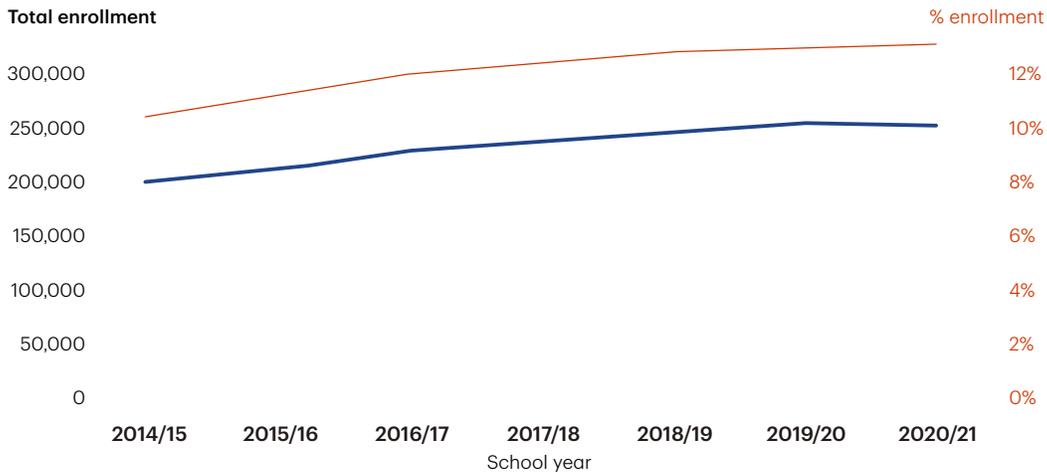
68 Government of Ontario, "French as a second language programs," updated June 28, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/french-second-language-programs>

69 Ibid.



According to the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Francophone Affairs, there were over 113,000 students enrolled in Ontario Francophone schools during the 2020/21 school year. There were approximately 251,000 Ontario students enrolled in French immersion programs at the primary and secondary levels.⁷⁰ Furthermore, over 1 million Ontario primary and secondary school students participated in French-language programs throughout the province during the 2020/21 school year, representing 50% of students in the province.⁷¹ As Figure 13 demonstrates, French immersion programs in Ontario have enjoyed increasing enrolments over the last decade, although enrolment numbers have levelled off recently.

Figure 13: Ontario French Immersion Student Enrolment Statistics (2014-2021)



Data Source: Canadian Parents for French, "French as a Second Language Enrolment Statistics: 2016-2017 to 2020-2021" and "French as a Second Language Enrolment Statistics: 2014-2015 to 2018-2019," <https://cpf.ca/en/research-and-advocacy/research/enrolment-trends/>

For adult learners who are working to build on French skills learned in secondary school, interviewees commented that they should feel encouraged to continue developing their skills, given the high demand for bilingual workers. Several employers reported investing in their employees' French language learning and hoped to see more opportunities for adult language development across the province. One interviewee offered the following advice to early-career bilingual workers who had learned French but did not speak it as a mother tongue:

“ We all have areas that we're not as strong in, and it's important to know what you're capable of... because oftentimes, they'll hire a bilingual individual and then all the work will go to you if you're the only one. So, know your limits and then ensure that you're joining a team that will have support and resources there for you.

70 Ministry of Francophone Affairs, "Report on Francophone Affairs: 2022," Government of Ontario, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2022-report-francophone-affairs>, 15-16.

71 Canadian Parents for French, "French as a Second Language Enrollment Statistics: 2016-2017 to 2020-2021," https://cpf.ca/wp-content/uploads/CPF_Nat_EnrolmentStats_2016-2021_v4_FINAL.pdf



Studying in French in Post-Secondary Institutions Outside of Quebec

Francophone post-secondary institutions play a crucial role in offering Canadian French speakers a way to maintain, develop, and professionalize their French language skills. They also provide Francophone minorities outside of Quebec the opportunity to pursue college and university studies in their mother tongue. As addressed in the section on French-speaking newcomers, they offer important bridging services to Francophone immigrants seeking to study and build a professional network in Canada.

Outside of Quebec, Ontario has by far the largest and most diverse Francophone and bilingual post-secondary education offerings in Canada. Francophone and bilingual post-secondary institutions include colleges, such as *Collège Boréal* in Sudbury, fully bilingual universities, such as the University of Ottawa, Francophone campuses of anglophone universities, such as York University, Glendon Campus, and Francophone universities, such as *Université de l'Ontario français* and *Université de Hearst*. Moreover, eCampus Ontario also provides French-language post-secondary education programs in consortium with Ontario's Francophone higher education institutions through its *Une initiative Francophone d'eCampusOntario* (CAPFO) program.⁷² Table 10 below lists Francophone and bilingual post-secondary colleges and universities in Ontario.

Table 10: French Language and Bilingual Post-Secondary Institutions in Ontario

Institution Name	Instructional Language	Type	Location (Main Campus)
Université de l'Ontario français	French	University	Toronto
York University, Glendon Campus	French	University (part of York University system)	Toronto
University of Ottawa	Bilingual	University	Ottawa
Université de Hearst	French	University	Hearst
Laurentian University	Bilingual	University	Sudbury
Royal Military College	Bilingual	Military academy	Kingston
University of Sudbury	Bilingual	University	Sudbury
Saint Paul University	Bilingual	University (part of University of Ottawa system)	Ottawa
Dominican University College	Bilingual	University (part of Carleton University system)	Ottawa
La Cité (Collège La Cité)	French	College	Ottawa
Collège Boréal	French	College	Sudbury
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto	Bilingual	University (part of University of Toronto system)	Toronto

Data Source: "French-language colleges and universities," Government of Ontario, accessed November 16, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/french-language-colleges-and-universities>

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See: <https://capfo.ca/>



Yet, despite Ontario's institutional variety in Francophone and bilingual post-secondary institutions, French-speaking students still often find themselves forced to choose between pursuing their choice of post-secondary education programs in English at their local college or university and relocating elsewhere in the province, or in some cases outside of the province, to pursue their studies in French. This is because of the geographically uneven distribution of Francophone and bilingual post-secondary institutions throughout the province.

This situation is especially acute in southern Ontario and the Golden Horseshoe, which does not have a single Francophone or bilingual university or college outside of Toronto. As Southern Ontario is the province's fastest-growing region, this situation will become increasingly untenable for French-speaking students living in the southern part of the province. As a 2013 study by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) notes, "Despite the expectation that French secondary schooling would lead to increased post-secondary enrolment, Ontario was slow to develop French-language colleges and universities.... Francophones wishing to continue their studies in French beyond the secondary level are restricted geographically."⁷³

Outside of Quebec and Ontario, post-secondary education options for Canadians wishing to pursue their studies in French are available but even more limited. While almost all Canadian provinces have a Francophone post-secondary institution—either a stand-alone institution or a Francophone campus that falls under the umbrella of a larger university system—program variety at these institutions is limited.

Francophone students often face the stark choice of either studying their chosen academic program in English or pursuing their studies outside their home province. Moreover, most provinces are home to a Francophone college or university campus but not both. The notable exception to this rule, outside of Ontario and Quebec, is New Brunswick, which is home to a large Francophone population. In fact, when we exclude Ontario and Quebec, there are, on average, 1.25 Francophone post-secondary institutions per province in Canada. Within Canada's northern territories, post-secondary education in the French language is even more limited, with *Collège nordique Francophone* in Yellowknife being the only Francophone post-secondary institution located in Northern Canada.

Prospective and Current Post-Secondary Students in Post-Secondary Institutions

The Survey of Prospective and Current Francophone Post-Secondary Students (ICTC, 2023), hereafter "student survey," was delivered in French to individuals across Canada who are attending, or are interested in attending, a French-language post-secondary institution. Due to this study's focus on Ontario, this survey under-sampled Quebec relative to its true proportion of French speakers in Canada and instead targeted Franco-Ontarians and French speakers throughout the rest of Canada wherever possible. See Appendix A for further details, including a demographic breakdown.

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Hillary Arnold, Anne Motte, & Lindsay DeClou, "An Overview of Francophone Postsecondary Education Participation in Ontario," Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, November 2013, <https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FINAL-At-Issue-Francophone.pdf>, 12-13.



Education and Career Aspirations

Respondents to the student survey were asked what type of program they were currently enrolled in or interested in enrolling in. Survey respondents fell into the following categories:

Teaching and education	12%
Social sciences	10%
Engineering, computer science, and technology	10%
Business, accounting, or finance	10%
Medicine, nursing, and health	9%
Public administration or policy	8%
Humanities	8%
Natural and formal sciences	7%
Fine arts	4%
Planning, design, or architecture	4%
Justice studies/social work	4%
Law school	3%
Other/don't know	11%

When asked what sector they “anticipate being employed in” after graduation, about half of the respondents chose the public sector (50%), 27% selected the private sector, and 22% the non-profit sector. Earlier in this study, it was noted that public sector professional roles that required a degree were the most common occupations for French speakers (recall the TEER 1 classification). Student expectations of government employment may contribute to this outcome, raising the question of whether post-secondary institutions can do more to inform students about senior/professional roles in other parts of the economy.

As a follow-up question, respondents were asked to say what type of organization within the sector they anticipated working in.

For respondents who anticipated pursuing a career in the **public sector**, most anticipated working in education (23%), healthcare (18%), government (16%) and social services (4%), while many weren't sure what type of organization they would work for.

For respondents who anticipated pursuing a career in the **private sector**, most were interested in finance and accounting (18%) but expressed a wide array of interests, including sales and retail, technology, fashion, design, communications, engineering, and agriculture.

For respondents who intended to pursue a career in the **non-profit sector**, most named individual organizations they were interested in working with, while others voiced interest in governance, community-facing work, and non-profit education.



When asked why they anticipated being employed in these types of organizations, respondents described wanting to help the public/their community, wanting to find a job within their field of study, being passionate about their intended type of work, and for many, a search for a competitive salary and benefits, opportunities for advancement, and professional development. Furthermore, the vast majority of students (90%) anticipated that their future employment would require them to have French-language skills. Respondents felt that education, health care, and government were the sectors that “needed French speakers the most.” Only 4% of respondents named customer service, retail, and sales as industries that needed French speakers the most.

Reasons for Attending Francophone Post-Secondary

Respondents were asked how important the following factors were in guiding their decisions to pursue post-secondary education in French. This list reflects the proportion of students who called the factor “important” or “very important” to their decision to attend a French-language post-secondary institution, in descending order.

I feel most comfortable learning in French	90%	
The strength and pedigree of the university or college’s programs	85%	
The reputation of the university or college	81%	
French is a part of my identity	79%	94% of respondents from Ontario felt this was important, significantly higher than the average
The university or college is conveniently located near me	79%	
High employment outcomes for graduates of the institution	73%	91% of respondents from Ontario felt this was important, compared with 61% of students from Quebec
I believe that a French-language degree will be helpful for my career	71%	
I want to maintain or improve my French-language fluency	70%	94% of respondents from Ontario selected this feature as important, compared with 58% from Quebec and 80% from the rest of Canada
Low tuition cost	69%	
A variety of extracurricular activities	53%	77% of respondents from Ontario saw this as important, compared to 34% of respondents from Quebec

More Ontario respondents were passionate about maintaining their Francophone identity but also looked for high employment outcomes and affordable tuition as a part of their decision making. These differences could be, in part, to the simultaneous pull and high cost of living of the GTA. When students were asked if they would be willing to relocate to the GTA for a Francophone post-secondary institution, 51% said they would be willing, primarily due to better employment opportunities (32%) or liking the GTA (28%). Those who were not open to relocating said that the distance from family and friends (60%), high cost of living (47%), and lack of French speakers in Toronto (31%) would dissuade them from moving.

In addition to voicing interest in French-language post-secondary education, 75% of survey respondents noted that they would be either very (43%) or somewhat (32%) interested in pursuing graduate education (a master’s, PhD, or graduate certificate/ continuing education) in French after their undergraduate degree. Comparatively, 58% were somewhat or very interested in pursuing graduate studies in English.



Finally, respondents were asked how important the following additional programs or institutional supports were to their decision about what college or university to attend. This list reflects the proportion of students who called the programs “important” or “very important” to their decision to attend any post-secondary institution, in descending order.

Workforce-integrated learning programs (including internships and co-ops)	85%	
A wide variety of program choices	85%	
Hands-on student support	83%	
Career development workshops	76%	84% of Ontario students selected this, compared with 72% of Quebec students
Mentorship programs	74%	83% of Ontario students selected this, compared with 65% of Quebec students
Small class sizes	66%	82% of Ontario students selected this, compared with 53% of Quebec students
Study abroad/exchange programs	59%	

Workforce-Integrated Learning: Co-op Placements and Employer Partnerships with Francophone Post-secondary Institutions

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is a form of experience-based education that, according to Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada, “formally integrates a student’s academic studies with quality experiences within a workplace or practice setting.”⁷⁴ Across Canada and in Ontario, experiential learning and mentorship are known to be critical for workers of all ages and career stages, and WIL opportunities for university students and recent graduates offer important ways for new labour market entrants to gain essential job-ready experience.⁷⁵ For example, a 2020 Ontario study found that only 43% of surveyed employers agreed that new hires were adequately prepared by their pre-employment education and training.⁷⁶ This gap in job readiness, perceived or otherwise, can be bridged by experiential learning opportunities. A Business Council of Canada 2022 skills survey found that large Canadian employers are “overwhelmingly” supportive of WIL initiatives for developing the talents of students and new graduates.⁷⁷

According to researchers at the University of Waterloo’s Work-Learn Institute, high-quality WIL addresses the goals of all stakeholders and includes “(1) meaningful experience in a workplace setting; (2) curricular integration of workplace learning and academic learning; (3) student outcomes that lead to employability; and (4) reflection.”⁷⁸ In other words, there is a difference between a student job and a WIL position: WIL is work that emphasizes both learning and integration within a student’s academic program, and high-quality WIL programs require active partnerships between employers and post-secondary institutions.

74 “What is Work Integrated Learning?” Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning [CEWIL] Canada, n.d., <https://cewilcanada.ca/CEWIL/CEWIL/About-Us/Work-Integrated-Learning.aspx>, accessed March 7 2023.

75 The Premier’s Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, “Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility,” Government of Ontario, June 2016, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/building-workforce-tomorrow-shared-responsibility>; McKinsey & Company, “Youth in Transition: Bridging Canada’s path from education to employment,” April 2015, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/americas/youth-in-transition>; Human Resources Professionals Association, “Strengthening Ontario’s Workforce for the Jobs of Tomorrow, 2020,” <https://hrpa.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2020/10/Strengthening-Ontarios-Workforce-for-the-Jobs-of-Tomorrow.pdf>, 17.

76 Human Resources Professionals Association, “Strengthening Ontario’s Workforce for the Jobs of Tomorrow,” 2020, <https://hrpa.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2020/10/Strengthening-Ontarios-Workforce-for-the-Jobs-of-Tomorrow.pdf>, 17.

77 Business Council of Canada, “Empowering People for Recovery and Growth: 2022 Skills Survey Report,” <https://thebusinesscouncil.ca/report/empowering-people-for-recovery-and-growth/>

78 Norah McRae, Judene Pretty, and Dana Church, (2018), “Work-Integrated Learning Quality Framework, AAA,” University of Waterloo, https://cewilcanada.ca/common/Uploaded%20files/Public%20Resources/Resource%20Hub/wil_quality_framework_-_aaa_-_for_posting.pdf



Over a third (38%) of employer survey respondents to the Survey of Ontario Employers with French-language Hiring Needs reported maintaining relationships with French-language post-secondary institutions for recruitment purposes. Businesses in the Francophone organization subsample were more likely to do so (65% vs. 22% of non-Francophone businesses). Furthermore, in the full sample, 90% of all employer respondents *did not* participate in career fairs, though 36% planned to do so in the future. One recruiter noted that the advent of virtual career fairs had helped them participate more broadly. Similarly, 81% of employer survey respondents *did not* participate in WIL programs (where a student is placed with an employer for a co-op or internship).

Meanwhile, as mentioned in the previous section, WIL programs were **the most common** program that French-speaking institutions could offer to attract students. Interviewees discussed fruitful partnerships between employers and Francophone post-secondary institutions, noting that career fairs, WIL placements, professional associations, and alumni/alma-mater networks were important avenues for graduates and employers to connect. Some bilingual talent recruitment firms also reported partnering with local colleges and universities “in order for newer grads to connect with us so that we can be an extension of their career search.”

Several interviewees discussed the importance of developing strong English skills in order to succeed in WIL placements or internships. As has been shown throughout this study, the vast majority of opportunities in Ontario are for bilingual roles. Employers noted that WIL placements were a way to both test and develop the English skills of Francophone students:

- “ Internships are often bilingual because you have no choice. If you're a student in Toronto in practical nursing, you're not going to find a hospital where you're going to speak just French in Toronto. Even the students at Montfort Hospital in Ottawa, which is the only French-speaking hospital, they have to accept English-speaking clients—it's a public hospital. So sometimes, they go to internships in French-only organizations. But even Francophone organizations operate in an English-speaking world.
- “ So if they are coming in and they speak a lot of French but lack English skills, [it is important to] work on their speech skills, or find ways, like a co-op program or an internship just to get their foot in the door, and then they do get English experience. And then it's a win-win because the candidate that's applying for the job is getting the experience, and the employer is getting the employee that they need.

Beyond workforce readiness, academic research finds that students who participate in WIL emerge with more information about their chosen career paths because participation in WIL provides “insight into the realities of a profession.”⁷⁹ For some students, these insights will affirm existing preferences and, for others, correct their preconceptions. Participation in WIL can also have a “humbling effect” on participants, spurring a re-evaluation of their skill and knowledge levels.⁸⁰

79 Denise Jackson and Nicholas Wilton, “Developing career management competencies among undergraduates and the role of work-integrated learning,” *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21(3), 2016: 266–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2015.1136281>, p. 281); also Miriam Rothman and Ruth Sisman, “Internship impact on career consideration among business students,” *Education & Training*, 58(9), 2016: 1003-1013.

80 Calvin Smith, Sonia Ferns, and Leoni Russe, “Placement Quality Has a Greater Impact on Employability than Placement Structure or Duration,” *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 20(1), 2019: 27.



A WIL experience allows students to determine if their chosen career path is the right one. Exposure to career paths and realities may be crucial for Francophone students for several reasons. First, given this study's discussion of the "typecasting" that may await Francophone students, where new labour market entrants can be placed in roles that prioritize their language skills over other skills, sometimes preventing advancement or taking on French-language work outside their role, exposure to different workplaces may give students a taste of what they do and don't like about particular roles and employers. Second, this paper showed earlier that French student survey respondents were mostly aware of public sector work. Given this lack of awareness of private-sector careers, WIL might open up novel career paths and expand student choices.

WIL is also salient for this study's discussion of the unique barriers to entry faced by newcomers and racialized French speakers entering the Ontario labour market. Research on the impact of WIL on equity-deserving groups has emphasized that the quality of a WIL experience is crucial to student outcomes. When employers are supportive and offer authentic work experience opportunities, and students have strong supervision and feedback and are well-prepared prior to the experience, students experience improvements in academic success and career readiness. Accordingly, the value of WIL is tied to the experience an employer is able and willing to offer a student, along with the preparedness offered by a student's post-secondary institution. Awareness of high-quality WIL programs within the Francophone and bilingual labour pool is crucial for all stakeholders involved.





Conclusion

French skills offer Ontarians significant labour market advantages if used strategically. Low unemployment in the province, along with high demand for French-speaking talent, means that new French-speaking graduates have fruitful careers ahead of them if they are able to leverage their language skills to their full extent. Employers widely report high demand for French speakers and offer bilingual bonuses or other incentives to skilled talent. Nevertheless, French-speaking professionals face several challenges in Ontario. First, the vast majority of roles available are bilingual. With the exception of a small number of roles, workers must have strong English skills to succeed.

Second, the most common roles currently taken by French speakers in the province are in sales and customer service. While many workers may choose and enjoy customer-facing roles, this study is focused in part on the career trajectories of post-secondary students, and the majority of roles in sales and customer service do not take full advantage of the skills learned in college or university programs. Furthermore, even in other fields, if a French speaker is alone in their organization, they may find themselves typecast into performing duties outside of their job description (such as interviewing French-language hiring candidates or doing translations, even if they are in a technical or other role). Finally, Francophone newcomers and racialized French speakers in Ontario may face additional challenges on top of the other hurdles that immigration and integration already pose.

Francophone post-secondary institutions and community organizations offer crucial support to French speakers by helping newcomers settle in their new country and access services and directing French professionals toward relevant opportunities. Francophone businesses also hire unilingual professionals in some circumstances, offering Francophone newcomers who do not speak English an opportunity to develop their bilingual skills. Finally, post-secondaries play a critical role in bridging the gap between graduating with knowledge of French and using that to its full advantage in the workplace. WIL opportunities and other employer-educator partnerships are essential to exposing French-speaking students to all the opportunities available to them.

In closing, several interviewees offered advice to early-career Francophone professionals. A notably common piece of advice was to work through “linguistic insecurity” and identify as a Francophone in their professional and personal lives in order to advance in their careers and support the French-speaking community in Ontario. In addition, interviewees urged new labour market entrants to avoid being narrowly funnelled into job opportunities that require French but are otherwise not challenging. As one interviewee noted, “The advantage of being able to speak and communicate effectively in two languages is beneficial regardless of the career path you’re choosing.” If French-speaking graduates can fully leverage and align their language skills with their professional skills, a bright career future awaits them in Ontario.



Appendix A

ICTC's Survey of Ontario Employers with French-language Hiring Needs (ICTC, 2023, n = 401) was targeted at Ontario employers in companies of 10 or more personnel that have an interest in hiring employees with French-language skills. The survey was run from January to February 2023. Just over half of respondents identified as men (55%) and just under half as women (45%). Respondents were sought across Ontario's five economic regions and were familiar with or responsible for hiring and managing people.

Respondent roles included C-level professionals, directors, and executives, as well as managers, hiring managers, and recruiters. The majority of businesses in the survey were small (89% were between 10 to 99 employees) and included a broad range of industries, with no single industry (measured using national industry association classifications, NAIC codes) representing more than 13% of the sample.

Over a third of respondents (36%) identified as belonging to a Francophone organization, and this subsample was noted where relevant in the study's discussion. This data explores French-language hiring trends in Ontario but likely under-samples the public sector and focuses only on employers who voice interest in recruiting French talent. This data can only be taken to represent the perspectives of survey respondents rather than Ontario employers broadly.

ICTC's Survey of Prospective and Current Francophone Post-Secondary Students was delivered in French to individuals across Canada who are attending or voice interest in attending a French-language post-secondary institution. Due to this study's focus on Ontario, this survey under-samples Quebec relative to its true proportion of French speakers in Canada and instead targeted Franco-Ontarians and French speakers throughout the rest of Canada wherever possible. Ultimately, the sample is comprised of 340 respondents, with 87 from Ontario, 167 from Quebec, 10 from New Brunswick, and 76 from the rest of Canada. All respondents are between 16 and 44 years of age, with approximately half identifying as men (44%) and half identifying as women (56%). The majority of respondents (82%) were Canadian citizens, while the remainder held temporary visas or permanent residency. About a quarter of respondents (26%) identified as being Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Colour (BIPOC). The vast majority of respondents (85%) learned French at home as a mother tongue, while others studied it at school or in other settings.

Approximately half (44%) of respondents reported having "enough support from family to cover all post-secondary expenses," while the rest intended to cover costs through student loans, employment income, or a mix of the two. Finally, over a third of respondents reported having completed CEGEP or less (38%), another 38% had some amount of university, and about one in five (22%) had done some amount of graduate studies. This survey's sampling approach means that it should not be taken to represent French-speaking post-secondary students and prospective students across Canada. Rather, the findings display an interesting look at this particular group of 340 respondents.



Overall, 14 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study with Ontario employers, recruitment specialists, and Francophone community organizations. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour and covered topics such as Francophone recruitment, retention, demand, and supply. ICTC also convened a project advisory committee with eight members with subject matter expertise or relevant positions in the private and public sectors. The project advisory committee offered guidance on research questions, interviewee outreach, and data.

ICTC conducted web scraping (an automated process where job posts are collected) of roles posted in Ontario over the course of one month from January to February 2023. Web scraping included roles with keywords that included “French/français” or “bilingual/bilingue” or French text in the description or title, posted on government and major job boards in Ontario. Jobs were subsequently cleaned to remove roles posted in French and English that only required English skills (e.g., federal jobs with bilingual postings but unilingual requirements). Where possible, years of experience and skill requirements were extracted from posts for analysis.

Finally, this study undertook a literature review and secondary data analysis, including labour force survey and Census 2021 data as well as a variety of existing literature on French talent supply and demand in Ontario.

