

Only One in Ten (10%) Canadians Strongly Consider Themselves “Bilingual” in French and English

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Read the Newspaper (11%) or Debate (7%) in the
Other Official Language*

Public Release Date: Saturday, October 27, 2012, 6:00 AM EDT



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One in Ten (9%) Strongly Agree they could be Successful in a Job, Read the Newspaper (11%) or Debate (7%) in the Other Official Language

Toronto, ON – Amid the backdrop of newly-released Canadian census data which revealed that 17% of Canadians are bilingual, a recent Ipsos Reid poll for Postmedia News and Global Television reveals that only one in ten (10%) Canadians ‘strongly agree’ that they consider themselves bilingual, with another 8% only ‘somewhat agreeing’ that they consider themselves to be proficient in both languages.

As evidence of most Canadians’ hesitation about their skills in the other official language:

- Only one in ten (11%) strongly agree that they are comfortable reading the newspaper in the other language.
- Just one in ten (9%) strongly agree that if they got a new job in the other language, with all the same duties and responsibilities as their current job, they would be successful.
- A similar proportion (7%) strongly agrees that they are just as comfortable speaking in the other language as they are in the language they typically use. Perhaps explaining why these figures are softer than what the census figures found, only three in ten (30%) Canadians who say they speak both French and English ‘strongly agree’ that they are just as comfortable in both languages.

- Seven percent (7%) strongly agree that they could have a debate about current events in the other language with ease.
- Six percent (6%) strongly agree that they can communicate in the other language with as much comfort as someone who learned the other language when they were young.

Bilingualism Not Cut and Dry; Canadians Reveal Degrees of Comfort...

The Ipsos Reid poll reveals that the notion of bilingualism isn't cut and dry. While the census reveals that 17% of Canadians consider themselves to be bilingual, the Ipsos Reid poll is mixed quite evenly among those who 'strongly' (10%) consider themselves bilingual and those who only 'somewhat' say they that are fluent in both English and French. Most (81%) Canadians, however, 'disagree' (69% strongly/12% somewhat) that they consider themselves to be bilingual. When broken down regionally, two in ten (19%) Quebecers 'strongly agree' that they're fluent in both official languages, more than twice as many as the one in ten (8%) in the rest of Canada who share this sentiment.

Only 9% of Canadians 'strongly agree' **if they got a new job in their non-primary official language, with all the same duties and responsibilities as their current job, they would be successful**, while another one in ten (11%) 'somewhat agree' that they would have success in such a job. On the whole, however, eight in ten (80%) Canadians 'disagree' (67% strongly/13% somewhat) with this sentiment and believe they would not be successful if they got a job in their non-primary official language. One in five (19%) Quebec residents 'strongly agree' they could be equally successful in such a job, compared to only 6% of those residing in the rest of Canada.

A similar proportion of Canadians strongly say they are equally comfortable using both official languages. One in ten (7%) Canadians 'strongly agree' they are **just as comfortable**

speaking English as they are speaking French (or vice versa, depending on which language they indicated as their primary one), while another 6% only 'somewhat agree'. Only 1% of Anglophones 'strongly agree' that they are comfortable speaking French, while only 2% 'somewhat agree'. Only slightly more Francophones (3%) 'strongly agree' that they are comfortable speaking English, while a similar number (3%) 'somewhat agree'.

A similar proportion (6%) 'strongly agrees' that they **can communicate in their non-primary official language with as much comfort as someone born in French-speaking Quebec/English-speaking Canada**, while the same number (6%) 'somewhat agree'. Most Canadians, however, do not believe they have mastered both official languages to this point. A strong majority of Canadians 'disagree' (87%, 73% strongly/14% somewhat). Quebecers are significantly more likely to agree they are just as comfortable in either language (15%) and that they have as much proficiency in English as a native Anglo speaker (12%) than those who reside outside of Quebec (4%, 4% respectively).

One in ten (11%) of Canadians 'strongly agree' they are **comfortable reading the newspaper in both languages**, while a similar number (10%) 'somewhat agree' they could do this. A majority of Canadians (79%), on the other hand, 'disagree' (66% strongly/13% somewhat) that they are comfortable reading the paper in both languages. Three in ten Quebecers (28%) 'strongly agree' with this level of comfort reading the newspaper in both languages, compared to only 5% from the rest of Canada who similarly believe they can read the newspaper in both languages.

Fewer than one in ten (7%) Canadians 'strongly agree' they **could have a debate about current events in the other language with ease**, while one in ten (9%) 'somewhat agree' with this statement. Most (84%) Canadians, however, 'disagree' (74% strongly/10% somewhat) that they could have a current events debate in the other official language that's not their

primary one. One in five Quebecers (17%) 'strongly agree' they could conduct such a debate with ease, compared to only 4% of those from the rest of Canada who feel the same way.

Demographics of Bilingualism Self-Classification

Those from Quebec (35%) are most likely to at least somewhat agree they consider themselves to be bilingual, followed by those from the Atlantic provinces (15%), Ontario (14%), British Columbia (14%), Alberta (11%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (7%).

Education is also a strong indicator of bilingualism in Canada. Three in ten (28%) Canadians who are university graduates at least somewhat agree (14% strongly/14% somewhat) they consider themselves to be bilingual, compared to 20% of those with some post-secondary education, 14% of those who completed high school and 11% of those who did not complete high school.

One quarter (25%) of those under the age of 35 'agree' (11% strongly/13% somewhat) they consider themselves to be at least somewhat bilingual, which is considerably higher than middle-aged Canadians, aged 35-54, (18%, 11% strongly/7% somewhat) and Canadian seniors, aged 55+, (13%, 8% strongly/5% somewhat).

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between June 28-9, 2012. For this survey, a sample of 1,014 Canadians from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The data from this poll were also weighted to Statistics Canada results for the following question: "Can you speak English and French well enough to conduct a conversation?" This poll did not contain any respondents who said "neither English nor French." The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using credibility intervals. In this case, the poll is accurate to within +/- 3.5

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percentage points of all Canadians. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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