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FÉDÉRATION DE LA JEUNESSE CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE

Summary of responses to surveys of Canadian francophone youth

Subjects surveyed

1. Attachment of youth to one of the two official languages and its respective culture

- All participants said they had a strong attachment to the French language and francophone culture, while 26% of participants said they had a strong attachment to the English language and anglophone culture, and 60% of them said they had a moderate attachment to the English language and anglophone culture;¹
- The participants' comments included the following: "Even though my mother tongue is English, I'm actually more attached to francophone culture because of my family background and heritage";¹
- "I have trouble seeing how one can be particularly attached to a language as common and widely used as English. We take it for granted because it's everywhere.... An attachment is created when something is complex and challenging and offers few opportunities for use, and that's how my attachment to French manifested itself."¹

2. Is bilingualism a part of Canadian identity?

- While 47.8% of participants said they were bilingual, 43.5% reported they were francophones and 4% called themselves francophiles;¹
- Exactly 91.3% of all respondents view bilingualism as an important or very important part of Canadian identity;¹
- "I think that bilingualism is the foundation of Canadian culture";¹
- "Bilingualism should be more important; much of Canada doesn't know that we're bilingual";¹
- "I believe Canadian identity is more about linguistic duality than bilingualism";¹
- "Work to increase the level of bilingualism among Canadians."²

3. The key factors that lead to valuing bilingualism

- Family (91.3%), school (82.6%) and community (78.3%) seem to be the most common key factors for the youth who responded;¹
- “While my family helped develop my affinity for francophone culture, it was really youth organizations that gave me the opportunities to find my place.”¹

4. Opportunities to use French in everyday life

- “The biggest opportunities to use French in my community are at school events and Acadian Games events or with the provincial francophone youth council”;¹
- “Volunteering in the francophone community and speaking with my family”;¹
- “At my school and community centre and by being involved in francophone organizations”;¹
- “In my family, but only my grandparents speak French, and we speak French only half the time”;¹
- “Every day at school, when I attend French-language classes, and when I play music”;¹
- “I speak French at home, and I have a few good friends who I talk to in French”;¹
- “I study in French and am involved in francophone community organizations”;¹
- “At school, at home and in the Yukon francophone youth group”;¹
- “When I travel outside the territory.”¹

5. Missing opportunities to use French in everyday life

- According to a recent survey of Canadian youth, 21% of respondents said that access to French-language courses in high school is a challenge for francophone youth, while 32.5% reported that access to French-language post-secondary courses is limited;³
- When asked about the challenge of geographic isolation, 16% of respondents said it was a challenge for them as francophone youth owing to “francophone isolation” and “the enormous separation between communities”;³
- Finding French-language volunteer opportunities is a challenge for 28.3% of Canada’s francophone youth;³
- In addition, 37.6% of francophone youth said there was a lack of French-language social and cultural activities in their community;³
- “We lack post-secondary institutions”;³
- “The program I want is not offered in French in my region”;³
- “Work, university, nearly all businesses”;¹
- “There are very few opportunities to get involved in my community in a French-language context”;¹
- “Interesting and engaging Internet content (YouTube videos, vloggers, blogs), appealing French-language music, television shows made by minority francophones for minority francophones, more French-language social events (non-advocacy and not affiliated with francophone community organizations), francophone cafés and restaurants”;¹
- “If everyone could speak both official languages, I could buy groceries, go to the

- bank, eat out, etc., while speaking the language of my choice”;¹
- “Post-secondary education”;¹
- “Better access to second-official-language learning and training”;²
- “Immersion programs should be available starting in early childhood”;²
- “My region lacks ... French-language services”;¹
- “More opportunities for anglophones to learn and speak French”;
- “Government resources in French and more bilingual or French-language jobs”;
- “A Franco-Ontarian university”;¹
- “Cultural activities”;¹
- “A lack of communication between francophone and anglophone school boards. Better cooperation would be beneficial ... to find a way to make our communities more open and promote French in order to create genuine communities outside of school”;¹
- “Parallel health care and transit systems, and a lack of graduate-level French-language post-secondary programs”;¹
- “Canada’s francophone community is making progress, but it definitely needs more federal support.... The Government of Canada needs to do more than celebrate Canada’s francophone community in front of minority francophones”;²
- “Canada is a country founded on its anglophone and francophone cultures, but the two are not represented equally in Canada. We live in a time when people are surprised to learn that there are francophones outside Quebec. The government has to start improving the distribution of francophone media and reconsider the age at which we learn both official languages”;²
- “Anglophones need opportunities to learn about the culture and history of francophones, particularly the various cultures. For example, the Acadians and their history are very important, and I think anglophones should know it. We also need more French-language resources (I rarely enjoy watching films in French or reading in French because they’re almost all translations and sometimes difficult to understand).”²

6. Challenges relating to learning and living in both official languages

- Of the francophone youth recently surveyed, 30% said they do not feel important to or valued by the political system, while 47.3% more of them said the situation could be better: “The government does not pay attention to francophones”;³
- About 31% of participants stated they were sometimes or totally unable to live their lives in French in their region: “The public school is English”; “The region is mainly bilingual”;³
- The most common response from the youth (40% of responses mentioned it) is feeling insecure or bullied when using their language;¹
- “Intolerance of different ways of speaking was one of the most difficult things I had to overcome when I started to learn how to speak French”;¹
- “The biggest challenges relate to social life and getting along with people as a francophone. The micro-aggressions make us feel insecure about our language”;¹
- “The fact that I have to justify my existence as a francophone and Acadian from

- Nova Scotia and constantly explain my background”;¹
- “It is important to teach francophone culture, not just the French language. We have to create a sense of belonging to the culture”;¹
 - “We have to increase the number of learning opportunities for youth.... We must better foster a learning culture”;²
 - “We should have an instinctive need to learn both official languages”;²
 - “The laws that don’t let people go to school in French”;¹
 - “It is difficult to be proud of one’s accent or dialect”;¹
 - “The strength of English everywhere”;¹
 - “In the area of post-secondary education, access to French-language programs is limited across Canada. This lack of access encourages francophone youth to move to other areas. This tends to weaken francophone minority communities”;²
 - “People need to feel like they belong to the francophone community socially and culturally to have a desire to preserve the language.... Being a francophone outside Quebec is above all a choice, and it needs to be reaffirmed every day”;¹
 - “The lack of a francophone presence outside Quebec. If anglophones don’t have the chance to practise their French, they will forget what they learned in school”;¹
 - “French must be learned, but English is infectious”;¹
 - “French-language schools are smaller than English-language ones, so they don’t offer the full range of courses”;¹
 - “The only option francophones whose mother tongue is English have is immersion, but immersion schools don’t really teach French as a culture”;¹
 - “Canada’s regions are different from one another in many ways. Urban minority communities are very different from rural minority communities. These regional characteristics must be taken into account when deciding what services will be offered”;²
 - “There’s a social stigma when francophones speak French in the company of anglophones. Francophones are ‘programmed’ to automatically switch to English so as not to offend. We must promote the value of bilingualism and promote minority communities”;²
 - “French must be accessible throughout Canada. We must recognize that access for francophones and francophone culture are not the same thing. By providing French-language tools to Canadian organizations, schools and institutions, we’re giving all Canadians the choice and opportunity to live in French.”²

7. Importance of mastering both official languages to their future and job prospects

- The participating youth all recognized the importance of mastering both official languages to their careers.¹
- “Mastering both official languages opens doors in the public service and internationally”;¹
- “It’s important because speaking only one language would mean that I couldn’t communicate with most of the people in my region. English and French enable me to experience two cultures and two languages that open many doors in the future (jobs, post-secondary education, travel)”;¹

- “Of course, my job prospects will be better if I speak two languages, but will I be able to use them equally at work?”¹
- “Bilingualism is important, but it’s also important to have equal opportunities to socialize in both languages”;¹
- “Mastering both official languages is important to me for personal reasons, including for communicating with my loved ones and appreciating cultural products (literature, podcasts, shows, films, music, etc.).”¹

8. Ways the federal government could help youth make the most of their attachment to the French language and pass this value on to future generations

- “More French-language jobs for youth, more French-language post-secondary programs”;¹
- “Change the definition of a francophone in Canada”;¹
- “Much more funding for organizations for francophone minority youth. Through their activities, they’re able to introduce and expand opportunities in French and increase the affinity for the French language of youth who have no other spaces where they’re comfortable and prompted to speak French, giving them the positive French-language experiences they need”;¹
- “Offer grants and awards for ideas and initiatives from francophone minority youth looking to innovate in the area of content creation”;¹
- “Help creators on an individual basis, then give them support so they can create content without having to dilute it”;¹
- “Promote French-language learning and exchange opportunities for both anglophone and francophone youth. Whether we use existing programs or create new exchange initiatives, there is a lot of room to innovate in cultural exchanges between the various provincial francophone communities or even international francophone communities, by improving the conditions of French-language exchange spaces in secure areas that strengthen feelings of belonging without a requirement to speak the language, but simply by doing it”;¹
- “Work with organizations that address linguistic insecurity, particularly in schools and communities, and then clean up the toxicity in these spaces to enable people to live in healthy and flourishing francophone communities”;¹
- “Provide all Canadians with a bilingual education”;
- “Provide more experiences like the Explore program”;¹
- “Create a fund for inter-language dialogue projects, add a linguistic and cultural development mandate to federal youth programs such as Encounters with Canada and provide free language training in both official languages to newcomers”;¹
- “Foster respect for all languages and dialects”;¹
- “Ensure equal services, promote French outside Quebec and provide opportunities to other linguistic groups to discover the culture”;¹
- “Improve and fund francophone education systems outside Quebec and educate people about their history and culture”;¹
- “Encourage and support national youth gatherings, but also gatherings in every region”;¹

- “Increase access to and the quality of French-language post-secondary programs in minority communities, especially to enable students to meet the requirements of graduate programs”;¹
- “Create a culture pass for students and young workers that gives access to French-language cultural products at a discount”;¹
- “Invest in francophone community and youth organizations, invest in youth employment programs, update the *Official Languages Act* and ensure it is fully implemented”;¹
- “Promote the use of both languages”;¹
- “Promote integration rather than separation”;¹
- “Create a Franco-Ontarian university, and make Ontario and Ottawa bilingual”;¹
- “Promote French in Alberta, ensuring it is in more schools. Services should also be offered in both languages”;¹
- “Provide funding to schools to support French-language programming”;¹
- “Study the idea of incorporating the complexity of francophone identity into language laws”;¹
- “The government could provide service in French and actively offer that service”;¹
- “Increase the bilingualism bonus to attract youth to the federal public service”;¹
- “Community groups truly make our communities shine. We must find a way to give them more resources so they can continue their social development work”;²
- “We need more resources for creation. We must invest more in francophone arts and culture”;²
- “Quebec is known around the world. However, francophone minority communities are virtually unknown. Canada should better promote the vitality and dynamism of these communities. They make our country richer”;²
- “Provide ongoing, free and accessible training (for both youth and adults), and ensure teaching standards are equal across school boards (that is, English in French-language schools should be treated like French in English-language schools and vice versa)”;²
- “Develop a strategy to increase the sense of linguistic security in schools”;²
- “Create French-language Internet and broadcast content... and establish a grant program for people who create French-language Internet content”;²
- “Radio-Canada must better represent francophone minority communities.... The content should reflect the communities”;²
- “Boost the number of competitive French-language post-secondary programs”;²
- “Improve access to French-language university programs”;²
- “Provide more choices of French-language activities and more opportunities to play sports in French”;²
- “Offer sports and creative activities in French-language schools (woodworking and music courses, francophone sports leagues, etc.)”;²
- “Make Radio-Canada reflect all of Canada’s francophones, not just those in Montreal. We need to see and hear ourselves, our realities and our accents”;²
- “The federal government needs to talk about minority francophones more often”;
- “Better promote Canada’s francophone community and our language and culture in anglophone communities”;²

- “Create a bilingual television station that does not use simultaneous translation”;²
- “Canada is lucky to have two wonderful official languages, and it is important that they be promoted equally so they don’t work against each other”;²
- “Increase base funding for non-profits in minority language communities. Make Canada a society that respects and appreciates diversity in our official languages... and a place where we stand united.”²

Sources

¹ Survey of the views of Canadian youth regarding the modernization of the *Official Languages Act*, conducted by the FJCF from April 21 to 26, 2017, 23 anonymous participants.

² Consultation of youth regarding Canada’s official languages, conducted by the FJCF at its annual general meeting on September 16, 2016, 30 participants.

³ Survey on the concerns of youth, conducted by the FJCF from June 24 to July 11, 2016, for the renewal of its strategic plan, 614 participants.

For more information about the content of this document, please contact the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française.

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