

Appreciation and Perception of Canada's Two Official Languages

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Ce rapport est également disponible en français

Executive Summary

Background and Objectives

- In the past 10 years, the Department of Canadian Heritage has had the opportunity to survey the Canadian population on different occasions on topics related to their appreciation of Canada's two official languages. In an effort to better understand the views and attitudes of Canadians towards official languages and to contribute to a program evaluation, the Official Languages Support Programs Branch (OLSPB) conducted a pan-Canadian public opinion research telephone survey.
- This survey discusses issues on themes such as appreciation of linguistic duality, linguistic majority / minority relations, official bilingualism and linguistic rights, official language knowledge and learning opportunities and public participation in Canada's linguistic landscape.

Methodology

- A 10 minute telephone survey was conducted with a statistically representative national sample of 1,504 Canadians eighteen years of age or older (18+). The response rate is 15%. Interviews were conducted between the dates of May 9 – May 29, 2012.
- Prior to the conduct of any data analysis the data set was checked and cleaned to ensure that all responses were valid, logical and accurate. Given the importance of conducting analysis of differences by region, we used a disproportionate random sample, in which certain regions/provinces were oversampled in order to ensure there was adequate sample size for meaningful analysis. National sample figures were then weighted to reflect the true population proportions.

Executive Summary (cont'd)

- In general, and not surprisingly, **French-speaking Canadians tend to be far more passionate than English-speaking Canadians** on the subject of Canada's two official languages.
- **Francophones agreed with the following language-related issues significantly more than Anglophones:**
 - Having two official languages in Canada is an important part of being Canadian (78% vs. 57%, top 5 box)
 - Linguistic duality in Canada is a source of cultural enrichment (85% vs. 57%, top 5 box)
 - The future of French in Canada is threatened (80% vs. 42%, top 5 box)
 - Learning both official languages contributes to better understanding among Canadians (91% vs. 73%, top 5 box)
 - In Canada, relationships between Francophones and Anglophones are more positive today than they were 10 years ago (67% vs. 57%, top 5 box)
 - Regionally, relationships between Francophones and Anglophones are more positive today than they were 10 years ago (64% vs. 48%, top 5 box)
 - Knowing both official languages improves chances of finding a job (89% vs. 73%, top 5 box)
 - All high school graduates should have a working knowledge of English and French (93% vs. 59%, top 5 box)
 - Interest in participating in school-based language exchanges to interact with young people from the other official language communities (80% vs. 69%, top 5 box)
 - The Government of Canada should continue to invest in exchange programs as a way to encourage understanding between Anglophones and Francophones (91% vs. 66%, top 5 box)

Executive Summary (cont'd)

- **Francophones also rated their interest levels and the level of importance of the following language-related issues significantly higher than Anglophones:**
 - Importance of Canadians having access to services offered by the Federal Government in official language of choice (96% vs. 83%, top 5 box)
 - Importance of Francophones living outside Quebec and Anglophones living in Quebec having access to services offered by Federal Government in official language of choice (94% vs. 81%, top 5 box)
 - Interest in learning more about Francophone communities living outside Quebec (88% vs. 50%, top 5 box)
 - Interest in learning more about Francophone communities living in Quebec (83% vs. 50%, top 5 box)
 - Interest in learning more about Anglophone communities living in Quebec (68% vs. 50%, top 5 box)
 - Interest in cultural products by Francophone/Anglophone artists in English/French (81% vs. 54%, top 5 box)
 - Interest in cultural products by Francophone/Anglophone Artists in French/English (59% vs. 34%, top 5 box)
- **The following issues were the only ones that Anglophones rated significantly higher than Francophones:**
 - The Government of Canada is effective in protecting both official languages (67% vs. 47%, top 5 box)
 - The Government of Canada's official languages policy supports national unity (59% vs. 50%, top 5 box)
 - Interest in learning more about Anglophone communities living outside Quebec (78% vs. 62%, top 5 box)

Key Insights and Conclusions

Official Languages – Part of Being Canadian

Canadians in all parts of the country value our two official languages and largely see our linguistic duality as part of the culture and social fabric that makes Canada.

In particular, Canadians across the country are very supportive of government programs and initiatives to enhance bilingualism; and Canadians across the country view the other official language as the one they would like to learn first.

However, this survey also points to a number of potential clouds on the horizon, or perhaps “danger” signs.

But...Clouds on the Horizon

First, positive sentiments are not shared equally. In most every subject surveyed, Francophones outnumber Anglophones across the country, and especially in the West, with regard to positive views of official languages and linguistic duality.

Moreover, eight in ten Francophones* continue to feel their language is threatened, and Anglophones in the rest of the country still don't get it – only four in ten share the same view*. In related results, Francophones do not feel the federal government is providing adequate protection for the French language. These sentiments lie at the very root of attachment to the nation (or not), and are a key ingredient for linguistic peace and national unity.

* Based on top 5 box