

Francophones see threat to future of French in Canada, survey finds

Description

Nearly three-quarters of francophones believe the future of their language in Canada is threatened. But just one-third of anglophones agree.

That's a key finding of a major national survey on perceptions of Canada's two official languages commissioned by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

According to the survey report, dated Nov. 3, 80 per cent of Canadians or more believe that learning both English and French contributes to better understanding among Canadians and improves the chances of finding a job.

But the \$65,000 survey of 1,501 Canadians, done between April 27 and May 26, also found that francophones are more positive and engaged than anglophones with regards to bilingualism.

Francophones are significantly more inclined to see Canada's linguistic duality in a positive light, with 84 per cent agreeing it's a source of cultural enrichment for them. By comparison, 60 per cent of anglophones agree.

Though 86 per cent of francophones say the fact that there are two official languages is, for them, an important part of what it means to be a Canadian, a smaller percentage of anglophones – 65 per cent – feels the same way.

While 95 per cent of francophones say all high school graduates should have a working knowledge of both English and French, just 62 per cent of anglophones concur.

Three-quarters of anglophones agree that knowing English and French improves the chances of finding a job, but almost all francophones – 95 per cent – feel that way.

Ninety-four per cent of francophones think the federal government should continue to invest in exchange programs to encourage understanding between the country's two main linguistic groups, while 73 per cent of anglophones agree.

More anglophones than francophones believe the federal government is effectively protecting both official languages, but roughly two-thirds from each linguistic group agree the government's official languages policy supports national unity.

Nearly three-quarters of francophones say relationships between the two official language groups in Canada are more positive today than they were a decade ago. About six in 10 anglophones agree.

About two-thirds of Canadians closely interact with at least one person from the other language group, with no significant gap between anglophones and francophones.

About one-third of those surveyed said they had attended a cultural event in the other official language

in the past year – significantly more francophones (47 per cent) than anglophones (23 per cent).

Though seven in 10 francophones have an interest in cultural products in English, only about one-third of anglophones have a similar interest in French cultural offerings.

Overall, Canadians say the greatest advantage of knowing both official languages is making it easier to find a job (37 per cent) or communicating more easily with others (26 per cent).

Nearly eight in 10 Canadians believe they have adequate access to instruction in the other official language. But 22 per cent of francophones and 14 per cent of anglophones express no interest in learning the other language.

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The federal government is in the process of developing a new multi-year plan for official languages. Between June and November, it held 22 bilingual round table discussions in cities across Canada.

According to Canadian Heritage, English is the first official language spoken by three-quarters of Canadians, compared to 23.2 per cent who speak French. (About two per cent of Canadians speak neither official language.)

By the numbers

94: Percentage of francophones who think learning both official languages contributes to better understanding among Canadians

79: Percentage of anglophones who agree

94: Percentage of francophones who say knowing English and French improves the chances of finding a job

76: Percentage of anglophones who agree

86: Percentage of francophones who say having two official languages is an important part of what it means to be a Canadian

65: Percentage of anglophones who agree

95: Percentage of francophones who think all high school graduates should have a working knowledge of French and English

61: Percentage of anglophones who agree

84: Percentage of francophones who say Canada's linguistic duality is a source of cultural enrichment for them

60: Percentage of anglophones who agree

74: Percentage of francophones who say relationships between francophones and anglophones in

Canada are more positive today than they were 10 years ago

59: Percentage of anglophones who agree

74: Percentage of francophones who say the future of French in Canada is threatened

34: Percentage of anglophones who agree

dbutler@postmedia.com

twitter.com/ButlerDon

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