

FRANCOPHONES

Equity & Inclusion Lens Snapshot



FRANCOPHONES

In 2011, 15 percent of the population of Ottawa reported French as their mother tongue; and 37.2 percent of citizens spoke French. The composition of our community has changed significantly over the past few decades. As a community we are recognized for our joy of life, energy, sense of humour, openness and warmth.

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This booklet is one of 11 Snapshots that serve as background information to aid in implementing the Equity and Inclusion Lens. To access them in an electronic version, visit the City of Ottawa Internal Site ([Ozone](#)) or the [Equity and Inclusion Lens webpage](#). Or the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) [Equity and Inclusion webpage](#).



A City For Everyone
Une ville pour tous

1. Who We Are

We are a distinct community in Ottawa and we are also members of all the equity groups included in the Equity and Inclusion Lens. Among us are Francophones who are women, youth, older adults, racialized, Aboriginal Peoples, members of the LGBTQ community, immigrants, living in poverty, rural, and who live with a disability.

As a community we are recognized for our joy of life, energy, sense of humour, openness and warmth.

The French were the first immigrants to settle in the Ottawa region when Samuel de Champlain arrived in 1613.

The composition of our community has changed significantly over the past few decades. Immigration from France, Africa, the Middle East, Haiti, as well as internal migration from Quebec, New Brunswick and small communities in Ontario and across Canada has diversified the French-speaking community in Ottawa.

Founded on the traditional unceded land of the Algonquin people, Ottawa has been home to Aboriginal peoples for thousands of years.

INTERSECTIONALITY: COMPLEX, OVERLAPPING IDENTITIES

Each of us could identify with more than one group. It is this intersection, or crossover of identities of who we are that affects how we experience the city. This is called intersectionality. People's lives are multi-dimensional and complex. Lived realities are shaped by different factors and social dynamics operating together.

For more info access the [Equity and Inclusion Lens Handbook](#) and [Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide For Municipalities](#).

2. Overview of Francophones in Ottawa

In 2011, 15 percent of the population of Ottawa reported French as their mother tongue. 16.4 percent of the population learned French as their first official language. 37.2 percent of citizens spoke French. (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census).

Francophones were the first immigrants to settle in the area of present day Ottawa. At first they settled across the City of Ottawa located close to the francophone parishes. By the end of the Second World War with the administrative function of Ottawa fully established, the Francophones were largely situated in the central area, in Lower Town and Vanier with a movement towards the east and Orleans. In the last twenty years there has been considerable Francophone immigration from Haiti, Somalia and sub-Saharan Africa and this has been accompanied by a movement to the western suburbs of Barrhaven and Kanata.

In terms of employment the highest percentage of francophones work in public administration, followed by social services and the educational sector.

One of the greatest accomplishments of the francophone population is to have succeeded in maintaining its identity and its vitality despite the Anglophone majority.

3. Contributions We Make

There are a number of ways in which we contribute to the City of Ottawa. We have contributed to set up institutions serving the City and its residents, develop its cultural and social life, build a tradition in claiming rights for minority French-speaking communities and create a city that is welcoming to a diversity of people.

In the employment sector, 31.2 percent of Francophones in Ottawa worked in public administration, 10.3 percent in health care and social assistance, and 9.6 percent in educational services (2011 Census cited in Portrait of Official Languages Group in the Ottawa Area, 2015).

There are numerous ways in which we have enriched Ottawa.

- » Implemented the foundations towards the establishment of the Maison de la francophonie d'Ottawa to serve Ottawa West End;
- » Founded Unique FM, a francophone radio station in 2010;
- » In 2006, unveiled the first Monument de la francophonie de l'Ontario, Centre éducatif du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE)
- » Formed the French Language Services Branch for the City of Ottawa 2001;
- » Created La Nouvelle Scène in January 1999;
- » Launched Le Théâtre la Catapulte in 1992;
- » Opened La Cité, College of Applied Arts and Technology, in 1990;
- » Established the Ottawa-Carleton French-Language School Board (now Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est) in 1988;
- » Launched *Liaison* magazine in 1978;
- » Created the Festival Franco-Ontarien in 1976 which continues to take place every year;
- » Founded the Montfort Hospital in 1953;
- » Opened the first bilingual secondary school in 1947 (Eastview, now in Vanier);
- » Published the first issue of *Le Droit* newspaper in 1913;
- » Created the Alliance Française in Ottawa in 1905
- » Founded the Ottawa Hospital in 1860; the Sisters of Charity under the leadership of Elizabeth Bruyère;
- » Opened The University of Ottawa which is the largest French-English bilingual University in Canada; and founded by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a French missionary group in 1848;
- » Assisted in building the Rideau Canal in 1832;

(Raconte-moi, and Francophone Community Profile)

For a chronicle of the contributions of Francophones to our city's heritage, please consult the "[Raconte-moi Ottawa](#)" website, developed by Vanier Muséoparc in collaboration with the Department of Canadian Heritage and the City of Ottawa.

In terms of cultural expression, vibrant French-language theatres in Ottawa, and La Nouvelle Scène, act as permanent homes for many productions and are key cultural sites. Francophones also contribute to the artistic musical life and literary scene of Ottawa. We celebrate the Franco-Ontarian Day every year on September 25, the International Francophone Day on March 20, and as part of the International Francophone week in March—these celebrations unite us in expressing our pride of being Francophones!

The Francophone community in Ottawa, and in Canada more generally, has also played a historical role in fostering acceptance and identifying ways that diverse groups can live together. The creation of a diverse society is of symbolic and practical importance for Ottawa as the national capital of a bilingual country.

A DEFINITION OF FRANCOPHONES:

A new definition of francophone published in 2009 is more inclusive and better-reflects the diversity of Francophones in the province.

Those persons whose mother tongue is French, plus those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English but have a particular knowledge of French as an Official Language and use French at home.

Office of Francophone Affairs, 2011

4. Barriers and Inequities

Despite the long history and list of contributions of Francophones in Ottawa, there remain barriers and inequities linked with non-recognition of the importance of preserving the French language and the establishment, maintenance and growth of French institutions.

1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND ACCESS TO FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Before the Second World War, Francophone communities were often centred around Francophone parishes across the city. Thereafter, a Francophone presence became increasingly concentrated around Lowertown and Vanier, with a movement to the suburbs towards Orléans.

Since then, the Francophone population has become spread out across the city. A number of Francophones currently live in the eastern sections (Vanier to Orleans) and in the past few years there has been movement West into Barrhaven and Kanata. There is now a much lower percentage of Francophones living in the more traditionally areas, such as Lowertown ([Ottawa Neighbourhood Study](#)).

Changes in the distribution of Francophones across the city have sparked new demands for services in French and challenges in the delivery of services across Ottawa.

2. BARRIERS TO FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Many Francophones speak English when dealing with public officials or in commercial transactions once it becomes clear that service in French will take longer or will be of a lesser quality. These factors may make the demand for French services appear as though they are decreasing when they are not.

Many people may assume that all Francophones are bilingual and do not need resources and services in French. This hinders the growth of French-language services in Ottawa and disadvantages unilingual Francophones and those preferring services in French.

Services that relate to personal care, such as services for women survivors of violence or medical services, are important to wellbeing and are not sufficiently available in French. Recent immigrant and Inuit Francophones are often less comfortable in their second language, particularly in situations of distress, and are therefore may be excluded from using existing English-language services (Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, 2008). This is also applicable to seniors who are more likely to use their mother tongue when seeking recreational, educational, and medical services.

3. ASSIMILATION INTO A DOMINANT ANGLOPHONE CULTURE

The number of Francophones who predominantly speak French at home is significantly lower than the number of individuals who claim French as their mother tongue. According to Statistics Canada's 2011 Census, 9 percent of respondents mainly spoke French at home whereas 15 percent reported French as their mother tongue. This might signal a challenge to vitality of the French language and contribute to an assimilation of Francophones into Ottawa's Anglo-dominant culture.

The reasons loss of French speakers are complex and relate, among other things, to English as the primary language used in the Ontario labour market; the dominance of English in the mass media in North America; the urbanization of Francophones in Ontario (they are living in communities in which they are a minority); and exogamy (marriages outside one's cultural group of origin).

When there is a loss of French speakers, institutions possess a limited capacity to offer services in French. Francophones must continuously mobilize to bring attention to their needs.

4. THE PROVISION OF FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Francophones have fought for the development of French-language services on political and administrative levels. The struggle to ensure services are offered in French was first concentrated around education and the creation of French-language schools and school boards. This goal has been at least partially achieved and more recent mobilization has expanded to focus on health services (the struggle for the continued existence of Montfort Hospital was particularly important for the Francophone community in Ottawa), women's services, child care, services for the elderly, and justice-related services. The desire for relevant and appropriate French services is described as services "par et pour" (by and for) Francophones. It entails the delivery of services in French rather than on a bilingual basis.

The French Language Services Bench and Bar Advisory Committee argues that French-language services in the justice sector in Ontario do not adequately provide services in French. The report *Enhancing Access to Justice in French: A Response to the Access to Justice in French Report* (2015) outlines the following among its findings:

- » The judiciary may not be adequately informed of French language rights;
- » French language rights do not ensure that all points of contact during a proceeding are in French;
- » Proceeding in French can be difficult, time-consuming and expensive;
- » The procedures under the Provincial Offence Act do not allow for seamless and easily accessible service in French;
- » There is a need for greater coordination of bilingual court staff and enhanced awareness of French language rights;

The overall goal of the report was to demonstrate the need for a commitment in offering and delivering French justice access services, and to emphasize the efforts in this area. It also emphasises the “active offer,” which for example, can include a two-language greeting.

Arguments in favour of strengthening French services centre on the fact that most bilingual services are developed, created and implemented in English and simply translated into French afterwards. They are not conceptualized in terms of the specificity of the Francophone community. To have services that are culturally sensitive to the Francophone reality, services need to be created, implemented and maintained in French.

Ottawa’s Francophone community has argued for their constitutional rights to services of equal quality. This has allowed them to vocalize the need for the creation of French-language services in preference to bilingual services.

5. INTEGRATION OF FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRANTS

Immigration from France, Africa, Haiti, and the Middle East has sustained the growth of the Francophone population in Ottawa. According to the 2011 Census, Francophone immigrants account for 11.2 percent of Ottawa’s French speaking population. In addition to immigrants from overseas, a considerable inflow of internal migrants from Québec and from other small communities has diversified the Francophone community in many social, cultural, political, and economic ways.

According to the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership, “each year, more than 1,000 Francophone newcomers choose Ottawa as their destination in Canada. According to the Association for Canadian Studies, 8945 Francophone immigrants have moved to live in Ottawa between 2006-2011” (Jedwab, 2013 cited in Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership, 2013). Data trends also reveal that Ottawa’s annual intake of Francophone and bilingual immigration has grown by about 35% between 1999 and 2008. Ottawa is a leader among the mid-sized Canadian cities in attracting Francophone and bilingual immigrants ([Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership](#)).

Francophone immigrants may face daunting challenges integrating into the community fabric of Ottawa and Ontario. The systemic challenges facing all immigrants (such as the non-recognition of foreign credentials and difficulties in finding employment) are compounded by language issues (where immigrants have indicated on immigration applications their preference of French as their first official language). Notably, these unique challenges include the limited availability of French-language services in Ottawa, the dominance of English in the Ontario job market and mass media, and the ambivalence of some parts of the traditional Francophone community toward welcoming new immigrant population (Andrew and Burstein, 2007).

6. ACCOMMODATION OF AN INCREASING DIVERSITY

Until recently, Francophones of Ottawa constituted an ethno-linguistic community that shared a culture, a settlement history of Canada, and a heritage in the building of local networks and institutions. Through immigration, Ottawa's Francophones have become a linguistic community with multiple heritages, diverse ethnicities and cultures, and distinct histories.

This has been an important and sometimes challenging transformation for some early Francophone communities. Francophones can face different barriers depending on the other facets of their identity and experience. For example, Francophone immigrants and racialized populations may often feel that there are barriers to their acceptance by traditional Francophone communities in addition to those barriers to integration into the dominant Anglophone culture.

The accommodation of diversity continues to be a major challenge within Ottawa's Francophone community. The success of initiatives to promote the vitality of the French language will depend on sustained advocacy and collaboration from a strong and cohesive network of communities. Including the diverse experiences of various Francophone communities in Ottawa will enrich dialogue around what it means to be Francophone in the city, grow the Francophone community and encourage added equity considerations in the planning and implementation of services.

7. MYTHS RELATING TO GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES

Several misconceptions about Francophones and the use of the French language are pervasive in Ottawa. When not properly addressed, these misconceptions may lead to backlash against Francophones, their mobilization for their rights, and can lead to the creation or perpetuation of barriers in workplaces and communities.

MYTH # 1: There is a belief that one must be bilingual to work for the federal public service and is fuelled by a fear of not getting federal employment without a proficiency in French.

In reality, 53.2 percent of core public administration services in Canada require knowledge of only one official language: 49.6 percent are English essential and 3.6 percent are French essential. Only 43.3 percent require varying levels of bilingualism (Reports of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2013-2014).

MYTH # 2: Following the adoption of the City of Ottawa’s Bilingualism Policy, only Francophones can work at the City of Ottawa

In reality, only 16 percent of the City of Ottawa full-time positions are designated bilingual. The following positions have identified a target of 25 percent of employees with the capacity to work in both official languages: Advanced Care Paramedic, Primary Care Paramedic, Bus Operator, Para Transpo Driver, Transit Supervisor, Firefighter, Captain, and Lieutenant.

MYTH # 3: Bilingualism in Ottawa costs the City government too much.

In reality, only one-tenth of a percentage point of the total municipal budget is spent on expenses related to bilingualism at the City of Ottawa.

MYTH # 4: With increasing diversity in Canada, there are more speakers of non-official languages in Ottawa than there are of French.

In reality, French remains the language with the second largest number of speakers in Ottawa. It is due, in part, to growth in the number of Francophone immigrants and children of immigrants who choose French as their first official language.

MYTH # 5: Francophones are bilingual, so they do not need services in French.

In reality, many Francophones are not bilingual (especially Francophone immigrants). Even if Francophones are bilingual, they have the right to access public services in the official language of their choice as sanctioned by the City of Ottawa’s [Bilingualism Policy](#), the Ontario Government’s [French Languages Services Act](#), the federal [Official Languages Act](#), the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#).

5. We Envision: a Francophone- friendly city

- » Place importance of practicing the “active offer”, which is the act of always offering services in French first. For example, “Bonjour / Hello”, “Comment puis-je vous aider? / How may I help you?” When using the active offer, individuals are empowered to use services in the language in which they are most comfortable. ([Toolbox for the Active Offer](#), 2016)
- » Organizers of public meetings and consultations think of how best to include Francophones without being reminded to do so;
- » Build the cost of simultaneous interpretation and translation into project budgets from the outset;
- » A French component is included in all public events for the City of Ottawa;
- » Francophone perspectives are automatically included in the planning stage of every City activity, program, and policy;
- » Policies, programs and activities for recent immigrants are offered in French and English, as well as other languages;
- » All signage and public notices are both in French and English;
- » Public transportation is safe, secure, affordable and accessible in urban and rural areas, and includes information (written and oral) in French and English;
- » There is a sufficient capacity across City services to respond rapidly to residents asking to be served in French.

WHAT CAN ALLIES DO?

- ✓ **Always** use the ‘Active Offer’.
- ✓ **Object** when I hear something that I think is anti-Francophone (a stereotype, a joke, an insult) even though objecting may be unpopular.
- ✓ **Seek** appropriate information from reliable sources.
- ✓ **Be** friendly and open to the French language and culture— for example try saying “Bonjour” and “Merci” to Francophone co-workers and team members.
- ✓ **Notice** when Francophones in my team are not being heard in a discussion; take action to draw them into the conversation.
- ✓ **Be** a Francophile (someone who supports the Francophone community and services in French).
- ✓ **Remember** that Ottawa has an official policy on bilingualism.
- ✓ **Be** proactive about increasing the capacity of the City to serve Francophones in French.
- ✓ **Partner** with Francophone community organizations.
- ✓ **Perceive** “difference” as value added, not a liability.
- ✓ **And, if I am a Francophone**, I know that my culture enriches the city and I will create opportunities for others and actively use the French services throughout the city.

6. Council Mandates and Legislation

- » The Ottawa City Council enacted the [Bilingualism Policy](#) on May 9, 2001. The policy reaffirms the Council's commitment to offer services in the two official languages to both residents and staff. The Bilingualism Policy's specific provisions govern several features of civic activity, notably communications, the proactive delivery of services in both languages to citizens and staff, work organization including designation of bilingual positions, language training, and cultural program management.
- » [Advisory Committee on French-language Services](#) and an administrative Division of French-Language Services were created in 2001, following the adoption of the Bilingualism Policy.
- » [Ontario Government French Language Services Act](#) was adopted in 1986 and mandates that all of the services that are provided to the public by a ministry or agency of the Government of Ontario (driver's licence, birth certificate, information, etc.) are available in French in the government offices located in or serving a designated area. The City of Ottawa is one of the regions designated. Although municipal governments were explicitly excluded from the Act, this legislation has expanded the range of public services offered in French.
- » The Charter of Rights and Freedoms establishes constitutional protection for Francophones and for minority francophone communities. The [Official Languages Act](#) of the federal government was adopted first in 1969 and amended in important ways in 1988 and 2005. The amendments of 2005 were particularly interesting to Francophone minority communities in that they opened up judicial recourse to the obligations under the act where federal government departments were required to take positive measures to promote the vitality of the Official Language Minority Communities (OCOL, 2006b)
- » [Equity and Diversity Policy](#) – In 2002, City Council adopted the Equity and Diversity policy, which recognizes women, visible minority citizens, people with disabilities, GLBT and Aboriginal People as groups designated for measures intended to promote equity.

7. What's Happening in Ottawa

- » The [National Capital Commission](#) has been the primary agency underlining the importance of the bilingual nature of Ottawa. Important Financial support was also awarded to the City of Ottawa by the Department of Canadian Heritage to promote the enhancement of French-language services during the 12 years after the 2001 municipal merger.
- » The [City of Ottawa Advisory Committee on French-Language Services](#) and the [Community and Social Services department](#) have worked to better serve Francophone families, particularly Francophone immigrant families. Due to the placement of many adult Francophone immigrants in the labour force (shift work, multiple part-time employment, etc.), traditional full-time public day care offering service during the day was not sufficient to support these families. A particular effort was made to expand home-based child care and to develop the network of foreign-born operators of these services. Providing adequate and culturally sensitive child care in French is crucial to the possibility for immigrant Francophones to choose Francophone services and therefore increases their chances of integration into the Francophone community.

- » Designation of bilingual positions by the City of Ottawa, pursuant to the adoption of the [Bilingualism Policy](#). This project took place from 2004 to 2008 and involved reviewing permanent positions. The classification was done on the basis of clearly defined criteria used to designate a certain number of positions bilingual. The project ensured that the City Council motion that no employees would lose employment because of designation was respected.
- » The City is initiating a systematic planning process for the development of French-language services through the implementation of Business Plans for the Delivery of French Language Services. Each City of Ottawa department is asked to prepare a business plan designed to improve French language services provision, therefore complying with the requirements stated in Section R.1.6 of the Bilingualism Policy (2001). These departmental business plans focus on 3 strategic priorities: Bilingual services provision in the various departments, excellence in service and employee engagement.

8. Relevant Practices in Other Cities

[Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities](#) presents a flexible approach to equity and inclusion and is adaptable to the diverse structures, contexts, and experiences of municipalities from across Canada. Flip through the different sections of this guide or visit [City for All Women Initiative \(CAWI\)](#) to find examples from municipalities across Canada.

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10. Definitions

FRANCOPHILE – is Any individual “interested in French language and French language communities in Canada” (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2014). As Francophiles, French Canadian history matters to us, and we are actively involved in the French Canadians’ culture and educational system.

11. Acknowledgments

The Equity and Inclusion Lens is the product of a collaborative partnership between City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) and City of Ottawa.

The original Equity and Inclusion Lens Guide and Snapshots were developed from 2008-2010 by an Equity and Inclusion Reference Group and working groups focusing on each of the 11 equity seeking groups profiled in the Snapshots.

City staff and community leaders contributed their knowledge and insights in the creation of this Snapshot.

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City for All Women Initiative; City of Ottawa; Coopérative M9Médias; French Language Services Advisory Committee; South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre; University of Ottawa; Vanier Community Service Centre.

Photography: www.ortega.ca

Graphic Design: www.jwalkerdesign.ca

All this was made possible thanks to funding from Status of Women Canada and the City of Ottawa which funded the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) to engage in this important work.



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