

# **‘New’ and Not So New Anglos: An Analysis of Quebec Anglophone opinion on the province’s socio-political realities**

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by

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## Introduction

There is no doubt that the Quebec Anglophone population has undergone a profound demographic transformation over the past few decades. In real numbers, the mother tongue Anglophone population has declined by about 20% since the year 1971. Population losses have had significant impacts on the socio-cultural characteristics of the Anglophone population, the most apparent of which are the aging of the community and its reduced degree of 'rootedness'. The needs and priorities of community members have been modified and in consequence there have been adjustments on the part of the institutions that have traditionally served this population.

A combination of political, economic and demographic circumstances has resulted in a change in attitudes amongst Quebec Anglophones. Some have contended that these changes have been characterized by a hardening of opinion relative to provincial language legislation and the sovereignty option. Others maintain that attitudes have been quite consistent with regard to political and social issues, and that it is the actions of the government that help explain a shift in strategy. There have however been few longitudinal studies amongst the Anglophone population to test these observations. In the midst of this, there are many analysts who note that Quebec's Anglophone population is by no means monolithic, and that opinions within the community vary according to age, income, place of residence, ethnic origin, and immigrant status.

For example, the *Montreal Gazette* ran a widely-praised series entitled the 'New Anglo', which focused on a segment of the community that was less preoccupied by language legislation and political debates than the older generation. For many, this valuable series of articles implied that there was an important new wave of Quebec Anglophones whose views were quite different from that of previous generations of community members. Some viewed this as a harbinger of things to come, and not surprisingly, many pointed to the series to assert a waning Anglophone hostility to government actions protecting the French language. It is both useful and important to determine if and how opinion within Anglophone Quebec has evolved, and to identify the lines along which distinctions within the population can be made.

Clearly, Anglophones are increasingly able to speak the French language, use that language more frequently in the workplace, and have far more frequent contact with Francophones. The number of marriages between Anglophones and Francophones has multiplied over the last decade. However, there has been little research done on the extent to which the increased knowledge of French and increased contact with Francophones has a bearing on the attitudes of Anglophones around the main social and political questions that confront the society.

Nearly a year ago, the largest-ever survey of Quebec Anglophones was conducted by the polling firm CROP on behalf of the Missisquoi Institute. Two separate studies were conducted, the first among English-speaking Quebecers aged 18 and over, and the second among French-speaking Quebecers aged 18 and over. In both cases, the samples were randomly drawn according to a non-proportionate stratified sampling model, in order to allow for adequate representation of residents of the 17 administrative regions of Quebec. The data were then weighted according to the region, sex and age in order to ensure the representativity of the sample. In total, 3,126 interviews were carried out among English-speakers between May 16 and June 28, 2000. In addition, 1,264 interviews were carried out among Francophones. The Francophone interviews were carried out in two groups, the first 1,000 between May 24 and June 11, 2000, and an additional 274 between September 22 and 30, 2000.

The results are subject to the following maximum margins of error, in 19 cases out of 20:

- Total Anglophones (n=3126) 1.8%
- Total Francophones (n=1264) 2.8%

*Administrative results: Anglophones*

Out of an initial sample of 63,612 telephone numbers, there were 8848 invalid numbers (no service, non-residential, fax, etc.), 36,123 out of sample numbers (sickness, Francophone, etc.) and 14,292 numbers whose eligibility could not be established (no answer, answering machine, refusal of the household). In the final sample of 4,349 questionnaires, 1,223 were incomplete, and a total of 3,126 completed interviews for a 53.4% response rate.

*Administrative results: Francophones*

For the first wave of the Francophone survey, out of an initial sample of 2,743 telephone numbers, 433 were invalid, 376 were out of sample, and 622 were for numbers where eligibility could not be established. There was a total of 1,312 numbers, 312 incomplete questionnaires, and a 55.8% response rate for the completed interviews. For the second wave, the response rate was 54.6%.

Detailed analysis of the results permits important insights into the state of Quebec Anglophone opinion on the dominant socio-political realities in the province. To conduct the analysis, emphasis will be on six social and economic sub-groups that are widely presumed to play a role in influencing views on the province's socio-political realities within the Anglophone population. They are as follows:

- (1) Intergenerational: focusing on those persons between the ages of 18-24 and 65 and over
- (2) Education: focusing on those who have not completed high school and those who have completed university
- (3) Employment status: focusing on those persons working full time and those without employment
- (4) Knowledge of French: focusing on those persons able to conduct a conversation in the French language
- (5) Language Contact Relations: focusing on those persons whose spouse is either English or French
- (6) Gender: focusing on differences in opinion between male and female respondents

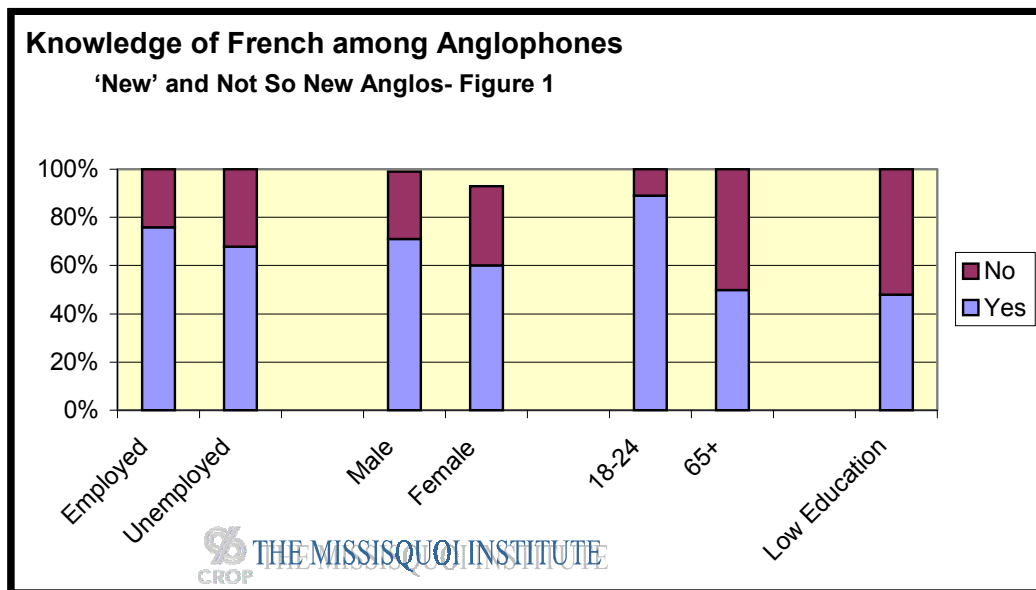
We note that the differences between English-speakers who are born in Canada and those who are born elsewhere or who have a mother tongue other than English will be analyzed at a later date.

The views amongst members of the sub groups were tested on a variety of themes that arose from the CROP-Missisquoi questionnaire. They were as follows:

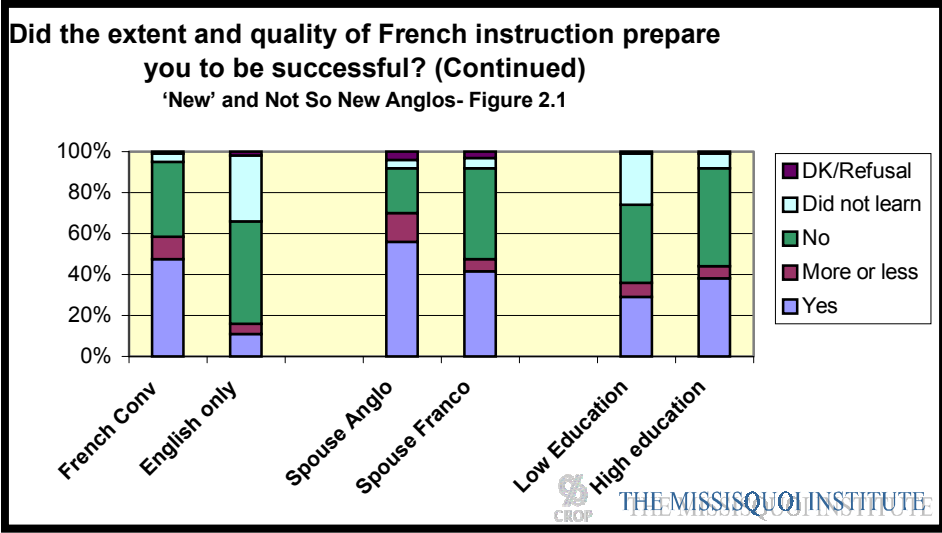
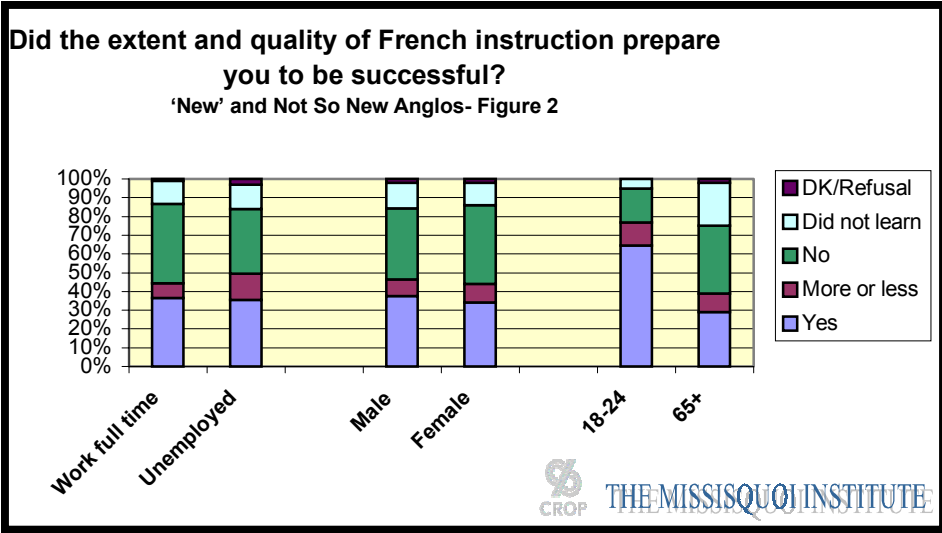
- (1) Problems and Priorities: What issues are seen as the main problems confronting the Anglophone community and which constitute the priorities?
- (2) Representation and Leadership: Which organizations are seen as most dedicated to the concerns of Quebec Anglophones?
- (3) Future of the French and English Languages: To what extent do Anglophones believe that there is a threat to either the French language and/or the English community?
- (4) Civil Service/Perceived Discrimination: To what extent does the Anglophone population express interest in employment with either the provincial or federal civil service and to what degree do they perceive discrimination in hiring amongst English-speaking Quebecers?

## Bilingualism and the Quebec Anglophone population

The younger generation of Quebec Anglophones reports considerably higher rates of bilingualism than is the case for the overall community. In the 1996 census, some 89% of Anglophones between the ages of 18 and 24 declared knowledge of both English and French. These figures correspond to the findings of the CROP-Missisquoi survey, which reveals that some 90% of the 18-24 age cohort are able to conduct a conversation in the French language. That said, those with lesser degrees of education possess a reduced ability to conduct a conversation in French. Data from the Conseil de la langue Francaise reveal that younger Anglophones use the French language in the workplace to a greater degree than persons in the higher age categories. The CROP-Missisquoi data reflect the gap in the knowledge of French amongst Anglophones on the basis of age. As regards other variables, one observes in the table below that employed were slightly more bilingual than the unemployed as were males more so than females and persons with higher education as opposed to those with low education.



Despite the high level of bilingualism amongst Quebec Anglophones there is a feeling that the extent and quality of French language instruction did not prepare them to succeed in Quebec. When asked about this, there was an important variation in the views held by persons over the age of 65 and those who were between 18-24. In the latter case some 2 out of 3 were satisfied with the extent and quality of French instruction whereas less than 30 of seniors felt that way. Another gap appears between those with French spouses and those who have English spouses where there was a lower level of satisfaction. Of those who spoke the French language some 36% were dissatisfied with their preparation as were around half of those with a university education.



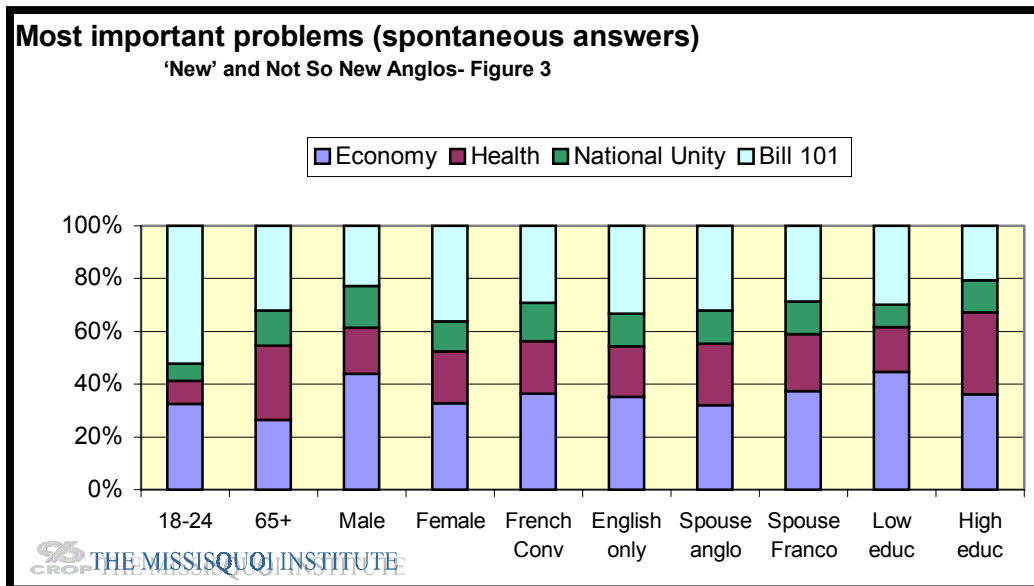
**Problems and Priorities**

In eliciting the views of Quebec Anglophones, the CROP-Missisquoi survey asked respondents to spontaneously identify the most important problem facing the Anglophone community, and then asked respondents to prioritize amongst a list of potential issues. Asking about the importance of the issue gives a sense of how deeply the respondent may feel about a problem. It therefore offers some idea of how in this instance Anglophones might go about defining priorities.

For example, more young respondents spontaneously mentioned Bill 101 as the main problem facing Anglophones and it was referred to more often amongst this group than those over the age of 65. Equal rights were spontaneously identified as the principal issue across our entire spectrum of respondents. There was a fair degree of consistency in the responses amongst the various sub-groups.

Persons over the age of 65 tended to spontaneously identify health as the most important problem for Anglophones, almost as often as they did Bill 101. However when asked about specific issues they tend to put equal rights above all other matters including health. Similarly, while male respondents spontaneously view economic problems as being more important than

Bill 101, they to invoke equal rights more often than any other issue when this question is put to them. For their part, female respondents regarded Bill 101 as the principal problem facing the Anglophone population.

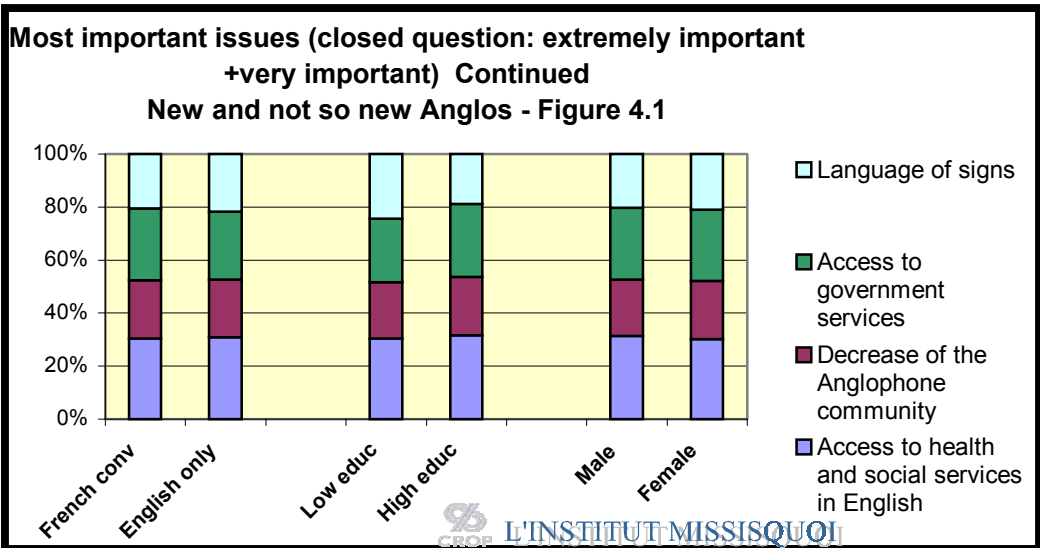
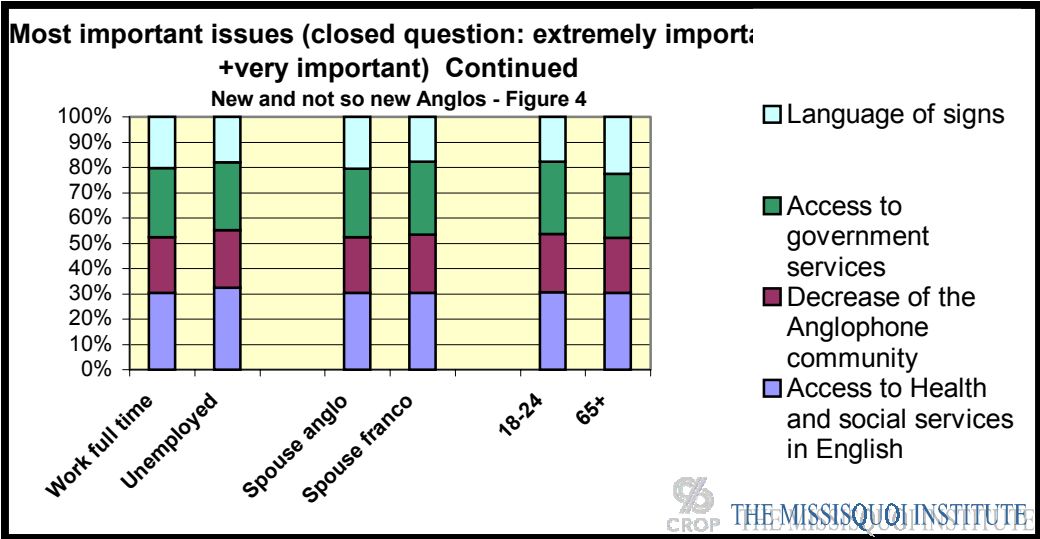


(1) Cumulative percentage of following responses: economy, employment and jobs

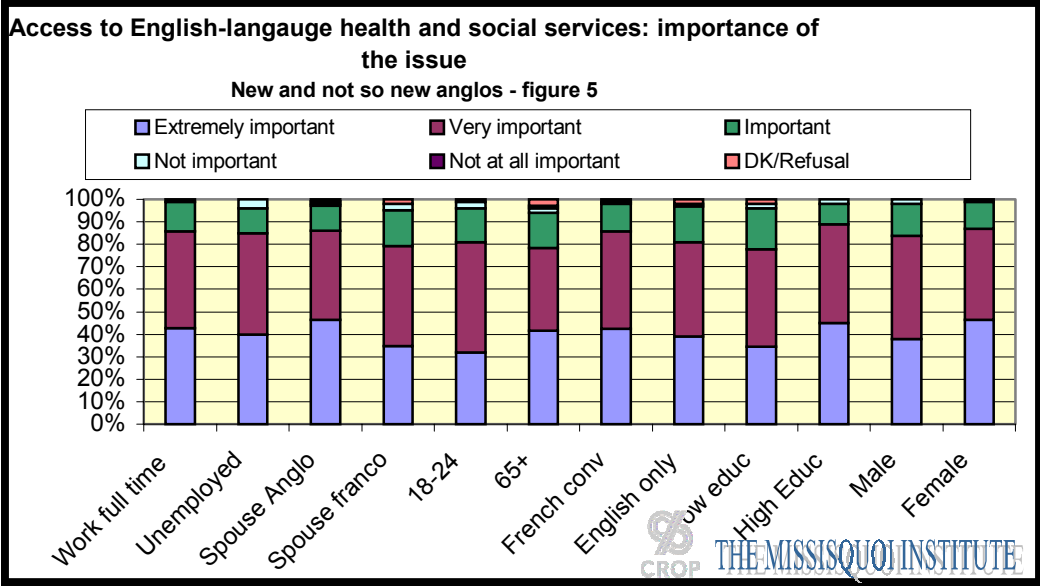
(2) Low education refers to respondents who did not complete high school while High signifies those who have a university degree

Neither as spontaneously mentioned problem nor as a suggested issue did national unity rank particularly high amongst respondents. This does not imply a lesser concern for this matter but is likely more attributable to the low number of Anglophones who believe that the province will separate from the rest of Canada. Here, as in the rest of the survey, what stands out most is the fairly important degree of convergence in the answers given by the Anglophone respondents whatever their age, social status, economic condition or gender. The extent to which equal rights arises as an issue is something that needs to be further examined as it too is a concern amongst all subgroups in this study.

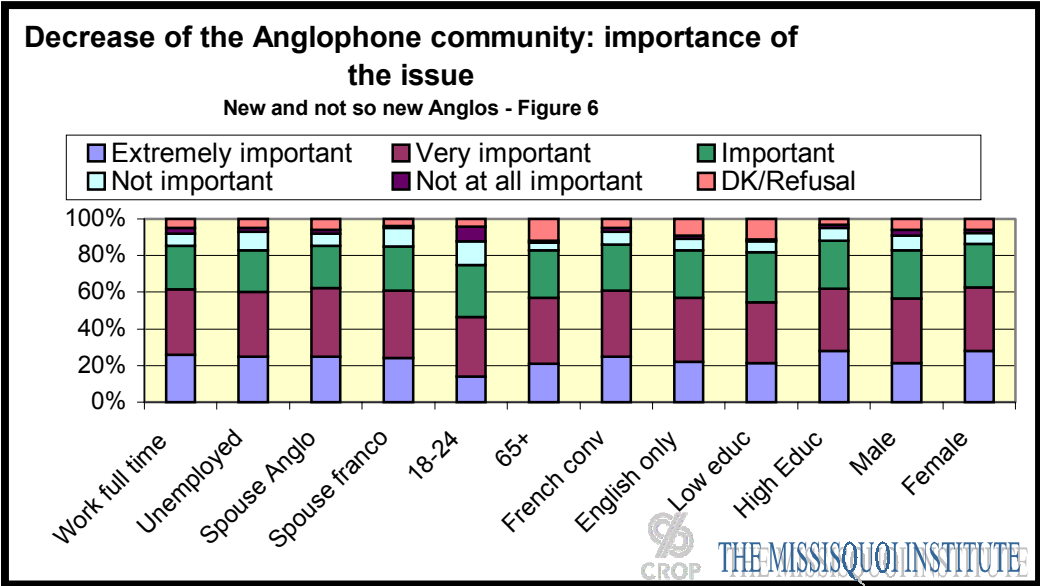
Respondents were further asked to rate the importance of each of the issues to the Anglophone community. Overall health and social services were ranked as extremely and very important by the highest percentage of respondents. This does not detract from the importance attributed to other issues. Rather at the time of the survey it appears that accessibility of services is of greater concern than are the demo-linguistic matters.



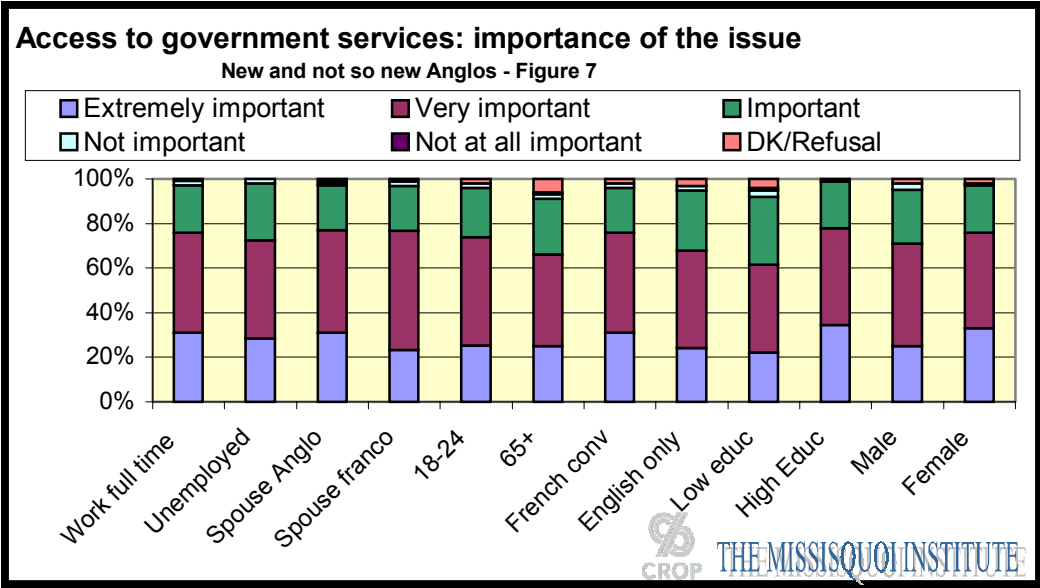
Looking at each issue on its own we observe slight differences in prioritization across the sub groups. As we can see in the Table below, health and social services ranked high amongst all respondents and there was at best a difference in the degree of importance attributed to the issue across the sub groups.



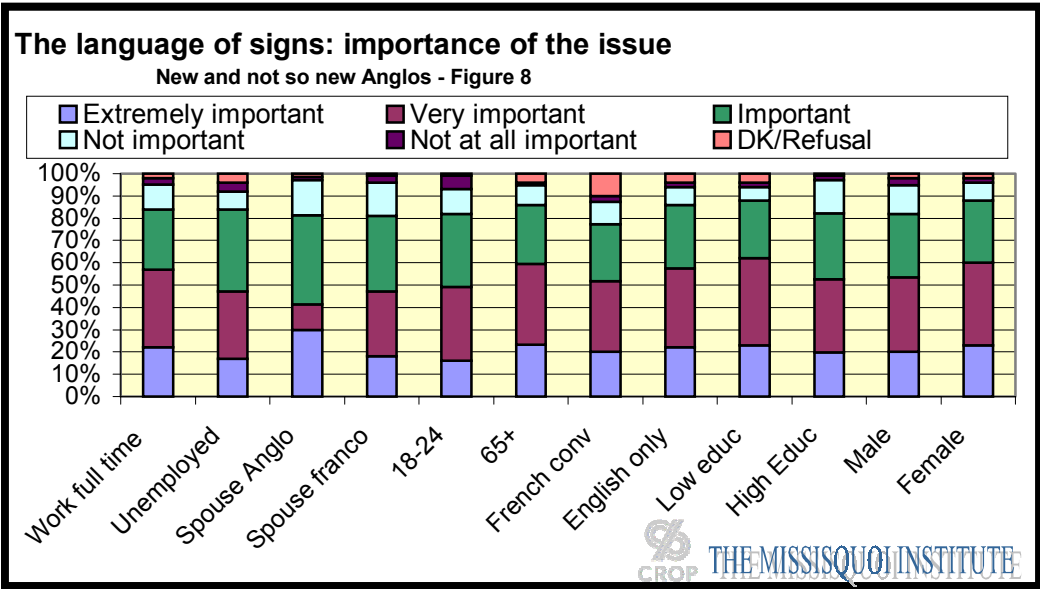
Concerns over the decrease in the Anglophone population elicited a fairly uniform reply with the exception of the younger respondents. More than one out of five regarded the issue as unimportant. Other categories yielded one response out of ten where there was little or no concern over the decline. As we can see in the table below a majority of respondents over the age of sixty-five regard the decrease in the size of the Anglophone community as either extremely or very important. This somewhat contrasts with the 46% of younger Anglophones attribute a similar degree of importance to the issue.



With regard to access to government services, there are only slight variations in the degree of importance attributed to this area by the sub groups investigated here. The most important distinction is between those persons who have completed university to whom such access is more important than those who did not complete high school.



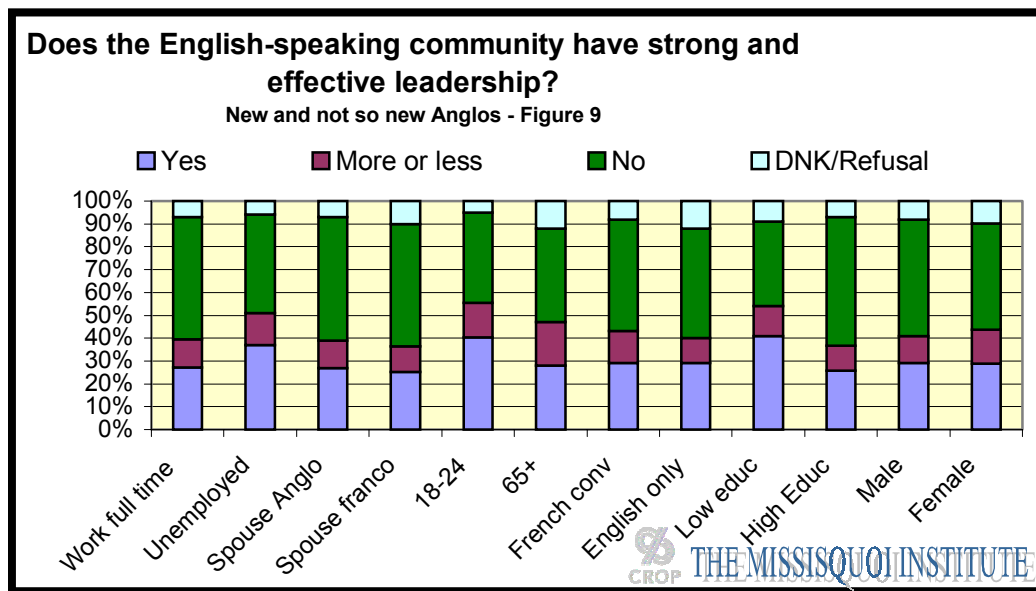
As to the language of signs, those who attribute somewhat greater importance to the issue are persons over the age of 65 versus those between the ages of 18 and 24, those married to Anglophones versus those married to Francophones and those who are working versus those who are unemployed. Still the differences are not sufficient to affirm that there is either a generation gap or that less social distance leads to reduced concerns over language issues (we will look further at this issue in a subsequent section).



**Representation and Leadership**

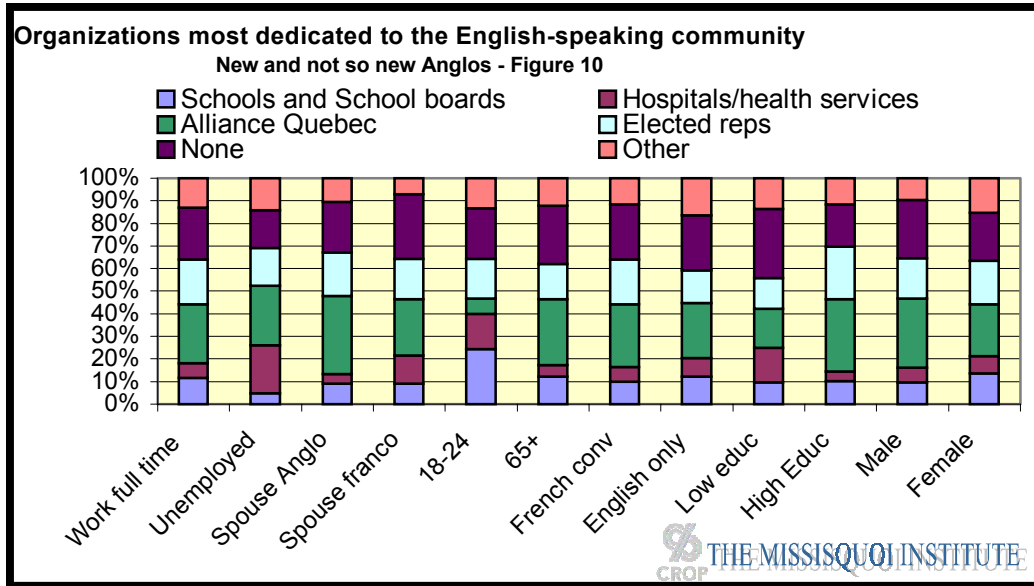
Leadership is a function of the input an individual can make into the community’s capacity for concerted action, into the total power of the community in relation to the problems and opportunities it encounters (Breton, 1991). The strength of communal expressions of identity very often depends upon the extent to which a group is able to mobilize persons around shared interests and objectives. Those charged with defining and implementing a community’s agenda play a decisive role in shaping such objectives.

Leadership has been the focus of much attention in Quebec's Anglophone and considerable interest has been paid to interest groups. Yet leadership can emerge from a variety of sources. On the question of leadership the CROP-Missisquoi survey shows some variations in opinion on the degree of effectiveness of community leaders amongst the Anglophone respondents. Around 40% of those who are unemployed, youth and seniors do not consider the leadership of the Anglophone community to be effective. In the case of our other sub groups, the rate rises to 50% with the exception of university graduates for whom a near 60% regarded the leadership as not being effective.

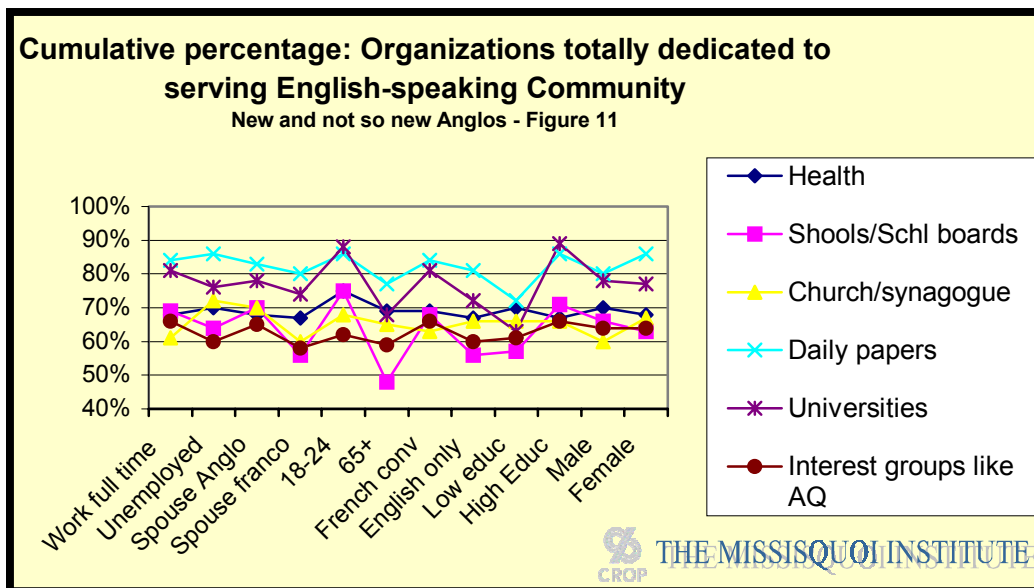


Leadership is present across the institutions of the community. The CROP-Missisquoi survey asked which organizations, institutions, associations or individuals Anglophones felt were most dedicated to representing or serving their interests either on a regional or provincial basis? When an open question was put on this matter an important number of persons did not respond. Amongst those who did provide an answer, as we can see in the Table below, Alliance Quebec was the most frequently identified institution. However it did not elicit a significant number of responses amongst the 18-24 group that were more inclined to identify schools and school boards as the most dedicated institutions.

Those without employment also referred to Alliance Quebec to a lesser extent than did other groups. Finally while university graduates identified Alliance Quebec to a proportionately greater degree they also referred to elected representatives more often than the other sub groups. Of course further research in this area is required to better understand the criteria upon which the respondents evaluate leadership.



Another question in the survey asked respondents to evaluate the level of dedication of the institutional leadership. This inquiry may bear on the degree of confidence that the Anglophone respondent has in these institutions. When the question is put this way the results appear different from that viewed previously.



Cumulative percentage (totally agree and somewhat agree response)

Across the sub groups it was the daily newspapers and the universities that respondents felt were most dedicated to the interests of the Anglophone community. Indeed they attracted considerably more positive responses than any of the other institutions. Again however these responses do not imply a lack of confidence in the other institutions, as the survey does not permit us to determine the standards against which each institution is measured. We would need to know what the expectations of the respondents were relative to the performance of the institution and in some instances how their mandates were understood.

Nonetheless, what does stand out is the consistency of the responses amongst the Anglophone population that further reinforces the notion that there are fewer discrepancies in the outlook of the community when it comes to leadership issues.

As to whether Alliance Quebec reflects the personal views of the Anglophone respondents there were some slight variations in opinion. Those who were unemployed and those whose spouses were English had higher rates of favorable responses to this question than other sub groups. By and large however the figures point to a split in the extent to which the respondents felt that Alliance Quebec reflects their viewpoint and what was perhaps most noteworthy was the fact that bilingualism played no role in the extent to which the organization reflects the community's point of view.

