

How do francophones regard Quebec anglophones and their issues of concern?

On the sixteenth of January, 2001, the Missisquoi Institute released the initial results of the largest ever survey of the Quebec anglophone community, with a view to providing a broad profile of the province's English-speakers. Crop Inc., a Montreal-based marketing research and consulting firm, was commissioned by the Missisquoi Institute to conduct the survey.

Following the presentation of the preliminary conclusions arising from the data, the Institute indicated that more detailed breakdowns would soon be made available on a thematic basis. Two areas were identified for further analysis by those individuals and groups who viewed the initial results. Thus the Missisquoi Institute is currently preparing a portrait of the attitudes and experiences of anglophone Quebecers in the various regions and a report on the findings from each sector of inquiry, including a summary of the views of the province's English-speaking youth on the issues raised in the Crop-Missisquoi survey.

In pursuit of the organization's mission to create a social research capacity within Quebec's English-speaking community it was deemed appropriate to examine the views of the francophone population vis-à-vis the province's anglophones. The complementary survey conducted amongst some 1,264 francophone respondents served two purposes. First, it provides a look at the respective importance attributed by Quebec anglophones and francophones to a number of fundamental issues, including health, economic, and employment questions. The data is also designed to provide insight into the receptivity of francophones to certain issues of concern to the province's anglophone population as well as their attitude towards the English language and English-speakers on the whole. This survey provides us with significant insight into the climate of relations between Quebec's French-speaking and English-speaking populations. The data being disseminated today is invaluable for those who wish to better understand the relationship between Quebec's language communities.

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Survey methodology and administrative results

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%.

Following is a review of the highlights of the survey that deal with Quebec francophone attitudes toward the anglophone community and the English language.

Knowledge and Use of Official Languages

While there are important regional variations in the extent to which francophones claim the ability to conduct a conversation in the English language, such bilingualism is equally if not more affected by the level of education and income of the respondent. In effect, the more education and the higher the level of income, the greater the propensity of the francophone respondents to be able to speak the English language. While the findings are not surprising, what is striking is the strong correlation of the relationships between the education of the respondent and the degree of bilingualism on the one hand and the level of income and knowledge of official languages on the other. It is also notable that while francophones indicate a higher level of ease in reading English than in speaking it, anglophones indicate that they speak better than they read. This is illustrated in the tables below.

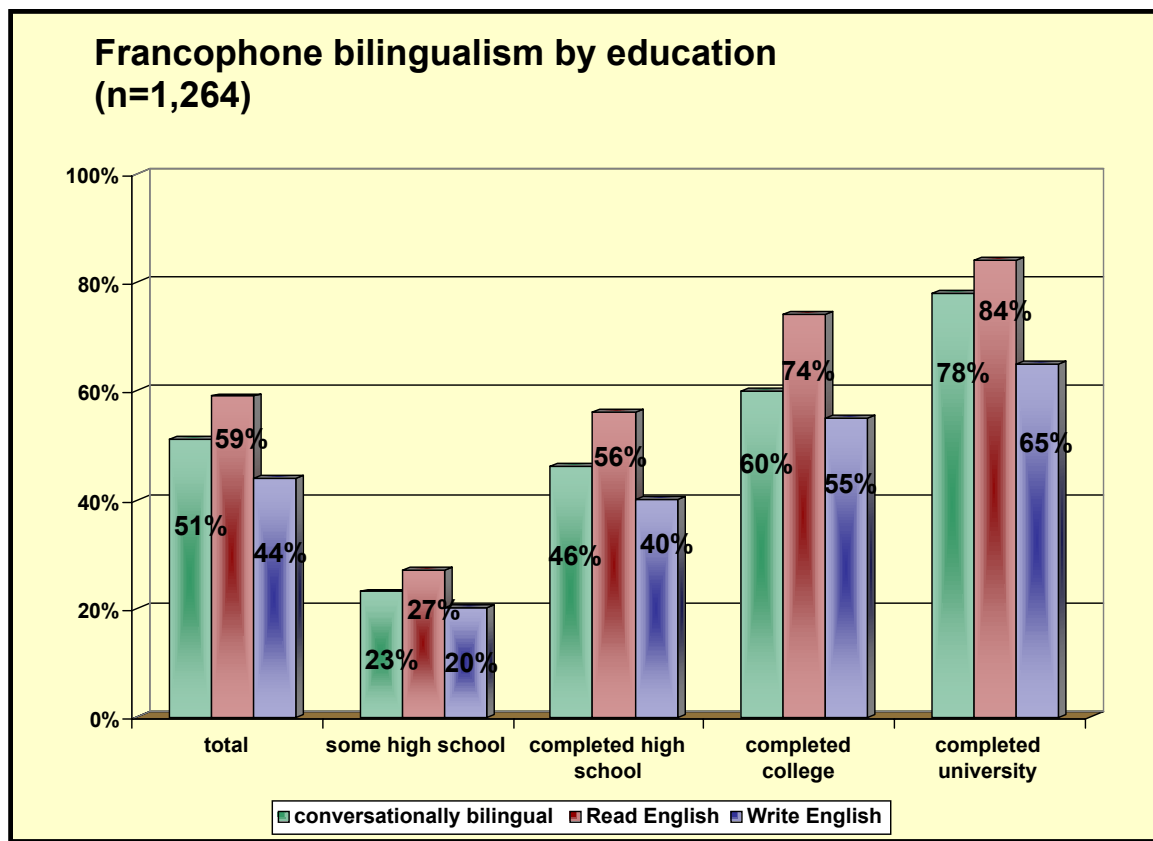


figure 1

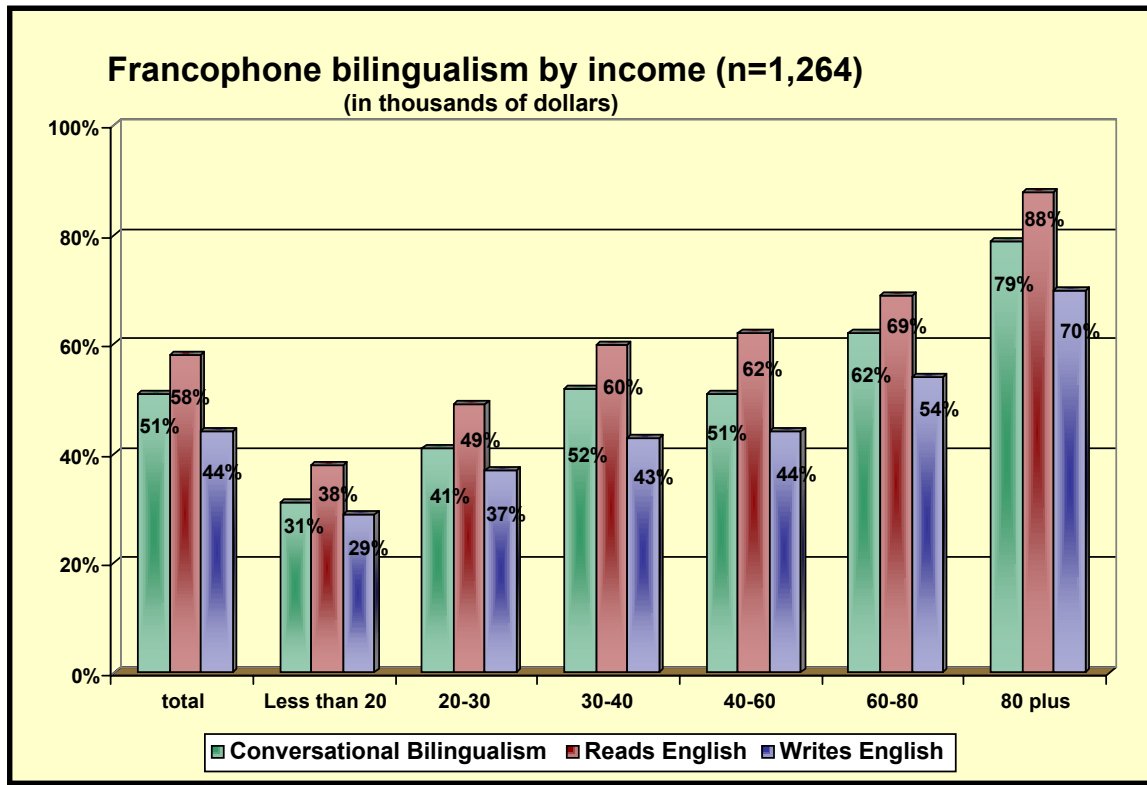


figure 2

The relationship between income and bilingualism appears to be quite well understood by the francophone respondents. The CROP-Missisquoi survey inquired into the extent to which they felt that it was advantageous to know both official languages in order to improve one's economic situation. Indeed, approximately 90% of francophone respondents believe that in their region an education in both French and English enhances the opportunity to find employment. This figure is particularly interesting in light of the fact that 91% of francophone respondents indicated that they work in French.

There is a correlation between higher levels of education amongst our anglophone respondents and the ability to speak French. The CROP-Missisquoi survey reveals that while the vast majority of those respondents who have completed high school can conduct a conversation in the French language, a slight majority of those who did not finish are unable to speak the French language. Paradoxically, those who have not obtained a degree beyond high school and who are employed tend to speak the French language in the workplace to a greater extent than do those who have a college or university degree. While the majority of Quebec anglophones speak the English language in the workplace, the situation varies in different parts of the province. In such areas as the Lower St. Lawrence, Quebec City, the Mauricie, Chaudière-Appalaches, Lanaudière and the Laurentides, the majority of anglophone respondents spoke mainly French at work.

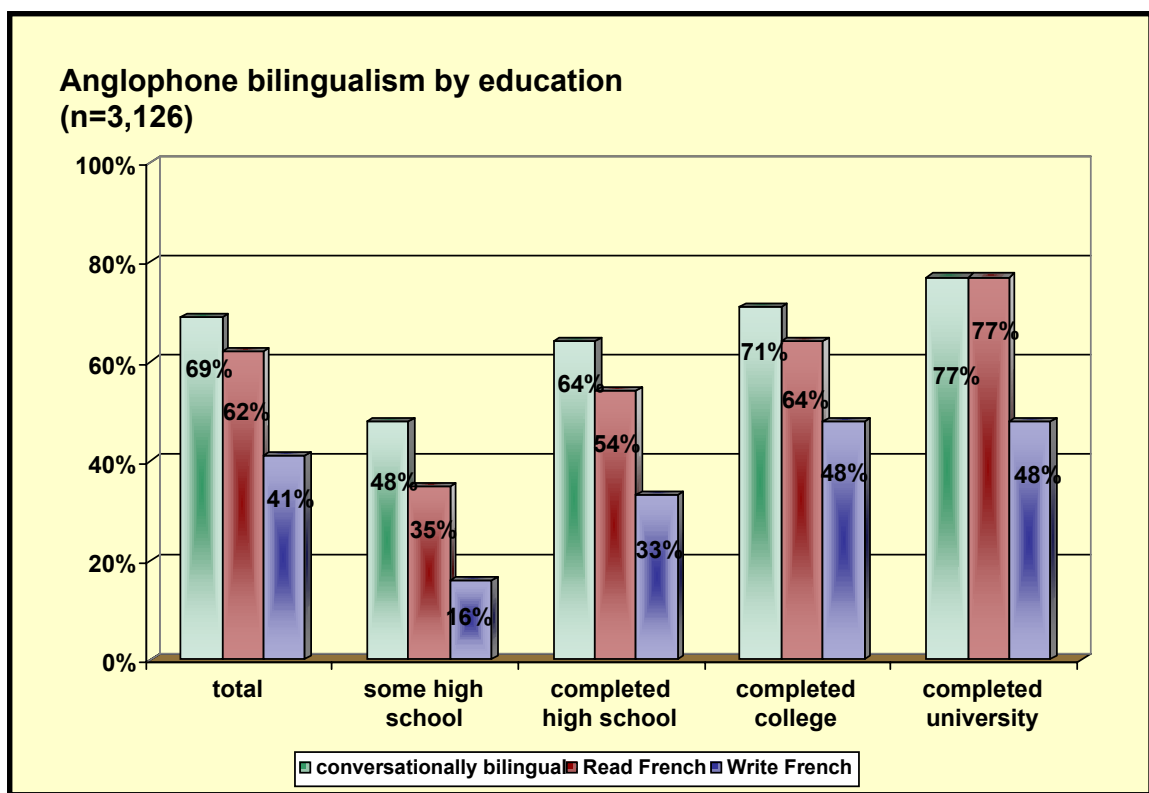


figure 3

Social Distance

Respondents were asked whether during the week preceding the survey they had been in contact with anglophones. Almost half reported having frequent and/or occasional contact with anglophones. The region in which one resides is by far the most important factor contributing to the degree of interaction between members of the two groups. On the Island of Montreal some 49% of the francophone population reported having frequent contact with anglophones in the last seven days. Further, some 49% indicated that they had close friends who were anglophone. On a regional basis, there was some variation on this question with as much as 60% of respondents on the Island of Montreal reporting close friendships with anglophones. These findings provide yet further evidence of the continuing erosion of the two solitudes.

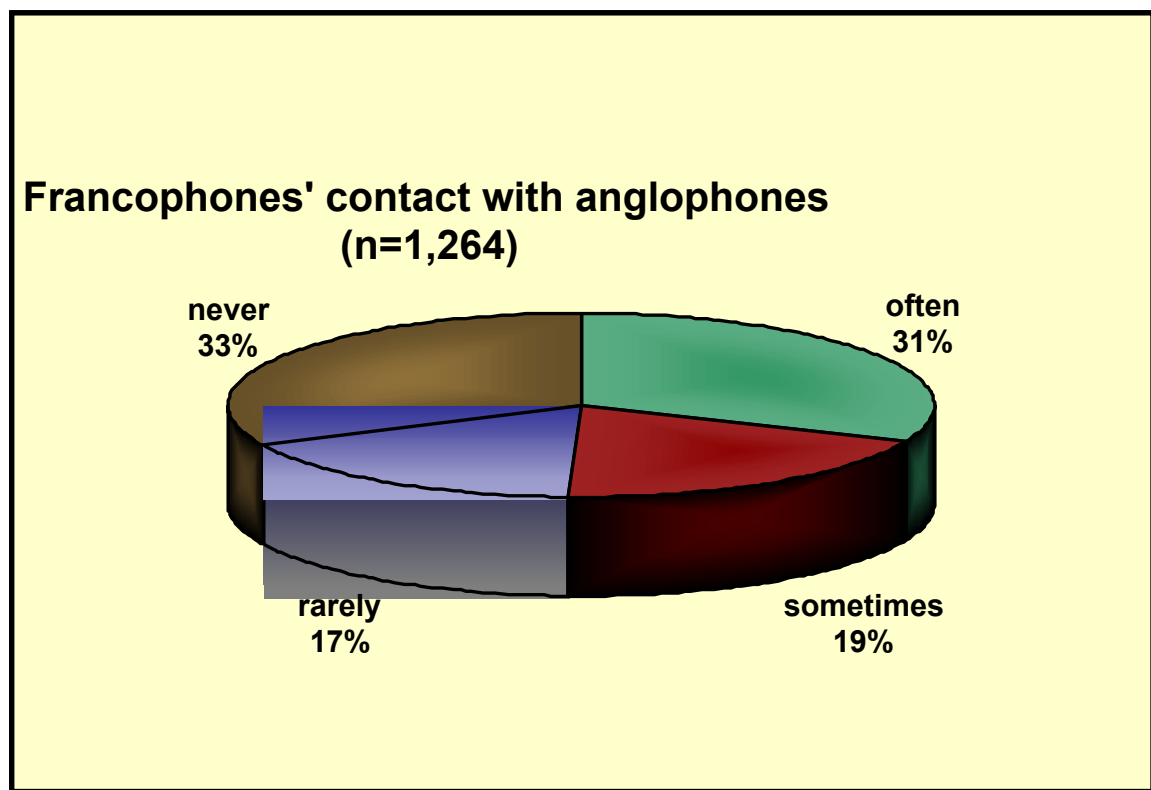


figure 4

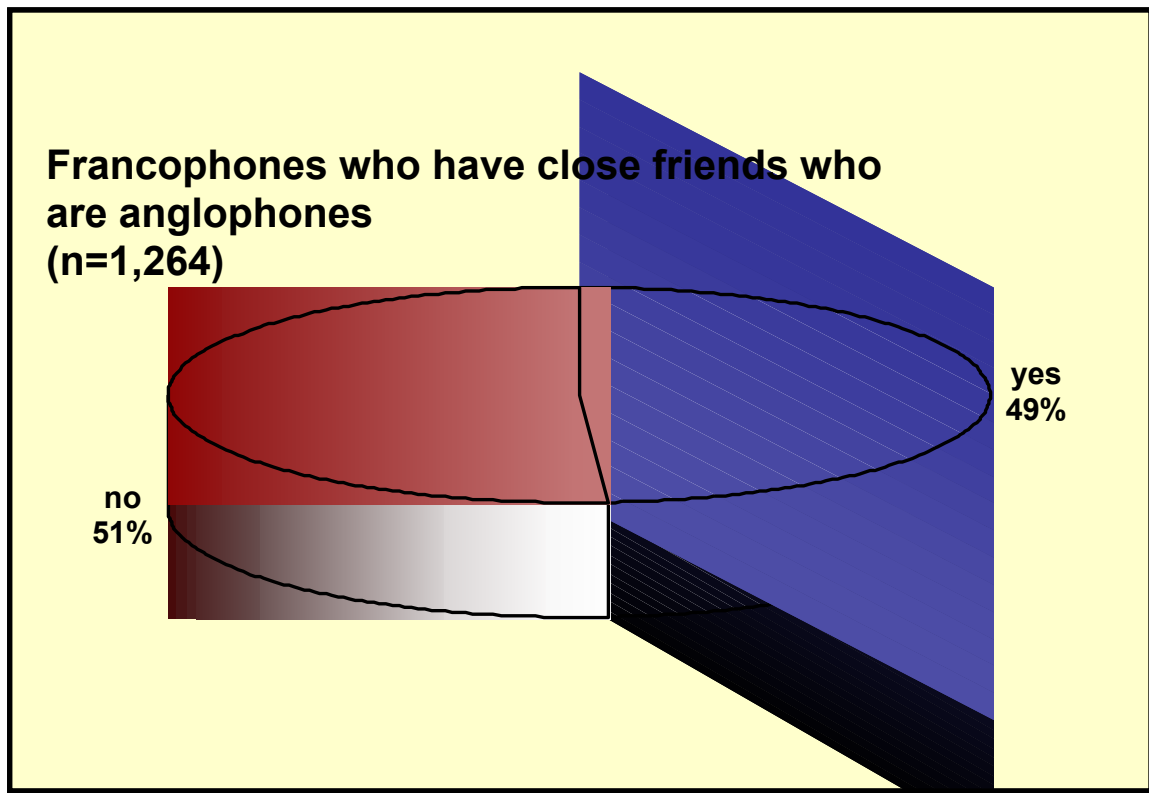


figure 5

That so many francophones have anglophone friends has likely had a bearing on how the relationship is perceived by members of the group. In this regard, when asked about the state of relations with anglophones, some 83% of our francophone respondents described them as either good or very good (some 6% described them as bad or very bad). In the Western part of Montreal some 95% viewed the relationship positively. When asked whether the relationship has improved over the past ten years some 44% said it had (67% in the Western part of Montreal, 52% in the center and 37% in the East). Overall some 43% felt that the relationship remained unchanged while 6% said it had deteriorated.

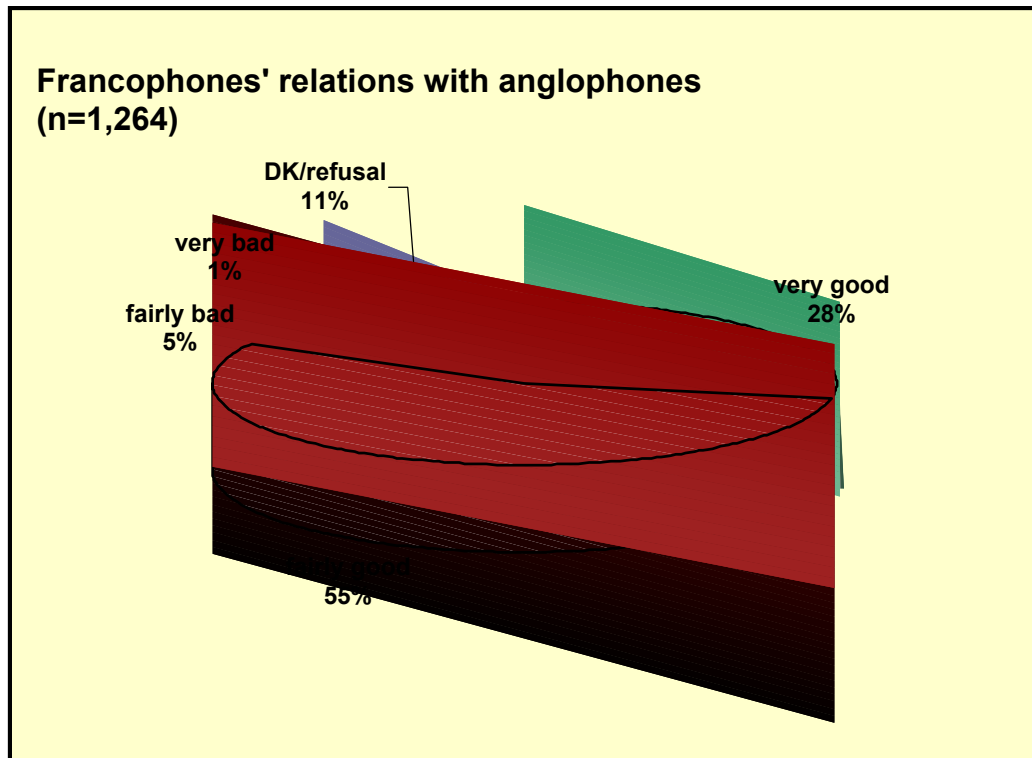


figure 6

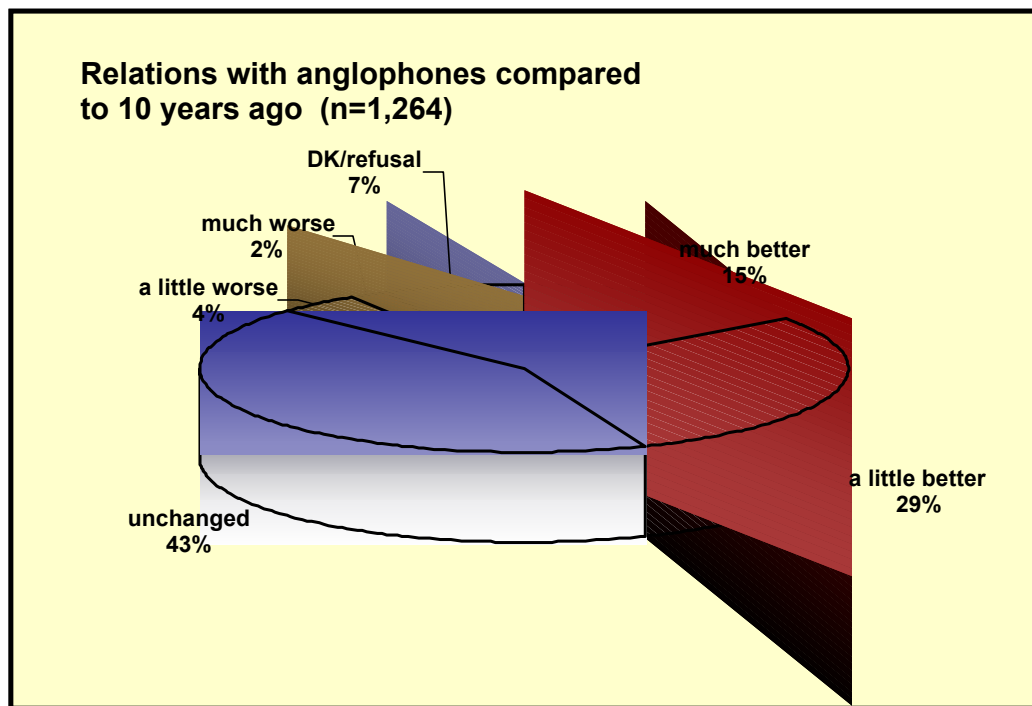


figure 7

Anglophones in Montreal account for approximately 19% of the total mother tongue population of the Island (24% on the basis of the language used at home). Francophone respondents were asked to estimate the size of the English-speaking community in their region. Some 40% of francophones on the Island of Montreal believe that more than four out of ten persons are anglophone.

The reduction of social distance is further reflected in the extent to which anglophones are married to francophones. It is worth noting that a majority of the sample of those anglophones who were married or living as a couple (some 1,978 persons) was NOT married to other anglophones. Over one out of five (22%) of respondents were married to francophones and another 31% reported that they were married to someone whose mother tongue was neither English nor French. Again there were important regional variations. In Laval, Montreal Center and Montreal East, a majority or near majority of those who were married or living as a couple had a partner who was neither English nor French. Marriage between anglophones was most pervasive in the Gaspésie, Estrie, Western Montreal and the Montérégie. Elsewhere the proportion of anglophones married or living with francophones ranged from 39% in such places as Lanaudière and the Laurentides to 62% in Abitibi and 66% in the Mauricie.

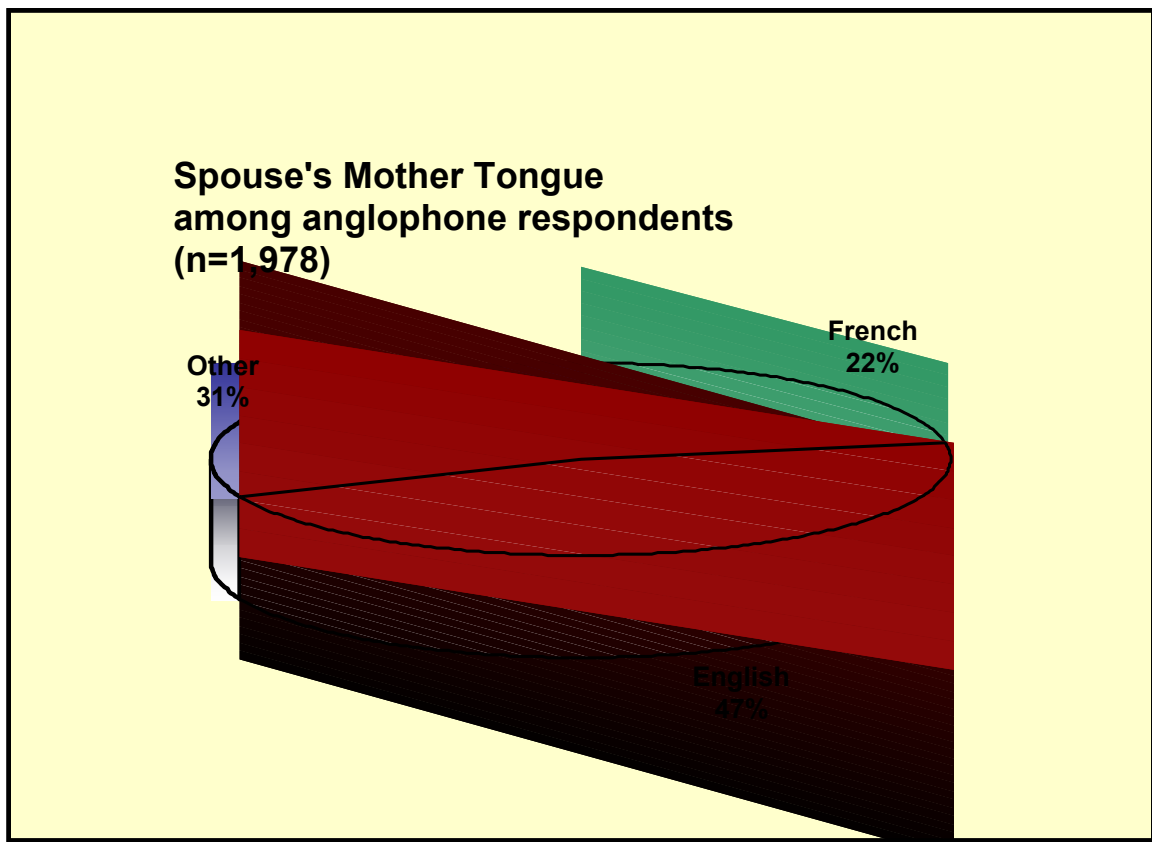


figure 8

A reduction in social distance is generally regarded as a recipe for reducing stereotypes, mutual demystification and easing of inter-communal tensions. This is not always the case. In Quebec the sometime difficult political climate must be factored in when assessing the state of the relationship between the anglophone and francophone population. However based on the findings from the CROP-Missisquoi poll it does not appear that, for example, the post referendum climate culminated in a souring of relations between Quebec's majority and minority language communities.

Concerns over the future of the French Language

Although the capacity to communicate with each other has augmented over the years and the social distance between anglophones and francophones has been reduced, there remain differences in the extent to which members of the two communities view the threat to their respective languages. In effect, some 61% of francophone respondents believe that the future of the French language in Quebec is threatened. This perception is held to a somewhat greater degree by those francophones who speak French only as opposed to those who are able to conduct a conversation in English. For their part, about 78% of anglophone respondents disagreed with the statement that the future of the French language in Quebec is threatened. On the other hand, when asked whether they thought the future of the English-speaking community in their region was threatened some 66% of the anglophone respondents agreed (36% agreed totally and 30% agreed somewhat). Only 14% of francophones agreed with the statement that the English-speaking community is threatened in their region, and there is little variation in such attitudes in the regions of the province.

Issues of concern to the anglophone community

While francophones believe that there has been much improvement in the relationship with anglophones, they do not regard their communities as threatened. For their part, most anglophones do not believe that the French language is threatened. Nonetheless, 50% of anglophones believe it is legitimate for the government to adopt legislation to defend the French language. But another way to evaluate the state of the relationship between the two linguistic communities is to look at the extent to which they support their respective issues of concern.

Health and Social Services

Francophone respondents were asked if they agreed that no matter where they lived, anglophones should be entitled to health and social services in the English language. Some 75% of respondents supported this view. In fact in Montreal Center, the Outaouais and the Gaspésie some 90% of francophone respondents were sympathetic to the extension of such services.

Language of Commercial Signs

On the ever-controversial issue of the language of commercial signs, some 73% of francophone respondents felt that languages other than French were acceptable. Indeed the difference between those francophones who do not support legislation in this regard (10%) and those who favor unilingual French commercial signs (14%) is not all that significant.

Access to English language schools

The issue of access to English language schools is among the most controversial issues facing Quebec society. This is one of the only questions that received a near-unanimous response from anglophone respondents: 97% totally or somewhat agreed with the statement that “parents should be able to send their children to primary schools in either English or French according to choice”. 74% of francophone respondents totally or somewhat agreed with this statement.

Conclusion

There are many signs that point to a reduction in the social distance between francophones and their anglophone neighbors. Bilingualism and social contact with anglophones are increasingly important hallmarks among francophone respondents to the CROP-Missisquoi survey. Furthermore, francophone respondents indicate a high level of sympathy for a number of concerns for the anglophone community, among them access to English-language health and social services, access to schools and the presence of languages other than French on commercial signs. Overall, some 44% of francophone respondents reported that they thought relationships with anglophones had improved in the past 10 years. The Missisquoi Institute will continue to examine the issue of relations between linguistic communities in Quebec, since this issue will undoubtedly have an impact on the identity of English-speaking Quebecers and on the manner in which community concerns are articulated and received by French speaking Quebecers.

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