



# Inclusion of English-Speaking Quebecers in the Equal Access Employment Program

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# Abstract

The Quebec government's Equal Access Employment Program (EAEP) targets five vulnerable, underrepresented groups in the public service. The anglophone minority is not currently one of them. However, in the past few decades, anglophones have experienced a decline in their institutional and economic vitality despite high levels of academic achievement and growing bilingualism. Compared with francophones, anglophones now live in less favourable socioeconomic conditions, with lower annual median incomes and higher unemployment and poverty rates in most of the 17 administrative regions of Quebec. They also report higher levels of discrimination and linguicism than the francophone majority. Their participation in Quebec's public service remains very low (1%) when one considers that mother tongue anglophones make up 10% of the provincial population. In light of the above, we recommend considering including English-speaking Quebecers as an EAEP target group. This paper focuses on the EAEP that the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse* (CDPDJ) administers for 338 public organizations.

# Introduction

The *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* and Canada's anti-discrimination laws were enacted as a result of the recognition of profound and persistent inequalities in our society. . . . The Quebec Charter was therefore received with enthusiasm. We had a tool: we could now work toward reversing trends and banishing the ghosts of exclusion and prejudice (CDPDJ, 1998, p. 1, free translation).

The province of Quebec adopted the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms in June 1975. Section 10 addresses the right to equality and non-discrimination in the recognition and exercise of rights and freedoms of all citizens. It prohibits all discrimination “based on race, colour, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap.” The Quebec Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ) is responsible for upholding the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

# The Quebec Equal Access Employment Program (EAEP)

The majority of Quebec public servants during the Quiet Revolution were francophones who contributed to the expansion and modernization of the welfare state in the 1960s-1970s. The Quebec government became the largest employer in the province. As Quebec opened up to immigration, the government launched recruitment campaigns to ensure a more equitable presence of ethnocultural minorities in its public service institutions (Cooper, Donovan and O'Donnell, 2019). However, these recruitment campaigns did not always succeed in increasing the representation of these minorities in the public service.

The underrepresentation of minorities in Quebec's public service could not be attributed solely to a lack of proficiency in French, a lack of skills or experience among minority candidates, a lack of educational degrees or diplomas, or a dearth of candidates applying for government positions (CDPDJ, 1998, 2020; Eid, 2009). Research showed that managers tended to favour candidates who shared the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds as themselves: a preference for "people who look like us" (Eid, 2012, free translation). Such "pro-ingroup favouritism" trends can lead to systemic discrimination in hiring, promotions, salaries, and the retention of employees from minority backgrounds (Bourhis, 2021; Charest and Chicha, 2012; Simard, 1998).

In response to the CDPDJ's recommendations (1998), Quebec adopted the Act Respecting Equal Access to Employment in Public Bodies in 2001. This act established Quebec's Equal Access Employment Program (EAEP) with the aim of employing more qualified persons from minority backgrounds in provincial public bodies (Quebec, 2020). Managed by the CDPDJ, the program targeted four vulnerable groups: 1) women; 2) First Nations, Métis and Inuit persons; 3) persons belonging to a visible minority because of their "race" or the colour of their skin; and 4) ethnic minorities whose first language is neither English or French (allophones). In 2005, the Act was amended to include: 5) persons with a significant and persistent disability who are likely to encounter obstacles in the performance of their daily activities (CDPDJ, 2023).

The EAEP seeks to select minority candidates whose language skills, occupational knowhow and work experiences are evaluated within a competitive process and are recognized and treated equally for a given position. Only at the end of this process are the candidates compared and, all else being equal, a candidate from a recognized minority will be hired, promoted and compensated fairly (CDPDJ, 2020). The CDPDJ established specific procedures for determining the number of target individuals in each of the five minorities to ensure their fair representation in the 338 public bodies subject to the law (see [Appendix 1](#)).

Defining and achieving these targets remains a difficult challenge. The EAEP is implemented in ten major networks that encompass 338 public organizations. These ten networks include 70 school service centers and English-language school boards, 38 private educational institutions, 48 CEGEPs, 19 universities, 25 state-owned enterprises, 71 municipalities, 8 transportation companies,

3 intermunicipal police boards, the Sûreté du Québec, and 55 establishments in the health and social services network (CDPDJ, 2023, pp. 23-26).

In March 2022, there were a total of 744,153 employees (100%) working in the government's 10 administrative networks subject to the EAEP (CDPDJ, 2023). For example, there were 300,075 employees working in the health and social services network (40%) and 200,013 working in school service centres and English-language school boards (26.9%). Table 1 provides a summary of EAEP data, including the number of minorities targeted by the act and their numbers in Quebec's administrative networks (CDPDJ, 2023, 26-39). When it compared the percentages of each of the five target groups in public bodies in 2009 and 2022, the Commission noted that many of the targets had almost been achieved and others, less so.

For example, **Table 1** shows that the representation of visible minorities in public bodies increased from 2.7% in 2009 (N=9,133) to 11.2% in 2022 (N=83,139). This growth reflects significant efforts by public bodies, especially within the health care system (N=39,966) and the school network (N=19,314). However, the 16.8% target set by the CDPDJ for 2022 was not achieved and would require that 5.6% of all additional hires be visible minorities.

As noted in the CDPDJ report:

Visible minorities are represented in all professional employment categories. However, additional efforts must be made by public organizations to increase their representation, particularly in senior management positions (2.4%), intermediate management positions (4.6%), as well as in supervisory (8.7%) and foreman positions (5.4%), where members of this group are the most underrepresented. (CDPDJ, 2023, p. 35, free translation).

Nevertheless, visible minorities are more represented in intermediate service staff positions (20.6%), skilled manual workers (15%), and other sales and service positions (13%).

**Table 1: Results of the Quebec government's EAEP in public organizations in 2009 and 2022**

Minorities targeted by the EAEP in Quebec's public bodies	2009		2022		2022	
	Total number of employees: 338,342		Total number of employees: 774,153		Target number of minority group members to be hired (%) in 2022	
	Number and % of minorities employed: EAEP 2009		Number and % of minorities employed: EAEP 2022		Minority target (%)	Shortfall (in % points)
<b>Women</b>	182,386	53.9%	507,998	68.3%	69%	0.7%
<b>Indigenous persons</b>	1,061	0.3%	3,298	0.4%	1.6%	1.2%
<b>Visible minorities</b>	9,133	2.7%	83,139	11.2%	16,8 %	5.6%
<b>Ethnic minorities (allophones)</b>	10,357	3.1%	27,272	3.7%	6.8%	3.1%
<b>Persons with disabilities</b>	N/A*	N/A*	6,574	0.9%	10.6%	9.7%

Sources: CDPDI, 2020 and 2023.  
\* Not applicable

While noting the significant progress of the EAEP for the five vulnerable groups, Cooper, Donovan and O'Donnell (2019) observe that, at the onset of the law respecting equal access to employment, it had not considered the province's anglophone minority. They also noted that "English-speaking Quebecers have long been underrepresented in Quebec's public service" (p. 7). Since 1972, only 0.7% to 1% of provincial public servants have had English as their first language, despite the fact that this group represents a much higher percentage of the Quebec population (10% in 2021) (Statistics Canada, 2023b). In addition, according to first official language spoken (FOLS), only 3.3% of anglophones held positions in Quebec's public service in 2016, although they made up 13.7% of the Quebec population according to this language indicator (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2019).

We note that the Québec Conseil du trésor also has a responsibility to establish its Equal Access to Employment Program (EAEP) for vulnerable minorities within the ministries and organisms of the Québec public administration (Québec, 2023). An analysis of these efforts could be the topic of another QUESCREN Working paper. It would be important to consider the inclusion of English-Speaking Quebecers "pour une fonction publique à l'image de notre société."



# Overview of the demolinguistic status of anglophones in Quebec

In 1977, as the francophone majority was achieving cultural, political and economic ascendancy, the Parti Québécois government adopted the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101), establishing the status and use of French as the public and common language of Quebec (Corbeil, 2007). Other language policies have consolidated the progress of French in the province, so that by the 2021 census, nearly 94% of Quebec's population reported being able to hold a conversation in French (Corbeil & Marcoux, 2023; OQLF, 2023).

The first official language spoken (FOLS) indicator used by Statistics Canada is based on a combination of three language markers used in Canada's Census: knowledge of English or French, first language spoken, and language spoken most often at home. According to this FOLS indicator in the 2021 Census, 6,909,570 Quebecers (82.1%) were francophone, and 1,088,820 (12.9%) were anglophone, while 329,515 were French/English FOLS (4.6%) and 79,000 were neither French nor English FOLS (0.4%) (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

That same year, based on L1 mother tongue data, the English-French bilingualism rate was higher among the anglophone (A) minority than among the francophone (F) majority. That was the case in 1971 (A=37.1% and F=25.5%); in 2001 (A=65.9% and F=37.7%); and in 2021 (A=67.1% and F=42.2%) (Statistics Canada, 2017, 2023a, 2023b). Also, L1 anglophone students were slightly more likely to have had some postsecondary education (85.5%) than L1 francophone students (81.6%) in Quebec.

# Median income of anglophones and francophones and bilingualism

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the wage gap favoring anglophones over francophones was mainly attributable to an ultra-rich Protestant elite that represented a tiny minority of Quebec's anglophone population (Rudin, 1985). As noted by Donovan and Bell (2024): "Most Quebec Anglophones were not wealthy." For example, in the 19th century, the Irish were overrepresented among low-skilled and poorly paid workers, just like francophone workers. The Quiet Revolution of francophone Quebecers, along with increased levels of education and language policies that increased the status and use of French, led to a rise in francophone incomes compared to those of the anglophone minority (Vaillancourt, 2018). The emigration of more skilled and professional anglophones to better-paying jobs in Ontario and Alberta contributed to a less favorable socio-economic situation for anglophones who remained in Quebec compared to the francophone majority (Floch & Pocock, 2012; Vaillancourt, Lemay & Vaillancourt, 2007).

What are the income disparities between francophones and anglophones in Quebec today? According to Canadian census data on Quebec, the median income of anglophones was less than that of francophones in 2011 (A=\$27,213 and F=\$29,432); and in 2021 (A=\$32,000 and F=\$37,200) (PERT, 2023a). [Table 2](#) shows that the median income of anglophones was lower in 15 of Quebec's 17 administrative regions, including those with a strong francophone majority.

**Table 2: Annual median employment income of anglophones and francophones (based on FOLS) in Quebec's 17 administrative regions, 2021**

Administrative region	Annual median employment income:	
	anglophone minority	francophone majority
Province of Quebec	\$32,000	\$37,200
Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	\$22,800	\$29,400
Bas-Saint-Laurent	\$27,800	\$32,400
Capitale-Nationale	\$35,200	\$40,400
Chaudière-Appalaches	\$38,800	\$37,600
Estrie	\$28,000	\$33,200
Centre-du-Québec	\$31,200	\$33,600
Montérégie	\$36,400	\$39,200
Montreal	\$30,000	\$35,600
Laval	\$34,800	\$37,600
Lanaudière	\$35,000	\$37,200
Laurentides	\$31,000	\$36,000
Outaouais	\$40,400	\$42,000
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	\$34,800	\$40,000
Mauricie	\$28,800	\$32,000
Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	\$41,600	\$34,800
Côte-Nord	\$28,400	\$39,600
Nord-du-Québec	\$28,600	\$48,400

Source: PERT 2023a; p. 19.

In Quebec, the French-English bilingualism rate of the provincial population increased from 40.8% in 2001 to 46.4% in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023a). This is partly due to the growth in the French-English bilingualism rate of the French mother-tongue population, which increased from 37.7% in 2001 to 42.2% in 2021. The bilingualism rate was higher among the English mother-tongue minority, being 65.9% in 2001 and 67.1% in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

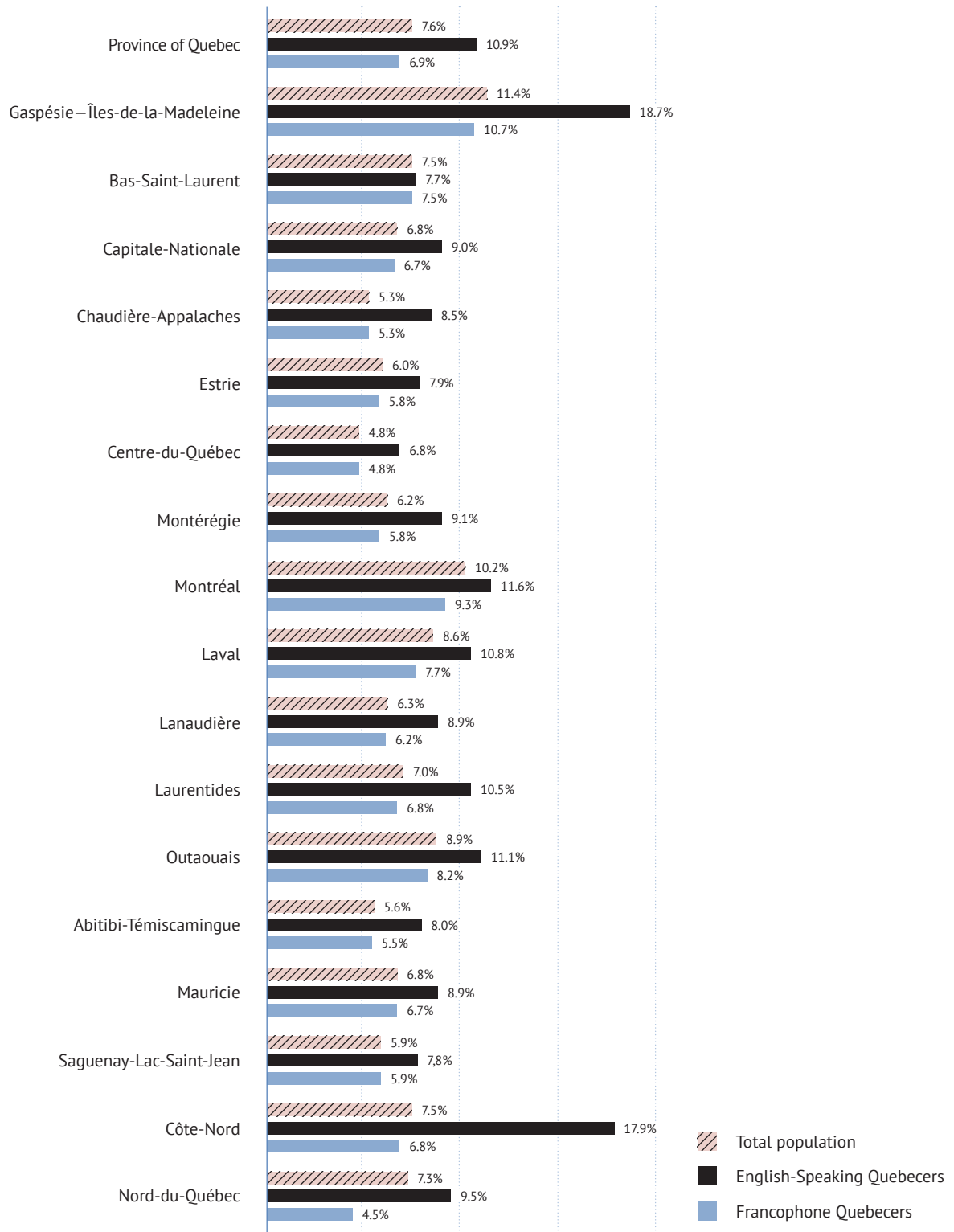
Since the adoption of language laws promoting the status and use of French as the official and common language of Quebec (Bill 101; Corbeil, 2008), what has been the economic advantage of anglophones and francophones becoming English-French bilingual? Economist François Vaillancourt used the annual median income of unilingual francophones as a baseline to calculate the percentage of this income earned by anglophones based on whether or not they knew French, controlling for level of education, number of years of work experience, and number of weeks worked per year (Vaillancourt, Lemay & Vaillancourt, 2007; Vaillancourt, 2018). The findings show that, in 1971, before the adoption of Bill 101, *unilingual* anglophones earned 10.1% more than unilingual francophones. However, in 2001, unilingual anglophones earned 18.1% less than unilingual francophones; in 2011, they earned 10% less. In 1971, *bilingual* anglophones earned 17% more than unilingual francophones, a “bilingual bonus” for this minority in Quebec. However, bilingual anglophones earned the same as unilingual francophones in 2001 and 2015, and 8% less than unilingual francophones in 2011 (Vaillancourt, 2021). These analyses show that anglophones’ lower income cannot be explained solely by a lack of English-French bilingualism among members of this minority.

Furthermore, these studies also showed that French-English bilingual francophone Quebecers earned more than unilingual francophones in 1971 (+12.6%), 2001 (+12.2%), 2011 (+7%), and 2015 (+ 10%) (Vaillancourt, 2018, 2021). It would be useful to verify whether bilingual francophones in Quebec remain better paid than bilingual anglophones based on analyses of the 2021 Census.

# Unemployment rate and poverty among anglophones

According to the first official language spoken (FOLS) language indicator, the unemployment rate was higher among anglophones (A) than among francophones (F) in Quebec in the 2021 Census (A=10.9% and F=6.9%) (PERT, 2023a, p. 9-11). **Figure 1** shows that the unemployment rate among anglophones was higher than among francophones in every one of Quebec's 17 administrative regions. In addition, anglophones were more likely to hold temporary positions, work part-time, and work fewer weeks per year on average than francophones, these being leading indicators of the precariousness of anglophones in the job market (PERT, 2023a, p. 24).

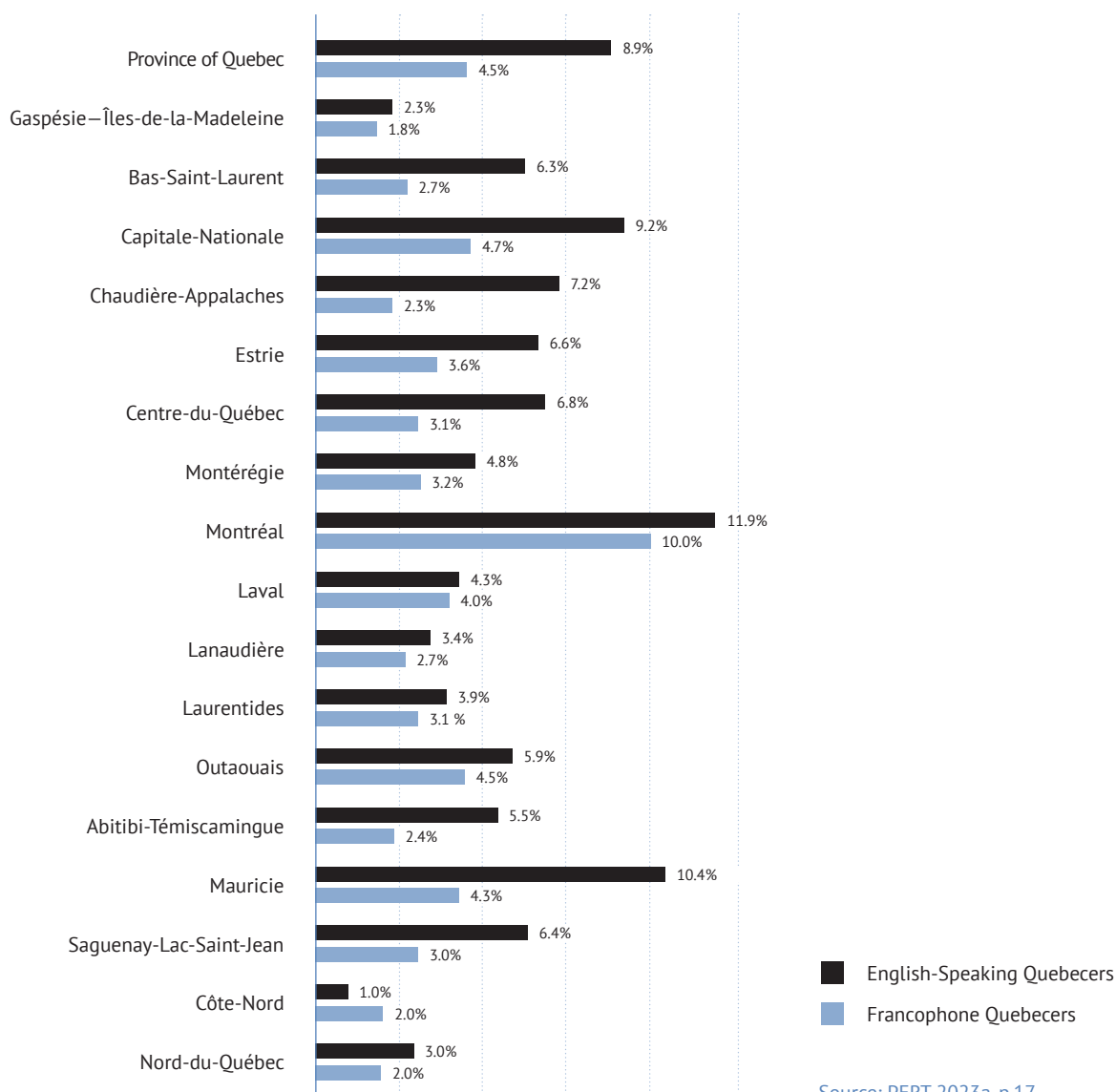
**Figure 1: Unemployment rate among anglophones and francophones in 2021 in Quebec's 17 administrative regions**



Source: PERT 2023a, p. 11.

The “low-income cutoff” (LICO) refers to the threshold below which individuals devote a larger share of their income than the average population to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. In Quebec, 2021 Canadian Census data showed that the proportion of the population living under the poverty line (LICO) was higher among the anglophone minority than among the francophone majority (A=8.9% and F=4.5%) according to the FOLS language indicator (PERT, 2023a, 2023b). **Figure 2** shows that, in the 2021 Census, more anglophones than francophones were living under the poverty line in 16 of Quebec’s 17 administrative regions, including Montreal and regions with a francophone majority (PERT, 2023a, 2023b).

**Figure 2 : Percentage of the minority anglophone and majority francophone population (according to FOLS) living below the low-income cutoff (LICO) in 2021 in each of Quebec’s 17 administrative regions.**



Source: PERT 2023a, p.17.

# Survey on discrimination and access to employment in Quebec's public service

Discrimination can also be based on the language a person speaks or their accent (Bourhis and Maass, 2005). **Linguicism** is the experience of being personally subjected to prejudice and discrimination due to the use of a stigmatized language or accent that differs from the valued dominant majority language of a country, region, or province (Blanchet, 2016; Bourhis, 2012; Bourhis and Carignan, 2010; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

A Canada-wide survey conducted by Canadian Heritage and Statistics Canada among 42,000 respondents compared the feeling of having been a victim of linguistic discrimination in Quebec and the rest of Canada (ROC) (Bourhis, Montreuil, Helly and Jantzen, 2007). Analyses of the results based on respondents born in Quebec and on their first language (L1) showed that more anglophones (18%) than francophones (7%) reported having been victims of linguistic discrimination. Results based on respondents of European origin also showed that more English mother tongue individuals reported experiencing discrimination (25%) compared to French mother tongue individuals (17%). The situation was especially problematic for Black minorities born in Quebec whose first language was English: 41% of these respondents said they had been victims of discrimination compared to those whose mother tongue was French (28%) (Bourhis et al., 2007). In Quebec, the double categorization of being Black and having English as a mother tongue (L1) contributes to the double jeopardy of being victim of both racism and linguicism (Williams, 2021).

Respondents who reported discrimination were also asked to identify the grounds on which such treatment occurred. Among French L1 respondents, 20% reported it was because of their race/skin colour, 27% because of their ethnic or cultural background and 61% because of their language or accent. Among English L1 respondents, 25% reported it was because of their race or skin colour, 19% because of their ethnic or cultural background, and 67% because of their language or accent. These results attest to the importance of discrimination based on linguicism in Quebec, a finding also observed in the ROC (Bourhis et al., 2007).

Respondents were also asked to indicate where discrimination had taken place, including in school, in retail stores, banks or restaurants, and at work when applying for jobs or promotions. It was in the workplace that discrimination was experienced by the greatest number of respondents in Quebec (40%) and the ROC (50%). Discrimination in the workplace delays the economic and social integration of linguistic and ethnic minorities in Quebec and the ROC and can fuel intergroup tensions, undermining harmony and social cohesion (Reitz, Breton, Dion and Dion, 2009).



Results from a 2011 survey revealed that anglophones were also aware of their disadvantaged position regarding job prospects within the Quebec public service (Jedwab, 2012). Both anglophones and francophones were asked to answer YES or NO to the question: "Do you think that anglophones have equitable access to jobs offered by the Quebec government?" A substantial percentage of anglophones responded NO to this question, regardless of the definition of "anglophone Quebecer" used in the survey: English as a mother tongue (No=76.2%); English spoken at home (No=75.6%); English as the language of identification (No=77.2%); English as the main language used at work or school (No=78%). Thus, the majority of anglophone respondents believed that their ingroup did not have an *equitable* access to jobs in the public sector of the Quebec government. The investigator concluded: "It goes without saying that anglophone Quebecers will feel they are an integral part of Quebec society if they see their group represented in their own public service" (Jedwab, 2012, p. 135, free translation).

A recent online survey of over 11,000 Quebec anglophones (FOLS) conducted by Statistics Canada (2024) confirmed main trends in the Canadian Heritage study (Bourhis et al., 2007). Results showed that 36% of anglophone respondents reported having experienced linguistic discrimination in the last five years in Quebec. English-speaking minority respondents reported encountering linguistic discrimination primarily in stores and banks (68%), in the workplace (36%), and when seeking care from health professionals (30%) (Statistics Canada, 2024). These studies confirm the persistence of linguisticism faced by anglophone minorities of Quebec.

# Conclusion

The anglophone minority has seen a decline in its institutional and economic vitality in the past several decades despite its high levels of postsecondary achievement and a sustained rate of English-French bilingualism. The socioeconomic conditions of Quebec anglophones are less favourable than those of the francophone majority when it comes to annual median income and their unemployment and poverty rates in almost every one of the 17 administrative regions of Quebec. The anglophone minority reported suffering more discrimination and linguisticism than the francophone majority. Participation of anglophones in the Quebec public service remains low (1%) when one considers that people with English as their first language make up 10% of the provincial population, a reality that anglophones attribute to a lack of equitable access to jobs in the Quebec public service. To remedy this situation, we recommend that the Quebec government consider including English-speaking Quebecers as a target group of the Equal Access Employment Program (EAEP).

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## APPENDIX 1

# The current mechanism for establishing goals for the five groups targeted by the Equal Access Employment Program

Source : Québec (2020). Rapport sur la mise en œuvre de la Loi sur l'accès à l'égalité en emploi dans les organismes publics. Ministère de la Justice du Québec.

« Dans un premier temps, la Loi oblige les organismes publics à procéder à l'analyse de leurs effectifs afin de déterminer, pour chaque type d'emploi, le nombre de personnes faisant partie de chacun des groupes visés, selon leurs auto-identifications. Puis, ces organismes doivent transmettre à la Commission (CDPDJ) le rapport d'analyse des effectifs. Ils doivent y mentionner le nombre de personnes composant les effectifs et la proportion que chacun des cinq groupes visés par la Loi pour chaque type d'emploi.

La Commission compare ensuite les résultats de cette analyse avec des données régionales ou provinciales reflétant le nombre de personnes faisant partie de chaque groupe visé par la Loi et qui sont compétentes ou aptes à devenir compétentes dans un délai raisonnable pour occuper les types d'emplois concernés. En cas de sous-représentation d'un groupe visé, un organisme sera tenu d'établir un programme d'accès à l'égalité en emploi pour corriger la situation...

L'organisme doit ensuite implanter son programme et prendre les mesures raisonnables pour atteindre les objectifs poursuivis selon l'échéancier prévu, puis faire rapport à la Commission tous les trois ans. Dans ce rapport, l'organisme doit faire état des mesures prises et des résultats obtenus. Si l'égalité en emploi est atteinte, que ce soit après l'analyse des effectifs ou l'implantation d'un programme, l'organisme doit vérifier à la maintenir. Si un organisme omet de transmettre son rapport d'analyse d'effectifs ou de se conformer à une recommandation de la Commission, la Loi indique que c'est le Tribunal des droits de la personne qui a compétence pour décider de la question ou pour rendre l'ordonnance appropriée. » (p. 5 et 6)



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