

¡Hola Canadá! Spanish Is Third Most Spoken Language

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There has been an important growth of second language Spanish speakers in Canada.

While it remains well behind English and French, in 2006 Spanish has become the third most widely spoken language in Canada and has now earned the title of Canada's most important non-official language. It is worth noting that, appropriately, Chinese is not considered one language and the census lists Mandarin and Cantonese separately.

Census data show that Spanish enjoyed a growth rate of 50 per cent over a decade, rising from half-a-million to three-quarter of a million (758,000 or 2.4 per cent of the total population). In 2006, some 345,000 persons in Canada reported that their mother tongue/first language was Spanish. However, most Canadians that reported an ability to speak Spanish did so as a second language. In 2006 some 400,000 Canadians spoke Spanish as a second language compared with 277,000 a decade earlier.

Although these numbers no doubt pale by comparison with the numbers of Spanish speakers in the United States, the growth of Spanish in Canada and the transmission of the language merit greater attention from researchers and policymakers. The growing importance of geo-political ties between Canada and the Americas may make knowledge of Spanish in Canada an increasingly valuable asset. Much

like the United States, the increasing number of Spanish-speakers in Canada is primarily attributable to continued immigration from source countries where Spanish is the principal language. Amongst those persons whose first language is Spanish, nearly three-quarters were born outside of Canada. The majority of these immigrants arrived after 1991 (56 per cent). Half of the Canadians reporting that they speak Spanish reside in the cities of Montréal and Toronto.

Where Canada's Spanish speakers live

Given the geographic concentration of French in Québec and English elsewhere in Canada, it is interesting to observe the patterns of ac-

quisition of English and French by Spanish speakers. Not surprisingly, the first official language spoken by Canadians whose mother tongue is Spanish varies significantly according to the regional language composition. Hence, nearly two in three Canadians whose mother tongue is Spanish report English as their first official language spoken.

The language divide is reflected in the extent to which the first official language spoken of the mother-tongue-Spanish population is overwhelmingly English in cities outside the province of Québec and predominantly French (frequently along with English) in urban centres within Québec. Over the past two decades, the fastest growing non-official language in the province of

Percentage of persons whose principal language is Spanish that speak both English and French (trilinguals), by immigrant status and selected city of residence, 2006

Mother tongue Spanish	Both English and French	
	Immigrants	Non-Immigrants
Canada	20.9	23.2
Montreal	49.8	45.6
Gatineau	45.5	41.8
Ottawa	28.3	39.6
Toronto	7.4	10.3
Vancouver	12.2	13.6

Source: Special Compilation, Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 2006.

Québec was Spanish. Montréal is home to some 200 000 persons that speak Spanish and just under half that number report that it is their principal language. Some 20 000 Montrealers whose mother tongue is Spanish are Canadian-born and not surprisingly the vast majority—some 75 000 were foreign-born. A narrow majority of Montrealers (51 per cent) whose mother tongue is Spanish report an ability to speak three languages (Spanish, English and French), 40 per cent speak Spanish and French and another five per cent speak Spanish and English only.

Spanish use in Canadian homes

Regarding the language most frequently used at home, Spanish continues to be the first choice amongst the majority of those for whom it is the first language they learned. There is, however, noteworthy variation in the extent to which it is most often spoken at home across cities. Retention of Spanish in the home is

highest in the cities in the province of Québec.

Montréal followed by Gatineau and Toronto had the highest rate of use of Spanish most often in the home. The 2006 census data suggest that Montréal and Gatineau have the highest rates of language retention for those under the age of 20. In effect, youth whose mother tongue is Spanish and who operate in majority French language areas are more likely to speak Spanish most often at home than is the case for those who operate in majority English language areas. When looking at individuals that are part of the same age group, the retention of Spanish in the home is still highest in Montréal and the margin is even wider when considering the presence of Spanish spoken in the home along with an official language.

Spanish ‘Trilinguals’: From the School to the Workplace

What impact does schooling

have on the acquisition of English and French by youth whose mother tongue is Spanish? In the initial years of elementary school (age 5-9), the 2006 census reveals that the population with Spanish mother tongue is most likely to acquire both official languages in the city of Ottawa, followed by Gatineau, with Montréal a distant third when it comes to trilingualism. In Toronto the percentage of knowing English and French with Spanish mother tongue is a mere six per cent and in Vancouver it is approximately 12 per cent. In the age group 10-14, the reported level of knowledge of English and French amongst the group of Spanish mother tongue rises to forty per cent or greater in Montréal (40 per cent), Gatineau (46.9 per cent), Ottawa (47.5 per cent), Toronto (11 per cent) and Vancouver (17 per cent).

However an important change in the pattern emerges between the 10-14 and 15-19 cohorts as the percentage of bilinguals jumps substan-

Various Languages Spoken in Canada (000's), 1996-2006

Various Language Spoken (000's)	1996	2001	2006
Spanish	506	611	758
Italian	694	681	661
German	654	636	623
Panjabi (Punjabi)	249	339	456
Chinese ¹	791	-	-
Cantonese		399	435
Arabic	223	290	365
Portuguese	259	265	275
Polish	258	250	243
Ukrainian	218	201	174
Greek	162	159	157
Mandarin	na	208	282

Source: Special Compilation, Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 2006

¹ In the 1996 census, all Chinese languages were combined under one category. In 2001, the category was divided and Cantonese and Mandarin were selected.

tially in Montréal (from 40 to 63.3 per cent) while decreasing in Ottawa and Gatineau, remaining stable in Toronto and rising slightly in Vancouver. When examining language learning amongst the Canadian-born whose mother tongue is Spanish, one observes a substantial increase in the percentage that know English and French between the under 15 years of age and the 15-24 group. The biggest jump is in Montréal (24.4 to 75.4 per cent), likely a testimony to the degree of contact with both English and French as youth enter the workplace.

Conclusion

At its current rate of growth the number of persons that speak Spanish in Canada will inevitably pass the one million mark with the 2011 census. Census data reveals that many Canadians are able to learn three languages as evidenced by the number of persons whose first language is Spanish and also possesses knowledge of English and French. In Montréal as well as in the National Capital Region these "trilinguals" represent a potentially important resource in bridging language divides within Canada as well as between Canada and the Americas. 🌐

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The PRI and Mexico's July 5 Mid-Term Congress and Senate Elections

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The former hegemonic Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) has enjoyed great legislative power and electoral success during the first two years of Mexican President Felipe Calderón's six-year term in office. Because of the strong three-party system, no party holds a majority in either House of Congress. Without a legislative majority for his party, the National Action Party (PAN), President Calderón has been forced to turn to the PRI's legislative leaders to help pass important reform legislation in Congress.

The ability of the PRI to force the PAN and the Executive to meet its terms was strengthened by the refusal of the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) to negotiate some important structural reforms with what they consider to be an unfairly elected president. The self-imposed exclusion of the PRD kept them, until recently, from any serious participation in the economic agenda, which allowed the PRI's 106 federal deputies, elected in 2006 to non-renewable three year terms, and 32 senators, also elected in the same year to single six year terms, to demand a high price for their acquiescence with Calderón's pension and fiscal legislative initiatives, among others.

Even worse for the president's National Action Party has been the rising violence and deaths associ-

ated with the drug cartels and the downturn in the Mexican economy due to the U.S. housing and financial meltdown. These two unrelated issues caused the president's popularity to drop during 2008. In the 2009 legislative elections, 500 federal deputies will be elected, 300 in majority districts and 200 in closed proportional representation lists.

The PRI is well poised to take advantage of the PAN's problems in government, as it currently holds 18 of the nation's 32 state governments, including the vote-rich states of Mexico, Nuevo León, Puebla, and Veracruz. Governors are important resources for parties and candidates in the federal congressional races as they can use their positions to help campaigning. Furthermore, if a governor is popular with his state's voters, his popularity lifts the electoral fortunes of all those competing under the same party label.

The PRI entered 2009 with considerable confidence as some analysts even began to wonder if the former governing party would win a majority of 251 in the Chamber of Deputies. This assurance that the party would do well stemmed both from the president's falling popularity as well as the PRI's local electoral victories in 2008. The PRI had done well in local assembly races in Coahuila, Hidalgo, Nayarit, and Quintana Roo. It also won important cities away from the opposition in several