



# Profile of the English-speaking Community in the Eastern Townships

by  
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## A Letter from the President of Townshipers' Association

Dear Friends,

Townshippers' Association is proud to publish the *Profile of the English-speaking Community in the Eastern Townships*.

This short book offers a concise summary of recent research about the Eastern Townships English-speaking community. It outlines key characteristics of this minority community, including its changing demographics, needs and assets. The Association's aim is to make this information easily accessible to decision makers and service providers in various levels of government, institutions and community organisations, as well as to community members. We hope this book will be a convenient reference tool as well as a starting point leading to other sources of information.



Heather Bowman

Townshippers' Association is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation that has served the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships since 1979. An important aspect of its work is to develop and disseminate a knowledge base about the Townships English-speaking community. Our website, [www.townshippers.qc.ca](http://www.townshippers.qc.ca), offers information about the Association's varied initiatives designed to strengthen the community and culture of English-speaking Townshippers, open doors of opportunity for youth and promote access to health and social services in English.

The Association gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many allies who work with us to develop our Eastern Townships community. In particular, the publication of this book was made possible in part by the financial support of the Development of Official-Language Communities Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Thank you!

—**Heather Bowman**  
*President,  
Townshippers' Association*





## Purpose

The purpose of this short publication is to profile and illuminate current realities of the English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships. It is a summary of research studies conducted during the period of approximately 1999 to 2005. Research includes initiatives from academia, the public sector at the local, provincial and federal levels and private research institutions.

## Introduction

The English-speaking minority of Quebec is in an interesting situation, as a provincial linguistic minority within a French-speaking majority, which is itself a linguistic minority in the English-speaking majority in Canada and in North America as a whole.

The different English-speaking communities in Quebec have distinct realities: Montrealers and various regional communities do not necessarily have shared experiences. The English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships shares some characteristics with other English-speaking communities in Quebec, but also has unique characteristics. English speakers in the Eastern Townships are defined by specific demographics and socio-economic realities. They have made different past and present contributions to the community at large, and face distinct future challenges.



*Traditional sap gathering in Glen Sutton, using a wooden yoke.  
Source: Eastern Townships Research Centre,  
P020 Eastern Townships Heritage Foundation Fonds: Landscapes of the Past*







## Who is an English Speaker?

There are many different definitions of an English speaker. Currently, one of the ways that Statistics Canada describes an English speaker is as an individual whose first official language spoken is English. Methods of data collection, the changing map of the territory and the evolving definition of an English speaker present challenges in tracing English speakers' historical role and presence in Quebec. Census information is the main source of data for historical analysis of the English-speaking community.

### Early Census Collection

In the early years of Quebec's history, a citizen's religion was more socially important than the person's linguistic profile. The 1831 census asked residents of Lower Canada to state their religion, not their language (E-Stat, 2006). English speakers in the Townships belonged to various faiths, including Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist and others. In later censuses, language use was derived from a citizen's country of origin. Country of origin was determined paternally, traced back to the first ancestor to arrive in North America (Kesteman, Southam & Saint-Pierre, 1998).

### Later Census Collection

From 1951 on, linguistic data have been categorised by Canada's two official languages, English and French. In 1971, the category of "language most used at home" was added to the census, and in 1986 the possibility of "multiple ethnic origins" and the option of "multiple languages" were added.



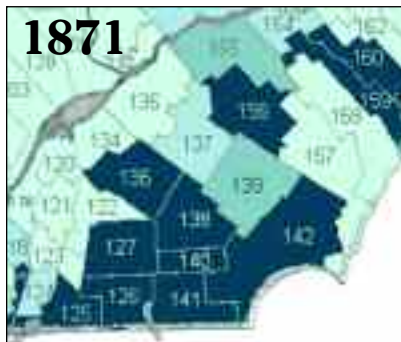
*The Methodist Church, the school house  
and the Anglican Church in Georgeville.*

*Source: Eastern Townships Research Centre, P016 Davidson Family Fonds*

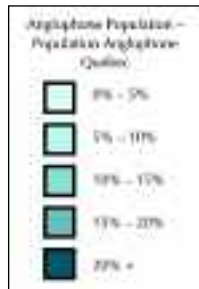




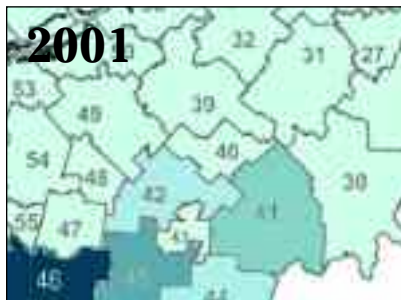
## Percentage of English Speakers by Census Districts



125 - Missisquoi	138 - Richmond
126 - Brome	139 - Wolfe
127 - Shefford	140 - Sherbrooke
135 - Nicolet	141 - Stanstead
136 - Drummond	142 - Compton
137 - Arthabaska	156 - Mégantic



3 - Arthabaska	56 - Richmond
10 - Brome	64 - Shefford
17 - Compton	65 - Sherbrooke
20 - Drummond	67 - Stanstead
43 - Mégantic	73 - Wolfe
44 - Missisquoi	



30 - Le Granit	43 - La Région-Sherbrookoise
31 - L'Amiante	44 - Coaticook
32 - L'Érable	45 - Memphrémagog
39 - Arthabaska	46 - Brome-Missisquoi
40 - Asbestos	47 - La Haute-Yamaska
41 - Le Haut-St-François	48 - Acton
42 - Le Val-St-François	49 - Drummond

Image Source: ETRC, 2005. Data Source: Census Canada

## Movement of People

Historically, English speakers in Quebec have tended to be very mobile and adaptable. Through investigating the location and movement of English speakers in the Eastern Townships, we can better trace their history and the role they played in the development of Quebec society.

The historical Eastern Townships had a very strong English-speaking population in 1861, comprising 58% of the population. At that time, the Eastern Townships had the largest regional concentration of English speakers in Quebec, some 90,000 people compared to 65,000 in Montreal (Rudin, 1985). The region is one of the few places in Quebec where the first European settlers were not French speakers. English speakers in the Townships held a pivotal role, in terms of population and influence. Many English speakers in the Townships lived in rural areas, including Lennoxville, Brome and North Hatley.





This majority started declining by the end of the nineteenth century and has continued to decline to the present day. French speakers quickly moved into the region, leading to a French-speaking majority within 20 years. By 1931, French speakers formed 82% of the Townships population, and Quebec's English speakers were increasingly concentrated in Montreal (Rudin, 1985).

In recent decades, the Eastern Townships has seen a significant exodus of young and middle-aged English-speaking people. Businesses and people moving to major urban centers such as Montreal, Toronto or cities in the West accelerated the absorption of Townships English-speaking institutions into larger enterprises primarily using French. This trend further weakened the region's English-speaking community.

### **From Dualism to Pluralism**

Migration was generally prompted by economic opportunities to be gained or by those lost. As the economy was regionally irregular, communities developed as families shared hardships and rejoiced in prosperity. Regional identities often closely corresponded to ethnicity and religious affiliations, contributing to the formation of cohesive communities.

By the 20th century, immigration to Quebec from European countries decreased and immigration from developing countries increased. Many of these people were Allophones, people whose first language was neither French nor English. Quebec evolved from a dual ethnic and linguistic society to a diverse and pluralistic society (Kesteman, Southam & Saint-Pierre, 1998).



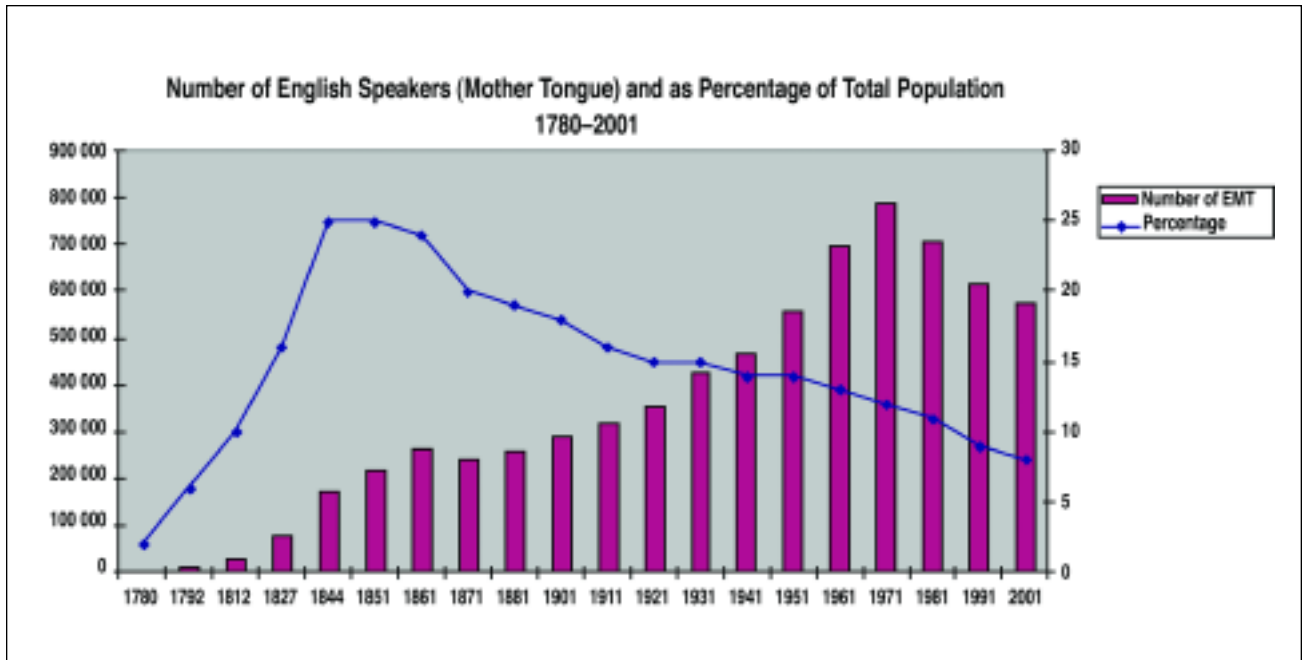
*Eastern Townships Bank branch in Sutton.*

*Source: Eastern Townships Research Centre, P020 Eastern Townships  
Heritage Foundation Fonds: Landscapes of the Past*





Even though the actual numbers of English speakers in Quebec increased over the years up to 1971, the community's relative weight or percentage of the total population decreased as the French-speaking population grew. As the demographics of the English-speaking community changed, so did their needs and priorities (Jedwab, 2004).



Sources: 1799–1981: Rudin, 1985; 1991–2001: Floch, 2005

### How Many English Speakers?

Because the Canada census is the main means of calculating the number of English speakers, we need to consider that census districts have changed over time. As well, the way of defining an English speaker has also changed. Depending on who is considered an English speaker, the size or proportion of a population can greatly vary. In recent years, Census Canada has organized responses into single and multiple responses, home and work languages and knowledge of official languages.

<i>Definition of English Speaker — 2001</i>	<i>Quebec</i>
English Mother Tongue	591,379
English Home Language	746,898
English First Official Language Spoken (FOLS)	918,955

Source: Jedwab, 2004



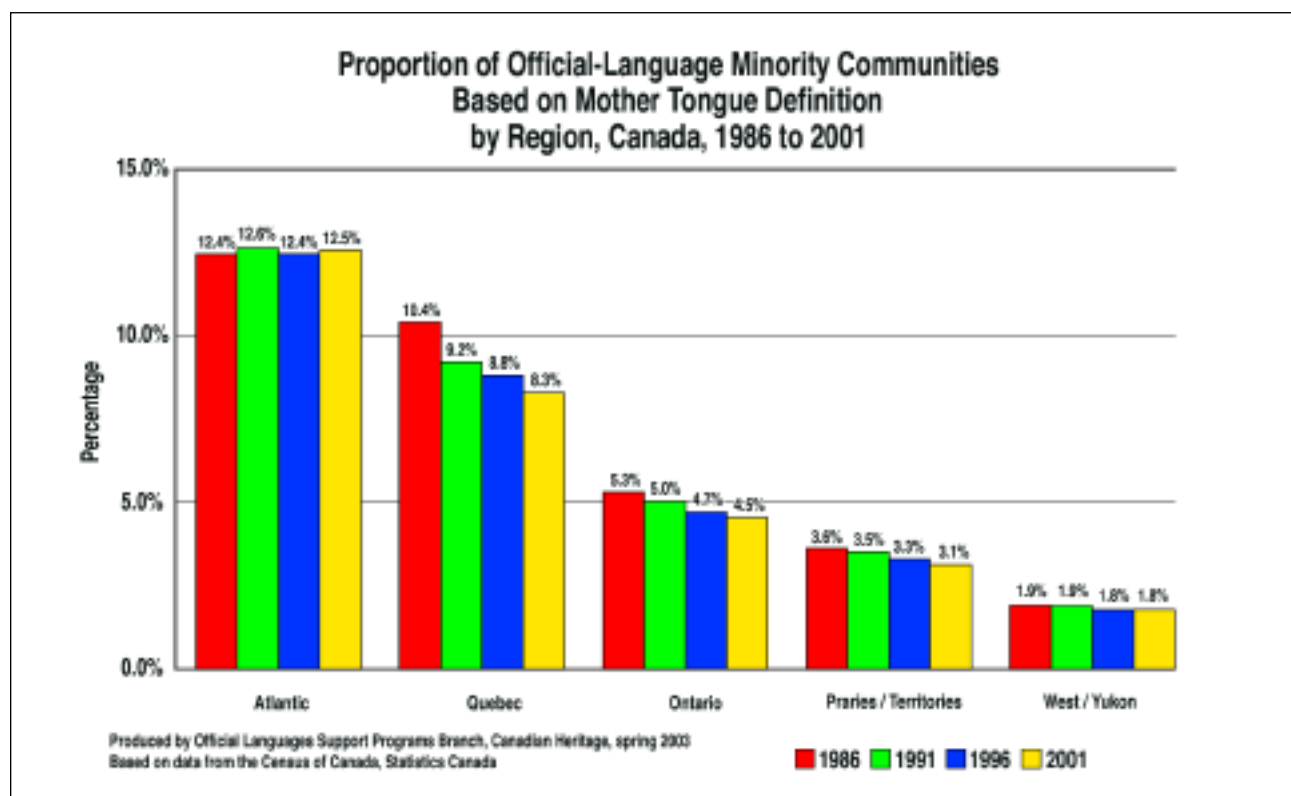


The percentage of the total population who were English speakers at the 2001 census also varies.

<i>Definition of English Speaker (2001)</i>	<i>Quebec</i>
English Mother Tongue	8%
English First Official Language Spoken (FOLS)	13%
Both English and French Mother Tongue	1%
Knowledge of English Only	5%
English Language Used at Work	18%
Knowledge of French and English	40%

*Adapted from Jedwab, 2004*

The English-speaking minority of Quebec was the fastest declining linguistic minority group in Canada during the period of 1986 to 2001, compared to French-speaking minorities in other provinces.



*Source: Floch & Warnke, 2004*





Soon after a peak in the late nineteenth century, a steady decline of the English-speaking population in the Eastern Townships began. According to Rudin (1985), the number of English speakers dropped 35% between 1861 and 1931. This decline was strongly influenced by economic factors. From 1931 to 1981, the population generally stabilized but continued to decrease due to a loss of natural increase (birth rate minus death rate).

### *English Speakers in the Eastern Townships 1861–2001*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of English Speakers in Townships</i>	<i>% of Total Population</i>
1861	89,748	58
1871	77,789	46
1901	74,141	32
1931	57,933	18
1971	57,830	11
1981	55,275	9
1996	43,050	6.9
2001	40,308	6.4

*Source: 1861 – 1981, based on Mother Tongue (Rudin, 1985); 1996 – 2001, based on FOLS (Floch, 2004)*





## Characteristics of the English-speaking Community in the Eastern Townships

In the past 15 years, the English-speaking population in the Eastern Townships has changed significantly. With these changing characteristics, the needs of the community have also changed. This is a summary of principal findings from recent research.

### Declining Population

The historical mobility of English-speaking Quebecers has, over time, led a certain number of Townshippers to leave the region. The effect this had on the population level was traditionally counterbalanced by natural increase, immigration and linguistic transfers (the adoption of English as one's primary official language).

Since the 1970s, these three methods of community replenishment have diminished. A survey of Census Canada population numbers from 1971 to 2001 shows that the number of English-speaking Townshippers dropped roughly 30% during that 30-year period.

During the more recent period of 1996 to 2001, Census Canada data showed a 6.4% decrease in the English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships. In contrast, the French-speaking population showed a 2.3% growth. Thus, the English-speaking community went from 6.9% to 6.4% of the total population during this 5-year time period (First Official Language Spoken; Floch & Warnke, 2004).

### *Population, historical Eastern Townships*

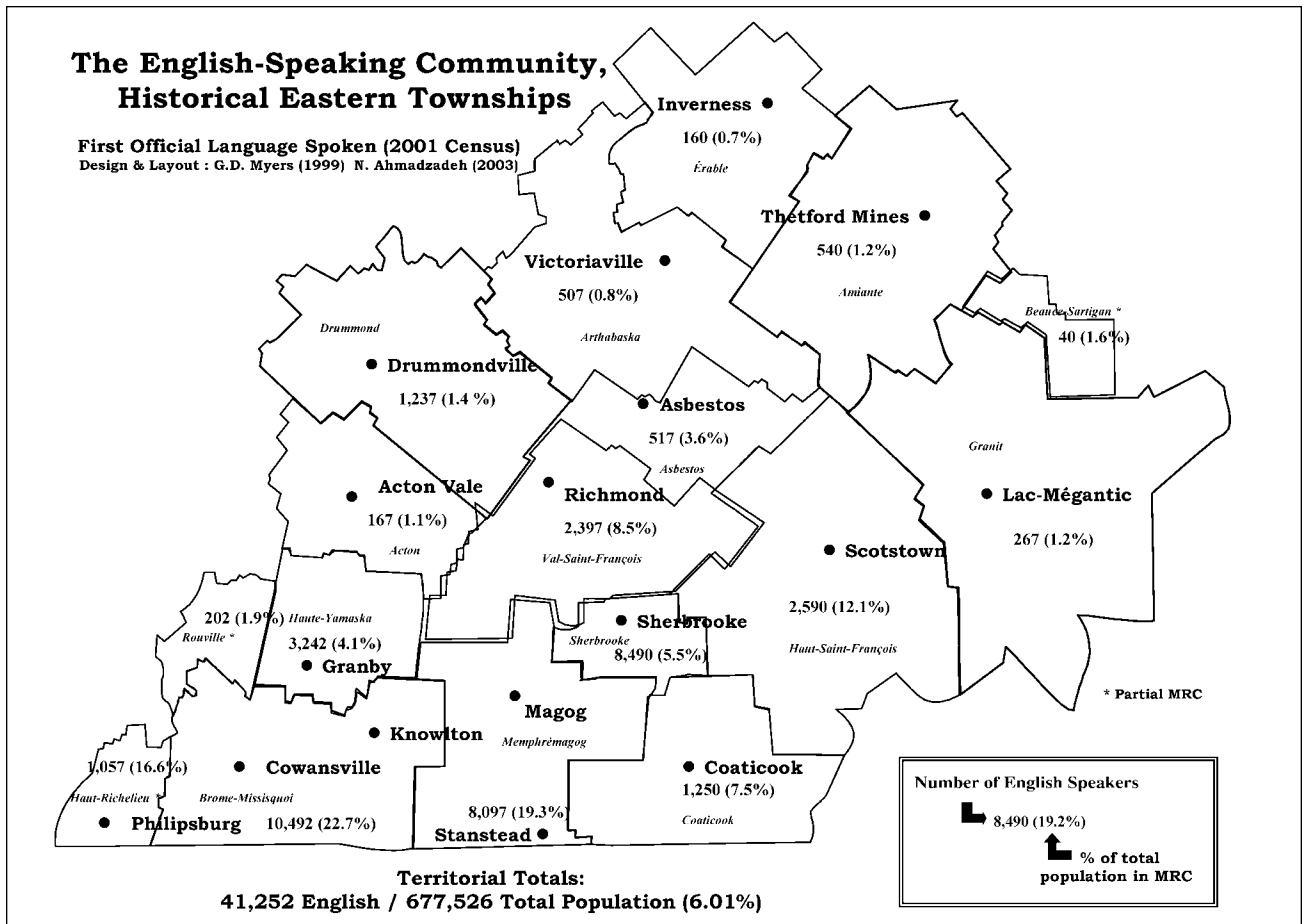
	1996	2001
English Speakers	43,050	40,308
French Speakers	576,985	590,038

*Source: Floch & Warnke, 2004*

In summary, in the Eastern Townships, the English-speaking population is diminishing in size and in proportion to the total population, while the French-speaking majority is increasing in size at a much greater rate than in the rest of Quebec.







Source: Townshippers' Association, 2003

The historical Eastern Townships includes the present Estrie administrative region and parts of Montérégie, Centre-du-Quebec and Chaudière-Appalaches. The population map above shows the number of English speakers in each MRC and their percentage of the MRC's total population.

### English-speaking Quebecers Leaving

From the 1870s onward, there has been a constant decline in the English-speaking population of Quebec. In the late 19th century, many English speakers began leaving Quebec in search of better economic conditions and places where they would be among a linguistic majority. As well, they may have been less attached to Quebec: Many of the people who left were born outside Quebec (Rudin, 1985).

Since the First and Second World Wars, the movement of people has varied in a cyclical fashion in conjunction with the economy. From 1961 to 1971, outward migration by English-speaking Quebecers was 2½ times higher than that of their French-speaking counterparts and twice as high as that of Allophones. The atmosphere of the Quiet Revolution, including the elections of the Parti Québécois and the arrival of Bill 101, accelerated the migratory trend. From 1976 to 1981, an estimated 95,000 English speakers left Quebec for economic opportunities and to escape the political climate (Rudin, 1985).





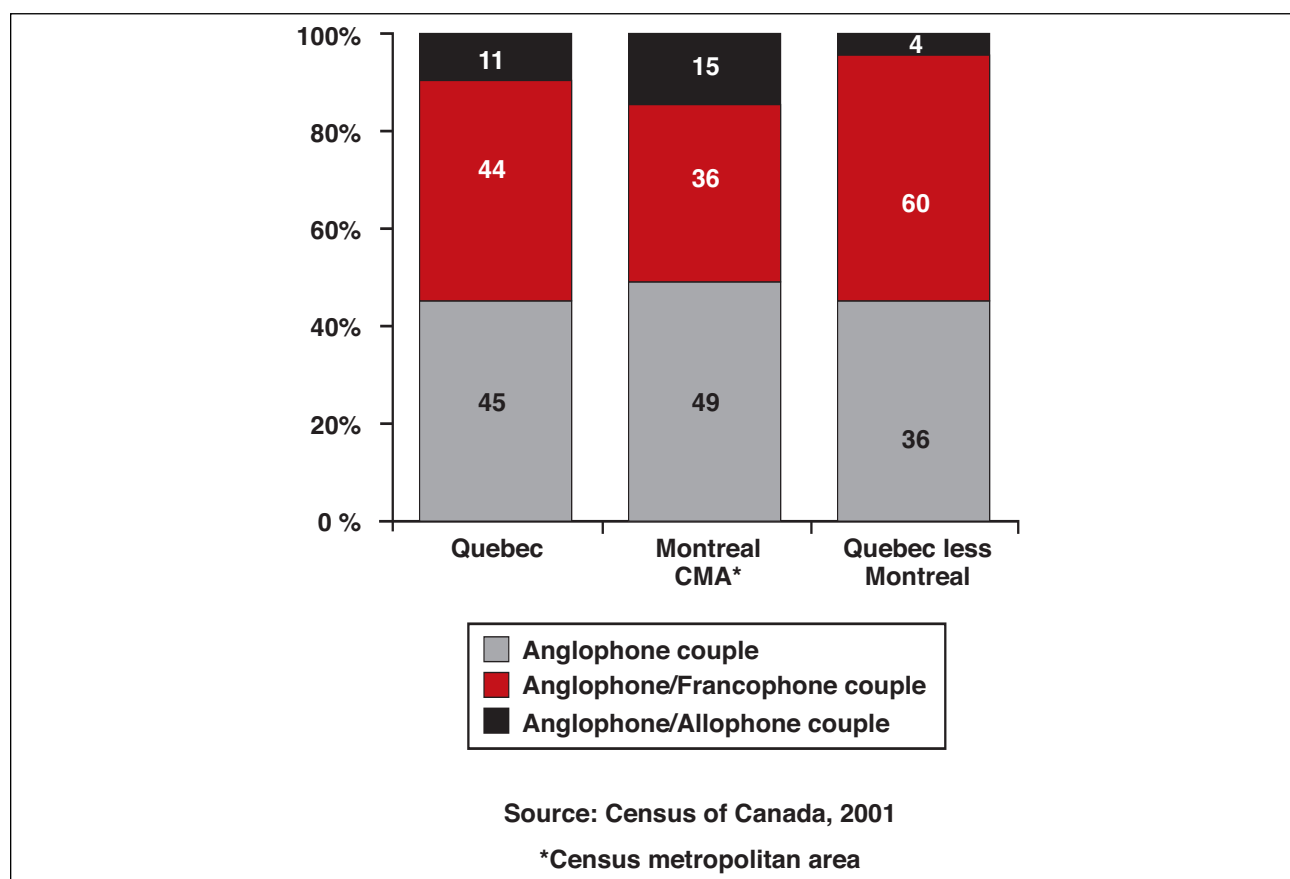
## Loss of Immigration

Traditional methods of replenishing the English-speaking population are changing. Linguistic transfer has been limited by a law restricting access to English schools and by selective immigration. Immigration to Quebec, including the Townships, from English-speaking countries and other provinces is very low. Because there is a very high inter-provincial out-migration rate among Quebec's English speakers, including people from the Eastern Townships, a principal challenge for English-speaking communities is the retention of new arrivals by instilling a sense of community (Jedwab, 2002).

## Linguistic Transfers

An important method of increasing the English-speaking population of Quebec is through exogamic relationships. Among English speakers, currently 6 out of 10 couples (55%) have a partner who is a non-English speaker (Government of Canada, 2003). In the Eastern Townships, until recently, intermarriage between French speakers and English speakers was lower than in other English-speaking communities, due to the high number of Protestants in the region (Rudin, 1985).

*Proportion of Anglophone couples by Mother Tongue of the spouse, Quebec, Montreal and Quebec less Montreal, 2001*



Source: Government of Canada, 2003





In the past, immigrants whose mother tongue was not English were a major replenishing factor for English-speaking communities in Quebec. In the early 1970s, language laws which restricted access to English schools and selective immigration policies greatly diminished this effect. However, Allophone spouses of Anglophones are still more likely than Francophones to pass on English as their child's first official language spoken.

Low immigration, high out-migration, low fertility rate and decreased natural increase have lowered the number of English-speaking children in Quebec (Government of Canada, 2003). This leads to a diminished number of English schools. Having fewer English schools limits the linguistic transfer of English to children.

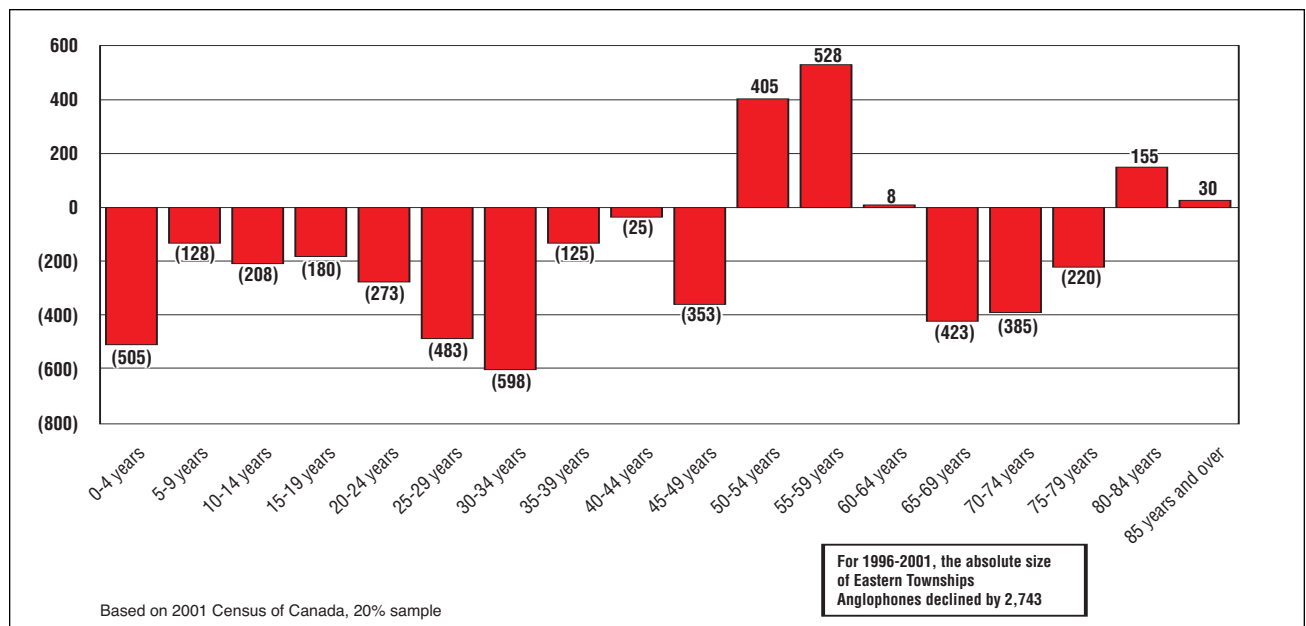


Source: Gavin Gizowski, 2005

### Aging Population

The age structure of a population is a reflection of its past. It is a residue of events that affected and changed the demography of a group and its promise for the future. The English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships is marked by a disproportionately high number of older people and a “missing middle” of people aged 15 to 44, resulting from a high proportion of youth leaving the region (Floch & Warnke, 2004).

### Increase/Decrease in Absolute Numbers by Age Cohort Eastern Townships Anglophones, 1996–2001



Source: Floch & Warnke, 2004







A full 18% of Eastern Townships English speakers are age 65 or older. This is 50% higher than the proportion of seniors in the French-speaking population (Floch & Warnke, 2004).

Having such a high proportion of older people presents specific concerns and needs in the English-speaking community, especially in the area of health and social services.

### **Limited Use of and Access to Health Care**

Health care and social services are of primary concern for many English speakers in Quebec (Saber-Freedman & CROP, 2001). Within this context, the Eastern Townships English-speaking community has particular characteristics that intensify the need for services in English. Also, certain needs may be different or more acute than those in the French-speaking community.

One factor affecting needs for health and social services is the high proportion of seniors. They are the least bilingual segment of the English-speaking population (Myers, 2000), and as people age, they tend to have greater recourse to health services. Other factors are the low levels of education, employment and income among younger English speakers. These key health determinants place them at greater risk for health problems, especially in the area of mental health and social difficulties (Groupe Recherche Focus, 2004, 2005).



*Source: Townshippers' Association*







When in need, Quebec English speakers tend to turn to family first rather than public institutions. In a survey by the Missisquoi Institute (Saber-Freedman & CROP, 2001), 72% of English speakers said they would likely turn first to other family members in case of illness, compared to 47% of French speakers. French speakers also reported being more likely to use public health care services.

This tendency, in conjunction with the high proportion of older persons, many of whose children have moved away from the Townships, contributes to a high level of unpaid care-giving in the English-speaking community. In fact, English speakers in the Townships are much more likely than French speakers to spend a great number of hours caring for family members who are seniors or children (Floch & Warnke, 2004).

### *High levels of unpaid care by English speakers in the Eastern Townships, compared to French speakers*

	<b>10 hours+ per week – unpaid care to seniors</b>	<b>15 hours+ per week – unpaid housework</b>
English-speaking women	40% more likely than French-speaking women	9% more likely than French-speaking women
English-speaking men	57% more likely than French-speaking men	26% more likely than French-speaking men

Source: Floch & Warnke, 2004

According to a recent CHSSN-CROP survey (Pocock, 2006), 66% of English speakers in the Estrie region responded that they would turn to their family for support in case of an illness. Only 12% said they would turn to public health and social services. As well, in the event of illness, English speakers in the Estrie region are almost twice as likely as English speakers in other regions to turn to a community resource rather than the public health care system.

Turning to family members first when in need reflects the independent attitude for which, traditionally, the Townships English-speaking community is known. This attitude is double-edged. Viewed as a strength, it suggests a readiness among family and friends to pull together to resolve difficulties rather than being dependent on outside aid. But it can also pose a barrier to seeking help from the public health and social services system, even when a situation has become overwhelming for the family unit.

A qualitative study by the Community Table (2000) identified key aspects to be improved in the health and social service sector in the Eastern Townships:

- Reduce the level of uncertainty associated with access to English-language services in the region, and with some segments of the population in particular (elderly women).
- Improve the overall level of English-language services, especially in outlying regions.
- Increase the availability of English-language services to senior citizens, many of whom are unilingual.
- Increase the level of services for youth with special needs.
- Develop creative and flexible responses to the needs for services in areas where the English-speaking population is small and dispersed, especially in rural areas.





## Women Not in the Labour Market

Viewed by gender and first official language spoken, English-speaking women are the least likely to be employed and in the work force. Many of them spend many hours caring for elderly family members.

### *Proportion of people “out of the Labour Market” in the Townships by Language and Gender*

French-speaking men	28 %
French-speaking women	41 %
English-speaking men	35 %
English-speaking women	51 %

*Source: Floch & Warnke, 2004*

English-speaking women also seek employment with less success than other segments of the population.

### *Rate of unemployment in the Eastern Townships by Language and Gender*

French-speaking men	7.4 %
French-speaking women	7.8 %
English-speaking men	7.4 %
English-speaking women	9.9 %

*Source: Floch & Warnke, 2004*

These findings suggest that English-speaking women in the Townships are in special need of resources and support to improve their current situation of low employment and salary.

## Missing Middle

Compared to the French-speaking community in the Eastern Townships, the English-speaking community has a low proportion of people aged 15 to 44 (Floch & Warnke, 2004). A recent survey has suggested that most of the people in this age group who left the Townships were motivated by better educational and economic opportunities elsewhere. Often they had post-secondary education and were bilingual (Kishchuk & Brault, 2005). Quebec English speakers have a very low retention rate compared to French-speaking minorities in other provinces. Quebec English speakers are also twice as likely to leave the province as French speakers. Specifically, English speakers aged 25–64 have a leaving rate exceeding 50% (Floch, 2005).

As of 2001, English speakers who left Quebec were 36% more likely to have graduated from university than other Canadians. They were also twice as likely as the Canadian population in general to have a master's or doctoral degree.

In contrast to the leavers, the English speakers who stayed were less likely to have post-secondary schooling (Floch, 2005).





Floch pointed out that during the same study period of 1971–2001, educational attainment did not appear to have the same importance in the mobility patterns of French speakers living in a minority situation. As well, French speakers had a consistent relocation pattern over time, whereas there has been an increase of educated English speakers leaving Quebec during the past 30 years.

In the Eastern Townships, a high proportion of English-speaking youth continue to leave. The English speakers aged 15 to 44 who remain, on average, have lower levels of education, income and employment than their French-speaking counterparts (Floch & Warnke, 2004).



Source: Townshippers' Association

The departure of well-educated English speakers may largely affect the long-term vitality of the community by weakening the leadership base, undermining community institutions and reducing the average labour force preparedness of English speakers (Floch, 2005).

### Low Education

In 1971, English speakers in Quebec had higher levels of education than other Quebecers and Canadians. By 2001, this educational advantage had disappeared (Floch, 2005). In 2001, English speakers aged 15–44 in the Eastern Townships were more likely to have lower levels of education and income than their French-speaking neighbours. English-speaking youth aged 15–24 in the Townships are 23% more likely than French speakers in the region not to finish secondary school. They are also less likely to finish secondary school than are English speakers in other areas in Quebec (Floch & Warnke, 2004).

As well, 2001 census data show that English-speaking Townshippers aged 15–24 and 25–44 are 8% and 15%, respectively, less likely than their French-speaking counterparts to have a post-secondary degree, certificate or diploma. This portrait sharply contrasts with that of English speakers aged 65 or older, who tend to be more highly educated relative to the French-speaking group (Floch & Warnke, 2004). The number of mother-tongue English speakers in English schools continues to decline. Many parents choose to send their children to French schools in order to give them a proficient level of French language skills. At the same time, an increased presence of French speakers has been noted in English schools.

### *French mother tongue & English mother tongue enrolment in English language schools in Estrie*

	1991		1998		2000	
	French MT	English MT	French MT	English MT	French MT	English MT
Estrie	715	2,744	1,133	2,532	1,399	2,416

Source: Jedwab, 2004





The majority of these French-speaking students have gained access to English schools through inter-marriage between Anglophones and Francophones. English CEGEPs and universities continue to have high percentages of French speakers, where access is not limited by legislation. For example, Champlain College reported that French speakers comprised 52% of the student body at its Lennoxville campus in 2005-2006.

## Low Income

Given the lower levels of education, it is not surprising that English speakers in the Eastern Townships aged 15–44 have a lower average income than their French-speaking counterparts. In 2001, the 25–44 age group was 26% more likely than French speakers in the Townships to make less than \$20,000 per year. As well, the 15–24 age group was 37% less likely than French speakers in the Eastern Townships to have an annual income of \$20,000 to \$50,000, and English speakers aged 15–24 were half as likely to make \$50,000 or more when compared to French speakers (Floch & Warnke, 2004).

Overall, English speakers in the Eastern Townships in 2001 were more likely to have an annual income between \$2,000 and \$24,000, and less likely to make \$25,000 to \$60,000 than their French-speaking counterparts. As well, English-speaking Townshippers were 20% more likely than French speakers to be without income (Floch & Warnke, 2004).

As of the 2001 Canada Census, the average income in Quebec was \$27,125, and in the historical Eastern Townships, \$24,782. Based on census data for 90% of the territory comprising the historical Eastern Townships, Warnke (2006) provided the following table showing average incomes for persons whose first official language spoken is English, French, both (learned simultaneously) and neither (speaks neither English nor French):

### *Average income in the historical Eastern Townships*

Age Groups	FOLS-English	FOLS-French	FOLS-English & French	FOLS-Neither
All Ages	\$23,675	\$24,905	\$20,853	\$16,761
Ages 15-24	8,623	10,781	8,865	0
Ages 25-44	24,311	28,552	22,404	6,088
Ages 45-64	27,985	29,295	25,686	46,983
Ages 65+	24,074	20,055	29,056	9,919

Source: Warnke, 2006







## High Unemployment

Unemployment is a major issue for English speakers in the Townships. They are 11% more likely to be unemployed than French speakers. In the 15- to 24-year-old age group, English speakers are 31% more likely than French speakers to be unemployed, and for the 25- to 44-year-old age group, unemployment levels are 18% higher. It has been suggested that the actual levels are even higher than these, as someone who is no longer looking for work may not be included in the unemployment statistics (Floch & Warnke, 2004).

## Marginalised Youth

The low levels of education, income and employment among English-speaking youth constitute a clear socio-economic weakness in their age group and their communities (Floch & Warnke, 2004). It has been suggested that these factors have led to the marginalisation and demoralisation of many young English-speaking Townshippers. It seems obvious that intervening to help this group to become active and contributing citizens in our region would be advantageous to the community as a whole.

## Sense of Belonging and Inclusion

Even though English-speaking Quebecers are increasingly fluent in French, they are not necessarily feeling more comfortable (Jedwab, 2005). In a 2005 qualitative study including focus groups with 110 English-speaking Townshippers aged 15–21, some participants reported feeling they were not always accepted by the French-speaking majority, especially prospective employers. This perception of discrimination was cited as a factor contributing to their plans to move out of the province. When English-speaking youth were asked about the negative aspects of living in the Eastern Townships, one aspect cited was language issues. They said that jobs tend to be available only in French. Some felt an anti-Canadian sentiment in the area and that the strong French culture in the region limited options for English speakers (Kishchuk, Karpenko & Brault, 2005).

Focus groups discussions suggest that the divide between French culture and English culture in the Eastern Townships is not being completely repaired by bilingualism. Some participants reported having families who have lived in the Eastern Townships for generations, and yet they did not feel welcome in some areas. Participants, though happy to have the advantage of being bilingual, were dismayed that prospective employers expected a higher level of French proficiency from them, compared to the level of English proficiency in a “bilingual” native French speaker. The two-tiered language requirements they experienced seemed to alienate and demoralise many English-speaking youth in the area (Kishchuk, Karpenko & Brault, 2005, p. 21).

According to Jedwab (2004), English speakers in Quebec with university degrees or full-time employment reported slightly higher levels of perceived discrimination.

A collective identity and personal attachment are strongly linked to one's sense of belonging in a community. Most English-speaking Quebecers feel a much stronger attachment to Canada than to Quebec and a greater confidence in federal institutions than provincial ones. Many feel that they are Canadian first and Quebecer second, whereas French speakers tend to rank Quebec first (Jedwab, 2005).





## Working in the Arts

One of the strengths of the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships is its dynamic artistic and cultural life. A significantly higher proportion of English speakers are working in the visual, performing or other arts, compared to the French-speaking population. In the Estrie region, English speakers are more than twice as likely to work in arts and culture as are French speakers. This is the highest minority-majority ratio for this characteristic in all of Quebec (Quebec Community Groups Network, 2005).

## Community, Roots and Heritage

Many English-speaking people living in the Eastern Townships have a deep sense of roots and heritage in the area. Some can trace their ancestors back hundreds of years, while others have chosen to move here because of the quality and pace of life, or employment opportunities. In general, English-speaking Townshippers are proud of their heritage and history in Quebec. Even people who have only recently moved to the Eastern Townships may feel that other places in North America, even if populated by a majority of English speakers, are just not home. They have built a network of family and friends, have contributed to the social fabric of the Eastern Townships, and enjoy living with their French-speaking neighbours.

English-speaking communities need to define their identity in response to rising bilingualism, intermarriage and multiculturalism. The English-speaking communities of Quebec need to celebrate the full range of their cultural identity (Quebec Community Groups Network, 2005).

## Summary

Many factors and circumstances have led the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships to have specific characteristics that present challenges for the community as a whole. Events such as the exodus in the late 1970s and the continued outward migration of the most educated and bilingual English-speaking Townshippers continue to affect the Eastern Townships English-speaking community. The missing middle (a low proportion of people aged 15–44) and the “missing-out middle” (low levels of education, income and employment in this age group) are echoes of the past that impact on the present demographic shape of the community.

Today, the Townships English-speaking community’s population continues to decline and now stands at about 41,000 persons, 6% of the population at large. The population is disproportionately older and lacks middle-aged people. Younger people are marginalised, with low levels of education, low levels of income and high levels of unemployment. Many women are bearing the burden of care of older people and are therefore not in the paid labour force. For example, English speakers in the Estrie region have a care-giver ratio (proportion of those aged 35-54 in relation to those aged 65 or older) of only 1.4:1, compared to the provincial average of 2.3:1 (Saber-Freedman, 2001, p. 65).





A vitality rating scale for minority communities has been devised by William Floch. It evaluates a standardized set of factors: overall size, relative size within regional population at large, bilingualism, internal age structure, income, employment and access to community-controlled institutions. The characteristics of the Townships English-speaking community described above suggest a low vitality rating of two on a five-point scale (based on Estrie characteristics, Saber-Freedman, 2001, p. 65).

On the other hand, the Eastern Townships English-speaking community has enormous creative potential, including both a high level of entrepreneurship and a high proportion of arts professionals. In the past, its members have made substantial contributions to the public infrastructure of the region, and continue to do so today through volunteerism and community involvement.

The high level of bilingualism among youth whose first official language is English suggests that they could have a special role to play as the region's ambassadors in the tourism industry and the international and inter-provincial business arena. Many English-speaking Townshippers have shown a strong attachment to the region, and positive attitudes about seeking and creating opportunity in the region could lead them to be a strong asset to the cultural and socio-economic life of the Eastern Townships.



## 10 Questions Answered

### (1) English-speaking Quebecers act as a unit.

A common historical and modern assumption is that English-speaking Quebecers act in unison. However, English-speaking Quebecers are actually quite diverse. Often regionally influenced, they come from different ethnic backgrounds, belong to various religions and hold divergent social and political beliefs. Changing demographics in the last few decades have transformed community profiles in terms of residential patterns, mobility, socio-economic diversity and regional, ethnic, religious and institutional characteristics. These changes have shifted community-based needs and priorities, and contributed to attitudes and actions that are diverse and different, both among various regions and within a single region.

### (2) French speakers are more bilingual than English speakers.

Sapber-Freedman and CROP (2001) reported that 69% of Quebec's Anglophones, compared to 51% of Francophones, could speak the other language well enough to carry on a conversation. Among those aged 18 to 24, 89% of Anglophones and 62% of Francophones said they were conversationally bilingual. In the Eastern Townships, approximately two-thirds of English speakers reported being bilingual, compared to only one-third of the French speakers (Warnke, 2002).

### (3) English speakers don't integrate into mainstream French society and culture in Quebec.

As a linguistic minority in Canada and in North America as a whole, many French speakers can understand the desire to protect one's unique heritage, language and culture rather than assimilating into a "melting pot." However, most English-speaking Townshippers consider Quebec – and specifically the Eastern Townships – to be their home, just as it is for their French-speaking counterparts. Many English-speaking people work, live and have friends in both languages, and some consider themselves to be bi-cultural. Conserving one's own culture does not rule out appreciating and integrating into the community at large. Linguistic, cultural and social differences within a community can be an asset, and residents of the Eastern Townships have long held a reputation for having a harmonious relationship between the English- and French-speaking language groups.

### (4) Eventually all the English speakers will leave anyway.

English speakers have a long history and presence in the Eastern Townships and have contributed to the region's vitality for generations. It is true that the population has declined over the past decades: Youth are leaving in a higher proportion than among French speakers, and the English-speaking population is not being replenished by immigration, compared to the French-speaking majority. However, the reasons for leaving that are most often cited (education and employment) may be more a matter of perception than reality. Many English-speaking Townshippers feel strongly attached to the Eastern Townships and are adapting positively to today's realities. It is not likely that all will leave!

Indeed, the English-speaking minority group in Quebec is larger than any other linguistic minority group in Quebec, and is triple most other province's French-speaking minority groups.







**(5) The services needed by English speakers in the Townships are no different from those that French speakers need.**

In the Eastern Townships, the English-speaking minority has a different population shape than the French-speaking majority. It includes a larger proportion of older persons and a much smaller proportion of people aged 18–44. On average, this age group has lower levels of education, employment and revenue. This profile suggests that illiteracy is also of greater concern. These major health determinants are widely recognised as placing a person at a higher risk for poor health.

In part, perhaps, because of the high level of care needed by seniors, the English-speaking minority also has a higher proportion of women who are not in the work force.

These characteristics strongly suggest that specific support and resources are needed in order to enable the English-speaking community in the Townships to contribute its fair share to the socio-economic vitality of the community at large.

**(6) English-speaking Townshippers are wealthy.**

A few very wealthy English speakers have marked the history of the Townships and Quebec as a whole. However, the majority of English speakers have little in common with this wealthy elite. The majority of English speakers under 65 have income levels that are similar to or lower than those of their French-speaking counterparts, as described in the table on page 20.

**(7) English-speaking Townshippers still think they are in the majority.**

In many ways, English speakers in the Townships have a shared history, culture and identity with their French-speaking neighbours. Many in the English-speaking community are strong supporters of the “French fact” in Quebec and enjoy the dominant French language and culture that surrounds them. Their vision of the Eastern Townships is that diverse cultures and linguistic groups can coexist and thrive together. They recognize the minority status of the English-speaking community and appreciate the tolerance and respect shown by many members of the French-speaking majority. With a population that is only 6% of the population at large, it is likely that most English-speaking Townshippers are acutely aware of their minority status.

**(8) The English-speaking community in Quebec is the best-treated minority in the world.**

Most of the institutions that now support the English-speaking community in the Townships, and in Quebec as a whole, were developed historically by English speakers themselves at a time when their community had a larger population base, greater economic power and more influence. A strong tradition of community fundraising and volunteerism were often instrumental in developing educational and health institutions. They were not “given” to the English-speaking community.





The fact that many of these institutions today serve mostly French speakers constitutes a significant contribution by the English-speaking minority to the social and economic fabric of the region.

On the other hand, the English-speaking community in many parts of Quebec, including the Eastern Townships, is cognizant of the good will and tolerance that many members of the French-speaking majority exhibit towards them. Townshippers' Association has often reiterated that members of the Townships English-speaking community aim to participate equally with other citizens in community life and contribute their fair share to the community at large – no more, no less.

### **(9) Older English speakers do not speak French because they never tried.**

The social fabric of Quebec society in the 1930s to 1950s was very different from today. Most older English-speaking Townshippers grew up in rural communities, devoting many hours to hard physical work. Social life was centered almost entirely around school and church. If they lived “in English,” it was probably not a matter of a conscious choice. It was more likely due to constraints of time and opportunity.

### **(10) English-speaking Townshippers have British ancestry.**

The early patterns of settlement in the Eastern Townships brought people from American and British origins. However, over the course of the twentieth century, immigration diversified to include many eastern European countries and developing nations. According to the Quebec Community Groups Network (2005), the English-speaking population of the Estrie and Centre-du-Québec regions were 76% more likely to have multiple ethnic origins than the French-speaking population. Similarly, in the Montérégie they were 60% more likely to have multiple ethnic origins, and in the Chaudière-Appalaches they are more than twice as likely. English speakers in the Estrie are almost three times more likely to belong to a visible minority than French speakers. In the Montérégie, they are over six times more likely; in Chaudière-Appalaches they are over five times more likely.



## Diverse Realities and Different Concerns

One of the demographic characteristics of the English-speaking community in the Townships is diverse ethnic backgrounds. English-speaking Townshippers include a higher proportion of people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds than among French speakers in the region.

Many English speakers are concerned about declining population numbers and access to health care, education and other services. However, issues related to inclusion and belonging are also challenges facing the English-speaking community. Many of the concerns of the English-speaking minority are different from the French-speaking majority.

According to a report by the Quebec Community Groups Network (2005), challenges facing English-speaking Quebecers can be summarized as follows:

- An evolving identity
- Population diversity, mobility and loss
- Adaptation and ambiguity
- Lack of unity
- A need for collective knowledge and models for guidance
- Insufficient presence in the decision-making process

### Building Bridges

Jedwab (2001) noted that the decreasing population level has affected the needs and priorities of English-speaking communities in Quebec. English speakers are increasingly bilingual and have more contact with French speakers. Some have greater participation in the French-speaking majority culture.

Saber-Freedman and CROP (2001) also identified a reduction in the social distance between French and English speakers, through increased social contact. This has led to a greater number of marriages between the two linguistic groups. In the Eastern Townships, French speakers have shown a high level of sympathy for a number of concerns of the English-speaking community, including access to health and social services.

The majority of French speakers surveyed by Saber-Freedman and CROP (2001) said they had good relationships with English speakers, and 44% said they thought relationships with English speakers had improved over the last 10 years. English speakers' integration into the French-speaking majority may differ significantly by region and by individual (Saber-Freedman, 2001).

According to Floch (2003), 39% of Quebec's English speakers said they thought that the French majority's attitude towards the English-speaking community was improving. Over 70% reported they were confident that the English-speaking community in Quebec would continue to be an active community with many supportive organisations.

### Strategic Planning

Knowledge about a community is the basis for sustained growth. The growing body of research in recent years about the Quebec and the Townships English-speaking communities has contributed to two relevant community development plans. First, the Quebec Community Groups Network (2005) has outlined the following main strategies for the Quebec English-speaking communities as a whole:



- Building and promoting a sense of cultural identity.
- Strengthening visibility and participation in Quebec society.
- Securing a future for English-speaking youth.
- Encouraging greater dialogue within the English-speaking communities and with the larger community.
- Providing greater access to services and programs.
- Promoting bilingualism.
- Empowering the community through research and knowledge.



Second, Townshippers' Association undertook a strategic planning process in 2000-2001 which led to the following five-year objectives:

- Develop and maintain a knowledge base about the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships.
- Support and showcase the English-speaking community and its heritage and culture.
- Reduce out-migration of English-speaking youth, encourage opportunity in the Townships.
- Act as an information and referral broker.

Community consultations in 2005-2006 formed the basis for the following four targeted results for Townshippers' Association (2006) to work toward over the next five years:

- Community development initiatives in the Eastern Townships English-speaking community are more strategically coordinated, with greater collaboration among various stakeholders and initiators.
- Townships English-speaking youth are more empowered, engaged and integrated into the community.
- English-speaking Townshippers are more engaged in addressing the needs of the community.
- The cultural identity and creativity of the Townships English-speaking community have heightened visibility, contributing to a more vital community with greater cultural, social and economic opportunity for all ages.

These objectives exist in the context of the Association's mission, which has remained relevant since its inception in 1979. The three-part mission is to promote the interests of the English-speaking community in the historical Eastern Townships, strengthen the cultural identity of this community, and encourage the full participation of the English-speaking population in the community at large.

Townshippers' Association's mission and objectives find expression in a wide spectrum of community development initiatives spanning the fields of health and social services, arts and culture, youth, information and referral, outreach, advocacy and research.

## To Conclude

The English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships is in transition. It currently has socio-economic weaknesses, especially among the 18- to 44-year age group, and certain needs that differ or are more acute than among the French-speaking majority. But it also has deep roots and many enduring qualities, such as self-reliance, community involvement, volunteerism and a strong arts community. These qualities will no doubt contribute to its future development. If the collective attitude of the community changes from discouragement to encouragement about opportunity in the region, the English-speaking community may be on the threshold of a new vitality.

The role of the English-speaking community in the Townships community at large is also evolving. Its long tradition of contributing to the socio-economic and cultural character of the Eastern Townships will no doubt continue, but may do so in different ways and in new capacities. Certainly, the Eastern Townships community at large has everything to gain from having a healthy and vital English-speaking minority.





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### Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)

[www.qcgn.ca](http://www.qcgn.ca)

### Megantic English-speaking Community Development Corporation

[www.mcdc.info](http://www.mcdc.info)

## Youth Resources and Employment

### Dobson-Lagassé Centre for Entrepreneurship

[www.ubishops.ca/dobson-lagasse](http://www.ubishops.ca/dobson-lagasse)

### Eastern Townships School Board

[www.etsb.qc.ca](http://www.etsb.qc.ca)

### Job Links

[www.etsb.qc.ca/joblinks](http://www.etsb.qc.ca/joblinks)

### Townshippers' Association

[www.topportunity.ca](http://www.topportunity.ca)

## Health and Social Services

### Community Health & Social Services Network (CHSSN)

[www.chssn.org/default.asp](http://www.chssn.org/default.asp)

### Townshippers' Association

[www.townshippers.qc.ca/H-health.aspx](http://www.townshippers.qc.ca/H-health.aspx)

## Heritage, History

### Eastern Townships Research Centre

[www.ubishops.ca/etrc](http://www.ubishops.ca/etrc), [www.etrc.ca](http://www.etrc.ca)

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