RURAL WELLBEING
Languages Factsheet

HIGHLIGHTS

- Most people in rural and urban areas speak English at home.
- German is the most commonly spoken non-official language in rural areas.
- A higher proportion of people speak French in rural areas than urban areas.

Overview - What do social statistics tell us?

Census data helps us understand what languages are spoken in our communities. This factsheet presents statistics for languages that are spoken most often at home. We examine the differences across municipalities in Ontario to explore rural and urban trends. Summary statistics for census divisions and economic regions are presented in the appendices.

Date source:

Statistics Canada. 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001.

Table 1. Overview of statistics for rural and urban areas.

Geography	Official languages	% Official languages	Non-official languages	% Non-official languages
Rural	2,354,760	97%	64,660	3%
Urban	8,810,435	80%	2,174,750	20%
Ontario	11,165,195	83%	2,239,410	17%

Rural – any municipality outside of census metropolitan areas.
Urban – any municipality within a census metropolitan area.
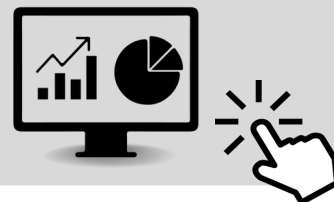For details about ROI's rural classification, please see our **website**.

Definitions:

Official languages: English and French languages.

Non-official languages: languages other than English and French.

Municipality: Census subdivisions, municipalities, and areas treated as municipal for statistical purposes, including unorganized territories and Indigenous reserves and settlements.

For interactive maps and data visualizations, please see the **Society page** of the Community Wellbeing Dashboard.

Official languages

Official languages are most commonly spoken at home in Ontario (Table 1). Almost all people in rural areas speak an official language at home, compared to 80% of people in urban areas. English is the most commonly spoken official language, at more than 96% in both rural and urban areas (Table 2). A higher proportion of people speak French in rural areas than urban areas.

Table 2. Number and proportion of people speaking official languages at home.

Geography	English	% English	French	% French
Rural	2,268,390	96.3%	86,370	3.7%
Urban	8,641,970	98.1%	168,465	1.9%
Ontario	10,910,360	97.7%	254,835	2.3%

Non-official languages

European languages are more common in rural areas, while Asian languages are more frequently spoken at home in urban areas (Table 4). German is the most commonly spoken non-official language in rural areas, while Mandarin is more common in urban areas. Punjabi (Panjabi) is the second most common language in urban areas and 3rd in rural areas. Spanish ranks 5th in both areas, while Portuguese ranks 8th for rural communities but 9th for urban communities.

Seven of the most commonly spoken non-official languages in rural areas do not appear in the urban top 10, including German, Pennsylvania German, Plautdietsch, Dutch, Polish, Oji-Cree, and Italian. Notably, Indigenous languages do not appear in the urban top 10, even though most Indigenous people live in urban areas. Seven languages in the urban top 10 are not commonly spoken in rural areas, including Mandarin, Yue (Cantonese), Arabic, Urdu, Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino), Tamil, and Iranian Persian.

Table 3. Top 10 non-official languages spoken most often at home in rural and urban areas.

Language Rank	Rural			Urban		
	Language	Number of People	Proportion of people	Language	Number of People	Proportion of people
1	German	12,635	19.5%	Mandarin	252,210	11.6%
2	Pennsylvania German	6,115	9.5%	Punjabi (Panjabi)	194,095	8.9%
3	Punjabi (Panjabi)	4,455	6.9%	Yue (Cantonese)	192,875	8.9%
4	Plautdietsch	3,360	5.2%	Arabic	123,355	5.7%
5	Spanish	3,255	5.0%	Spanish	120,345	5.5%
6	Dutch	2,345	3.6%	Urdu	111,275	5.1%
7	Polish	2,260	3.5%	Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	94,210	4.3%
8	Portuguese	2,105	3.3%	Tamil	92,155	4.2%
9	Oji-Cree	1,845	2.9%	Portuguese	72,545	3.3%
10	Italian	1,795	2.8%	Iranian Persian	66,950	3.1%

In rural areas, northwestern Ontario has the highest proportion of people speaking a non-official language at home. Eleven communities with a high non-official proportion are Indigenous reserves and settlements, where Indigenous languages are spoken (Table 4). More than half of the people in Poplar Hill, Wunnumin 1, and Kasabonika Lake speak an Indigenous language at home. Between 30% - 40% percent of people speak an Indigenous language at home in 5 rural communities: Webequie, Neskantaga, Kingfisher Lake 1, Fort Albany (Part) 67, Summer Beaver.

In urban areas, there is a higher proportion of people speaking a non-official language at home in southern Ontario. Greater than 40% of people in Markham and Richmond Hill speak non-official languages at home (Table 5). Brampton has the 3rd highest proportion at almost 38%. The proportion is around 30% of people in Mississauga, Vaughn, and Toronto.

Table 4. Rural municipalities where at least 20% of the population speak a non-official language at home.

Municipality	Number of people speaking official languages	Proportion of people speaking official languages	Number of people speaking non-official languages	Proportion of people speaking non-official languages	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages
Poplar Hill	80	16%	415	83.8%	415
Wunnumin 1	110	29%	275	71.4%	275
Kasabonika Lake	475	49%	490	50.8%	490
Webequie	390	61%	250	39.1%	250
Neskantaga	145	62%	90	38.3%	90
Kingfisher Lake 1	275	63%	160	36.8%	160
Fort Albany (Part) 67	475	66%	245	34.0%	245
Summer Beaver	225	66%	115	33.8%	115
Fort Severn 89	235	72%	90	27.7%	90
Wellesley	8,115	73%	3,070	27.4%	
Attawapiskat 91A	1,090	75%	355	24.6%	355
Johnson	585	80%	150	20.4%	
Northwest Angle 33B	40	80%	10	20.0%	10

Table 5. Urban municipalities where at least 20% of the population speak a non-official language at home.

Municipality	Number of people speaking official languages	Proportion of people speaking official languages	Number of people speaking non-official languages	Proportion of people speaking non-official languages
Markham	163,645	53.0%	143,455	46.7%
Richmond Hill	103,980	56.0%	80,570	43.7%
Brampton	359,800	62.0%	219,955	37.9%
Mississauga	445,105	69.0%	197,295	30.7%
Vaughan	212,825	71.0%	85,960	28.8%
Toronto	1,855,810	72.0%	713,255	27.8%
Aurora	45,280	77.0%	13,385	22.8%
Milton	93,025	78.0%	25,870	21.8%
Oakville	157,985	79.0%	41,050	20.6%

Summary

Diversity is important for a community's cultural, economic, and social wellbeing. In diverse communities, it is important for people to have opportunities to maintain their culture, which includes speaking their language of choice. Most Ontarians speak an official language at home. Communities, policy makers and organizations can use the statistics presented in this factsheet to develop programs that encourage linguistic diversity.

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Appendix 1. Summary of statistics for Census Divisions.

Census Division	Number of people speaking official languages	% Official	Number of people speaking non-official languages	% Non-official	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages
Algoma	108,870	95.7%	2,635	2.3%	125
Brant	132,865	91.7%	7,930	5.5%	
Bruce	69,470	94.7%	2,595	3.5%	10
Chatham-Kent	98,455	94.4%	3,695	3.5%	5
Cochrane	72,080	92.5%	1,880	2.4%	550
Dufferin	61,890	93.4%	2,805	4.2%	
Durham	599,955	86.1%	65,040	9.3%	
Elgin	88,260	93.1%	4,505	4.8%	
Essex	350,090	82.8%	52,630	12.4%	
Frontenac	149,145	92.2%	7,320	4.5%	10
Greater Sudbury / Grand Sudbury	155,065	93.3%	4,240	2.6%	35
Grey	95,120	94.3%	4,060	4.0%	
Haldimand-Norfolk	111,255	95.3%	3,560	3.1%	
Haliburton	20,125	97.8%	225	1.1%	
Halton	470,560	78.9%	86,885	14.6%	5
Hamilton	471,455	82.8%	70,340	12.4%	20
Hastings	139,720	95.9%	3,120	2.1%	15
Huron	57,540	93.8%	2,825	4.6%	
Kawartha Lakes	76,390	96.4%	1,080	1.4%	
Kenora	59,900	90.8%	3,950	6.0%	3,510
Lambton	122,670	95.7%	2,995	2.3%	25
Lanark	73,605	97.2%	695	0.9%	5
Leeds and Grenville	101,110	97.2%	1,105	1.1%	
Lennox and Addington	42,715	94.5%	365	0.8%	
Manitoulin	13,165	94.5%	445	3.2%	405
Middlesex	418,025	83.5%	58,770	11.7%	25
Muskoka	64,210	96.3%	730	1.1%	

Census Division	Number of people speaking official languages	% Official	Number of people speaking non-official languages	% Non-official	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages
Niagara	433,040	90.6%	29,630	6.2%	5
Nipissing	80,665	95.2%	1,160	1.4%	40
Northumberland	86,365	96.6%	1,140	1.3%	
Ottawa	817,530	80.4%	124,650	12.3%	170
Oxford	114,135	93.7%	5,270	4.3%	
Parry Sound	45,765	97.6%	440	0.9%	30
Peel	865,550	59.7%	428,890	29.6%	10
Perth	75,525	92.6%	4,190	5.1%	
Peterborough	141,515	95.8%	3,265	2.2%	15
Prescott and Russell	89,145	93.2%	1,235	1.3%	
Prince Edward	25,065	97.5%	260	1.0%	
Rainy River	18,905	97.3%	180	0.9%	65
Renfrew	102,970	96.8%	1,395	1.3%	
Simcoe	487,315	91.4%	29,995	5.6%	25
Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry	107,460	93.7%	2,660	2.3%	15
Sudbury	21,475	96.0%	295	1.3%	5
Thunder Bay	138,570	94.4%	4,485	3.1%	365
Timiskaming	29,915	95.2%	355	1.1%	
Toronto	1,855,810	66.4%	713,255	25.5%	80
Waterloo	469,090	79.9%	88,290	15.0%	10
Wellington	211,030	87.6%	22,005	9.1%	5
York	724,760	61.8%	359,695	30.7%	5

Appendix 2. Summary of statistics for Economic Regions.

Economic Region	Number of people speaking official languages	% Official	Number of people speaking non-official languages	% Non-official	Number of people speaking Indigenous languages
Hamilton--Niagara Peninsula	1,310,715	87.6%	127,740	8.5%	30
Kingston--Pembroke	459,615	94.8%	12,460	2.6%	25
Kitchener--Waterloo--Barrie	1,229,325	86.1%	143,095	10.0%	40
London	620,420	86.5%	68,545	9.6%	25
Muskoka--Kawarthas	388,605	96.3%	6,440	1.6%	15
Northeast / Nord-est	527,000	94.6%	11,450	2.1%	1,190
Northwest / Nord-ouest	217,375	93.6%	8,615	3.7%	3,940
Ottawa	1,188,850	84.5%	130,345	9.3%	190
Stratford--Bruce Peninsula	297,655	93.8%	13,670	4.3%	10
Toronto	4,354,535	66.7%	1,637,485	25.1%	95
Windsor--Sarnia	571,215	87.2%	59,320	9.1%	30