

A High Percentage of New Brunswickers Retain Their Mother Tongue

Language retention refers to the situation where people speak their mother tongue at home. Retention is defined as 'complete' when the mother tongue is the language spoken most often at home and 'partial' when it is spoken on a regular basis at home but not most often.

- The (complete or partial) retention rate refers to the proportion of the population with a given mother tongue that speaks that language at home most often or on a regular basis.
- The retention rate provides an indication of a group's linguistic vitality, particularly the importance of transmitting languages between generations. Typically, the main language spoken at home is the mother tongue. The language spoken most often at home is likely to be passed on to children. Thus, the use of a particular language at home by parents influences the first language a child will learn at home.
- In New Brunswick, the total retention rate in 2011 for the population with an English mother tongue was 99.4%, that is, 99.4% of the population with an English mother tongue spoke English at home most often or on a regular basis. The total rate of retention of French was 93.6%, while the retention rate for those whose mother tongue was a non-official language was 77.5%.
- Among the seven largest urban areas in the province, the Edmundston CA had the lowest retention rate in 2011 for the population with an English mother tongue (79.3%), while the Saint John CMA had the lowest retention rate for the population with a French mother tongue (60.0%).

Mother-tongue retention in New Brunswick, 2011			
Mother tongue	Mother-tongue retention (in percentage)		
	Total Retention (Language spoken at home at least on a regular basis)	Complete Retention (Language spoken most often at home)	Partial Retention (Language spoken at home on a regular basis)
English	99.4	98.6	0.8
French	93.6	87.3	6.3
Non-official language	77.5	53.4	24.1
Aboriginal language	75.1	42.3	32.8
Non-Aboriginal language	77.9	55.2	22.7

Note: Counts for mother tongue and home language include single response of a language as well as multiple responses of a language with English and/or French.

SOURCE: Statistics Canada, 2011 census of population.