

of New Brunswick. Outside of Quebec, Ontario had the largest number of persons with French as their only mother tongue (484,265 in 1986). These persons accounted for a little less than 5% of the population of that province.

Overall, the size of French-language minorities in the country decreased between 1981 and 1986. In 1986, 945,860 persons living outside Quebec indicated French as their only mother tongue. During the same period, in Quebec, the number of persons with English as a mother tongue also fell, continuing the trend that began in the mid-1970s. In 1986, 678,785 persons reported English as their only mother tongue.

Most of the 3.2 million persons with a single mother tongue other than English or French, spoke European languages (2.1 million persons) but since the 1960s, Asian and Middle Eastern languages — mainly Chinese, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu — have grown considerably. Approximately 138,000 people in Canada had a single aboriginal language as mother tongue, mainly Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut. Languages other than English or French are more prevalent in Ontario and the western provinces, than in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

There was little change from 1961 to 1986 in the number of persons who indicated a language of European origin, although there have been changes within this group. For example, the number of persons with Spanish as their mother tongue was larger in 1986 than it was 25 years earlier, while the number with German or Ukrainian as their mother tongue has decreased. Overall, the proportion of the population reporting a mother tongue other than English or French changed little in the 25 year period.

In 1986, the proportion of the population for which the only mother tongue was neither English nor French varied a great deal from one region of the country to another: this group made up less than 2% of the population in the Atlantic provinces, 6% in Quebec, 15% in Ontario, 19% in Manitoba, 13% in Saskatchewan, 13% in Alberta, 14% in British Columbia and 7% in the Yukon. The Northwest Territories reached 40%; most of these persons reported Inuktitut as their mother tongue.

Collection of data on mother tongue. The following is an overview of some changes made in data collection and a description of the analytical methods used to determine the trends.

Data collection. The question on mother tongue was the same in the last two Censuses, but the instructions to respondents were modified. In 1981, the respondents were asked to indicate only

one language, nevertheless, 597,980 persons reported more than one. This instruction was dropped from the 1986 Census. Under the new instructions, people could indicate two mother tongues if they had learned them at the same time and had spoken one as frequently as the other when they were children.

The number of multiple responses given in the 1986 Census was significantly higher than the number given in the 1981 Census. This increase may have resulted from changes made in the questionnaire, changes in the way the population answers language questions or an increase in the number of persons who learned more than one language as a mother tongue. In 1986, 954,940 persons provided a multiple response.

When the 1981 data were processed, only one language was retained, even in cases where the respondent reported more than one. In 1986, responses indicating more than one language were accepted.

Comparison between 1981 and 1986. In order to facilitate the determination of the trends between 1981 and 1986, two methods of comparison were established. In the 1986-based method, the presentation of the data from the 1981 Census shows the multiple responses obtained at that time. In the 1981-based method, the results of the 1986 Census were adjusted, based upon the methods used in 1981; in cases where several languages were reported, the multiple responses were distributed among the component languages.

These adjustments make it easier to relate the 1986 data to the 1981 data, but do not make the results of the two Censuses entirely comparable.

Generally, the two methods reveal similar trends. For New Brunswick, the results obtained using the second method indicate that the size of the French-language group grew and that its proportion did not change between 1981 and 1986.

2.7.3 Ethnic groups

In total, the ethnic background of 72% of Canadians was made up of just one ethnic origin. Of this group, just over one-third was of British origin and one-third was French.

Regional differences were reflected in ethnic reporting. Newfoundland had the highest proportion of the population with a common ethnic background: 80% of Newfoundlanders reported a single British response. In Quebec, 78% of respondents gave French as their only ethnic origin.

The western provinces, notably Manitoba and Saskatchewan, showed greater ethnic diversity. British single responses represented the single