WHO ARE OUR 0-5 YEAR OLDS?
A PORTRAIT OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING 0-5 YEAR OLDS IN THE OUTAOUAIS REGION
The mission of Connexions Resource Centre is to serve and promote the health, well-being and vitality of the English-speaking population of the Outaouais.

The Outaouais region has a population of 392,785 (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2017). The proportion of the population whose mother tongue is only English is 14.2%. As such, English-speaking residents find themselves in a minority situation. Research shows that minority populations do not always benefit from the same services or have access to the same information, which can affect their health and well-being. It is therefore important to support the development of this minority language community, and this of course begins with its preschoolers.

This report was prepared with the financial support of the Centre intégré de santé et des services sociaux (CISSS) de l’Outaouais. Connexions Resource Centre wishes to thank all the members of the English-speaking community of the Outaouais who took part in this survey. Connexions would also like to thank Dr. Annie Bérubé of the Université du Québec de l’Outaouais (UQO), as well as Dr. Jacques Marleau and Marie-Claude Courteau of the Direction de la santé publique de l’Outaouais for their support and advice in preparing this report.

Prepared for Connexions Resource Centre by Mylène Dault, PhD - March 2019
Graphic design: Pascale Payant
Several factors influence child development. According to the Ecological Systems Theory advocated by Avenir d’Enfants (2015) and adopted by the Community Health and Social Services Network - CHSSN (2018) in their document dedicated to the development of English-speaking children aged 0-5 years and their family, it is not just about supporting the child and nurturing their healthy development, it is also about recognizing the importance of family and the community in which they live. The interrelationships between these different dimensions will have a positive or negative impact on the child’s development. In keeping with this approach, this report examines different factors around the child in order to provide a portrait that is representative of the child’s reality in the Outaouais.

There are 27,320 children between the ages of 0 and 5 years in the Outaouais. They account for 7.1% of the population (2016 Census). The following report provides a portrait of English-speaking children between the ages of 0 and 5 years in the Outaouais and their family in order to learn more about their current reality and to better understand the challenges they face. This report also serves as a guide for Connexions Resource Centre whose mission is to serve and promote the health, well-being and vitality of the English-speaking population of the Outaouais.
Who Are Our 0-5 Year Olds?

2016 CENSUS DATA
Several types of data on language are available in the census, namely, mother tongue, first official language spoken, language spoken most often at home, knowledge of the official languages, etc. In order to ensure consistency with the various studies presented in this portrait, we will refer to the child’s mother tongue.

The Outaouais region has five MRC territories, each of which has a variable percentage of children under the age of 5.* The Pontiac territory has the highest proportion of children whose mother tongue is English, at 53.4% compared with 41.2% for children whose mother tongue is French.

* Note that the demographic data presented in this section are for children under 5 years of age.
Gatineau has 2,210 children with English as their mother tongue which makes it the territory with the largest number of children. However, they account for only 12.3% of its population, which suggests that the vast majority of children with English as their mother tongue and their families find themselves in a minority situation and are more at-risk for social isolation.

65.5% of children under age 5 in the Outaouais whose mother tongue is English live in Gatineau.
Our Families with a Child Aged 5 Years and Under

According to the most recent census data, there are 20,030 families with at least one child aged 5 years and under in the Outaouais (2016 Census). In total, there are 2,845 families for whom English is the mother tongue of the child aged 0-5 years and 15,250 families for whom it is French. There are 645 families where the mother tongue is both English and French.

**INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT**

The annual average total income for English-speaking families is $80,190, it is $92,255 for French-speaking families, and $98,951 for bilingual families.

**PROPORTION OF low-income FAMILIES WITH A CHILD AGED 5 YEARS AND UNDER**

- **English-speaking families**: 12.2%
- **French-speaking families**: 7.3%
- **Bilingual families**: 11.1%

A higher proportion of families considered low-income are English-speaking.
In this statistical portrait:

**English-speaking family**
Family in which the child’s mother tongue is either English only or English and another non-official language according to the 2016 Census.

**French-speaking family**
Family in which the child’s mother tongue is either French only or French and another non-official language according to the 2016 Census.

**Bilingual family**
Family in which the child’s mother tongue is either French and English only or French and English and another non-official language according to the 2016 Census.

...unemployment rate *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH-SPEAKING FAMILIES</th>
<th>FRENCH-SPEAKING FAMILIES</th>
<th>BILINGUAL FAMILIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for reference person of the family who responded to the 2016 Census.

English-speaking families have a higher level of unemployment.
EDUCATION
The level of education is higher for families whose mother tongues are French and English. In fact, 42.5% of bilingual families have a university degree. This proportion is 32.7% and 35.7% for English-speaking and French-speaking families, respectively.

Families whose mother tongue is English are more likely to have a parent who only holds a secondary school or college diploma (20.2% and 25.2%, respectively) versus 12.6% and 18.7% for Francophone families. Whereas Francophone families are more likely to have a parent who has a diploma of professional studies (19% vs 10% for Anglophone families).

* Note that data on education is for the reference person of the family who responded to the 2016 Census.

Families whose mother tongue is English are more likely to have a parent who only has a secondary school or college diploma, but they are less likely to have a parent with a university degree.
FAMILY STRUCTURE AND HOUSING STATUS

Bilingual families have a higher proportion of families where both parents live together, at 85.6%. Conversely, English-speaking families have the highest rate of lone-parent families, at 22.5% (83.5% of whom are single mothers). This rate of lone-parent families is higher than that of Québec as a whole (16.8%).

It is the homes of English-speaking families that require the most minor (36.0%) and major (9.8%) repairs, compared with Francophone families (30.8% and 7.0%, respectively) and bilingual families (35.6% and 5.5%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family with parents living as a couple</th>
<th>Lone-parent family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English-speaking family</strong></td>
<td>77.1%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>French-speaking family</strong></td>
<td>80.5%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bilingual family</strong></td>
<td>85.6%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of the EQDEM

The Enquête Québécoise sur le développement des enfants de la maternelle (Québec Survey of Child Development in Kindergarten) provides a portrait of Québec children enrolled in kindergarten during the 2016-2017 school year. (EQDEM, 2017) This enquiry, through a questionnaire completed by the child’s kindergarten teacher, aims to gather information on five areas of development:

- Physical health and well-being;
- Social skills;
- Emotional maturity;
- Language and cognitive development;
- Communication skills and general knowledge.

The Outaouais region is characterized by a higher percentage of children who are vulnerable in at least one and two areas of development compared with Québec as a whole. It is the only region in Québec where the proportion of vulnerable kindergarten children is higher in all five areas when compared to Québec as a whole.

A child is said to be “vulnerable” in an area if he or she is part of the 10% of Québec children who have the lowest scores for the targeted area.
A higher proportion of kindergarten children in the Outaouais are vulnerable in at least one area compared to Québec as a whole.

VULNERABILITY IN AT LEAST ONE AREA OF DEVELOPMENT

• all languages combined •

33.5%  
KINDERGARTEN  
OUTAOUAIS

27.7%  
KINDERGARTEN  
QUÉBEC

Even more alarming, a higher proportion of children in the Outaouais whose mother tongue is English are vulnerable in at least one area of development compared with children in the Outaouais whose mother tongue is French and to Québec as a whole.

VULNERABILITY IN AT LEAST ONE AREA OF DEVELOPMENT

• English mother tongue •

42.9%  
KINDERGARTEN  
OUTAOUAIS

36.8%  
KINDERGARTEN  
QUÉBEC
More specifically, the proportion of children who are vulnerable in the areas of physical health and well-being as well as communication skills and general knowledge is higher among English-speaking children than among French-speaking children.
SUB-AREAS
General physical development
Motor skills
Nutrition
Clothing
Hygiene
Punctuality
Wakefulness

SUB-AREAS
Communicating effectively in a way that is understood
Understanding others
Articulating clearly
General knowledge
The Outaouais’ English-Speaking Community Speaks Out!

In February 2019, a survey was conducted among English-speaking families who have children between 0 and 5 years of age. Over a period of two weeks, 417 families responded to the survey.

* Please use caution when interpreting the data as survey responses are not as reliable as census data or inquiry data.

**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

- **45.8%** are from the Collines-de-l'Outaouais territory
- **44.1%** are from Gatineau
- **87.7%** are women
- **61.5%** are between 30 and 40 years of age
- **41.2%** have at least 1 child over 6 years old
- **88.5%** both parents living together
- **54.9%** have a university degree
- **24.4%** have a college diploma
- **48.8%** speak only English at home
- **36.1%** speak French and English at home

*Please use caution when interpreting the data as survey responses are not as reliable as census data or inquiry data.*
HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- **64.6%** have a family doctor.
- **69.7%** ask to be served in English when they receive health care/social services.
- **52.9%** feel that they do not have access to sufficient information on health/social services in English.
- **72.4%** of families travel outside of the Outaouais to receive health care/social services, 93.8% of whom go to Ottawa.
- **73.1%** have already used the 811 service, 72.9% of whom were served in English.
ATTENDANCE AT DAYCARE CENTRES

65.6% ATTEND DAYCARE
OF THESE 36.6% ARE IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE (ECC)
AND 24.4% ARE IN PRIVATE DAYCARE

36.3% EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE
18.5% SUBSIDIZED FAMILY-HOME DAYCARE
24.4% PRIVATE DAYCARE
14% PRIVATE HOME DAYCARE
6.7% OTHER

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT DAYCARE
33.3% ATTEND UNILINGUAL ENGLISH-SPEAKING DAYCARE
AND 35.6% ATTEND BILINGUAL DAYCARE

33.3% ENGLISH ONLY
25.4% FRENCH ONLY
3% ENGLISH AND ANOTHER LANGUAGE
2.7% OTHER LANGUAGE
35.6% ENGLISH AND FRENCH
A FEW HEALTH INDICATORS

Screen Time

According to the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years, the time spent in front of screens should be below 1 hour for children aged 4 years and younger and should be almost none for children younger than 1 year. (Tremblay et al., 2017)

According to the data collected in the survey, 32.4% of English-speaking children in the Outaouais who are younger than 5 years of age spend more than 1 hour in front of a screen every day.

MEALS PREPARED AT HOME

Most English-speaking families who took part in the survey eat home-cooked meals more than 5 days a week.

In addition, 52.2% of respondents indicated that their child participates in preparing meals, and 90.2% indicated that their child eats fruits and vegetables at most meals.
Sleep

According to the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years, children under 1 year of age should sleep between 12 and 17 hours. For children between 1 and 2 years of age, the recommendation is between 11 and 14 hours, and for children 3 to 4 years of ages the recommendation is between 10 and 13 hours. (Tremblay et al., 2017)

Reading

According to the Enquête Québécoise sur le développement des enfants de la maternelle (EQDEM), the simple act of leafing through a book around age 2 will have an impact on the academic results of the child at age 15 (Nanhou et al., 2016). Several studies also show that emergent literacy at a young age influences school perseverance.

According to the survey data, only 33.2% of English-speaking children in the Outaouais region sleep more than 10 hours a day, which means that at least 66.8% suffer from a lack of sleep.

64.3% of English-speaking parents who responded to the survey read a story to their child every day.
Activities

According to the survey results, here are the most popular activities for English-speaking children aged 0-5 years:

1. **49%** take part in sports activities;
2. **36.5%** take part in playgroups;
3. **31.6%** take part in activities offered at libraries.

In 35.5% of cases, parents manage to find activities in English always or most of the time. In 36% of cases, they sometimes find activities in English, and in 28.8% of cases, they rarely or never manage to find any activities in English.

With respect to activities for parents, survey respondents indicated that:

1. **64.5%** of them are more interested in activities in which they can participate with their children;
2. **66.5%** would like to learn more about the resources available to them;
3. **63.2%** would like to have more time to take care of themselves.

With respect to children's activities, in order to better support their development, survey respondents indicated that:

1. **60.9%** of them would like activities that allow for socializing and playing with other children;
2. **45.6%** would like activities related to emotional development and strategies to better manage emotions;
3. **55.8%** would like to receive health and social services.
In Short...

English-speaking children aged 5 and under in the Outaouais region:

- are more likely to be vulnerable in the area of communication skills and general knowledge
- are more likely to be vulnerable in the area of physical health and well-being, including motor skills
- seem to sleep fewer hours and spend more time in front of screens than what is recommended for their age
- seem to eat enough fruits and vegetables
- participate, for the most part, in meal preparation and eat home-cooked meals most of the time
- have access to health care and social services in English, even if most of their families travel to Ottawa to receive these services
- live mostly in the Gatineau territory
- live, in a higher proportion than their French-speaking counterparts in the Outaouais, in a family:
  - with a single parent
  - with a higher unemployment rate
  - with a low annual income
- are in the minority in all the territories except for the Pontiac where they are in the majority
- are less likely to have one parent with a university degree
Recommendations for the Next Five Years

Further promote the services offered by Connexions Resource Centre;

Request and make available existing services and information in English to ensure greater equity;

Increase partnerships to better serve the health and development of English-speaking children in the territories where they are in the minority and are at a higher risk of isolation;

Act early and on an ongoing basis with all the partners in the Outaouais who work with preschoolers in order to better support child development, as well as parental skills;

Strengthen partnerships with the Western Québec School Board and the Centre intégré de santé et des services sociaux (CISSS) de l’Outaouais by forming an advisory committee for English-speaking children aged 0-5 years where all key partners will be invited, including parent representatives;

Ensure the needs of both families and preschoolers are taken into account in the English-language health and social services access program of the CISSS de l’Outaouais;

Conduct a survey targeting the more vulnerable families to better understand their needs and subsequently work with existing community organizations to help them better support these families;

Target areas of vulnerability where English-speaking children experience the greatest difficulty, namely physical health and well-being, as well as communication skills and general knowledge;

Support English-speaking parents in preparing their children for their first transition into school.
Conclusion

The importance of early and concerted action in a child’s development is well known. As proposed in the Ecological Systems Theory, the child, their family and the community in which they live play a critical role in their overall development. Growing up in a minority language community brings an additional challenge. According to the reference tools to help vulnerable English-speaking children and families developed by the Community Health and Social Services Network - CHSSN, several factors influence the vulnerability rate of children in minority language situations, and as such, we must adapt our interventions accordingly.

Based on all the data presented in this report, we can conclude that English-speaking preschoolers in the Outaouais have many challenges to overcome. Preparing our children for their transition to kindergarten at an early age is critical. All positive measures that families and communities take to support our young one’s will have long-lasting effects on their academic success and school perseverance, as well as their physical and mental health.

Considering this portrait of English-speaking preschoolers in the Outaouais, Connexions Resource Centre’s role and mission is all the more relevant. In collaboration with its partners, Connexions will develop an action plan that will target English-speaking children aged 0-5 years and help propel them towards a promising future. As the African proverb aptly says:

“It takes a village to raise a child.”
REFERENCES


Statistique Canada (2016) Données du Recensement de 2016. Table of customized data for this portrait of census family with at least one child under the age of 6 years old based on mother tongue of the child - 25 % Sample Data.
