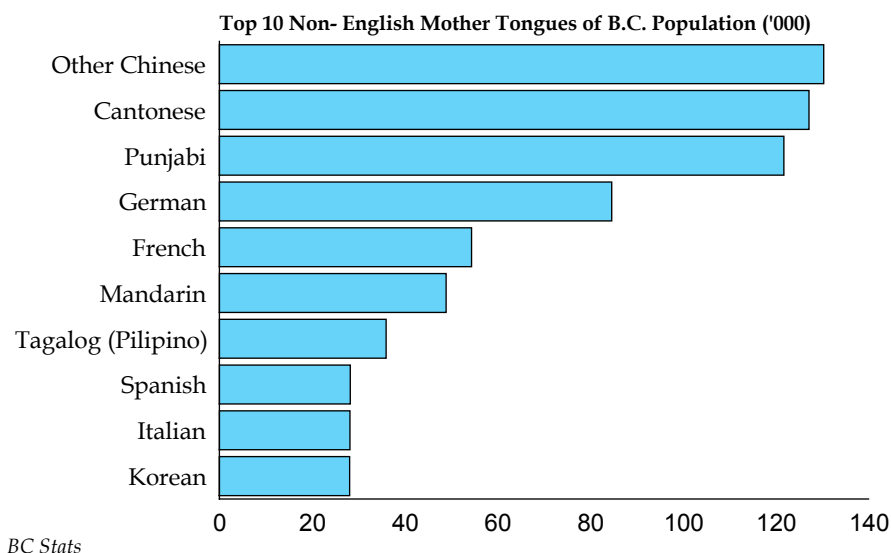


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## *Special Feature: MotherTongue & Home Language*

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In 2001, one in every four British Columbians reported a single mother tongue other than English. . .



Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the Census. In 2001, about seventy-five per cent of the B.C. population reported English as their mother tongue, indicating a decline from the 76.5 per cent reported five years ago in the 1996 Census. French was reported by 1.4 per cent of the province's population as their mother tongue. Nationally, 58.5 per cent of the Canadian population reported English and 22.6 per cent reported French as their mother tongue. Including English and French, there were a total of 125 languages tabulated in the 2001 Census for mother tongues. There were 1.3 per cent of the B.C. population (or 48,750 persons) who reported more than one mother tongue (multiple responses).

After English, Chinese was the second most spoken mother tongue. A total of 307,995 persons in the province reported having a Chinese mother tongue in 2001. This represented 32.8 per cent of the B.C. population with a non-official mother tongue, or 8.0 per cent of all British Columbians who reported a single mother tongue. This ratio is high for B.C. when compared to the 2.9 per cent with Chinese mother tongue in the overall population of Canada. Also, the population with a Chinese mother tongue has been growing significantly over the last two census periods. The number from the 1996 Census was 252,405 persons, indicating an increase of 22.0 per over the five years between 1996 and 2001. The majority of the Chinese speaking population lived in the Lower Mainland. In 2001, 95.2 per cent of the people who had a Chinese mother tongue lived in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area. The major Chinese dialects spoken



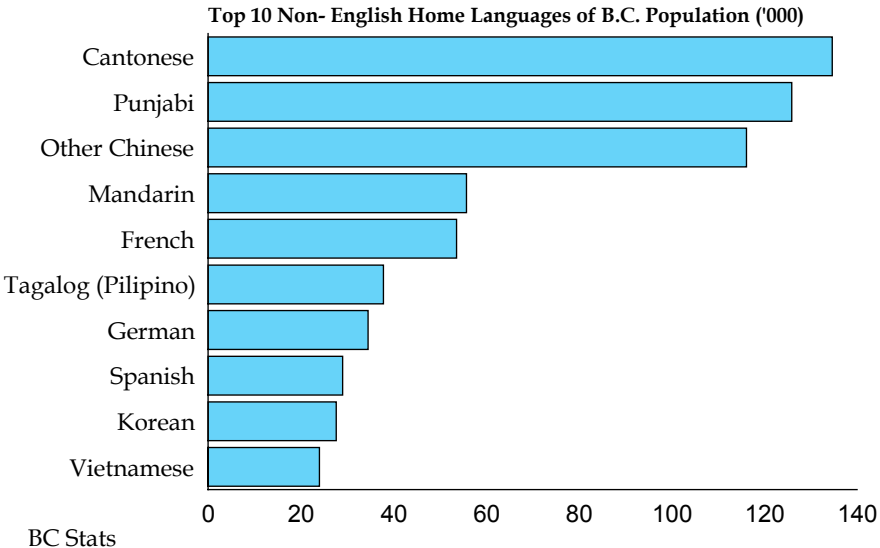
were Cantonese and Mandarin, representing 41.3 per cent and 15.9 per cent of all reported Chinese mother tongues, respectively.

Punjabi and German were the other major mother tongues spoken in British Columbia. They respectively accounted for 13.0 per cent and 9.0 per cent of the province’s population having a non-official mother tongue. The other common mother tongues included Tagalog, Spanish, Italian, Korean, Dutch, Vietnamese and Persian.

While European languages were still the dominating mother tongues in the province, the number of people having an Asian mother tongue has been increasing due to the high influx of Asian immigrants over the last two decades. Over the five years from 1997 to 2001, about three in every four immigrants who arrived in the province were from Asia, and more than 150,000 Asian immigrants had landed in B.C. during that period. A very high proportion of these recent immigrants having a non-English mother tongue had no knowledge of English or French at the time of the Census. For example, 30.5 per cent of the population with a Chinese tongue reported not knowing either English or French. Overall, there were 2.7 per cent of British Columbians who could not speak, write or understand either official language in 2001.

Home language is the language a person speaks at home most of the time. Home language may or may not be a person’s mother tongue. A majority of the most common non-official home languages were Asian languages. Cantonese and Punjabi, apart from English, were the top two most spoken languages at home. In 2001, 134,670 persons spoke Cantonese and 125,920 spoke Punjabi at home.

Some people speak more than one language at home and a very high proportion of the multi-lingual population spoke English and their non-English mother tongue at home. On the other hand, there were people who speak only their mother tongue at home. For example, in 2001, more than half of the Cantonese speaking people spoke only Cantonese at home. Population who reported a European home language tended to speak more than one language at home and were relatively less likely to speak only their mother tongue at home.



## B.C. Population by Mother Tongue - 2001 Census

English	2,825,780	Hebrew	810
Chinese, n.o.s.	130,330	Amharic	750
Cantonese	127,160	Sinhalese	725
Punjabi	121,740	Sino-Tibetan languages, n.i.e.	640
German	84,605	Shuswap	630
French	54,400	Kurdish	620
Mandarin	48,880	Indo-Iranian languages, n.i.e.	615
Tagalog (Pilipino)	35,940	Latvian (Lettish)	595
Spanish	28,235	Yiddish	565
Italian	28,165	Nishga	505
Korean	28,105	Malayalam	495
Dutch	26,745	Bantu languages, n.i.e.	440
Vietnamese	23,220	Frisian	430
Persian (Farsi)	21,290	Flemish	420
Hindi	20,295	Gaelic languages	420
Japanese	17,900	Niger-Congo languages, n.i.e.	410
Polish	17,320	Nootka	405
Russian	14,920	Athapaskan languages, n.i.e.	395
Portuguese	14,155	Thompson (Ntlakapamux)	390
Ukrainian	13,605	Icelandic	380
Hungarian	10,775	Lithuanian	345
Croatian	8,520	Welsh	345
Greek	6,685	Tsimshian	340
Danish	6,565	Telugu	330
Arabic	6,235	Twi	320
Gujarati	6,200	Turkic languages, n.i.e.	300
Malayo-Polynesian languages, n.i.e.	5,885	Creoles	295
Czech	5,835	Ojibway	285
Romanian	5,170	African languages, n.i.e.	275
Finnish	5,120	Aboriginal languages, n.i.e.	250
Serbian	4,670	Maltese	235
Urdu	4,410	Pashto	235
Norwegian	3,850	Semitic languages, n.i.e.	235
Serbo-Croatian	3,305	Swahili	235
Swedish	3,265	Tigringa	230
Slovak	2,820	Marathi	210
Malay-Bahasa	2,265	Konkani	155
Tamil	2,250	Haida	145
Slavic languages, n.i.e.	1,810	Romance languages, n.i.e.	145
Sindhi	1,775	Kutenai	125
Other languages	1,630	Macedonian	110
Germanic languages, n.i.e.	1,625	South Slave	100
Hakka	1,625	Austro-Asiatic languages, n.i.e.	90
Salish languages, n.i.e.	1,555	Dene	70
Turkish	1,505	Asiatic languages, n.i.e.	55
Khmer (Cambodian)	1,360	Byelorussian	55
Slovenian	1,335	Inuktitut (Eskimo)	50
Somali	1,315	Kannada	50
Carrier	1,235	Algonquian languages, n.i.e.	35
Thai	1,235	Blackfoot	35
Estonian	1,190	Dakota/Sioux	25
Cree	1,180	Chipewyan	20
Bengali	1,165	Dogrib	20
Lao	1,125	Iroquoian languages, n.i.e.	15
Bulgarian	910	Kutchin-Gwich'in (Loucheux)	10
Gitksan	905	Malecite	10
Armenian	900	Micmac	10
Wakashan languages, n.i.e.	865	Mohawk	10
Chilcotin	810	Tlingit	10

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Note: n.i.e. = Not Included Elsewhere ; n.o.s. = Not Otherwise Specified