

Official Language Proficiency and the Civic Participation of Immigrants*

by
Monica Boyd**

Abstract:

This project assesses the relationship between language proficiency and civic participation, comparing immigrant immigrants to the Canadian born. Two core questions are addressed: 1) what are the relationships between language knowledge and the level and type of civic participation within the immigrant population? More specific, does knowledge and use of English and/or French increase the likelihood of civic engagement by immigrants? 2) Do immigrants, particularly those with low levels of proficiency differ from the Canadian born in the type of civic participation? These questions are answered with information from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, focusing on rates of associational participation, volunteering, voting, and sense of belonging. The data show that official language skills are associated with the levels and types of civic participation among the foreign born.

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Introduction

Four reasons exist for the on-going interest in the civic participation of immigrants. The first reason derives from studies of voluntary association membership, which is one indicator of civic participation. As discussed by Baer (2008) in his seminal work, although Canada has one of the world's highest rates of voluntary association participation, secularization and immigration may mean declining engagement in the future¹. A second reason is that similarities between the Canadian born and the foreign born in rates of civic participation can be viewed as indicating integration. Just as convergence, usually over time, in economic indicators of the foreign born compared to the Canadian born are thought to represent economic integration, the convergence of behaviours regarding civic participation of immigrants vis-a vis the Canadian born can be considered an aspect of civic integration. Third, to the extent that it is a form of participation in social life, civic participation can be considered to indicate social cohesion and the existence of social networks. In turn, such networks may offer social support that assists in the immigrant integration process. Fourth, the absence of civic participation by immigrants may indicate the existence of barriers to full participation in the destination society.

To date, mixed results exist regarding the relationship between nativity and civic participation. Some studies find that new immigrants tend to participate less in civic and social activities than non-immigrants (Baer 2008; Couton and Gaudet 2008; Nakhaie 2008). In addition there appears to be important differences between, and within, immigrant groups along ethnic and gender lines (Baer 2008; Couton and Gaudet 2008). However other research suggests there is little difference in civic participation between immigrant and non-immigrant groups. Moreover, this gap closes as time spent in Canada increases (Black, 1991; Scott, Selbee and Reid, 2006). These studies all use diverse indicators to measure civic participation such as volunteering, political activism, voting, and acquisition of citizenship (Baer 2008, Tossutti 2007; Stoll and Wong 2007; Nakhaie 2007).

At the moment there is no ready explanation for the different research findings regarding the levels of civic participation between immigrants and native-born Canadians, as well as between immigrant groups themselves. However, knowing (or not knowing) the language(s) of the host country emerges as an important determinant of immigrant civic participation. Many studies find a positive and direct relationship between language proficiency in Canada's official languages and civic participation among immigrants, particularly new immigrants (Baer 2008; Torney-Purta et al 2007; Nakhaie 2008). Using data from the 2003 General Social Survey, as well as the 2001 Census, Baer (2008) found that immigrant groups who tended not to adopt English as a

¹ Baer (2008) suggests that immigrants may be less likely to join associations either because they differ from the Canadian born in those characteristics known to increase membership (the status/compositional hypothesis) or because they come from countries where the civic culture of participation is less strong (the origin civic culture hypothesis).

home language were considerably less engaged — even when including ethnic organizations — than those within their own ethnic community, as well as those from other immigrant groups, who had begun to use the majority language. Similarly, over one in five of the 50 immigrants surveyed by Dudley (2007) in his case study of ESL immigrants in Canada indicated they did not volunteer because of their limited language abilities. Another study observed that the Chinese and Indo-Canadian community in British Columbia did not display higher rates of voting because of language barriers that make the voting process difficult to navigate (Elections BC in Tossutti 2007). Language proficiency /ability in these studies tends to be measured as whether individuals speak only the official languages or other languages, or whether English/French is spoken at home.

Although researchers find that language proficiency in English and/or French is associated with increases in immigrant civic participation, language per se is not the foci of their research. Further, studies vary with respect to the surveys analyzed and the indicators of civic participation. In this paper, I use a single data source, the 2002 Canadian Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS), to highlight three indicators of civic participation, while emphasizing the relationship between levels of official language proficiency and the level and type of civic participation observed for the Canadian born and the foreign born. In my analysis I address two core questions. First, what are the relationships between language knowledge and the level and type of civic participation within the immigrant population? More specific, does knowledge and use of English and/or French increase the likelihood of civic engagement by immigrants? Second, do immigrants, particularly those with low levels of proficiency differ from the Canadian born in the type of civic participation? Results from the EDS confirm that differences exist between the Canadian born and the foreign born in the extent and type of civic participation. Further language proficiency, measured as a three category typology of language use, is correlated with the frequency and type of civic participation.

Data and Methods

The Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) was conducted jointly by Statistics Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage in 2002 and released in September of 2003. The aim of the survey was to advance understanding of the social, political, and economic integration of Canadians with diverse ethnic backgrounds. In total, 42,476 respondents participated, achieving a 76 percent response rate and representing a population of 23,092,643. Participants were selected on the basis of their answers to questions on the 2001 Census of Canada, with the target population being persons aged 15 and older living in private dwellings in Canada's ten provinces. Because teenagers and young adults are still in the transition to adulthood stage, the analysis in this paper is based on a sub-sample of EDS participants that includes all those aged 25 and older.

The EDS has a civic participation module that asked respondents to indicate their participation in various types of organizations and groups (ethnic or otherwise), and voting. Respondents were asked: "Are you a member of, or have you taken part in the activities of, any groups or organizations at anytime in the past 12 months? For example, a sports team, a hobby club, a community organization, an ethnic association, etc?" When respondents indicated they were members of a specific group or association, questions were asked about the frequency of participation in the activities of the group or

organization. These questions were used to provide information on the membership or participation overall and on the overall frequency of participation.

The EDS public use micro database which is analyzed in this paper also contains information on the participation of respondents in the following specific groups and organizations (in alphabetical order): art, dance, cultural groups; business or job related; community organization(s); ethnic or immigrant associations; hobby, social club or seniors group; religious affiliated group(s); sports club or team(s); service club, agency or charitable organization; and youth organizations or children's groups. The public use micro data file also contains information on the frequency of participation for the groups or organizations excluding hobby, social club or seniors group; service club, agency or charitable organization; and youth organizations or children's groups.

In addition to membership and activities in groups and organizations, voting is used in many studies as a form of participation in civil life. The Ethnic Diversity Survey has a voting module which asks respondents if they voted in the last Federal, Provincial or Municipal election; these questions also contained categories for respondents to indicate they were not eligible to vote.

A third area probed in the Ethnic Diversity Survey is the strength of the respondent's sense of belonging to family, to her or his ethnic or cultural group, to her or his town, city or municipality, to her or his province, to Canada and to North America. Strictly speaking, this is not a measure of civic participation, at least in terms of core indicators used in previous research. However, sense of belonging can be considered as an attitudinal measure, one that is both symbolically important and captures a more abstract orientation to participation in a specified community; for these reasons this measure is included in this paper as a third type of civic participation.

The EDS also asked respondents about their birthplace and for the foreign born, their year of arrival which then was converted into data on age at immigration. Because of interest in the integration aspect of civic participation, the paper presents information only for those immigrants who immigrated as adults, notably at age 25 or later. The EDS also asked respondents a number of questions about languages learned and used. Following previous investigations into civic participation, the following typology of official language proficiency is developed and used in this paper:

Type 1: The first language(s) learned in childhood is English and/or French and the language used mostly in the home is English and/or French

Type 2: The first language(s) learned in childhood is a language(s) other than English and/or French and the language used mostly in the home is English and/or French

Type 3: The first language(s) learned in childhood is a language(s) other than English and/or French and the language used mostly in the home is not English and/or French

This language typology is combined with information collected by the EDS on participation in groups or organizations, on voting and on feelings of belonging. It should be noted that the analysis does not adjust for differences between groups with respect to age, place of residence, marital status, levels of education, ethnic origins, and years lived

in Canada or other factors that are associated with variations in civic participation. If these geographical and other compositional differences were taken into account using multivariate techniques, the magnitude of differences between groups defined by nativity and language proficiency might change.

Language Proficiency and Membership in Groups and Organizations

Overview

That language proficiency in the host country language is associated with higher levels of civic participation is hardly surprising – as a complex bundle of symbols, language is essential for communicating thoughts and ideas and for undertaking tasks. For newcomers, knowing the language(s) of the host society enhances ability to obtain information about the new society - information about schools, health care, social programs, housing and employment opportunities. As such, proficiency in the destination country language(s) is a resource that can facilitate cooperation and social interaction among members of a society, and it facilitates active civil participation. Conversely, immigrants who do not have a high proficiency in either official language are less likely (or able) to participate in civic activities. Specifically, immigrants with limited language skills have difficulty communicating with the majority population when volunteering or participating, and may also find it difficult to inform themselves about opportunities to become involved politically and socially (Baer 2008; Dudley 2007; Nakhaie 2008; Tossutti 2007).²

However, civic participation in turn enables groups to exercise the right to full citizenship, enjoying civil, political and social rights that are given to members of society (Marshall, 1950). Not knowing English and/or French limits interaction to those activities and social groups that use the languages specific to each immigrant origin group; low levels of host country language proficiency thus has the potential to reduce levels and types of civic participation and to curtail full access to rights and entitlements.

As noted previously, respondents to the Ethnic Diversity Survey were asked about their participation in art, dance, cultural groups; business or job related groups; community organization(s); ethnic or immigrant associations; hobby, social club or seniors group; religious affiliated group(s); sports club or team(s); service club, agency or charitable organization; and youth organizations or children's groups. The overall profile created by all their answers conclusively shows that associational participation is enhanced when people are proficient in English and/or French (Table 1 and Chart 1). Stated conversely, the percentages that are members or participate in one or more groups or organizations are depressed for those who have medium or low levels of English and/or French proficiency.

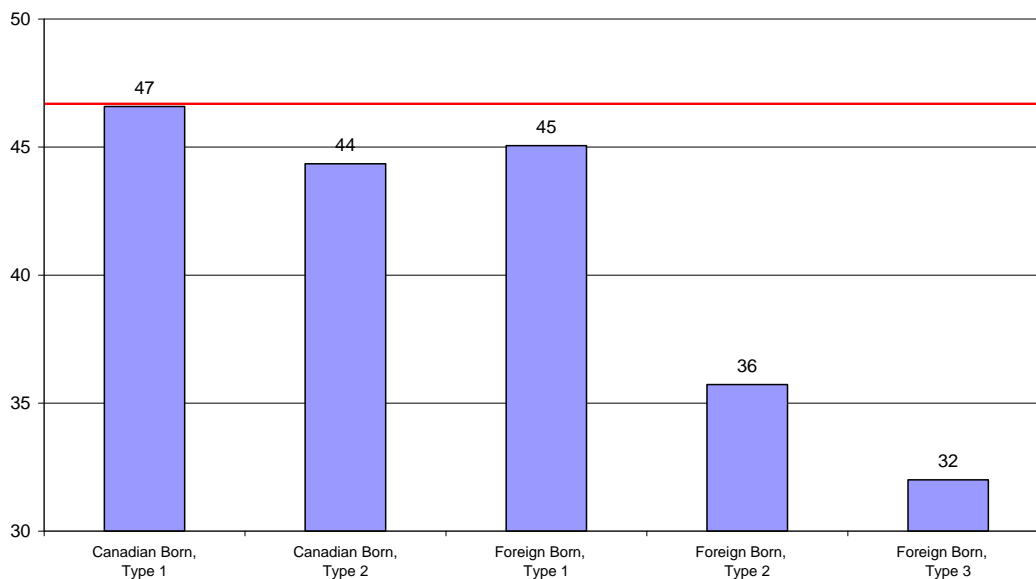
² In terms of federal government support in this area, earlier versions of Canada's multiculturalism policy (in the 1980s) placed an emphasis on assisting ethnic minority communities retain their ethnic languages. However since that time several budget restrictions, as well as a feeling of uneasiness by French-Canadians in Quebec in reaction to this additional assistance provided to other linguistic minorities, has considerably reduce any active efforts on the part of the government to financially assist ethnic minority language retention (Dewing and Leman 2006).

Table 1: Membership or Participation in a Group or Organization and the Number of Groups or Organizations by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

	Total	Canadian Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Canadian Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born Type 3 ^(c)
Membership or Participation in a Group or Organization^(d)						
Yes	45	47	44	45	36	32
No	55	53	56	55	64	68
If yes, number of types						
1 type only	77	77	76	74	82	81
2 types	17	17	16	20	14	15
3 types	5	5	5	5	3	2
4 or more types	1	1	2	2	1	1

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.
 (b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.
 (c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.
 (d) Are you a member of, or have you taken part in the activities of, any groups or organizations at anytime in the past 12 months? For example, a sports team, a hobby club, a community organization, an ethnic association, etc.
 Source: Prepared especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use file.

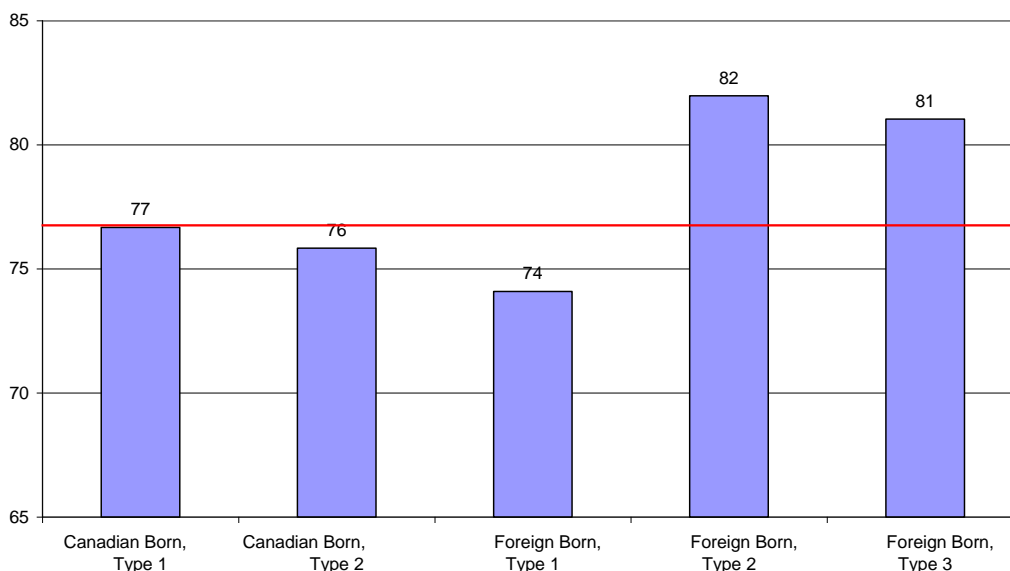
Chart 1: Percent Having Membership or Participation in a Group or Organization by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Further, the extent of involvement is conditional on the level of language proficiency in the destination language. Table 1 and Chart 2 show that compared to the Canadian born or to immigrants who have high levels of official language proficiency, those who arrived as adults and who have medium or low levels of language skill are the most likely to belong to only one group or organization. Specifically, four out of five of immigrants arriving in adulthood who indicate they participate in a group or organization but have a non-English-French mother tongue have participated in only one group or organization.

Chart 2: Of Those Participating, Percentages Belonging to Only One Group or Organization, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Participation in Specific Type of Groups and Organization

Do people vary in their levels of participation depending on the organizations or groups, and do variations exist by language proficiency? The answers to both questions are yes. As shown in Table 2, overall rates of participation are low for ethnic or immigrant associations, business associations, art, cultural and dance groups and children and youth groups or organizations. At the same time, there exist considerable differences in the percentages who participate in groups and organizations by nativity and language proficiency levels.

Table 2: Type of Group(s) or Organization(s) for Those Reporting Membership or Participation by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

Type of Group or Organization	Total	Canadian	Canadian	Foreign	Foreign	Foreign
		Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Born, Type 3 ^(c)
Art, Dance or Cultural Group(s)	8	7	10	13	13	12
Business or Job-Related Association(s)	6	6	5	6	3	3
Community Organization(s)	18	18	15	19	22	16
Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s)	4	2	9	9	21	28
Hobby, Social Club or Seniors Group(s) ^(d)	14	15	10	16	8	6
Religious Affiliated Group(s)	14	12	24	21	22	32
Service Club or Agency or Charitable Organization(s)	15	16	14	14	7	5
Sports Club or Team(s)	41	44	38	30	20	15
Youth Organizations or Children's School Group(s)	6	6	5	4	3	4
Other Organizations	5	5	6	5	5	5

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.

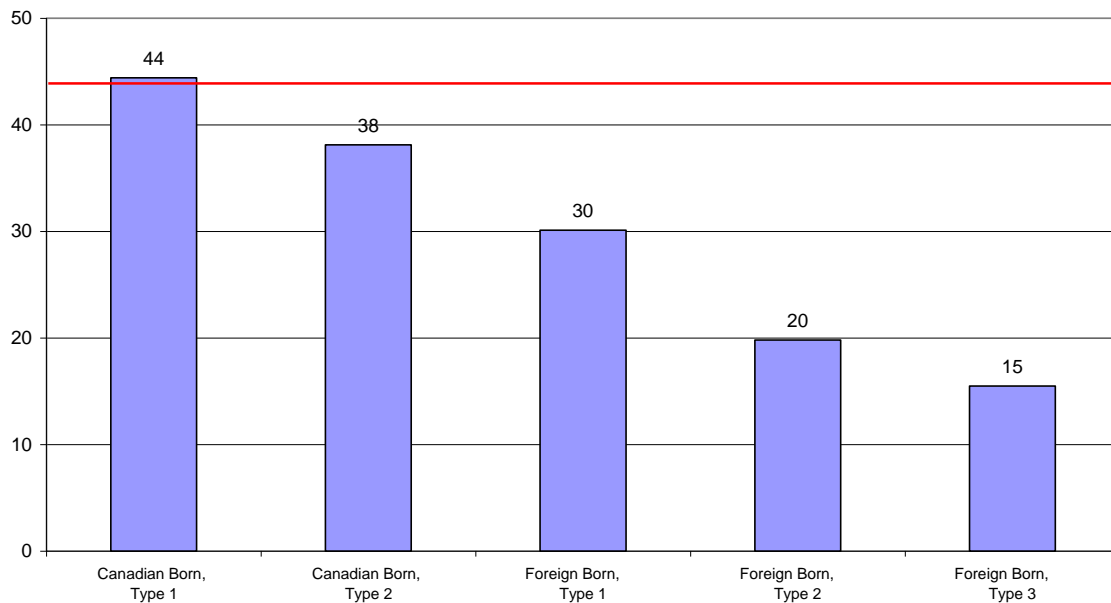
(d) Excludes art, dance or cultural groups

Source: Prepared especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use file.

Two countervailing patterns exist by nativity and language skills. First, participation in hobby, social clubs or seniors groups, service agencies or charitable organizations and sports clubs or teams is substantially higher for the Canadian born who have high official language proficiency compared to other groups, especially the foreign born whose mother tongue and whose most used home language is neither English nor French (see Charts 3 and 4). Second, the reverse is found for membership in religious affiliated groups, ethnic or immigrant associations and, to a lesser extent in art, dance or cultural groups. It should be noted that participation and membership of the Canadian born whose mother tongues are English and/or French and whose most often use another language at home is similar to that of the foreign born whose mother tongues and home languages are English and/or French.

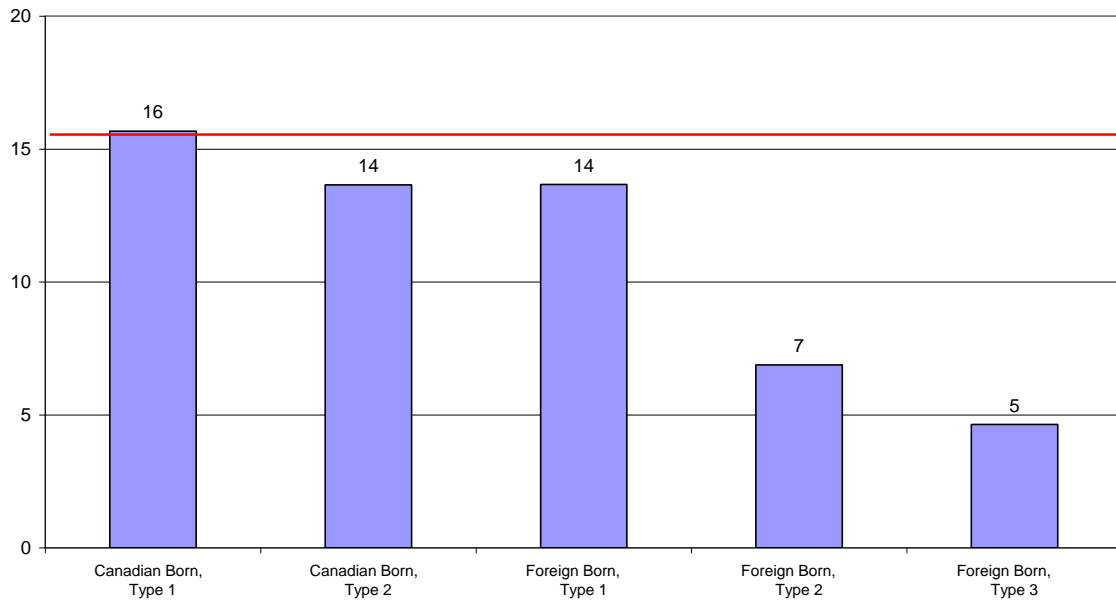
As shown in Chart 5, over one in four immigrants who arrived at age 25 and older and who have lower levels of proficiency in official languages participate or are members of ethnic and/or immigrant associations. Further, compared to recent immigrants, participation is higher for immigrants who have been in Canada for ten years or more (Chart 6). This pattern also holds for participation in religious affiliated groups (Chart 7 and 8). It may be that recent arrivals are busy getting settled and have less time for participation in these groups and organizations.

Chart 3: Of Those Participating, Percentages Belonging to Sports Club or Team(s), Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



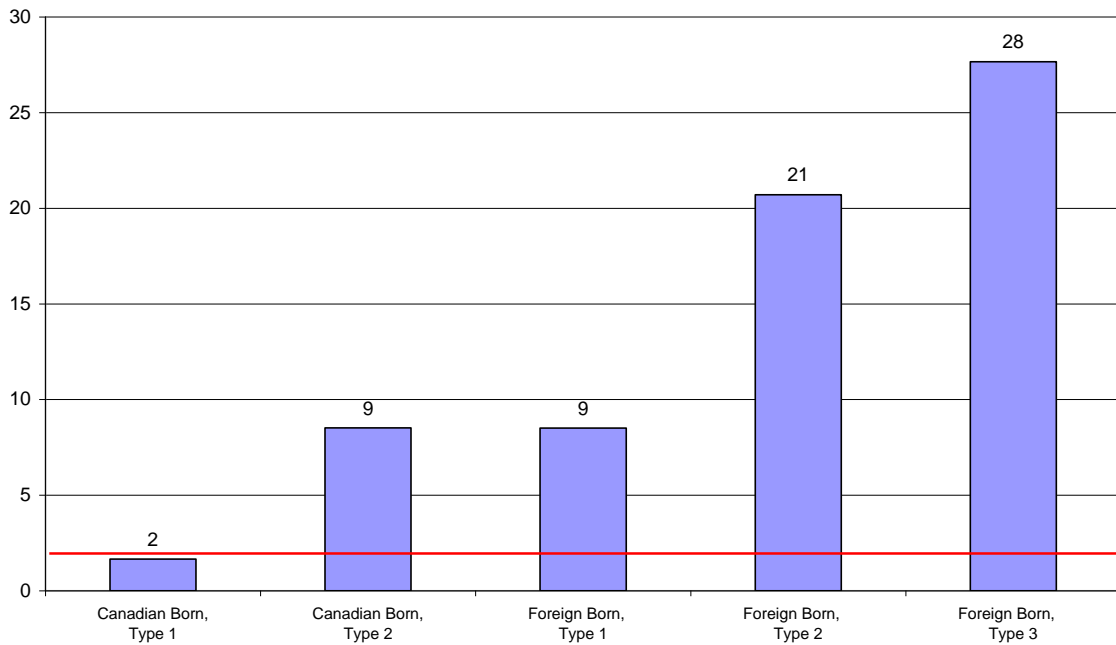
Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Chart 4: Of Those Participating, Percentages Belonging to Service Club, Agency or Charitable Organization(s), Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



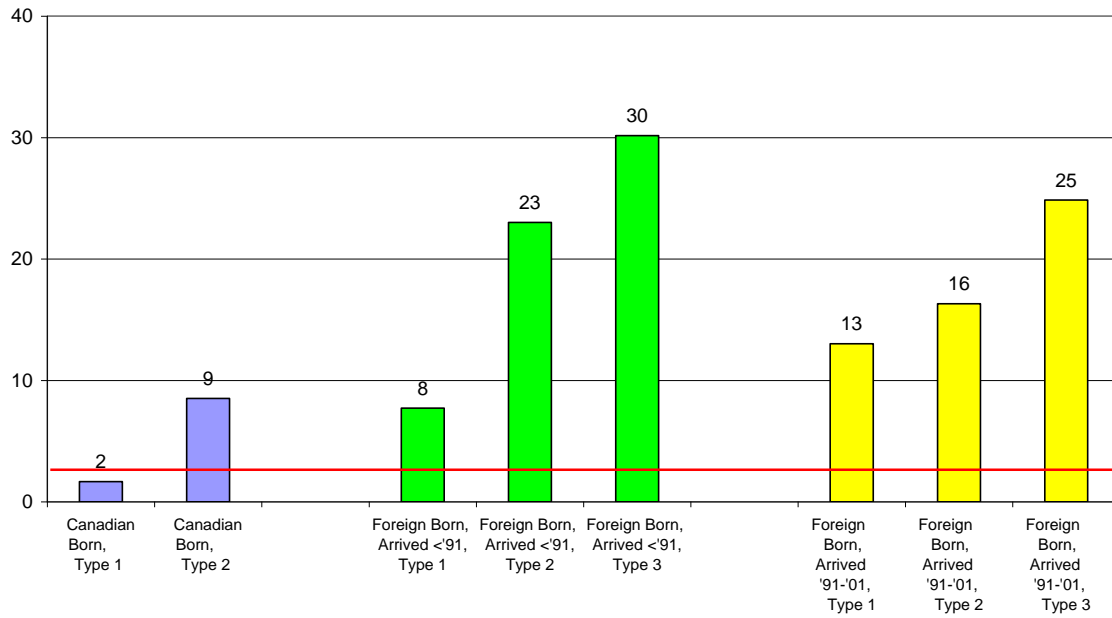
Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Chart 5: Of Those Participating, Percentages Belonging to Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s), Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



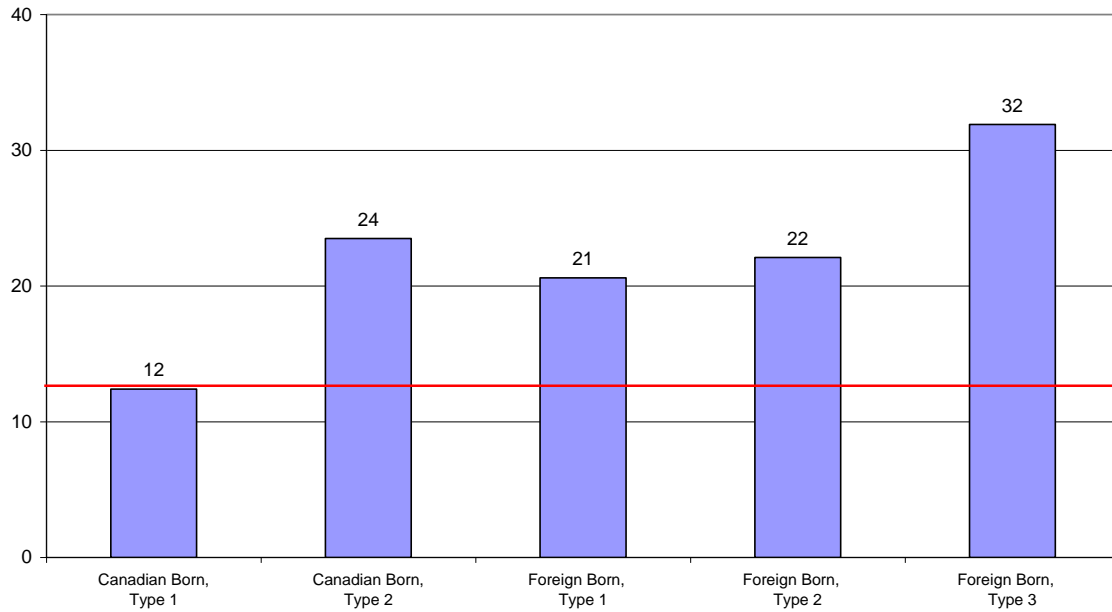
Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Chart 6: Of Those Participating, Percentages Belonging to Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s), by Year of Arrival, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



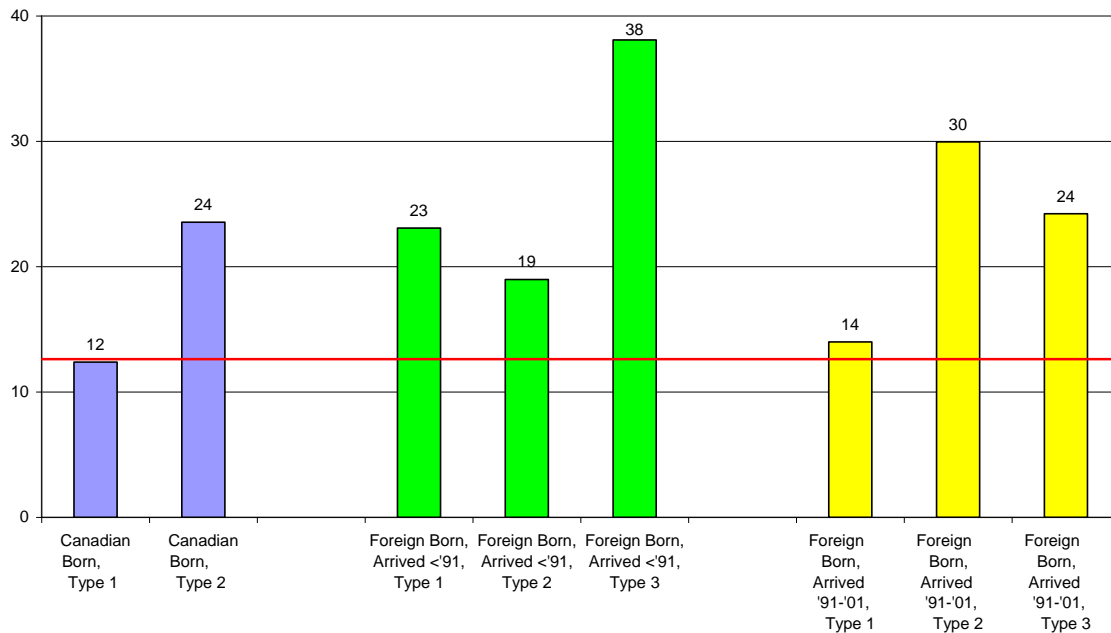
Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Chart 7: Of Those Participating, Percentages Belonging to Religious Affiliated Group(s), Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Chart 8: Of Those Participating, Percentages Belonging to Religious Affiliated Group(s) by Year of Arrival, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Levels of Participation by Types of Groups and Organizations

Differences in the levels of participation also exist between groups defined by nativity (Canadian-born and immigrant) and language proficiency. Table 3 shows participation levels by type of group or association, excluding hobby, social clubs or seniors groups, service agencies or charitable organizations; information on these latter groups and organization was omitted from the EDS public use database. Even when they participate or hold membership in art, dance or cultural groups or in business and job related associations, or in sports clubs and teams, immigrants who have the lowest level of official language proficiency also have less frequent levels of participation compared with other groups. Compared to the Canadian born, those immigrants with low levels of language proficiency belong or participate in religious affiliated groups or in ethnic/immigrant associations do have higher percentages participating on a monthly or weekly basis. However, these levels are not as high as the percentages observed for immigrants who have the highest level of language proficiency, defined as having English and/or French as the mother tongue(s) and speaking official languages in the home.

Table 3: Frequency of Participation in Group(s) or Organization(s) for Those Reporting Membership or Participation by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

Frequency of Participation in Group or Organization	Total	Canadian Born, Type 1 ^(a)	Canadian Born, Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born Type 1 ^(a)	Foreign Born Type 2 ^(b)	Foreign Born Type 3 ^(c)
Art, Dance or Cultural Group(s)	100	100	100	100	100	100
At least once a week	42	45	34	39	26	29
At least once a month	28	29	24	33	27	17
At least 3 times a year	18	15	26	14	21	35
Once or twice a year, or not at all	12	10	17	14	25	19
Business or Job-Related Association(s)	100	100	100	100	100	100
At least once a week	19	19	17	33	8	19
At least once a month	44	45	53	29	22	22
At least 3 times a year	19	19	15	10	58	21
Once or twice a year, or not at all	18	17	15	28	12	38
Community Organization(s)	100	100	100	100	100	100
At least once a week	37	37	42	41	40	30
At least once a month	38	39	28	32	32	36
At least 3 times a year	17	16	15	19	19	20
Once or twice a year, or not at all	9	8	15	8	9	14
Ethnic or Immigrant Association(s)	100	100	100	100	100	100
At least once a week	19	17	21	20	18	21
At least once a month	25	18	25	41	27	28
At least 3 times a year	28	30	37	19	27	26
Once or twice a year, or not at all	28	35	18	20	28	25
Religious Affiliated Group(s)	100	100	100	100	100	100
At least once a week	51	50	44	63	43	56
At least once a month	35	37	35	28	30	26
At least 3 times a year	10	9	15	6	20	11
Once or twice a year, or not at all	4	4	6	4	7	7
Sports Club or Team(s)	100	100	100	100	100	100
At least once a week	80	81	75	70	72	59
At least once a month	14	14	14	20	19	18
At least 3 times a year	4	3	8	4	4	11
Once or twice a year, or not at all	2	2	2	6	5	12

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.

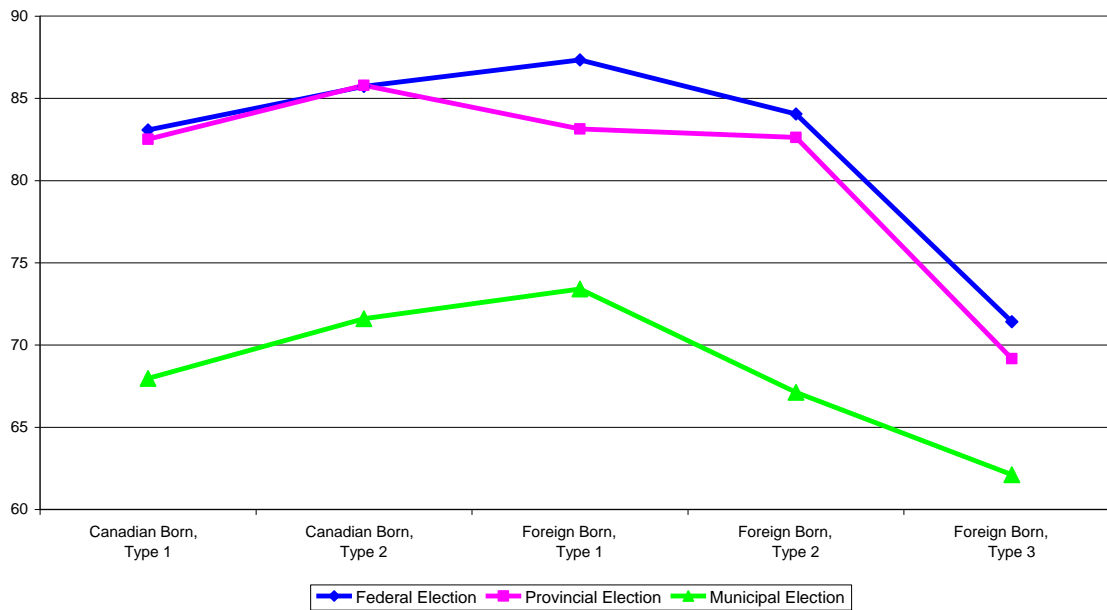
Source: 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use file.

Source: Prepared especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use file.

Voting Patterns

As anticipated based on the findings of other studies, low levels of official language proficiency are associated with lower levels of political participation as measured by voting in elections. The 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey asked respondents if they had vote in the last federal, provincial and municipal elections along with recording if they were not eligible to vote. Chart 9 shows that immigrants who arrived at age 25 or older and who have low levels of official language proficiency are the least likely of all groups to have voted in the last federal, provincial or municipal elections. Elections are important not only because they represent the operation of democratic government in Canada but also because they represent an important mechanism whereby groups in Canada can make their views and voices heard and where groups can exercise the rights of legal citizenship.

Chart 9: Percentages Voting in Types of Elections For Those Who Voted by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002

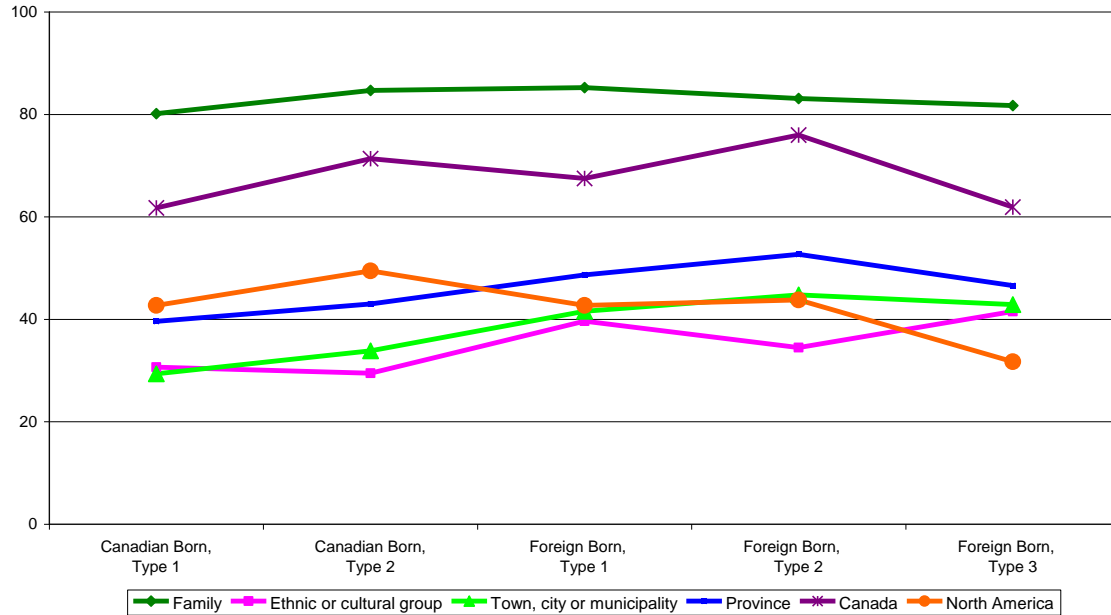


Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Strength of Belonging

Even though people do not vote, they still may feel part of a social unit. The 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey also asked respondents to indicate how strong their sense of belonging was to family, ethnic or cultural groups, their town, city or municipality, their province, Canada and North America; respondents were requested to use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not strong at all and 5 is very strong. As shown in Chart 10 and in Table 4, all groups indicate a very strong sense of belonging to family with percentages ranging between 80 and 85. However, there exist modest differences among groups in the percentages indicating they had strong feelings of belonging to other units. Immigrants who arrived at age 25 or older and who had low official language proficiency had the highest percentages indicating a very strong sense of belonging to their ethnic or cultural groups and the lowest percentages of belonging very strongly to North America. After family, belonging to Canada received the highest percentages with a strong sense of belonging from all nativity and language proficiency groups. Here, nearly two thirds (62 percent) of immigrants with low official language proficiency said they had a very strong sense of belonging to Canada; this percentage is identical to that of the Canadian-born with the highest level of official language proficiency (English and/or French is the language first learned and is currently the most regularly used home language). Although low levels of language proficiency are associated with a lower propensity to vote among immigrants, it appears that these immigrants still have a strong sense of belonging to Canada.

Chart 10: Percentages Feeling a Very Strong Sense of Belonging to Types of Units by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Ages 25 plus, Canadian born and Foreign-born Who Immigrated at Age 25 or Later, Canada 2002



Source: Produced especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey public use microdata file.

Conclusion

Analysis of the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey confirms that levels of proficiency in Canada’s official languages are correlated with civic participation. Compared to the Canadian-born or to the foreign born with English and/or French mother tongue, immigrants who arrived at age 25 or older and who first learned a language other than English or French have lower percentages having membership or participating in a group or organization. Even when they are members or do participate, these immigrants with low official language proficiency are more likely than the Canadian born or those immigrants with high English/French proficiency to participate in only one group or organization.

Canadians participate in a variety of groups and organizations. However, immigrants with low levels of official language skills have the lowest percentages of all groups belonging to sports clubs or teams and participating in service clubs, service agencies or charitable organizations. Yet, they have the highest percentages of all groups participating in, or belonging to, ethnic or immigrant associations and to religious affiliated groups.

Immigrants with low levels of official language proficiency also have lower percentages voting in recent federal, provincial and municipal elections. At the same time, nearly two thirds (62 percent) say that they have a very strong sense of belonging to Canada; this percentage also characterizes the Canadian born who first learned English and French. Overall, while low levels of official language proficiency are associated with a reduction in diverse measures of civic participation, such reductions cannot be equated

with negative feelings about belonging to Canada. Yet, compared to those immigrants who have higher levels of English/French language skills, those immigrants who first learned other languages and who use languages other than English and/or French most often in the home do have slightly lower percentages indicating a strong sense of belonging to their province, to Canada, or to North America.

These results represent a first look at the relationship between language proficiency and civic participation, with special attention paid to immigrants arriving in adulthood. The five nativity-language groups studied in this paper undoubtedly differ with respect to characteristics such as age, marital status, education, origins, years living in Canada and other factors that are also associated with civic participation. Thus, the percentages documented in this paper might change if adjustments were made for compositional differences using multivariate statistical techniques.

Additionally, it is worth noting that survey data fielded at one single time point cannot prove causality. While low levels of language proficiency undoubtedly limit interaction in the larger Canadian society, and thus influence levels of civic participation, it also is true that the inverse holds - civic participation can influence language proficiency. Dudley's (2007) case study of ESL immigrants in Canada demonstrated that some immigrants volunteer in order to improve their English skills with native speakers. This is especially the case when ESL classes were either not available or not appropriate for their level of English skills. A complimentary relationship between volunteering and immigrant language proficiency also may exist. For instance, Stepick, Stepick and Labissiere (2008) found that approximately three-fourths of first and 1.5 generation immigrant college students in Miami, Florida volunteered with non-English speakers to assist the latter in improving their language skills. Thus, although research presented in this paper confirms that language proficiency is correlated with civic participation indicators, a longitudinal study would be better able to ascertain any reciprocal relationships between language proficiency and civic participation of immigrants in Canada.

Table 4: Strength of Sense of Belonging to Family, Ethnic or Cultural Group, Municipality, Province, Canada and North America by Nativity and Language Proficiency, Canada, 2002

Strength of Belonging to	Total	Canadian Born, Type 1^(a)	Canadian Born, Type 2^(b)	Foreign Born Type 1^(a)	Foreign Born Type 2^(b)	Foreign Born Type 3^(c)
Family	100	100	100	100	100	100
Level 1 - Not Strong at All	2	2	1	2	1	1
Level 2	1	1	1	1	1	2
Level 3	5	5	4	3	4	5
Level 4	11	11	9	8	10	10
Level 5 - Very Strong	81	80	85	85	83	82
Ethnic or Cultural Group	100	100	100	100	100	100
Level 1 - Not Strong at All	16	18	13	13	13	6
Level 2	11	12	13	9	11	6
Level 3	23	22	24	23	25	24
Level 4	18	18	20	16	17	23
Level 5 - Very Strong	32	31	29	40	34	42
Town, City or Municipality	100	100	100	100	100	100
Level 1 - Not Strong at All	7	8	6	8	4	5
Level 2	10	11	8	7	6	6
Level 3	28	29	28	22	19	21
Level 4	24	24	24	21	25	25
Level 5 - Very Strong	31	29	34	42	45	43
Province	100	100	100	100	100	100
Level 1 - Not Strong at All	6	6	4	7	3	4
Level 2	7	7	7	7	5	5
Level 3	23	23	19	19	16	20
Level 4	24	24	26	19	23	24
Level 5 - Very Strong	41	40	43	49	53	47
Canada	100	100	100	100	100	100
Level 1 - Not Strong at All	4	4	2	3	1	3
Level 2	3	4	2	3	1	3
Level 3	12	12	8	9	7	12
Level 4	18	18	16	18	15	21
Level 5 - Very Strong	63	62	71	67	76	62
North America	100	100	100	100	100	100
Level 1 - Not Strong at All	9	9	7	9	7	14
Level 2	9	9	6	10	8	11
Level 3	21	21	17	21	18	24
Level 4	19	18	20	18	23	20
Level 5 - Very Strong	42	43	49	43	44	32

(a) English and/or French first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(b) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned, English and/or French spoken most often at home.

(c) Other non-English, non-French is first language learned and spoken most often at home.

Source: Prepared especially for this paper from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Public Use file.

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